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Coaching culture model as a driver for a successful team management

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ABSTRACT:
Current fast-paced environment challenges companies to shift the focus of business away from control, power and micromanagement towards personal and professional progression by learning and upskilling practices, as well as nurturing leadership competencies, in order to stay competitive. Coaching has been considered a practice that enables businesses to facilitate growth, assist learning, thus getting to a safe environment pushing self-confidence, mutual support, creativity, multicultural communication. Yet, there is a lack of clarity on what coaching represents as a phenomenon, as well as how exactly companies can benefit from it and, if they can, which formats are the most efficient in which cases. Moreover, it is not enough to develop and implement a set of separate coaching practices – in order to see the qualitative outcomes, coaching culture model should be developed and applied. Therefore, this study takes a step forward in the understanding of coaching culture framework, develop a coaching culture model and see how it can be useful within the corporate environment.

Theoretical base for this research consists of coaching theories by Whitmore, Bachkirova, Cox, Clutterbuck, Jakonen, Vesso, Alas as well as other authors, such as Wolf, Rosha, Lace etc. who studied factors impacting coaching process and its outcomes. Change management models by Lewin and others are used for coaching culture model implementation planning.

The empirical analysis was made with qualitative research. The case company participating in the research went through the company-wide questionnaire, while a few team members completed the semi-structured interviews. The activities were made before and after the coaching culture model was implemented in the company.

The conclusion of the study is that coaching culture model has a positive effect on the team management process. The final version of the model ensures that by addressing the following aspects: having structured processes towards agile and team metrics' establishments (Objectives and Key Results, Key Performance Indicators etc.), waterfalling practices from the leadership team as the starting point and towards the rest of the teams, making sure applied practices are customized for each particular team to ensure its full efficiency, encouraging commitment and engagement, thus boosting employees' potential. These results are discussed by formulating the theoretical and practical implications of the research, limitations and suggestions for further research on the topic.

KEYWORDS: coaching culture, agile leadership, virtual team, performance management

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1 Introduction

Current businesses, regardless of the industry, are growing and being shaped within the same environmental context, characterized by a fast-paced environment from the perspective of the information flow and ever-changing customer needs, technological progress and global happenings like COVID-19. All the aforementioned tendencies, respectively, challenge companies to nurture their organizational ambidexterity as the ability to maximize potential of existing processes and resources, while actively seeking and seizing new opportunities into ongoing processes (Gupta et. al., 2006). Apart from that, the nature of work has been changing as well, switching to the team and project-oriented basis. All that shifts the focus of business away from control, power and micromanagement towards personal and professional progression by learning and upskilling practices, as well as nurturing leadership competencies. Whichever strategy the company chooses to do that boosts its potential, it is clear the focus on people is now a key to retaining competitive advantage (Turtio, 2017; Bennett & Bush, 2009).

Coaching as a potential driver for such changes has grown its popularity from the nineties when the concept was at its early stages of development and evolved into a discipline that is being constantly developed (Vesso & Alas, 2016; Turtio, 2017). Indeed, it appears to be quite an exciting area of research for several reasons. Lack of academic background, vague descriptions lead to the surfaced understanding that coaching might be an efficient tool to be used for a business environment, yet no full understanding of that is present. In the meantime, a fast-paced environment and, thus, a dynamic work life require new ways of managing employees in order to achieve business goals (Kim et. al, 2013), thus highlighting the need to develop new ways of managing business through facilitating people's growth and development. Indeed, the corporate environment nowadays starts to see a potential in human capital as a business competitive advantage booster (Turtio, 2017). Therefore, investing in people nowadays becomes more meaningful and that is when coaching starts getting an increasing attention from an academic community and business leaders as a potentially helpful tool to empower employees, thus nurturing businesses.

As of today, coaching has proven quite numerous positive outcomes when being used within a business environment. First of all, it clearly affects the manager-employee

relationship. Research shows that employees perceive their managers as the company representatives whose lead they should follow and whose opinion and example they rely on. Therefore, managers have an extra layer of influence on the employees and shape positive workplace attitudes among employees, thus leading to positive workplace outcomes and shaping an encouraging culture (Ali, 2021). The central motives of implementing coaching within a business context would be to facilitate growth, assist learning, thus getting to a safe environment pushing self-confidence, mutual support, creativity, multicultural communication (Vesso & Alas, 2016; Turtio, 2017; Bennet et. al, 2009; Hawkings, 2012; Randak-Jezierska, 2015).

1.1. Background of the study

The main focus of the given thesis is on coaching as a phenomenon that keeps getting increased attention from both academic community and business leaders. The main subject is narrowed down to development of a coaching culture model as a tool that can enhance business outcomes by influencing team performance and evaluating the impact it may have on the team engagement. The concept within the given study involves a personal level of dealing with employees, thus reflecting commonalities with life coaching as a separate type. However, the coaching model introduced in the research has connection to the personality-focused work only to the extent that enhances work-related aspects - the research does not go in-depth into psychological study. In the meantime, the aim of the study is to contribute not only to the theoretical framework of coaching as a concept, but also to the practical implications of how coaching practices can be used to boost the business environment.

The thesis, therefore, will represent action design research (Petersson & Lundberg, 2016), focused on developing and integrating a coaching culture model into the company in order to define the best practices applicable towards team management. Such choices of subject and research type introduce both opportunities and challenges. Among the first ones are the willingness of the company to improve the current team management processes, motivation of the author to self-progress within the field and a potential to provide some insights for other companies to be enhancing their practices. On the other hand, lack of

theoretical knowledge and practical competencies of both case company and the author might lead to a challenging process.

1.2. Research problem and question

Based on the aforementioned information, it becomes clear the concept of coaching has been studied to a certain level, yet there is still much to learn about coaching from both theoretical framework and practical implications perspectives. Indeed, there is a lack of clarity on what coaching represents as a phenomenon, as well as how exactly companies can benefit from it and, if they can, which formats are the most efficient in which cases. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to take a step forward in the understanding of coaching and how it can be useful within the corporate environment.

In order to fill the research gap, the paper will aim to answer a few questions, which can be divided into theoretical and empirical types. As for the theoretical questions, these are formulated below:
- What is a coaching culture? How can it benefit an organization?
- What are the theoretically sound ways to implement the coaching culture model into a company?

Empirical questions are the following:
- Which coaching culture elements are the most efficient for the case company?
- What are the practically relevant ways to implement the coaching culture into the company?
- How can coaching culture principles be communicated to the organizations and managed by them so that companies help their teams succeed?
- How coaching culture can affect the team management from the perspective of engagement?

Theoretical questions are to be answered mainly by the literature review, followed by the actual development of a coaching culture framework based on the managers' preferences and theoretical framework, thus adding more value to the existing theoretical knowledge on the matter. Empirical questions are to be answered by the actual implementation of a coaching culture model into ongoing company processes for 3 months in order to see the

suggested practices in action. The second iteration of the coaching culture model based on the team managers and members' feedback will be the final outcome of the given thesis.

1.4. Delimitations of the research

The thesis has certain delimitations within the given research. It focuses entirely on a business environment within one particular company in order to define how coaching culture can be on a certain example, not on a general level. The research also narrows down the scope to studying coaching culture as one of the business concepts, not the entire long-term HR strategy that may include talent acquisition, onboarding, compensation etc. That is done for the purpose to explore only the aspect of performance management, not the entire scope of HR-related processes, so that there is a possibility to study options for facilitation of employees' growth and development in-depth, without shifting focus to other potential aspects. The research is also based on exploring coaching culture with respect to agile virtual teams as that type is getting increasing demand among businesses. Presumably, that happens given the fast-paced environment businesses operate in nowadays, so solid strategies with little room for innovation are not viable options anymore, while remote format of cooperation is something that the world had to get used to during COVID-19 spread.

1.5. An outline of research structure

The research consists of several parts. The introduction presents coaching concepts within the business environment and encourages discussion on the subject. The introductory part is followed by the research descriptions from the angles of aim, research questions and structure.

The following chapter discusses coaching from the angle of existing theoretical framework, how it is applied to the corporate environment and what the other factors are that influence coaching practices successful outcomes. Once coaching term definition, approaches and factors are explored, the thesis continues with the discussion of a coaching culture as a phenomenon, taking a closer look at the existing definitions, model elements and implementation strategies.

The next chapter explores the research methodology: first, it presents the qualitative research method, exploring research choice for data collection and analysis. The choices are justified by discussing the validity and reliability factors, thus confirming the trustworthiness of the research generally. That is followed by introducing the case company and describing the way the research will be conducted, managed and finalized.

That is followed by the closing chapter presenting the research findings with their relation to the research questions. The results are discussed by formulating the theoretical and practical implications of the research, limitations and suggestions for further research on the topic.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Coaching as a concept

Coaching as a phenomenon has gained an increase in academic acknowledgement. There is little theoretical background of the concept. Yet, even the existing researches state the overall idea of coaching is quite vague, starting with mere attempts to define the term itself.

First of all, it is worth taking a look at the dynamics of how coaching was perceived over time.

Table 1. Coaching as a concept.

Author	Description
Whitmore (1992)	'Coaching is about unleashing a person's potential to maximize their performance; in addition to helping her learn rather than teach her'
Berg (2006)	'It has been stated that coaching is the process of challenging and supporting a person or a team in order to develop ways of thinking, ways of being and ways of learning. The purpose is to achieve personal and/or organizational goals'
Bennet et al. (2009).	'Emphasizing action, accountability and personal responsibility, coaching support provides leaders with a safe environment for learning how to creatively manage change and conflict, improve communication, strengthen self-confidence, retool skills, and foster multicultural relationships in a positive and constructive way'
Passmore & Fillery-Travis (2011)	'Socratic based future focused dialogue between a facilitator (coach) and a participant (coachee/client), where the facilitator uses open questions, active listening, summarizes [sic] and reflections which are aimed at stimulating the self-awareness and personal responsibility of the participant'
Randak-Jezierska (2015)	'Coaching is a method which, with the help of an expert, allows for the realization of problems and working through all that prevents a person from changes, and, based on our own resources, plan and take actions that allow for the achievement of the set goal. Coaching can be viewed as a partnership relation based on mutual trust between a properly prepared coach and a coachee where, through conversation, asking questions by the coach, receiving the feedback and helping remove internal barriers, coachees are

	motivated for determination of the goal they aim to achieve and to achieve the goal based on their own values and resources'
Vesso & Alas (2016)	'Coaching is described as a process that emphasizes both relationship and task orientation and consists of the process of learning and transformation'
Rosha & Lace (2021)	'Coaching is the process for facilitating individuals' self-directed learning driven by a coach who triggers the individuals' knowledge creation and transformation of experience for achieving their goals through disclosing their potential and enhancing awareness of new opportunities'
International Coaching Federation (ICF)	"partnering with clients in a thought provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential, which is particularly important in today's uncertain and complex environment" (ICF, n.d.).

Based on the table above, it is possible to formulate a few insights. First of all, it is worth noticing early studies are highly focused on the enhancement aspect of personal performance. Later on, the focus has shifted towards such factors as goal determination and achievement, self-awareness, communication improvement. The most recent research suggests facilitation of own experience transformation towards maximizing potential and knowledge creation.

Thus, it is possible to observe how the definition has been getting more in-depth perception. As for the definition evolution, Lawrence (2017) has pointed out a meaningful journey from a process which helps employees to recognize opportunities and improve their performance and capabilities, up to the process being collaborative and referring to feedback provision, personal challenges' alignment and behavioral modeling. Indeed, while it all started with helping a person just achieve better results, nowadays the term stands more for the individual's ability to broaden his/her worldview, discover new knowledge and, consequently, come up with new experience with maximized potential and self-awareness. Indeed, while early coaching studies considered solely individual and organizational performance improvements, later getting a stronger connection with learning and development (Bond & Seneque, 2013). If we consider the fact that the same actions would

lead to the same results, this new understanding of coaching still supports the idea of achieving different (presumably, better) results. The research by Rosha & Lace (2016) points out that *development* stands for the main characteristic of coaching in terms of word frequency to describe the term, while *process to improve & facilitate, encourage & engage, to create* and *to support* would be the most common themes.

So far, there are several common components which shape the overall definition of coaching. First, it is essential to address the processual nature of coaching. Indeed, coaching does not stand for a result only, it emphasizes the activity towards the goal. Next to that, its focus area refers to the skills and competencies yet not learnt by the individual / group. Numerous researches point out challenging, thought provoking, stimulating, triggering as one of the characteristics of the process coach has with the client (Berg, 2006; Bennet & Bush, 2009; Rosha & Lace, *2021*). Another interesting approach is given by Jepsen et. al. (2020), raising the question on the challenges in identifying the actual value coaching brings, such as empowerment (Jepsen & Dehlholm, 2020). The aforementioned authors went further in formulating the definitions and raised the question of comparing the role of coach and psychoanalyst (from the perspective of Lacal's psychoanalytic discourse) since it seems like both are focused on helping a person to articulate own wishes and accompanying him or her on a journey towards these. Even though there are still differences between these two processes, the coach is about to trap the coachee precisely at the stage where the latter's desire is overshadowed instead of pushing the person to go beyond it. The research thus justified the idea of perceiving managerial coaching as a semblance of the psychoanalytic discourse.

Therefore, while there are several things which have been related to coaching as a concept at all times (performance enhancement, self-awareness, performance improvement etc.), some of them are more relevant only to the modern definitions (transformation of goal achievement experience, learning enhancement, self-driven focus etc.).

Within the given thesis, we will rely on the following definition of coaching: ***'process of interaction between coach and coachee focused on encouragement, empowerment of the latter and facilitation of his/her growth and determination towards goals achievement via pushing the coachee towards questioning things, finding new perspectives, brainstorming***

opportunities and challenges, coming up with new solutions and getting resources to taking action'.

2.2 Coaching theories / classification

Due to the fact that there is no universal definition of coaching, there are numerous theoretical frameworks which shape the understanding of one from different angles. GROW model appears to be one of the examples for it, being illustrated below.

Figure 1. GROW diagram (Whitmore, 2009).

As can be seen from the diagram above (Fig. 1), GROW stands for the abbreviation reflecting each step of the coaching process: "G" refers to the actual outcome the person wants to get, "R" is about exploring the current environment and circumstances. "O", in turn, would consider both obstacles and opportunities that can respectively either empower the person with resources or challenge him/her to achieve the goal. "W" is about will, in other words, the actual steps the individual is about to take in order to get to the desired result. To sum up, the model can be described in the following questions:

- What do you want to achieve?
- What is the situation right now?

- What can prevent you from achieving the goal? What can encourage you to get there?
- What will you do to make it happen?

Another quite exciting theoretical coaching model refers to the one emerged from Wilber's integral theory (2005). The theory in its core stands for that nothing can be comprehensive with a single perspective - all should be perceived from several aspects (Jakonen, 2018). Thus, in order to make the most objective and accurate understanding of pretty much anything in this world, you've got to be "touching all the bases" (Wilber, 2005). In other words, the Integral operating system (IOS) "can be used to bring more clarity, care, and comprehensiveness to virtually any situation, making success much more likely, whether that success be measured in terms of personal transformation, social change, excellence in business, care for others, or simple happiness in life", also being applicable to any field due to its neutrality (Wilber, 2005). The model is called AQAL, standing for All Quadrants, All Levels, All Lines, All States and All Types. There are four main elements of the model: I (self and consciousness; inside of the individual), IT (brain and organism; outside of the individual), WE (culture and worldview; the inside of the collective), ITS (social system and environment; the outside of the collective). Shortly, the main distinctions between the perspectives are between individual / collective and subjective / objective points of view (Turtio, 2017).

When applied to the coaching framework, the model may represent the following:
- 'I' – coaching participants as individual experiences
- 'We' – the coaching interaction: relationship, culture, language etc.
- 'It' – structure of coaching that can be observed: processes, models, behaviors etc.
- 'Its' – systems presenting a foundation of the coaching process and having an impact on it: sponsoring organizations, other social and professional groups.

Thus, coaching represents a multifaceted way of interacting with an individual's internal and external environments.

The aforementioned theory has quite much in common with Kolb's theory of learning cycle, consisting of concrete experience, observations and reflections, formation of abstract concepts and generalizations, testing implications of concepts in new situations (Kolb,

1984). If keeping the given approach in mind along with the integral model, the following structure comes in place:

intrasubjective	intraobjective

I
Coach and coachee (team members) as personalities with own traits, beliefs, assumptions etc.

COACHING
IThe integral coaching framework (customised for business environment)

IT
Actions, thoughts, behaviours by coach and coachee (team members)

WE
The surrounding environment: psychological team climate and communication, team performance

ITS
Company organisational structure, company values, business & HR strategy, cross-teams communication

intersubjective	interobjective

Figure 2. The integral model within a coaching framework within a business environment (based on Bachkirova, Cox & Clutterbuck, 2010; Jakonen, 2018).

Another interesting model is proposed by Scheepers (2013), who introduced the 7 'P' tool to progress with coaching, reflecting several ways in which coaching can be processed.

- Purpose coaching – reflects the overall goal of coaching as empowerment and inspiration towards the goal;
- Progress coaching – ability to realistically approach project plans and milestones;
- Process coaching – refers mostly to the ability of the coach to 'process experience and elicited emotions' relating that to self-management skills of a leader;
- Perspective coaching – refers to the strategic thinking when it comes to the coaching experience;
- Polarity coaching – relates to the diversity management;
- Political coaching – addresses networking as a social capital within an organization;
- Potential coaching – this approach is supposed to help leaders to realize the potential of commitment and progress with the development.

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The author also addresses the agility of each tool and encourages to perceive all the approaches as complementary, without narrowing your views down.

Vesso & Alas (2016) refer to the previous studies and point out several criteria according to which the process can be called coaching: attitude towards developing the potential of the person and the environment they develop in, striving for the achievement of goals, finding solutions, improvement in efficiency, support for the development of coachees that is consistent with the values they believe in, partnership relations between coach and coaches, emphasizing that this is a process of support, being based on the conversation of feedback to coachees, caring for coachees to find solutions by themselves; supporting coachees in overcoming internal limitations and emphasis on short-term interventions.

Based on the information above, coaching can be developed, integrated, measured and managed in a number of ways, depending on the perspective the individual / organization takes, the purpose and key focus areas one chooses. In order to get a deeper understanding of coaching frameworks, it is worth taking a look at the factors that influence the coaching process generally.

2.3 Factors impacting of coaching process

Given the present paper context, it is not enough to define what coaching means and how the concept can be structured from the angle of the theoretical model - it is significant to define its place within the current reality and how it is connected to other aspects of the environment, corporate one in particular.

First of all, coaching appears to be a process applicable to quite many areas. It has a proven impact within various industries and areas, such as, for instance, banking and finance services (Modestino et. al., 2019; Rosha & Lace, 2016), health (Gonzalo et. al., 2019; Wolf et. al., 2019), retail and wholesale, information technology, manufacturing and production, education, health care (Rosha & Lace, 2016).

Interestingly, it seems like certain processes appear to be more efficient within certain areas than the others. For instance, direct observation, feedback and reflective practice appears to be the foundation for entrustment when it comes to the medical industry (Gonzalo et. al.,

2019). Regarding the latter, coaching may indeed be a powerful tool to "for supporting and sustaining health promotion coalition practice shifts that can build power and advance health equity" (Wolf et. al., 2019).

There are a few aspects which can be considered challenges preventing a successful coaching practice implementation into personal / organizational life. Among them is the gap in theoretical knowledge that leads to the same drawback in empirical evidence, thus decreasing value in investing resources (effort, time and money) in such a practice (Maamari et. al, 2021). Research by Turtio (2017) supports that statement, yet by pointing out the unwillingness of companies to sacrifice the senior executive resources for the purpose, thus referring to external coaches instead of nurturing such an environment in-house. While it can be a great benefit of getting "a fresh set of eyes" to pinpoint issues which are not seen internally (Turtio, 2017), it does not encourage such an environment on a permanent basis, thus lowering long-term benefits.

Remote format of working also affects the way coaching is used. Turesky et. al. (2020) points out coaching practices along with other methods focused on conflict management, transparency, recognition of achievements etc. positively influences team success. Moreover, it also encourages trust, which Du Plessis et. al. (2015) has also studied revealing the connection between trust and servant leadership, along with emotional intelligence (EQ).

Another important factor which is crucial to consider refers to the actual extent to which the company is mature enough for welcoming coaching practices. Numerous researches touched that aspect, drawing the academic community's attention towards that aspect. For instance, Turtio (2017) points out the company can be considered mature when there is "an open ambience for learning where all parties feel like problems and challenges can be expressed safely". The author also brings up several more characteristics indicating the readiness of the organization to integrate coaching practices into business processes: ability of the employees to reflect on their performance, co-operation as a part of the organizational culture, values in place: trust, openness etc. Hunt & Weintraub (2004) also deepen the topic by mentioning that a coaching friendly environment is built when the circumstances allow employees to define their own goals instead of merely following

guidelines. The authors point out that such an environment also acts against control- and evaluation-oriented environments with strong impression management practices, which usually nurture willingness of employees to pretend they do good even if they actually do not.

Personality traits appear to be quite significant when it comes to prepping for coaching practices. Ironically, even though coaching highlights a human touch and emphasizes the contribution of an actual person-to-person interaction considering active listening and individual readiness factors, such as self-efficacy, ability to engage in emotional intelligence development etc. into a successful outcome of the coaching interaction (Dippenaar & Schaap, 2017), the actual impact of certain personality traits of a coach is still not explored to its full potential. That idea is being supported by Diller et. al. (2021), who addressed the impact a so-called "dark triad" can have on the coaching process and its outcomes. Particularly, the authors of the research claim having dark-triad-related traits, such as narcissism, machiavellianism or psychopathy, by either coach or coachee, may easily lead both parties to anxiety, distress and other negative reactions towards the process itself. Therefore, Diller and his colleagues (2021) emphasize the following things to be considered when either coach or client has dark triad traits: openly disclose potential and ongoing conflicts, let client choose only the goals and methods which are compliant to ethics, rely on supervision practices and use mindfulness practices for coaches in case of dealing with dark triad clients in order to reduce behavioral inhibition system (BIS) - uncertainty and anxiety of a coach once confronted with conflicting stimuli. ethical responsibility.

Overall, such things are important to consider, since jumping on coaching practices being premature for it may negatively affect their potential success (Rona, 2014). As can be seen above, being aware of certain factors may correct the course of action within the coaching process in order to ensure successful outcomes.

Based on the aforementioned information with respect to the corporate environment, it is clear coaching cannot really be treated as a one-time method or a set of practices - it is a time- and energy-consuming investment from the side of the organization. Moreover, coaching appears to represent the way to speed things up and improve, yet it does not

stand for something each business must have. In reality, the company should prepare itself to integrate coaching into ongoing operations.

Hence, implementation of a mere set of coaching practices turns out to be an inefficient strategy. In order to maximize coaching practices potential fully, one needs to be fully aware of coaching potential and own potential benefits out of it, ready to commit to invest enough resources to ensure the changes, develop the environment mature for coaching practices, shape strategies of integrating coaching practices in the most efficient manner and define the ways to manage them, evaluating the outcomes at all times. Therefore, the best approach would be to develop and integrate a coaching friendly environment or, in other words, **a coaching culture model**. Implementation of a model will aim to boost people's potential as the key purpose of coaching as a phenomenon.

The next section, thus, will provide a more in-depth exploration of a coaching culture framework which represents the core element of the given action research.

2.4 Coaching culture framework

2.4.1 Coaching culture definition

First and foremost, coaching culture is to be defined before the concept will be shaped into a certain structure and integrated into organizational processes.

As for the coaching generally, the same vagueness is applied to coaching culture as a concept from the angle of definition. The variety of coaching culture definitions are presented below.

Table 2. Coaching culture definitions.

Author(s)	Definition
Hart (2003)	We believe a coaching culture approach is a cost-effective way to accomplish the work of the organization because no extra resources are utilized to focus action and improve results. This derives from the proposition that by using coaching behavior, people can help others in being focused on priorities and taking actions that increase productivity and reduce costs.

Gormley & Nieuwerburgh (2014)	- It is proposed that coaching can form an integral part of how organizations develop their people. - It is suggested that coaching can be embedded within the existing performance management and feedback processes of organizations. - The literature suggests that coaching can provide a holistic approach to unlocking the potential of individuals and their organizations. - There are indications that coaching can create increased performance within organizations. - It seems that coaching can be a good way of demonstrating a clear commitment to grow individuals within an organization. - There is a general agreement that creating coaching cultures can take time. - Finally, there is a broad agreement that creating coaching cultures can lead to changes in organizations with rewards for staff, stakeholders and clients.
Vesso & Alas (2016)	"is a type of culture where a balance exists between support and achievement"
Milner et. al (2020)	'a coaching culture is one in which members of the organization use coaching skills with each other'
Boysen, Arya, & Page (2021)	A coaching culture exists in an organization when a coaching approach is a key aspect of how the leaders, managers and staff develop all their people and engage their stakeholders. [...] At its roots, a coaching culture is based on the principles of respect, positivity and embeddedness.

As can be seen, coaching culture is a relatively new term, which yet has numerous definitions each having certain commonalities. To summarize, definitions reflect coaching culture within a corporate environment as something that: 1) involves multi-level employees; 2) strong communication focus not only in the manager-employee way, but generally between employees no matter the hierarchy; 3) has development, support, maximizing the potential as key elements.

Therefore, the major difference between coaching practices overall and coaching culture would be the scope: while coaching practices are mostly used only one-way (manager-employee) and with respect to particular occasions, coaching culture involves coaching principles to be integrated to all levels of organizational structure and with no particular

connection to certain cases. Furthermore, coaching culture puts more emphasis on all mutual and cross-teams / cross-levels influences that employees may have on each other, empowering individual potential and facilitating development.

If the company, regardless of the organizational structure, industry etc. does not care about people and their performance / growth, that increases the chances of them leaving for the organizations who actually take care of such aspects. All that shapes the need for effective coaching at the workplace, summarizing the idea of Blanchard & Don (1995), who stated that 'Everybody's a coach in some aspect of life, and that means you. Regardless of whether you have an official title, there are people out there who need your help'.

2.4.2 Coaching culture approaches

One needs to understand the range of perspectives that can be taken once it comes to coaching culture development. Each point of view presented below potentiates coaching success, nonetheless, each addresses separate aspects of coaching. Hence, it is essential to analyze the key needs that the company would want to fulfill by integrating a coaching culture into its processes in order to maximize its full effect.

Denison & Mishra (1995) as one of the early researchers on organizational culture generally, recognize the following cultural traits leading to organizational effectiveness: involvement, consistency, adaptability and mission (Denison and Mishra, 1995). Yet, in order to apply any changes to the organizational culture, leaders' fundamental beliefs and opinions need to be shifted, while increasing the awareness of the culture and its significance, which appear to be some of 'the most unique benefits of professional coaching in this context' (Nieminen et. al, 2018).

Hawkings (2012) identifies several levels of an organizational coaching culture (Hawkings, 2012; Vesso & Alas, 2016):

- Artifacts: coaching represents a 'key competency and capability for all leaders and managers', thus highlighting the importance of coaching in from a strategic point of view;
- Behaviors: coaching style is used in all types of interaction within the team, supporting the idea of encouragement, empowerment, mutual support etc.

- Mind-sets: coaching is not applied only to the level of actions - people are reflecting on their choices and decisions, own behavior and the actions of others, being focused on both personal and company development;
- Emotional ground: sufficient levels 'of personal engagement and responsibility';
- Motivational roots: refers to commitment, choosing learning and team development over individual growth.

Wilson (2011), in turn, has made an interesting contribution too, pointing out principles which should be present within a coaching culture: self-belief, responsibility, blame free.

Milner et. al (2020) point out coaching culture lies in the 'consistent use of different types of coaching across the organization, a formalized process, provision of appropriate training and resources, the involvement of top management, transparency of benefits, and the alignment with organizational values such as ownership, empowerment, collaboration, and respect'. The authors also highlight proactiveness of the responsible parties when it comes to creation of coaching culture, engagement and promotion of one within the organization.

It is worth pointing out a few aspects to consider when it comes to the development of a coaching culture model.

First, **managerial coaching** turns out to be quite a demanded element of coaching practices that are currently being used. This model of coaching has been recognized as a driver for shaping employee attitude and behavior, thus positively influencing collective organizational success (Kim, 2013). The concept itself describes the case when a manager becomes a coach towards his/her employees. One more worth-mentioning theoretical contribution was made by Zhao & Liu (2020) who introduced a new perspective of the relationship between managerial coaching and workplace well-being, namely self-categorization. Overall, this approach has proved to be well-suited especially for the companies with no strict hierarchy, which characterize modern approaches towards corporate environment structure nowadays (Leikomaa, 2016). Apart from that, managerial coaching has a proven impact on numerous corporate factors, such as work fatigue, job satisfaction, personal accomplishment, role overload (She et. al., 2019). Indeed, when it comes to managerial coaching, it is essential to highlight that, while traditional coaching would have a stronger focus on coach controlling

the employee, managerial coaching stands for commitment and nurturing an environment that would encourage employees to reach their fullest capacity (Bommelje, 2015). Some research also indicates coaching as a management tool has a positive connection with individual and unit-level performance, while leadership-member exchange relationships have a strong connection with work engagement (Tanskanen et. al, 2018).

Another aspect that can have an impact on the way coaching culture is shaped is the **agility of an organization**. Agile management generally would relate to diverse work tasks, informal corporate culture, personal conversation, self-problem solving/conflict resolution in a team, performance evaluation according to work results, and focus on results.

Among the agile organization characteristics, it is worth mentioning the following: informal corporate culture and communication, flexible organizational structures, dynamic environment, frequent changes, focus on people and results (not processes), international overlap (work in geographically dispersed teams), self-organized teams, evaluation according to the results / outcomes of team performance, common goals, teamwork, responsibility for results (Revutska & Maršíková, 2021). The authors also point out agile management encourages quite a few changes which go hand in hand with coaching principles: collaboration, facilitation, innovation, responsibility and initiating change in communication with employees, their development and job satisfaction. Such benefits have also been found with respect to IT teams to which the case company of the given research relates to flexible IT project management improves financial outcomes indicators, as well as the company management indicators generally (Orlov et. al, 2021).

Agility within an organization may have another connection to coaching practices through **leadership concepts**. Leadership in a corporate environment requires certain things from the personnel management, such as flexibility, empathy and an opportunity for the leaders to be addressing individual matters of employees, inspiring and motivating them etc. which can be achieved through agile leadership practices (Fielitz & Hug, 2019).

Agile leadership practices, in turn, have proven to drive significant outcomes of ongoing business processes. Spotify, for instance, used the practice of a Complexity leadership theory (CLT) which is about 'balancing formal and informal organization to leverage dynamics of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) and produce learning, creativity, and

adaptation in organizations' (Bäcklander, 2019). The research has proven such practice to nurture leadership, context-sensitivity of others, mutual support, growth facilitation and encouragement, shaping organizational principles, conflict management competencies. Such a system was integrated into the company processes through coaching practices, which, in that context, appeared to be a great tool to achieve a balanced duo of autonomy and alignment within a company.

Scheepers (2013) also points out perceiving coaching as solely a personal development may lead to the lack of an alignment of personal intentions with the business strategy in case corporate environment is the context. Thus, a balanced personal and organizational focus is key, which then connects the coaching process with the leadership aspect, thus introducing the leadership coaching concept. Coach-like leadership has been first introduced by Karacivi & Demirel (2014) as a unit of leadership style and emotional intelligence. The latter (EQ) stands for five basic skills identified by Goleman (1998): self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social skills and empathy. Vesso & Alas (2016) have identified several coaching culture characteristics in leadership style, which are presented below.
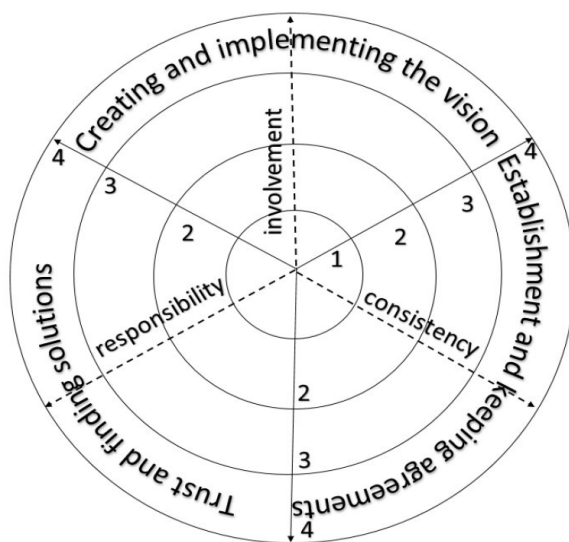

Figure 3. Coaching Culture Characteristics in Leadership Style (Vesso & Alas, 2016).

Plessis et. al (2015) has also conducted a research with the conclusion stating that such thing as servant leadership - the way of managing people aiming to gain authority, not power, and facilitate the growth and development of the followers so that they can become

servant leaders themselves - requires coaching and mentoring practices to build trust with the employees, along with an efficient amount of time and emotional intelligence training.

One more aspect worth addressing would stand for another widely-known and common practice, which is **virtual team management**.

When it comes to the actual task management, Orlov et. al (2021) mentions coaching or mentoring practices would quite help to implement the relevant roles within the project teams and, thus, support the functioning principles of flexible teams.

Moe et. al. (2015) claimed that, while agile practices help with communication and collaboration of teams, certain challenges are still present (language barriers, lack of offline interaction, trust issues etc.). Coaching activities for virtual agile teams can enable team leads and members to achieve the abilities to: coordinate work by mutual adjustment and strengthen motivation, share knowledge and develop expertise, learn to self-improve. That would encourage shared leadership and decision-making, mutual adjustment, regular feedback, social software & camera-on meetings, continuous learning, knowledge sharing and team building activities, hence nurturing self-managed and highly motivated teams.

Thus, coaching is an effective tool of improving efficiency of an employee and promoting him in the career ladder. Coaching process plays an important role in acquiring new knowledge by employees while performing their immediate responsibilities in the workplace. At the same time coaching helps an employee to develop not only professional but also personal qualities, and therefore improve them and reach new career heights (Askhatova et. al, 2015).

Apart from that, coaching culture as a concept appears to be one of the most recent developments of coaching ideas generally. That explains why there are numerous ways to describe it and perspectives to be taken when it comes to the actual shaping of the concept as a model. Indeed, the most important thing to assess regarding a coaching culture model is the functionality end users would like to have. Generally, functionality of a coaching model, according to Lennard (2010), is the following:

- Shapes the framework for coaching-related ideas;
- Highlights core aspects of coaching as a process;

- Determines the logic of coming up with decisions and actions;
- Provides a basis for continuous learning for the coaches (in the case of the given thesis, actual team leads managing coaching practices).

Therefore, the coaching culture framework used in the given thesis will not be reflecting any of the existing models fully, but be rather customized based on the case company needs and environment from the beginning. The next chapter introduces the first draft of the framework itself.

2.5 Coaching outcomes

Before proceeding with the research, it is essential to address the outcomes the researcher is driven to achieve. Based on the characteristics described above, empowered employees stand for the main outcomes of coaching practices implementation. By that coaching-practices outcomes should lead to the following abilities of an individual:

- Finding new perspectives;
- Brainstorming opportunities and challenges;
- Coming up with new solutions;
- Being determined and resourceful to overcome obstacles and take action.

As for the coaching culture, the desired outcomes would be the following:

- Improved awareness of own potential: clarity on the meaning & purpose of the role;
- Improved awareness of own goals: clarity on professional development;
- Deepened work relationships: established trust, commitment, empathy, support, continuous feedback;
- Full utilization of own skills: maximized potential to achieve 'meet expectations' or 'above expectations' performance levels.

One more outcome coaching culture framework will aim for would be improved engagement rate: overall engagement rate, as well as improved metrics on engagement drivers' satisfaction. Engagement on its own proved to be quite interrelated to coaching. When it comes to the corporate environment, it is quite accurately defined as 'the antipode to burnout' (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2006). Indeed, sufficient engagement leads directly to

energetic and effective connection with work-related activities. Moreover, engaged employees prove to see themselves able to overcome obstacles and handle the demands the workplace provides. Therefore, work engagement can be considered a self-sufficient and resourceful mindset that can be characterized through vigor, dedication, absorption (Schaufeli et. al., 2002). Hence, coaching-related practices are considered to have a direct impact on the engagement metrics.

Successful implementation of coaching practices seems to directly impact engagement metrics. Yet, within the given research paper it is not enough to consider high-level engagement metrics (such as engagement rate) only: since coaching refers to an improved utilization of each individual potential, it becomes necessary to address the actual drivers of engagement. In other words, pure high-level engagement rate metrics might not be sufficient to prove the success of coaching-related practices and define the further actions: it is also important to understand what shapes the overall engagement rate within a certain team and track the metrics on each of them. To sum up, defining the precise engagement drivers and improving them becomes one more goal of coaching-related practices implementation.

3 Coaching culture model development

3.1 First coaching culture model draft

Based on the analysis above, the following first draft of the coaching culture model has been developed for the given action research to test the concept within the case company in practice. It has been structured into several layers to get a better understanding of the overall idea.
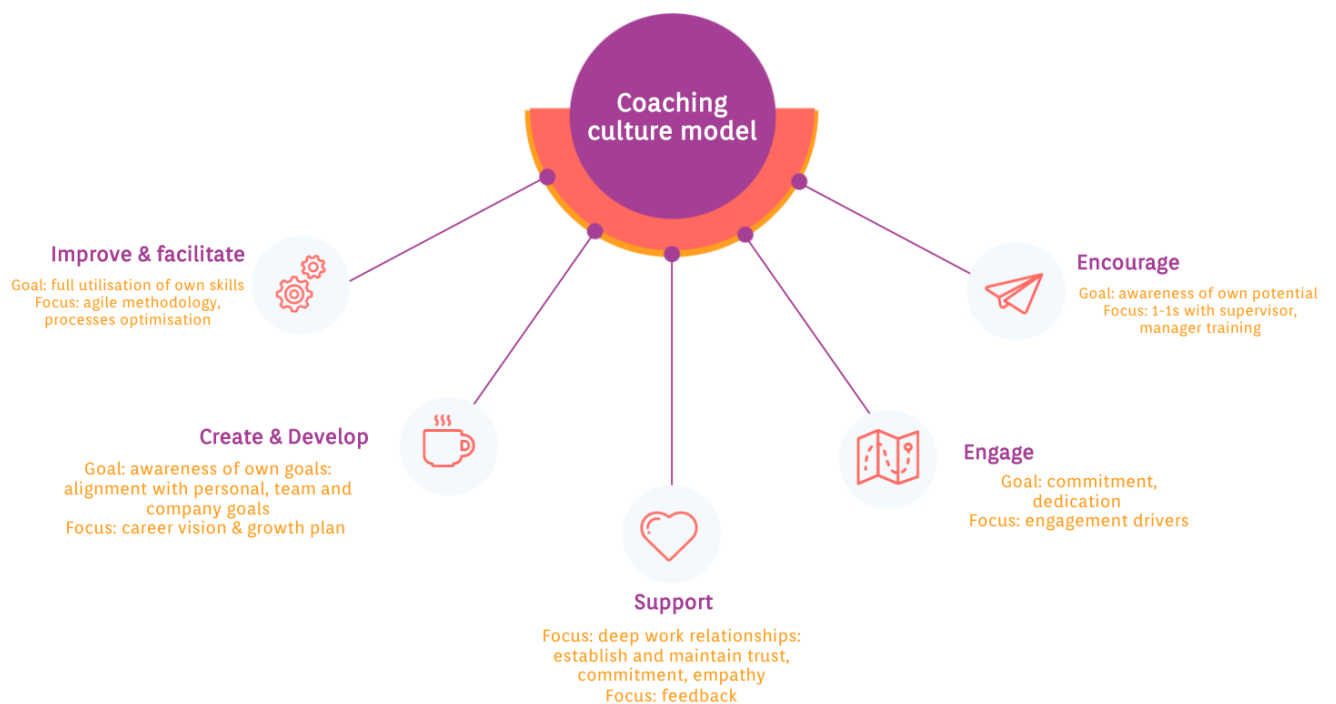
Figure 4. Initial draft of a coaching culture model.

As can be seen from a diagram, the model addresses five pillars in order to implement and nurture an entire cultural concept, not several specific practices.

Support. That stands for the activities and resources addressing employees on an individual level and refers to the coaching relationships (Hart, 2003): principles & values, behaviors. Principles would include the following:

- Rapport: stands for the ability to establish a human-human connection by sharing the feeling of trustworthiness, openness, respect, empathy and care for one another;

- Collaboration between the coach and coachee, in turn, refers to something that 'connects their minds' (Hart, 2003) and relates to the ability of both parties to share respect, acknowledge the differences in their views and opinions, have the common idea of exchanging ideas for the purpose of generating new solutions or knowledge;
- Commitment stands for the mutual pledge to overcome struggles and celebrate successes acting together.

The given element of a coaching culture model also addresses the ways employees would be interacting nurturing the coaching relationships. That involves the best communication practices in relation to verbal / non-verbal communication, active listening, conflict resolution and feedback practices. With respect to the current research, this element would refer to establishing and encouraging continuous feedback across teams.

Engage. In order to execute coaching behaviors, people must practice a mental frame of reference consisting of commitment to development and action. This is beneficial to both individuals and the organization in two ways. First, as people interact with each other from this perspective they motivate others to improve their behavior. Second, practicing this point of view facilitates people in motivating themselves to improve their own behavior. (Hart, 2003). In the given paper, the engagement part would address some of the following factors defined as drivers, which will be used as the main managerial tool within the empirical part of the given research (15Five, 2022). The survey would define the extent to which the following drivers are present and influential within the case company team:
- *Meaning* - employees have a sense of purpose at work and see the value they bring;
- *Role clarity* - employees are certain on what their job responsibilities are, how they are connected and how they impact the business;
- *Utilization* - employees' skills and competencies are properly (efficiently) used by the company;
- *Capacity* - employees have enough resources (physical, mental, emotional, information etc.) to accomplish their work;
- *Autonomy* - employees being able to make decisions on how to do their job on their own. They are not micromanaged;
- *Coworker relationships* - mutual respect and trust employees have with one another;
- *Fairness* - employees feel and recognise they are treated fairly within the company;

- *Feedback* - employees are aware of their strong sides and areas of growth;
- *Goal support* - employees are given all the resources to excel at their job and achieve their goals;
- *Leader availability* - leaders are approachable and available for their employees and the team generally;
- *Leader integrity* - leaders are committed to act with the best of intentions for the company and stay consistent with that;
- *Professional development* - there are opportunities for growth for the employees within the company;
- *Psychological safety* - employees are not concerned about any negative consequences to their career or professional image and feel safe to contribute to business;
- *Purpose* - employees have a clear vision of where the business is headed to;
- *Relationship with manager* - employees have got respect, feedback, fairness, development and advocacy as the main characteristics of their relationships with the managers;
- *Rest* - employees are not only given enough time to have a rest, but also feel they can take one when they need it;
- *Shared values* - employees share common values, attitudes and principles within the company.

Encourage. The given element aims to make the person aware of own potential, realize own strong sides, areas of growth and, more importantly, capabilities. The core activity related to this element would be meaningful 1-1s between the employee and manager, including: talking points (sharing updates), reflection on the projects and tasks' statuses, setting goals before the next meeting, action items. Apart from the regular structure, this element of the coaching culture emphasizes: open questions (to encourage employee's thinking), solution-driven conversations instead of addressing the problems only, encouragement (message 'I believe you can do it, you become the owner of this task' from the manager to the employee).

Improve & facilitate. That would refer to the way teams are managed and the extent to which employees' potential is used. Key focus areas within this element would be:

- Applying agile methodology for project management activities. That would allow teams to stay flexible and adjust to the changing business needs, own resources and capacity etc. Moreover, it will allow them to achieve more results in the end instead of sticking to one goal from the beginning of the project;
- Establishing 'Loosely coupled' teams: teams within and across which every member is self-managed, autonomous, yet interconnected with others. That would ensure each individual gets enough responsibility and freedom to make decisions, innovate and find original solutions to the problems, thus boosting their own potential, instead of following the strict guidelines;
- Processes' optimization. This part refers to the intention of each team to find smart ways of handling tasks: seek ways to automate, facilitate, delegate processes. Such practice would allow people to focus on innovation and key decisions, goals and processes shaping, rather than focusing on hands-on administrative work.

Create & Develop. That refers to enabling employees to realize and establish their own goals within the company. The key focus areas within this pillar would be:

- Ensuring personal & team & company OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) alignment;
- Initiating Performance management practices through implementing activities on career vision and growth plan for the employees.

This way, the proposed model will help to achieve a few goals boosting people's potential: shaping a framework for ideas (*create and develop*), highlight the key concepts of coaching interaction (*support*), nurture a coaching-centric approach (*encourage*), ensure implementation of the culture across levels and teams (*engage*) and continuous learning of team leads (*improve and facilitate*). Apart from that, the suggested practices are to encourage feedback, human touch, thus nurturing a coaching-friendly environment.

One might argue that not every single process is related entirely to coaching. The reason why all the aspects are proposed as parts of the overall model is that any kind of culture should be maintained and communicated through numerous processes and levels of the organization to reflect breadth as one of the characteristics of a culture: 'A third characteristic of culture is that once it has developed, it covers all of a group's functioning'

(Schein, 2004). Therefore, implementing just one practice (such as, for example, coaching of the employees on a regular basis) will not nurture an entire coaching culture across teams.

3.2 Coaching culture model implementation

In order to reach the maximum potential of the proposed coaching culture model, it is important to plan the way it will be implemented well in advance. For that reason, the process of implementing the first version of a coaching culture model is described below. In order to shape the process efficiently, change management models were used as references. The implementation model below is built loosely by following the principles of Kurt Lewin's change management model (Lewin, 1947). The model states that, first, the need for change should become explicit, which is then to be followed by the transformation practices towards the desired behavior and being finalized with ensuring the new behavior becomes a common practice, or a habit. Thus, making the current needs actionable insights towards change was considered one of the first steps. Moreover, the significance of leadership, employee involvement and knowledge sharing is addressed throughout the process as aspects playing the dominant role within the model (Hussain et. al., 2016).

Apart from that, other models were taken into consideration (Sheikh Hamdo, 2021). For example, the principle stating that change should be communicated in a way that people are clear on the expected results to be achieved through that change, thus, presumably, being more motivated to go with the process (Hiatt & Creasy, 2012). Prior to any action, it was ensured the implementation model process would include preparation, guidance and support aspects towards employees, therefore, following the guidelines of Burke's change management approach (2017). Moreover, the implementation process below is positioned as a systematic, multifaceted process being delivered through a structured coordination with the stakeholders (managers and employees), thus following principles of the model by Dalcher (2019).

Step 1. Formalizing coaching culture model

Goal: to structure the essence of a coaching culture model and evaluate how mature the company is towards such practices. As the outcome, the first draft of the coaching culture model has been presented above in detail.

Step 2. Define the current state with relation to the coaching culture elements

Goal: to define the current way teams are being managed and whether applying any practices from the model would be beneficial at this stage.

That is to be achieved by the following actions:

- **In-depth interviews with the managers and employees**

Before any significant or long-term changes are to be made within business, even if the purpose and benefits are clear, it is crucial to assess whether the timing is right for such changes and the business is ready to welcome them (Turtio, 2017; McComb, 2012). The in-depth interview is conducted with the team managers presenting the coaching culture model drafted and gathering feedback on which practices, from the managers' perspectives, have already been in use.

The interviews are to be held among team leads, as well as employees who would later become the participants of the research and, thus, coaching culture practices implementation. The interviews outcomes would shed light on whether the company anyhow has a coaching-friendly environment already and, if some of the elements from the model draft are present, to what extent these are developed by now.

- **360-degree survey company-wide**

The survey would help to identify the current state company-wide from the following perspectives: individual's strong sides, areas of growth, goals, competencies, values match. That would be done through several angles: self-reflection, peer review, upward review (employees evaluating managers) and manager review. Apart from that, engagement survey will be added in order to check this element of the initially proposed coaching culture.

Step 3. Development and implementation of an action plan for coaching-culture-related practices.

Goals: 1) to draft the implementation strategy for the particular team defining the priority and timing according to which coaching practices will be implemented; 2) to agree on the proposed action plan for each team, coordinate the process of coaching culture

implementation and provide team leads and other stakeholders with all the needed resources to run the implementation successfully.

Step 4. Define the company-wide state with relation to the coaching culture model elements

Goal: gather feedback on implemented coaching culture model outcomes and its influence on the team performance, if any.

Action plan:

1) Run through 360-degrees survey once again company-wide;
2) Assess the level to which coaching has become a part of the ongoing processes. For that purpose, the stages formulated by Megginson & Clutterback (2016) are used. These are presented below:
   - Nascent - at that stage, no coaching culture is created, while the organization can support occasional coaching practices;
   - Tactical - the company has already recognised the significance of a coaching culture. Yet, there is little understanding of how such a concept can be integrated into the company life and is mostly perceived as part of HR department responsibility only;
   - Strategic - this stage reveals a significant effort towards company representatives to gain coaching competencies and become familiar with the concept. Managers are being encouraged to use coaching practices at all times. However, even though, technically speaking, coaching is formally recognized as a company practice, in reality there are minor flaws in the way it is being applied, so the organization clearly sees more ways to integrate the approach;
   - Embedded - both formal and informal coaching are considered a permanent part of the business processes, people across different teams and levels are engaged with it.
3) Get an overall perception of the coaching culture model with respect to positive and negative outcomes, should be done differently etc.

Step 5. Coaching culture model iteration

Goal: based on the feedback, to customize the overall coaching culture model or certain practices of it to boost its potential overall. The iteration of the presented coaching culture model will become the final outcome of the given research.

4 Research method

4.1. Qualitative research methodologies

Research design stands for a set of multi-layered aspects and decisions (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). Therefore, it is crucial to pay close attention towards the way it is defined. The given paper uses a cascade approach by first exploring the philosophical foundation of the thesis.

The chosen format of the thesis is an integration of design science and action research, as it fits the author's needs to develop a qualitatively new design. According to Goldkuhl (2013), design science is quite similar to action research: they both are focused on problem-solving research and an actual development of a knowledge or concept.

Table 3. Comparison between action research and design research (Goldkuhl, 2013).

Action Research	Design Research
Diagnosis	Diagnosis
Action planning	Proposing
Technical preparation	Demonstration
	Construction
Practice rearranging	
Evaluation	Evaluation

The core difference between approaches is that design science research is focused on developing a new concept and its performance, thus studying artifacts within the given context, while action research is about actual intervention in a social context in order to simultaneously develop knowledge and learn from it. Since the main purpose of the given study is to develop a concept, see that in action and improve accordingly to the certain context, integrating both formats appear to be a viable option. Thus, the thesis focuses on

action design research that is to 'generate prescriptive design knowledge through learning from the intervention of building and evaluating an artifact in an organizational setting to address a problem' (Petersson & Lundberg, 2016).

4.1.1 Data collection methods

The given research is about using both qualitative and quantitative data to develop sufficient conclusions. Qualitative data is about to be gathered through interviews before and after the coaching culture model implementation, while quantitative data - through company-wide surveys.

4.1.2 Research process

The diagram below represents the research process visually. As can be seen, it starts with the preparation phase, followed by theoretical and empirical parts being developed partly at the same time and, thus, complimenting one another. The process is wrapped up by the discussion and findings section.

The textual data is to be analyzed using an interpretative approach. This way, the information gathered is considered subjective (unlike from the perspective of linguistic or positivist approaches) and qualitative.

The circularity of the data gathering and analysis is crucial to mention, since each qualitative research design applies a circular, not linear model, meaning the researcher is able to go back and forth along the research process and, thus, be flexible about the start and end of it (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016).

However, in the interpretative approach, the text is considered subjective, the role of the researcher is that of an insider, and the research method focuses on the cultural influences of the text.
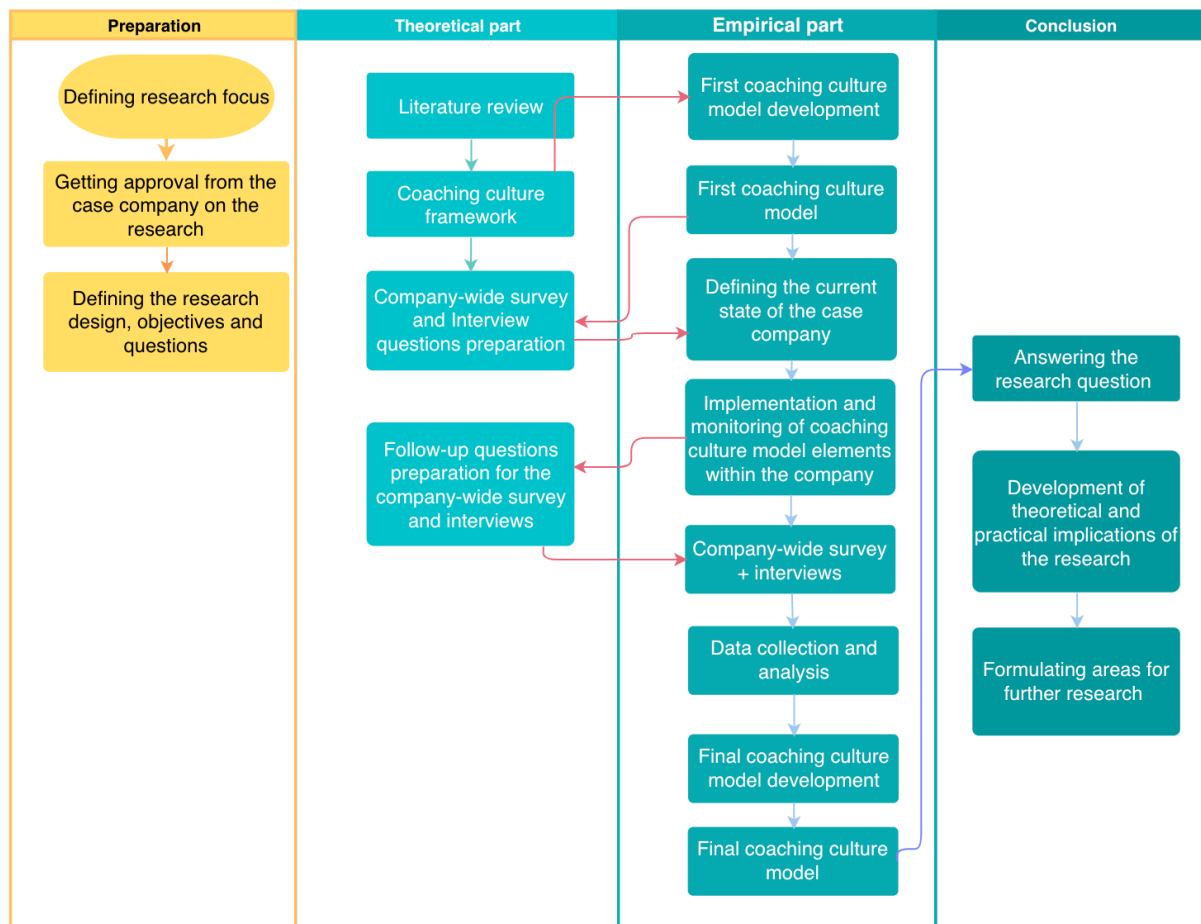
Figure 5. The research process.

According to the research process plan, the thesis is leading the reader through both theoretical and empirical parts.

The first one has been discussed in the previous sections of the thesis and represents the theoretical framework of the thesis. It involves the literature review and questions for the data collection stage (surveys and interviews). It is entwined with the empirical part of the thesis, as can be clearly seen from the flowchart above.

The empirical research is a broader part of the paper, including the certain steps:

1. Initial coaching culture model development;
2. Conducting initial interviews and surveys;
3. Implementing coaching culture model by introducing certain practices customized for the team;
4. Conducting follow-up interviews and surveys after 3 months of coaching-related practices being in place. Survey will address one coaching culture model aspect in

particular in more detail - engagement - evaluating the development on the engagement drivers defined in the initial Engagement survey;

5. Analyzing the follow-up data comparing it to the initial one (step 2);
6. Shaping the final coaching model version.

The empirical part of the research, thus, will introduce three kinds of logic: developmental, descriptive and outcomes ones. **Developmental logic** would address the overall process of development and implementation of the coaching culture model. That will be done via in-depth interviews before (chapter 4.3.1) and after (chapter 5.1) the coaching culture model was implemented. These, along with qualitative survey questions (chapters 4.3.2, 5.2, 5.3), help realize and describe the process the way it went within the case company, thus representing the **descriptive logic** to the data usage.

Outcomes logic refers to evaluating the metrics of the desired coaching culture implementation outcomes (chapter 2.5). That is to be achieved via quantitative surveys questions before (chapter 4.3.2) and after (chapter 5.3) the coaching culture model was implemented, as well as in-depth interviews (chapters 4.3.1, 5.1, 5.2) to go deeper into experiences of employees and define their insights on the impact the presented type of culture has on the team engagement.

The outcomes logic, along with the descriptive one, also follows the weak market test principle described by Kasanen et. al (1993), which evaluates the extent to which managers are willing to get new practices adopted within the team. Questions on that are integrated in the in-depth interviews. The given research does not address the other two types of tests due to the nature of the given paper: it does not analyze neither the extent to which other companies succeeded in adopting the new constructs (semi-strong market test), nor the difference between the results received by the companies which adopt the constructs compared to those which do not (strong market test). Yet, the logic follows the weak market test only to a certain extent: the ultimate goal of using engagement drivers, for instance, is to track whether the engagement itself has gone through any improvements over the given research, which goes beyond the aforementioned principles. It is also important to note no big changes are expected to be seen over the course of the research due to the timing factor: the timeframe has been quite short for any significant changes to appear.

It is also important to mention that, as the trial period is very short, one cannot expect big changes to be found. The outcomes and descriptive kinds of logic contribute to the developmental one, since tracking the whole process will help to get insightful information that will be further used for improvement of the coaching culture model.

All the aforementioned aspects can be summarized under 'Engagement' as the main concept that coaching culture should contribute to. Therefore, that would become the main aspect which will be addressed throughout coaching culture model implementation. The scope of datasets is summarized below.

Table 4. Coaching culture model datasets used.

Dataset	Reference	Meaning (developmental purposes in planning the intervention and the purposes related to the verification of the outcomes)	Logic type
Initial stage (before the coaching culture model implementation)			
Initial interview	Appendix 4	Developmental purpose - checking: - Which coaching-like / team engagement practices are already in place and at what extent; - Which practices the team lead wants to try first based on the needs; - Whether teams are giving approval and consent with coaching culture model implementation.	Developmental
360-degree survey	Appendix 2	Developmental purpose - check the team engagement overall.	Developmental
Engagement survey	Appendix 3	1) Checking the initial team engagement metrics to verify the desired outcomes in the final stage. 2) Define the engagement drivers	Outcomes

		(most influential antecedents of engagement within the team) in order to focus on the in the follow-up survey.	

Follow-up stage (after the coaching culture model implementation)

Follow-up in-depth interview	Appendix 7	Define the way the process of coaching culture model implementation was managed by the team leads.	Developmental
Follow-up survey	Appendix 6	Checking engagement metrics below to compare with the initial stage for verification of the desired outcomes. The drivers defined during the initial Engagement survey are presented below.	Outcomes
	Meaning	A measure of the work experience and organizational culture. The organization helps employees have a sense of value (purpose, money, status, and influence) when they immerse themselves in their roles.	
	Professional development	A measure of the work experience and organizational culture. The organization promotes and encourages employees' professional development.	
	Utilization	A measure of the work experience and organizational culture. The organization effectively uses employees' abilities and skills in their roles.	
	Coworker relationships	A measure of an employee's relationship with their coworkers. There is coworker cohesion and amicable interactions leading to positive relationships at the organization.	

	Goal support	A measure of organizational culture. The organization makes efforts to remove structural barriers that prevent an employee from achieving their goals.	
	Leader integrity	A measure of the organization's leadership. The perception of leaders based on their commitment to do what is best for employees and the company and their ability to follow through on that commitment.	
	Role clarity	A measure of the work experience and organizational culture. The organization connects employees' daily work tasks to the purpose of the business and provides clarity about what that work is.	
	Feedback	A measure of an employee's direct manager. Employees feel that they receive adequate and helpful feedback from their manager.	
	Purpose	A measure of the work experience and organizational culture. The organization communicates to employees why it exists beyond making a profit.	
	Capacity	A measure of the work experience and organizational culture. The organization enables employees to feel they possess the emotional and psychological resources necessary for investing themselves in their roles.	
	Autonomy	A measure of the work experience and organizational culture. The organization trusts employees to use their expertise to make decisions	

		about how to do their jobs.	

The researcher uses the aforementioned types of logic for the following reasons:

- Having only one small-sized case company does not provide an objectively valid statistical data, thus making the research rely only on the outcomes-related metrics will be a significant drawback of the research;
- Relying only on the way the coaching culture was shaped and incorporated (developmental logic) does not clearly show whether any desired outcomes (chapter 2.5) were achieved and, therefore, whether the whole process is a practice worth being applied;
- It was important for the research purposes to reflect on whether the initial model was relevant to the case company and track the way new practices were defined and integrated to the company operations, thus representing the descriptive logic.

Thus, taking a look at the research from all three perspectives will bring more clarity not only on the way the coaching culture model is to be implemented, but also what impact it actually has on the internal processes of the business. In other words, to assess performance-related data to see whether there are subjective points of view supporting the model (the weak market test on the basis from team leads' perspective) or objective empirical results (engagement surveys) that support the relevancy of the model. None of aforementioned obstacles were possible to overcome by getting in touch with more companies or extending the time frame to monitor the impact the coaching culture practices have due to the time limits for the author to finalize the research. That part of the research is later followed by the final coaching culture model iteration.

The paper is then finalized with the final discussion of the research outcomes, development of answers to research questions, implications of the research and potential further areas of it. The researcher has been solely responsible for the whole process, yet has spent sufficient time in close contact with the employees to be able to get a full understanding of the internal culture and gather their insights on current and potential needs that can be satisfied through the coaching culture model. Those have been the team managers (Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operations Officer, Head of Engineering) and employees (2 People

Team assistants). Such a choice has been made to ensure diverse and cross-teams, as well as cross-level feedback.

The new coaching culture model is also developed by the researcher. The aforementioned company representatives' feedback was used to ensure the usefulness and relevance of the new version to the current company needs.

4.2 Case company introduction

The company name is Cloudvisor. It is an IT company which has been registered in Lithuania back in 2018. By being an AWS (Amazon Web Services) partner, the mission of the company is to empower start-ups across Baltics and Nordics to scale, meaning helping them to efficiently run AWS resources. The main purpose of the business is being an intermediary between the AWS representatives and the end-users by providing either information on the billing etc., consultation on which AWS services would be the optimal solution for the certain business needs and engineering help with any technical issues or complex requests (such as migration from the on-premises servers to cloud etc.).

Cloudvisor is a fully remote company, meaning the team is 100% virtual. In addition to that, the team is an international one, working from different countries and sharing different cultural backgrounds. By being a start-up, Cloudvisor supports agile methods of work which are supported by the existing company values:

- Do things fast - the company values the results. That is why each role in the team has flexible working hours - it does not matter how much you spend on a task or when you start. The results delivered on time matter the most.

- Experiment and learn - Cloudvisor is about trying things and innovating based on the outcomes. Thus, the company is tolerant to failure, because every outcome is considered an experience, not a definite success or mistake.

- Establish friendship - a lot of attention is paid towards the company being a true united team. Therefore, Cloudvisor supports small talks, informal communication, team building events and gatherings, both online and offline.

The company has been chosen for the given thesis research due to a high level of internal processes' awareness by the researcher and an overall willingness to initiate new things coming from the top management. The company is, therefore, the only organization used for the given research. Such a choice has been made to ensure individual approach and customized coaching culture model founded on one-source data. There has been no funding from the case company dedicated to the research, which makes it free of conflicts of interest.

The coaching culture model idea was discussed with the case company prior to conducting the whole research and considered as an additional tool towards the already existing managerial practices the team has in place. These are clarified and discussed further within the in-depth interviews (chapter 4.3.1).

4.3 Action research process

The empirical study, as described before (chapter 4.1.) will be conducted by managing the process of developing and implementing the coaching culture model together with the team managers as the end users, as well as monitoring the outcomes such process leads to. Data will be generated based on the process description, interviews of team leads and survey results across teams.

4.3.1 In-depth interviews

Introduction

Interview questions at the initial stage of the action research (Appendix 4) were formulated the way which will ensure getting clarity on the following aspects:

- Which of the aforementioned practices have already been used and at what extent;
- Which practices the team lead wants to try first;
- Whether teams are giving approval and consent with coaching culture model implementation.

The interviews have been conducted with the Chief Operating Officer (COO; supervising teams of 6 people in total), CEO (managing 4 chief officers of the company), People Team

Assistant, Head of Engineering (managing 7 people), based on which the following stages were defined as a part of the coaching culture implementation.

The results of the interviews were shared with the whole team along with the results of the company-wide survey via a virtual page in Notion (Appendix 5).

Table 5. Outcomes of the first interviews.

Title	Chief Operating Officer (COO)	Head of Engineering	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	People Team Assistant
Team	Marketing, People, Operations, Finance	Engineering	Leadership	People
How is the team management organised now?	Agile (SCRUM) project management 1-1s Self-managed teams OKRs (Objectives and Key results) alignment	Agile (SCRUM) project management 1-1s Self-managed teams	1-1s bi-weekly Strategic sessions monthly / quarterly (depending on the team)	Weekly tasks 1-1s each week, mentoring sessions
What are the current gaps proposed coaching culture model can help with?	Communication insufficiency Lack of role clarity	Lack of leadership positions	No clear gaps	Lack of clarity on the role evolvement
How can that be done?	Performance management process	Pushing leadership practices throughout hiring and onboarding process	Overall development of People & Culture initiatives	Agile (SCRUM) approach, Performance management process
Is there anything else the team would require as an addition to the proposed model?	No	No	No	No

Being a start-up, the company does not have a strict frame of processes, long-term strategy or any other corporate-like characteristics, which usually make it challenging to implement

any significant changes such as shifting the company focus towards people-oriented practices. The case company, on the opposite, is quite people-centric already: having a relatively small number of people (31), people-oriented company values and a strong focus on human-to-human (not formal) interaction positively influence the maturity of the company towards coaching related-practices. As can be seen from the information provided by the interviewees above, many practices that can boost people's potential are already in use.

First of all, agile practices have been introduced to some of the teams just before the current research was initiated. Thus, such an approach is still a new thing to the case company, yet it has proven to bring improvements into the way the team works.

In a nutshell, agile approach stands for unpredictability and relying on people and their ideas instead of following a universal instruction. It is different from the other ways of project management from several perspectives.

Table 6. Traditional and agile perspectives on software development (Dybå & Dingsøyr; 2009).

Factor	Agile approach	Traditional approach
Goal	Flexible	Clear and final
Key factors	Iterative process	Linear process
Task management	Sprints: short repeatable phases each resulting in draft, prototype or other solution	Top-down instruction, regular follow ups
Team management key	Collaboration	Authority, regular one-way reporting
Manager role	To facilitate	To control
Communication	Regular feedback through retrospective sessions	Regular reporting, roles in decision-making are different

It is confirmed by the research that agile approach towards project management turns out to be quite an optimal solution for IT remote teams (Tselikovska, 2013), small organizations.

It is applied slightly differently across teams, yet the main structure is the same. For instance, the way it works across teams:

Marketing team:

- Each quarter KPIs are shared at the beginning of the quarter. That keeps the whole team aligned with the desired outcomes.
- Each Tuesday the team runs through the sprint review and planning session. The employees evaluate the outcomes of the previous week and set a new direction based on that. By Friday, each employee shares the outcomes of his/her week to the manager to be analyzed on Monday to get ready for the sprint review and planning session. The planning part is done via working on the Kanban board, setting and updating the tasks reflecting such detail as the goals, stakeholders etc.
- 1-1s are held with the employees every 2-3 weeks. The focus is on showing support, sharing feedback and maintaining human interaction with the employees. Daily stand-ups are also present to evaluate the results in real-time and be more flexible with adjusting the work based on that knowledge.

People team:

- A pure coaching style is applied prior to getting engaged with the current research. Monday would be spent on establishing the focus areas for the week and delegating them accordingly to all the employees. Mid-week would be for 1-1 calls with the employees to ensure they are given enough support and resources to be proceeding with the tasks. On Friday the team would meet again to evaluate the outcomes of the week, thus taking enough time to generate ideas for the focus areas next week. Apart from that, employees would have a coaching session bi-weekly in order to reflect on their own performance and get new perspectives on how tasks can be approached. The topics of the coaching would be defined by the employees themselves and could be related to either particular task management or personal skills and competencies.

Engineering team:

- The team has a strong focus on agile methodology. Apart from the daily stand-ups, the team has sprint retrospective sessions closer to the end of the week, based on which the new sprint planning is done collaboratively with the whole team. In the meantime, each employee has a 1-1 session with the manager scheduled weekly. Therefore, this team appears to have the biggest amount of time across other presented teams to be spent on agile-methodology-based communication.

Interviews outcomes analysis

The interviews outcomes made it possible to identify the way the coaching culture can be aligned with the given corporate environment:

1) It highlights the main values the company has, encouraging outcome-driven approach ('Do things fast'), empathetic personality-oriented listening ('Establish friendship') and shaping a framework for ideas ('Experiment and learn');
2) It resonates with the overall way team is managed now: lack of micromanagement, open-mindedness etc.;
3) It addresses the main gaps / areas of growth of the company: pushing performance management practices, bringing clarity towards communication, company culture and own current states (role clarity) and development (OKRs).

Based on the outcomes of the interviews, several suggestions were made to boost coaching culture model implementation across teams. The whole concept has been called a performance management initiative and was presented for the company with that name.

Goals:

- To maintain motivation within teams for further growth —> retain talents at Cloudvisor;
- To boost professional & personal potential of employees —> improve job performance outcomes;
- To align personal & professional goals of an individual with company OKRs —> make employee experience meaningful and clear.

All the aforementioned goals reflect the coaching culture model approach and its core purpose. Moreover, the company was considering to start work in the direction of employee experience and the ways to improve it, which made the given thesis topic and timing optimal for the new initiative of that sort: instead of applying certain practices coaching-related across 1-2 teams, it has been decided to run the overall performance management direction company-wide to ensure the actual deep changes within the team. Thus, based on the interview outcomes, it has been decided to proceed with the research the following way:

1) Conduct a 360-degree company-wide to define the current state of team management within the organization from the perspective of coaching culture model implementation.

2) Proceed with the certain initiatives on a company level as priorities for the given quarter, customizing them for different teams to maximize efficiency: check-ins, 1-on-1 calls between managers and employees, enable mentoring sessions, develop communication guidelines focused on coaching culture principles.

3) Monitor the previous step and gather feedback after 3 months through conducting the 360-degree survey or interviews once again.

4) Provide the outcomes and modify the further course of action for maintaining the coaching culture model within the organization if needed.

All the aforementioned steps were developed through the prism of the aspects crucial to consider when it comes to development of a coaching culture as a concept (Hart, 2003):

● Using a 'cascade' effect of developing both formal and informal internal coaches. For that, the company used the knowledge of one employee who is a certified ICI coach.

● Incorporate coaching behavior as a job performance competency and link it to systems of advancement and rewards - that was aimed to be done through performance management practices.

● Strategic thinking applied: planned activities, structured, long-term programs, instead of sporadic, reactive, informal and ad hoc events.

● Consider the psychological wellbeing of the team when enabling the change: learning cycles, steps for acceptance, steps to integrate change etc. (Jantunen,

2019). That is to be ensured through constant feedback and monitoring of the coaching culture model implementation process.

4.3.2 Initial company-wide survey

The surveys are conducted to serve the following purposes:

- To ensure transparency of the employees' wellbeing;
- To encourage feedback across and within teams;
- To facilitate personal & professional growth.

The first 360-degree survey has been scheduled for June, 2022 (27/06-07/07/2022) and planned to become an ongoing practice on a quarterly basis. That survey is to evaluate yourself, managers and peers. All the questions were developed by the researcher and given approval by the top management. The onboarding materials about the platform were prepared and shared with the team by the researcher prior to the survey (Appendix 1).

As an addition to that, **Engagement survey** (Appendix 3) also took place to ensure employees are asked about their wellbeing at the workplace from the perspectives of their own commitment, relationships with the managers and employees.

The team has been informed about both surveys a few days prior to the start. Both questionnaires were conducted simultaneously with the following schedule:

1. Full review cycle: 27/06/2022-11/07/2022;
2. Peers are nominated by 27/06/2022, peer nominations are approved by 01/07/2022;
3. Self-reviews are due by 04/07/2022;
4. Peer reviews are due by 05/07/2022;
5. Upward reviews are due by 05/07/2022;
6. Manager reviews are due by 06/07/2022.

employees are to be getting the following email notifications:

- When the review cycle launches;
- 7, 3, 1 days before any kind of review is due;

- If their review is overdue;
- When self-reviews are submitted (managers only);
- When review results are shared.

The team is also provided with videos navigating themselves across the platform prepared by the researcher. The results are also to be shared with the managers first, then with the whole team. Self-reviews are shared only with the person himself and his manager. The results of peer evaluations and upward review are shared, meaning that the managers will see all the answers verbatim. Yet, the peer's and employee's identities remain hidden, so the answers are anonymous.

Survey results

Survey results were analyzed together with the outcomes of the interviews (chapter 4.3.1) and introduced to the team via a virtual page in Notion (Appendix 5). These are briefly discussed below.

1. **Engagement Survey (Q3, 2022)**

The Engagement survey results in Q3, 2022 suggest the following:

1) The company is doing better engagement-wise than average (average organizational score - 73.41%, Cloudvisor score - 80.12%).

2) The main drivers for the company are: goal support, coworker relationships and autonomy. Drivers as a concept quantify the presence or absence of a workplace quality that impacts engagement.

3) The morale of the group is high and shaped mostly by such factors as meaning of the job, goal support and psychological safety.

4) There is a good relationship between employees and their manager, reflecting feedback, fairness, respect and development.

5) There is low risk for burnout among employees thanks to goal support, clarity and capacity (how we enable employees to feel they possess the emotional and psychological resources necessary for investing themselves in their roles)

6) A few drivers have been considered to be the most struggling ones, meaning that improvements to this area will likely have a greater impact on engagement:

   a) Meaning - the extent to which the organization helps employees have a sense of value (purpose, money, status, and influence) when they immerse themselves in their roles;

   b) Capacity - the organization enables employees to feel they possess the emotional and psychological resources necessary for investing themselves in their roles;

   c) Manager - the relationship between the employee and their manager that looks at respect, fairness, and development.

Out of 17 drivers presented in chapter 4.1.2 of the given paper, 11 of them were defined as the most influential: 1) meaning, 2) role clarity; 3) utilization; 4) goal support; 5) leader integrity; 6) feedback; 7) purpose; 8) professional development; 9) coworker relationships; 10) capacity; 11) autonomy. The choice was made based on the drivers' importance, emphasizing the extent to which employees would consider certain factors important on a scale (1 – 10) within the questionnaire.

2. 360-Degree Review (Q3, 2022)

360-degree review is a survey coordinated through 15Five platform to ensure 360-degree feedback on performance, motivation, competencies and other aspects of an employee. It is done by 4 stages: self-review, peer (when employees are evaluating each other), upward (when employee assesses own manager) and manager (manager assesses own employee).

Points scored
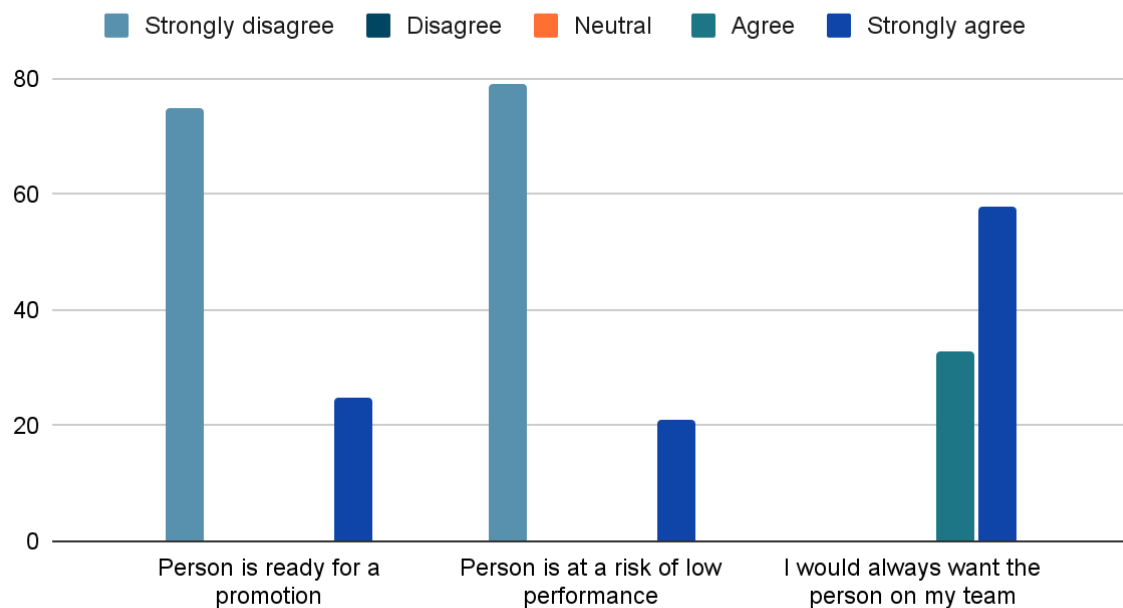
Figure 6. 360-degree review results.

The data above suggests the following:

- Half of the team is on the edge performance-wise: 25% (6 out of 25) are ready to be promoted higher, while 21% (5 out of 25) are at risk for low performance.

- 84% of people are exceeding the expectations set to their performance. Presumably thanks to that, it is shown that the employees would feel stressed if certain people would leave the team. That indicates mutual respect and connection within teams.

- Completed reviews' percentage is 93%, indicating a high level of team involvement.

As for the strong sides and areas of growth for the team:

Top competencies ⓘ	Top opportunities ⓘ
Commitment	Management
Open-mindedness, drive to learn and self-grow	Proactivity
Emotional Intelligence (EQ)	Innovative mindset, ability to seize opportunities
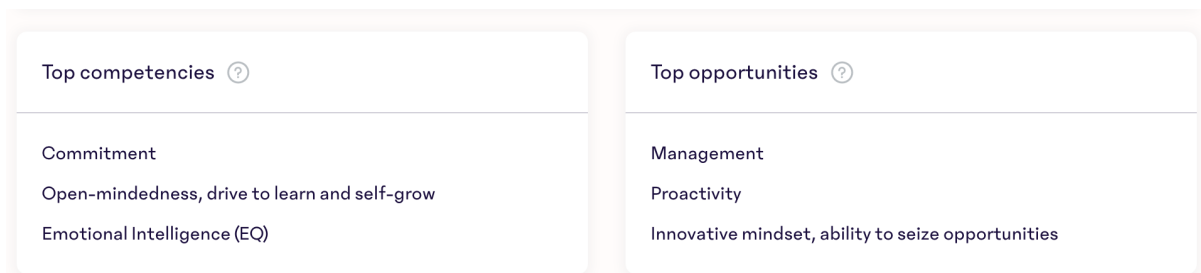
	Lowest ◄				► Highest
Collaboration	0%	12%	0%	46%	42%
Commitment	0%	4%	4%	27%	65%
Open-mindedness, drive to learn and self-grow	0%	0%	11%	41%	48%
Management	0%	0%	0%	80%	20%
Proactivity	0%	7%	4%	70%	19%
Responsibility & Reliability	0%	0%	15%	33%	52%
Decision making	0%	0%	4%	62%	33%
Emotional Intelligence (EQ)	0%	0%	4%	46%	50%
Innovative mindset, ability to seize opportunities	0%	0%	4%	58%	38%

Figure 7. Competency assessment.

- Employees are committed to what they do, open to something new and able to stay true teammates based on their own ability to show emotions, manage them and connect with others.

- Presumably due to the struggles mentioned earlier (aka lack of clarity and meaning of the role etc.), management, proactiveness and innovativeness are areas for improvement.

Along with the results earlier, the team received the following suggestions for immediate improvement:

1. **Responsibility**. We don't micromanage at Cloudvisor, we respect and believe in one another. That also means we trust and rely on each other, that is why it's a 50/50 responsibility between yourself and your manager to set the direction, shape the vision of your future results, suggest ideas etc. If you feel like we're missing something - it's up to you to bring that to the table, you'll be heard.

2. Get the **meaning**. If you cannot answer why you're doing a certain task, it's worth bringing the question up. As soon as there is no value from the activity, it's worth

asking whether you actually need that. Once you're clear on why you do things, you are more likely to figure out how to do them.

3. Encourage, nurture and be brave enough to initiate **feedback** between you and your manager / somebody in your team. It's worth maintaining a strong connection instead of making your calls a mere to-do-list discussion. One good point to start with would be suggesting your ideas for the **management** part. That refers to both the way your workload is managed by your manager and the way the workload is split within your team.

4. Don't be afraid. Things progress fast, yet you're always welcome to bring new ideas to the table and initiate changes because you feel it might be worth it. Don't be afraid to be **proactive**, take the floor and ask or suggest things - we want to see your full potential at all times!

The team was also informed that the surveys were just the first step of the performance management initiative (chapter 3.2), so that employees are ready for the next step of the action research plan (chapter 4). Apart from that, a new initiative was also discussed, which is scheduling quarterly meetings with employees individually in order to provide them the opportunity for talking more about how they are doing - a so-called wellbeing check-in. Beside the aforementioned initiative, the team stepped into the next stage - performance management initiative.

4.3.3 Coaching culture model initiatives

The coaching culture model implementation was decided to be considered a performance management initiative within the case company - that is how it was positioned within the team. Performance management process is related the following communication practices:

● A feedback process that is continuous and timely throughout the review period so that employees know how they are doing and what is expected.
● A dialogue that includes performance feedback measured against clear and specific goals and expectations established at the outset of the performance management cycle.

- A process for acknowledging the outcomes of the performance review process that is documented between the manager and the employee.
- A two-way individual conversation between the manager and the employee (preferably face-to-face) on a regular basis.

Goals:

- To maintain motivation within teams for further growth —> retain talents at Cloudvisor;
- To boost professional & personal potential of employees —> improve job performance outcomes;
- To align personal & professional goals of an individual with company OKRs —> make employee experience meaningful and clear.

That is to be done through the several activities communication-wise.

Step 1. Initiate check-ins and 1-1s with the manager (company-wide)

Check-ins. The aim of this activity is to gather constant feedback across teams on how people are doing and whether they need any help. That is done on a weekly basis and includes the following questions:

1) How did you feel at work this week?
2) What do you intend to accomplish before your next Check-in?
3) What went well this week?
4) What's your biggest challenge right now?
5) What is something that makes your day?

The manager is to review the check-ins regularly and provide feedback or bring certain topics up during the 1-1 calls with the employee whenever needed.

1-on-1s with the managers - regular meetings (conducted every 2-3 weeks). The purpose would be to track an individual's progress with relation to the team and company OKRs (objectives and key results). Therefore, meetings would ensure the progress towards business goals or identify the need to modify the way tasks are being approached.

Step 2. Organize the career development initiative (People team)

The initiative is done through the Career Hub as one more functionality of 15Five as a platform. That activity has been approved to be tested within the People team (between People Team Lead and COO as the manager, as well as between People Team Assistant and People Team Lead). Based on the first outcomes, the decision will be made on whether such practice is to be used by other teams too.

1. **Shaping career vision**

employee is to go to 15Five and complete the following parts (1 week is dedicated for it):

- **Role clarity.** That refers to describing all the responsibilities an employee has.
- **Strengths.** By following the links provided on the platform, it is possible to come up with one's own strong sides and put them on 15Five along with the values and interests.
- **Career vision.** Building career vision relies heavily on alignment between personal and company OKRs. That is why employees were encouraged to get themselves familiar with OKRs as a concept, company & team OKRs for the coming quarter prior to developing personal OKRs and working on a career vision.

2. **Career development meeting**

The meeting is conducted between the manager and his employee in order to:

- Discuss the defined role clarity, strengths and career vision;
- Exchange feedback two-ways;
- Agree on the further **career growth plan**.

3. **Career growth plan**

Based on the meeting outcomes, employees are about to define their own goals in order to progress according to the career vision defined together with the manager. That is to be reflected in 15Five, 'Growth plan' section.

By adding a career goal, employees are able to define the deliverables, timeframes, subgoals of one, as well as track progress by marking the status prior to each performance review meeting (monthly) as either 'at risk', 'behind' or 'on track'. Example of a Growth Plan:

1. *Career vision:* to establish People team;
2. *Career goals:*
   a. To establish Talent Acquisition unit:
      i. Develop a hiring framework. Deadline: 15/06/2022;
      ii. Hire a Talent Acquisition Assistant. Deadline: 30/06/2022;
      iii. Define the best practices for headhunting people for the engineering roles. Deadline: 31/07/2022.
   b. To establish Performance Management direction:
      i. Develop and implement a coaching culture model. Deadline: 30/09/2022.

Once the growth plan is ready, the employee and his manager are to conduct Performance review meetings.

4. Performance review meetings

These are planned on a regular basis to see how the person is progressing based on the defined plan. Such meetings are suggested to be handled each month between the employees and the manager. Unlike 1-1s, Performance review meetings are focused on tracking the employee's individual progress career-wise. Thus, while 1-1s are to rely on company OKRs, Performance review meetings refer to the role clarity and career vision.

Below is the approximate agenda of such meetings to ensure they take place in time and able to see the dynamics of the employee's growth.

- Agenda
  - Overall review of objectives/goals/metrics and how the employee is progressing
  - Employee feedback:
    - How I feel I'm progressing towards own goals

- What achievements I've managed to achieve

- What are the obstacles I've faced

- How I can progress next month

- Manager feedback:

- How I feel you're progressing towards own goals

- What achievements of yours I consider the most significant

- What your areas of growth are from my perspective

- How you can progress next month

- Action plan for the next month / before the next Performance review meeting

- Do they want to stay in the current job and keep their skills and knowledge up to date?

5. Career level-up stage (*if and when the person is ready to get promoted*)

Prior to that step, the manager is about to assess the following:

- Current career stage
  - Has the person managed to accomplish all the goals required within his/her current role?
  - Do you feel like the person lacks motivation / productivity due to that he/she has outgrown the role?
  - Can you think of any other roles the person might be a better fit from now on?
- Promotion Possibility Assessment
  - Do they want to advance to a leadership position?
  - Do they want to stay in the current job and keep their skills and knowledge up to date?
  - Do they want to explore a different career path in a new department or job family?

Based on the positive outcomes of the assessment, the person can be promoted further in his career progression.

6. Update the Career Hub for the person based on the new role

That is the end of the performance management cycle. Since the process is a continuous practice, step 6 puts the cycle to run again from the beginning.

5 Coaching culture model implementation follow up

After 3 months of running the coaching culture model implementation (July-September, 2022), the follow-up is made (company-wide survey + in-depth interviews) which reflects on the changes the action brought to the team management on a company level.

The results are to be presented according to the structure of the theoretical framework and action research stages. Thus, the given part is revealing the results of the company-wide survey and in-depth interviews conducted in fall, 2022. That is followed by the comparative analysis of the received outcomes and the results of the survey and interviews in the beginning of the research (chapter 4.3.1).

Based on the feedback after the first company-wide survey (chapter 4.3.2), it was agreed with the leadership team that such activities are to be conducted every 6 months, not on a quarterly basis as was planned initially. Based on the timeframe for the given research, it was agreed to approach the follow-up stage in a different manner: one aspect of the model was and the intention to consider Engagement as the main concept that will be analyzed within the given research, it was agreed with the leadership team of the company to conduct only a follow-up Engagement survey in fall in order to finalize the given research, whilst a full 360-degree survey is to become a half-annually practice (thus, scheduled in January for the next time). Thus, the Engagement aspect has decided to be checked through the survey results, while all the other practices' outcomes - through the semi-structured interviews.

The given chapter is divided into three sections. First, the implementation process is described, reflecting on what was done between the initial and follow-up stages of the research. Next chapter discusses the developmental data, reflecting on the appropriateness of the model. Finally, the survey data is compared from before and after the coaching culture model was implemented in the company.

The first two sections are developed based on the follow-up interviews stage, while the third one - on the Engagement follow-up survey. Thus, all three types of data usage logic (developmental, descriptive, outcomes) are addressed in a structured way.

The interviews were conducted with the team leads via online 1-1 sessions with the duration of 45-60 minutes. The researcher used the questions for the survey company-wide (Appendix 6), yet encouraged the team leads to go more in-depth and elaborate on their feedback about the whole coaching culture model implementation so far. The interview answers were summarized in Appendix 7, while the given chapter introduces a number of conclusions based on the content analysis.

5.1 Implementation process

First, the interview questions addressed the extent to which certain practices have been introduced and implemented. Turns out, it highly depends on the degree to which managers themselves were thrilled about the initiatives. It is clear that, as soon as the manager himself/herself is up for a change and understands the value it may potentially bring, there would be more effort to push the idea forward, thus, higher possibility to maximize the potential of the idea. Fortunately, the start-up environment suggested a positive attitude towards new initiatives among the interviewees.

It turned out some practices which have been introduced or shaped together with the managers under the given research scope of work had already been incorporated in the teams. More precisely, the top managers representing the leadership team (CEO, COO - Chief Operations Officer, Head of Engineering, CPO - Chief Product Officer, CGO - Chief Growth Officer) has been having 1-1 meetings, coaching & mentoring services, as well as monthly reviews (initiatives similar to Performance management reviews as one of the proposed ideas). That leads to a few conclusions: first, managers have been familiar with some practices proposed, therefore, more open for introducing other relevant initiatives.

Secondly, since the managers were already using coaching & mentoring services themselves, that presumably enabled the foundation of promoting the coaching culture model in the first place, making the whole initiative more feasible. Important to note: these were the leadership group which is usually to have more power of authority when it comes to change management processes, which also played in favor of the research idea. Otherwise, some small teams using coaching & mentoring would not be as powerful an engine to initiate such changes as the leadership team: it is always easier (and, in reality, more efficient) to be implementing ideas from top to bottom, not vice versa. Next to it, the

whole familiarity with the coaching-friendly environment turned out to be quite common within the leadership team: according to the CEO, the team management process works in the way that there are monthly discussions among managers focused on strategic decisions. That means a certain level of autonomy and lack of micromanagement, suggesting employees would navigate themselves on their own, catching up with the team to ensure their actions are aligned and receive guidance whenever needed.

Overall, the teams welcomed the practices from the coaching culture model in different ways as can be seen below.

Table 7. Coaching culture model practices used on a team level.

Team	Team Lead	Practices introduced (new)	Practices modified (existing)
Leadership	CEO	check-ins	1-1s
Engineering	Head of Engineering	check-ins	1-1s
Outreach	CEO	1-1s, check-ins	-
People	COO	Check-ins, performance management reviews	1-1s
Marketing	COO	Check-ins, 1-1s	-
Finance	COO	Check-ins, 1-1s	-

Among the main practices which were introduced, some of them were considered the most useful, these being check-ins, team surveys and 1-1 calls between the employee and manager. The reasoning behind such judgment refers to the opportunity for getting up-to-date information from the relevant employees, exchanging feedback and ensuring the rapport and connectivity, which is challenging to get through mere establishment of OKRs etc.

Among the initiatives new to the whole company it is worth mentioning the quarterly planning process, which would require establishing OKRs on all three levels - company, team, individual - as well as the quarterly planning sessions separately with the manager

(focus on OKRs progress) and the People Team Lead (focus on company vision, needed resources and hiring needs). These were being tested when the interviews were conducted.

No practices have been identified as the least helpful, yet it became possible to define the challenging ones. There turned out to be company-wide surveys, OKRs development and implementation. It is important to note both initiatives are new to the whole case company. The logic behind such answers referred to the timing as the main factors: such practices usually take more time to be incorporated and, consequently, more time to bring the actual results. Within the start-up environment, that plays a significant role. Another initiative which was identified as challenging referred to the career planning activities (Performance review meetings) due to the fact it would address the variety of the personality types and the driver to customize such activities, thus requiring more effort to be made to encourage such practices. Coaching and mentoring practices were also addressed at this point. According to the leadership team, it brings more results once it is a service provided by the expert within the relevant field to the person who is at the early stage of self-developing within the role. Once the person is quite familiar to the field and holds a senior role with confidence, such practices turn out to be less valuable.

5.2 Developmental data

Among the main changes throughout the given research initiation, interviewees emphasized a few. First, incorporating the proposed practices encouraged applying more shape and structure to the ones the leadership team had. For example, Head of Engineering mentioned the Agile methodology that was already in place prior to the research, yet lately it got more shape: right now all the sprint planning, retro sessions etc. are more organized through ClickUp (Project Management software). It allows us to translate the meeting minutes into actionable insights.

The next change the given research has initiated turned out to be the waterfalling of certain practices from the leadership team down to other teams within the company (1-1s, monthly reviews etc.). It turned out not to be an intention of the leadership team initially. Moreover, structured organization kept the efficiency of the processes, since targets were still achieved regardless of the company scaling and increasing the complexity of the processes, which

indicates the teams were flexible and mature enough for the scaling, which brought the variety of tasks, complexity of processes and restructuring of the teams.

Overall, the appropriateness of the model was recognised by all the interviewees, leading to the conclusion that model-like approaches were partly in place, which made the whole coaching culture model implementation process relevant and smooth. When it comes to further development of the culture model, the interview participants were also asked about how they see that going.

As for the next steps, the interviewees highlighted the step-by-step approach, meaning that new practices should get a solid foundation first and become the new 'norm' before new practices are to be implemented. Among the particular suggestions, Chief Operation Officer suggested to nurture team connectivity through team building practices: interest clubs etc. The Head of Engineering also highlighted the importance of communicating the deeper meaning of the job, so that employees are aware of the overall role purpose, thus being more engaged with the job itself. Next to it, the latter team (Engineering) turned out to be requiring a slightly different approach towards team management: the employees are less motivated to be sharing feedback and having small talks to nurture connections. Therefore, the team management practices should be approached in a different way. For example, applying the metrics-related approach seems to be a potential option: giving out 'points' for certain activities, such as delivering the training, providing feedback, conducting the team call etc.

The last, but not least, outcome of the interviews was that the environment of the case company was already quite familiar with the coaching-like practices and aiming towards boosting people's growth through nurturing engagement, motivation and professional growth. The given research idea has become a facilitator encouraging such practices forward and applying more shape to the whole initiative. If before the communication, encouragement and other practices were quite intuitive and, therefore, not paid attention to or monitored and constantly improved, the provided coaching culture model became a great framework, also empowering teams to waterfall the things the leadership team had as a norm.

5.3 Survey results

The outcomes logic of the given research is supported by the chapter focused on survey results. In order to gather feedback from the team, a follow-up survey was developed. Based on the feedback after the first company-wide survey (chapter 4.3.2) and the intention to consider Engagement as the main concept that will be analyzed within the given research, it was agreed with the leadership team of the company to conduct only a follow-up Engagement survey in fall in order to finalize the given research, whilst a full 360-degree survey is to become a half-annually practice (thus, scheduled in January for the next time). Thus, the engagement aspect has decided to be checked through the survey results, while all the other aspects of the coaching culture model were analyzed through the follow-up interviews. The first part of the given thesis analyzes the development of the engagement drivers and their importance.

The survey questions can be found in Appendix 3 (Engagement survey). There have been 23 respondents, all of them were a part of the team once the first coaching-culture-model related practices were introduced. The given chapter reflects on the findings from two perspectives. First, it shows the development of the engagement metrics ('drivers') through the dynamics in average engagement rates. That part is followed by the analysis of drivers' development from the perspective of importance. Sum-variables are used to analyze the outcomes of the research, according to the categories of the engagement survey.

Rate stands for the average answer among all the respondents. The task was to evaluate each sentence on a scale from -4 (Below Average) to +4 (Above Average). In order to get away from the negative numbers, the scale was adapted to the 0-8 range. Therefore, the scores above 4 are considered strong, while the scores from 0 to 4 - requiring improvement. The actual engagement driver average scores are presented below.
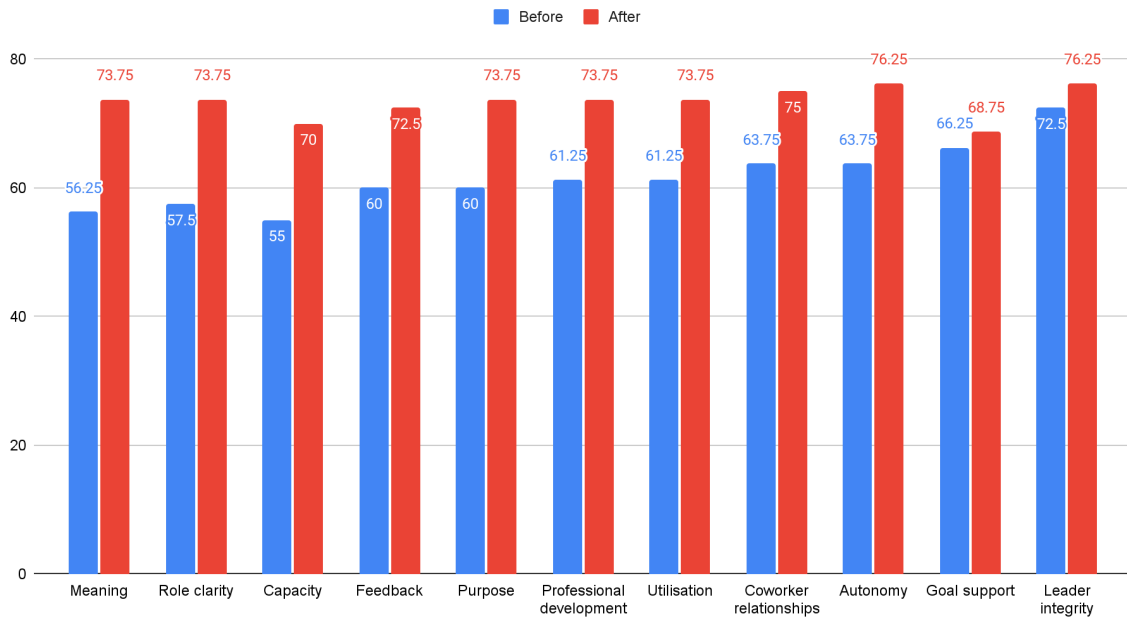
Figure 8. Engagement drivers' rate.

As can be seen on the diagram, there are changes towards each engagement driver assessed. While some drivers encountered significant changes, such as role clarity (from 57.5% to 73.8%) or meaning (56.3% to 73.8%), some experienced slight ones, for instance, goal support (66.3% to 68.8%). Yet, it is clear that each engagement driver has experienced an increase, meaning employees felt more engaged with work from all the aspects taken into consideration.

Apart from evaluating how engaged the employees were feeling from various perspectives over the time of the given research, it is crucial to address the way engagement drivers development went from the perspective of their importance in employees' perception. The average importance rates are presented below, showing both the results of the initial (pre-implementation) survey and the follow-up one, once the coaching culture model implementation was initiated.

Table 8. Importance average score (initial and follow-up surveys data).

Driver	Importance (raw)	
	Initial survey	Follow-up survey
Meaning	6.1	7.3

Role clarity	5.9	7.3
Capacity	5.9	7.2
Feedback	5.9	7
Purpose	6	7.1
Professional development	5.9	7.4
Utilization	5.9	7.2
Coworker relationships	6	7.3
Autonomy	5.9	7.6
Goal support	6.1	7
Leader integrity	5.9	7.4

As could be seen from the table above, the significance of each engagement driver has risen noticeably. The actual question was for employees to rate the importance of each particular engagement driver on a scale from 0-10. Based on that data, it was possible to reflect the raw numbers. While some engagement drivers did not face any significant changes ('Goal Support' - dynamics from 61.2 to 70%), some factors' value actually were recognised way more over time, such as 'Leader integrity' (58.8% to 74%), autonomy (58.8% to 76%) etc. Potentially, the logic behind the aforementioned dynamics is the following.

First of all, it is not surprising to see employees would still consider certain engagement drivers as the most influential ones, given the fact no activities were focused in particular on emphasizing certain engagement drivers over the others. Becoming more aware about the matter would naturally lead to the increase in the results. Here it is essential to address the increase in the results from two perspectives: the actual engagement rate based on a certain driver presence, as well as the influence that this particular driver would have on the overall feeling of being engaged by the employee.

Starting with the first factor, the data shows how the engagement drivers improved over time. Leader integrity, autonomy, role clarity, capacity, professional development - such factors reflected quite significant change presented below.

Table 9. Driver score change.

	Development average score	Importance average score
Leader integrity	72.5% → 76.25%	58.8% → 74%
Autonomy	63.75% → 76.25%	58.8% → 76%
Role clarity	57.5% → 73.75%	58.8% → 73%
Capacity	55% → 70%	58.8% → 72%
Professional development	61.25% → 73.75%	58.8% → 74%

Such changes happened, most likely, due to the fact implemented practices were highlighting them, which was not explicitly done before:

- 1-1 meetings between employees and their managers - that nurtured the space for feedback, as well as gave more opportunity to evaluate the manager's competencies (the way team leads would act as they say, reflecting 'Leader integrity' factor);
- Check-ins - addressed self-reflection on own capacity, autonomy, meaning aspects;
- OKRs - addressing role clarity, professional development, coworker relationships, autonomy, purpose, utilization etc.

Apart from that, another important conclusion refers to the relation between the changes within importance rate and the engagement drivers themselves. By taking a look at both figures, it becomes possible to conclude that increase in engagement drivers has a direct connection with the importance rates: the more importance people give towards certain aspects, the more value or benefit they would be able to see, thus more engaged they would become.

There are several potential reasons behind such results contributing to the actual results of the coaching culture model practices being used:

1) The team was already familiar with this survey format, so managed to approach it in a more thorough manner with potentially less frustration when it was going through the questions for the first time;

2) The team was shared with the outcomes of the first survey, where all the drivers were explained and connections between them showed. That potentially increased

awareness of the employees towards the drivers, so that they became more attentive to the aforementioned factors overall, thus realizing the importance of them overall.

Therefore, implementing the coaching culture model helped the employees to gain more clarity on their current scope of work and desired deliverables of their work within a certain time frame, which pushed their self-awareness of their own capacity and how to manage their time and other resources in the most efficient manner. Next to it, team leads also got an opportunity to share feedback, think more strategically and be able to share the goals with the employees. All the aforementioned aspects encouraged transparency, especially with regards to communication, which presumably had a positive impact on trust within teams. All that naturally nurtured satisfaction from both ends to the relevant engagement drivers. Thus, the practices implemented did not only introduce new approaches towards team management, but also raised awareness among the employees on what would help them feel engaged in company life.

Second, the influence rate has also increased significantly towards each culture model element. The potential reasoning behind might be that, as soon as people saw the actual engagement drivers in action (such as the ongoing feedback, leader integrity etc.), they became able to realize how they affect their overall feeling of engagement when it comes to work. Thus, the influence rates naturally improved as well.

In order to provide the sufficient analysis of the outcomes, it is crucial to address the development of the engagement figures throughout the process, hence reflecting more on the qualitative data.

It is also crucial to assess how engaged the employees were feeling from various perspectives over the time of the given research. Based on the data received from the interviews and the follow-up survey, it becomes possible to track a clear dynamic of how engagement figures were evolving. It is important to reflect how some metrics would encourage the change in others or how certain practices would address a few engagement criteria at once.

To start with, establishing 1-1 between the managers and employees did not only introduce the idea of continuous feedback - it helped both sides to consider that as a strategic tool for further task planning and management. If before it was on the ad-hoc mode (thus, not quite a reliable factor for planning future activities), coaching culture model implementation ensured that the structure and usability of feedback as a necessary factor to rely on for team management, ensuring that it is problem-centric and solution-driven. In other words, it follows a clear set of actions: address the problem performance-wise, address the outcomes, suggest the solution, and brainstorm on the further course of action.

Implementing OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) & KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) to the daily operations encouraged people to understand their responsibilities more by having them written down (KPIs) and relying in daily work, as well as being future-oriented by seeing the ultimate goals that current actions should lead to (OKRs). All that shaped the understanding of why people accomplish precisely these tasks, but not others ('role clarity', 'meaning' drivers) and what should be the desired outcomes in the future ('purpose' driver). Before that, teams would rely on high-level KPIs, while setting goals were more of a prerogative of the leadership team and not explicitly shared across other teams continuously. Thus, the concepts of role clarity, meaning and purpose were built from scratch. The OKRs & KPIs are shared publicly for all the departments of the case company and the whole team receives regular updates on how other departments are doing. That encouraged transparency on what the teams are doing, along with the team leads. Thus, leader integrity as one of the engagement factors stepped in - people started to be aware of what the key figures within the business are working on and whether they manage to achieve their goals. That was not addressed anyhow before: employees would have an idea on what their Team lead is doing, yet not quite much apart from that. Now they can clearly track the direction of each team, thus being able to see whether the managers succeed in achieving their goals. Reflecting on OKRs & KPIs over quarterly calls between the Team Leads and People Team Lead ensures reflection on capacity and utilization of employees' potential. Before that such aspects were not particularly addressed, so managers would facilitate / slow down the processes, yet not brainstorm specifically on whether the workload or expectations are too high or low for the individuals. Over the process of

coaching culture model implementation, the aspects of whether employees manage to accomplish tasks and take on more started to be addressed.

Using check-ins encouraged coworker relationships in a way that people started sharing appraisals towards one another highlighting the support, help and encouragement they would get from other employees. That pretty much enhanced coworker relationships, since, before it, teams would not be cooperating that much with each other. Nowadays, they are regularly showing appreciation towards other people's work, thus recognizing each individual's contribution.

Performance review meetings as the new initiative that was introduced over the coaching culture model implementation addressed the individual goals and career intentions, such paying more focus towards professional development and goal support. The point is to have regular calls between the manager and employee to go over the growth plan of the latter career-wise, ensuring needed professional skills and competencies are being developed in alignment with the company goals. While prior to the research such things would be discussed only if the employee would bring such initiative to the table (which was not something people would consider possible unless they are told so), such practice addressed individual preferences, thus working on employee retention and motivating the person to keep growing within the team.

On the other hand, there are some engagement factors that were not quite changed over the implementation process, such as autonomy, since the working format (remote, flexible hours) remained the same.

To sum up, quite a few engagement drivers were improved because of that they were given shape being documented (role clarity etc. through OKRs & KPIs), implemented across all teams, not just a few (purpose, meaning, leader integrity etc. through 1-1s; check-ins), or given more recognition (professional development through performance management initiative).

In conclusion, analyzing the outcomes of the coaching culture model implementation process leads to a number of insights. First of all, new initiatives are better to be supported by the decision-makers. In case the team lead is against the initiative, it has low chances to

be implemented or used to its full potential. Next to it, all initiatives need to have a favorable environment to be successfully introduced and implemented. That is why the initial check on the company makes sense in order to see if the company: 1) has a potential value in having new ideas implemented (it's important not only to have it theoretically, but also to be recognized by the company); 2) has enough resources for new initiatives to be considered. Without the favorable conditions even potentially good ideas are destined to fail when it comes to bringing valuable outcomes.

Another important conclusion is that the culture model should represent interrelated components, so that working on improvements in one field would naturally nurture other elements as well. A good example for that is the Engagement survey results: by welcoming various new practices, employees recognized the value in way more engagement-influencing factors, thus starting to appreciate the more and, consequently, reaching higher engagement scores in the end. Another instance would be the overall implementation of various practices: welcoming 1-1s, agile methodologies led to natural questions on how individual growth can be boosted in the long run, not only on a weekly basis. This was one of the reasons the company started addressing bigger questions timewise, introducing OKRs and quarterly planning - the company started to apply a more strategic approach.

The final conclusion indicates that certain factors that influence team management can be utilized to their full potential through becoming explicit (not tacit) knowledge by being written down and set as solid practices across all company levels.

The following chapter transforms the aforementioned outcomes into actionable insights and presents the final discussion and results of the given research.

6 Discussion

6.1 Summary of results

The given chapter of the thesis provides the outcomes of the research. First, it starts with introducing the answers to the research questions raised in the beginning of this work. That part is followed by the final coaching culture model iteration as the final outcome of the empirical research, also elaborating on theoretical and practical contributions of it. The closing parts of the chapter would be focused on the action plan on further coaching culture model implementation, limitations and further areas of research.

As for the theoretical questions, the answers to them are provided below.

- **What is a coaching culture? How can it benefit an organization?**

Coaching culture within a corporate environment appears to be a relatively new term with numerous definitions and the following focus areas: 1) involving multi-level employees; 2) strong communication focus not only in the manager-employee way, but generally between employees no matter the hierarchy; 3) development, support, maximizing the potential as key elements. It is a bigger concept than a set of coaching practices, as it puts more emphasis on all mutual and cross-teams / cross-levels influences employees may have on each other, empowering individual potential and facilitating development. Summarizing, the coaching culture framework is an environment which:

- Shapes the framework for coaching-related ideas;
- Highlights core aspects of coaching as a process;
- Determines the logic of coming up with decisions and actions;
- Provides a basis for continuous learning for the coaches (in the case of the given thesis, actual team leads managing coaching practices).

An organization that applies a coaching culture is aimed to get the empowered employees by reaching the following outcomes:

- Improved awareness of own potential: clarity on the meaning & purpose of the role;
- Improved awareness of own goals: clarity on professional development;

- Deepened work relationships: established trust, commitment, empathy, support, continuous feedback;
- Full utilization of own skills: maximized potential to achieve 'meet expectations' or 'above expectations' performance levels.

One more outcome coaching culture framework implementation will aim for would be improved engagement rate: overall engagement rate, as well as improved metrics on engagement drivers' satisfaction, which leads directly to energetic and effective connection with work-related activities.

- **What are the theoretically sound ways to implement the coaching culture model into a company?**

Successful implementation of coaching culture model can be done by following a certain set of steps. Firstly, addressing the various existing coaching culture frameworks is essential to define the commonalities and most used practices of implementing it among organizations. From the theoretical framework part, referring to change management models turns out to be one of the theoretically sound ways to initiate changes within a corporate environment. For that, the references were made towards Kurt Lewin's change management model (Lewin, 1947), as well as other approaches to define the optimal solution towards the way coaching culture will be implemented within the case company (Sheikh Hamdo, 2021).
As for the empirical questions, these are answered below.

- **Which coaching culture elements are the most efficient for the case company?**

The research has shown that addressing a certain set of elements is the most efficient solution when it comes to having a coaching culture model in place.

First, it is crucial to address the ongoing processes and ensure these are structured and well-shaped through agile methodology or an alternative method of team and task management (depending on the team), applying metrics. The latter refers to OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) and KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) on all three levels: company, team, individual, as well as company-wide surveys (engagement surveys, 360-degree reviews). That refers to '**Clarify & Structure'** element in the final model iteration.

Next, **waterfalling** concept is important, reflecting the approach when the new practices are first introduced through the team leads and only then are considered to go further to new teams once each department of the company gets to a more complex structure.

Apart from that, adapting is also a crucial element, referring to the idea that each practice, while being introduced within the company, is to be pushed in a proactive and authoritative manner, so that teams are to think about how the practices would be adapted to their internal processes, not if the practices should or should not be used. That would allow to ensure the change is happening, yet it may vary across different departments.

The next element is focused on boosting **commitment** and dedication towards work by communicating the role purpose, developing career vision & growth plan, as well as encouraging solution-driven loosely-coupled approach across teams.

One more element (**'Involve & engage'**) which coaching culture model contains is focusing on personal and professional growth of the employees by having 1-1s with the managers which are developed from the prism of established trust, empathy, support, respect and other coaching principles mentioned earlier.

- **What are the practically relevant ways to implement the coaching culture into the company?**

Practicalities of implementing the coaching culture model would rely on: formalizing the coaching culture model first in order to structure the essence of a coaching culture model and evaluate how mature the company is towards such practices. Once that is done, it is necessary to conduct the initial survey within the company to define the current state with relation to the coaching culture elements. Development and implementation of an action plan for coaching-culture-related practices customized for each team within the company would be the next step, which is later on followed by the follow-up survey within the company to identify the change within the way team members perform and how engaged they are. The outcomes of this step would lead to the final iteration of the coaching culture model.

- **How can coaching culture principles be communicated to the organizations and managed by them so that companies help their teams succeed?**

The following practices turned out to be the most efficient ways of reflecting and strengthening coaching culture principles across teams:

- 1-1s between the employees and managers;
- Check-ins (company-wide surveys on how the employees are doing);
- Knowledge sharing practices (trainings);
- Quarterly 1-1s interaction between the researcher and team leads on the following topics:
  - OKRs (personal OKRs apart from the team ones);
  - Manager competencies development (through 1-1s with the researcher on a quarterly basis);
- Performance management initiative: role clarity, career vision, growth plan for each employee, performance review meetings.

- **How coaching culture can affect the team management from the perspective of engagement?**

Team management is influenced by the coaching culture model implementation from two perspectives: development and importance of the engagement drivers. Within the given research, some drivers encountered significant changes, such as role clarity (from 57.5% to 73.8%) or meaning (56.3% to 73.8%), while some experienced slight ones, for instance, goal support (66.3% to 68.8%). Yet, it is clear that each engagement driver has experienced an increase, meaning employees felt more engaged with work from all the aspects taken into consideration. In practice, it means that 1-1s between the managers and employees welcomed structured feedback as one of the must-have steps, new practices like establishing OKRs and KPIs have been introduced, along with the new practices to check on the employees (check-ins, performance review meetings etc.). Moreover, the engagement drivers' importance has also been increased from the employees' perception. It is also important to note that almost half of the assessed engagement drivers has experienced significant changes not only from the perspective of own development, but also importance: leader integrity, autonomy, role clarity, capacity, professional development, proving that the implemented model has made a great impact on the way employees would feel engaged at work.

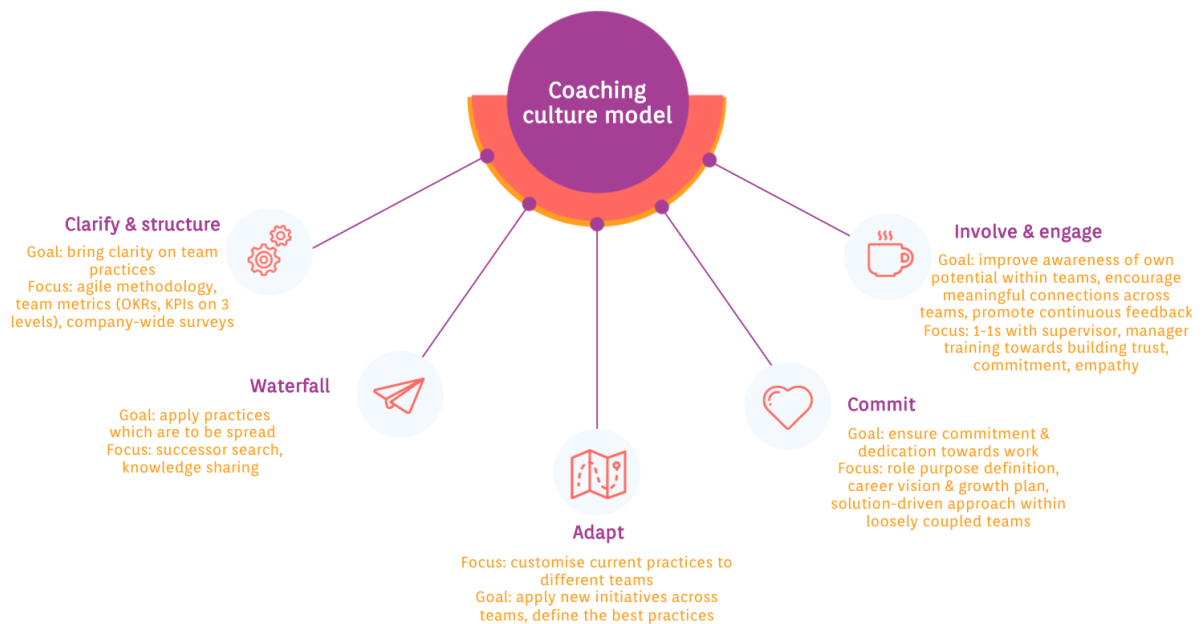## 6.2 Final coaching culture model iteration

Figure 9. Final coaching culture model iteration.

Based on the follow-up stage outcomes, the final coaching culture model was developed and introduced to the leadership team first (CEO + team leads), then to the whole team. It was agreed the whole research idea was deepened and extended over the actual research process. It is crucial to address what changes appeared to be needed for the final coaching culture model iteration, since iterations were made towards every element of the initial draft.

First, it became clear that quite a few aspects should be integrated or addressed in a different way. These turned out to be the following:

- *'Engage'* aspect (referred to the commitment to development and action as a mindset across teams, which would be nurtured through addressing the engagement drivers);
- *'Encourage'* aspect (awareness of own potential);
- *'Support'* aspect (building rapport within and across teams).

Over the research process, the decision was made to integrate them through the involvement and support aspects from both managers and their employees. Involvement in the present context would stand for addressing the awareness of one's own potential as part of the company, as well as giving and getting feedback so that it's an ongoing process

within the company overall, which relates to the *'Support'* element in the initial draft. That would serve the ultimate goals of both elements - to encourage people to realize their own strengths and areas of growth, improve their own behavior and motivate others to do the same - in a more efficient way through requesting feedback initiatives, along with 1-1s sessions between the manager and employee. Thus, the elements transformed into '*Engage & involve*', taking engagement and awareness as the key focus areas.

The commitment aspect, therefore, was addressed as a separate coaching culture model element - *'Commit'*, referring to ensuring commitment and dedication towards work. That was defined to be achieved through strategic thinking towards employees' career growth. In other words, the key element of the given part of the model is Performance management initiative: performance management reviews, career vision, growth plan and potentially other relevant initiatives.

The '*Improve & facilitate*' aspect of the initial draft also encountered changes, since it became clear mere process optimization through agile methodologies or alternatives is not sufficient. Instead, it's essential to ensure waterfalling of the practices, meaning these are first to be practiced by the decision-makers (presumably team leads), then shared within their teams and, later, become the common company knowledge as best practices, so that other teams might use it as well. One clear example as such was the implementation of 1-1s: first it started only within the leadership team, then was waterfalling to other departments and smaller teams. Making it work this way turned out to be efficient, since, considering the company hierarchy (even though it's not a corporate, but rather quite a dynamic structure), it seems to be inefficient for employees trying things on their own - good ideas and practices should be addressed by the decision-makers as well, thus becoming the whole team practice first in order to get the most outcomes. Considering that, the element was transformed into *'Waterfall'*.

The '*Create & develop*' element was also improved. The researcher figured it is not enough just to introduce new ideas - it is essential to make them applicable to each team. In other words, teams should be encouraged to adapt the existing practices the way they see fit. A great example was to implement check-ins: while for some teams it turned out to be efficient as a weekly practice, other teams (for example, Engineering one) came to

conclusion having this as a bi-weekly practice works better for them in order not to overwhelm employees with tasks and, thus, to keep a positive perception towards the initiative generally. Hence, the *'Adapt'* element stepped in as a more relevant part of the coaching culture model.

Next to it, there turned out to be the need to develop one more element that would nurture the whole process and team management activities, thus supporting the aforementioned elements as well. Thus, the model has been optimized introducing a *'Clarify & structure'* one. The logic behind such change leads to the conclusion that each process, idea or practice should be clear for all the stakeholders, so that there is a transparency on what is going on within and across teams, while everyone is aware of the company, team and, thus, personal desired deliverables.

Based on the insights above, a few updates have been addressed during the development of the final iteration. The elements are introduced and elaborated on below.

Clarify & structure. The goal is to shape the ongoing processes and ensure these are structured and well-shaped. That would consequently improve the clarity across teams over the operations. The goal is to be achieved through agile methodology or an alternative method of team and task management (depending on the team), applying metrics. The latter refers to OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) and KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) on all three levels: company, team, individual, as well as company-wide surveys (engagement surveys, 360-degree reviews).

Waterfall. The given approach means the practices which are applied within or across teams, are to: 1) be introduced through the team leads as the main source of new practices implementation; 2) be considered to go further to new teams once each department of the company gets to a more complex structure. As one of the examples, the practices that leadership team goes through is to be potentially introduced to teams beneath it. The desired outcome here is to ensure the best practices are spread and welcomed. That principle also refers to the team leads nurturing the employees as further successors of their own roles, so that once team leads are progressing further, the employees are mature enough to take over more senior responsibilities. Such practice encourages personal and professional growth across teams.

Adapt. The element refers to the idea that each practice, while being introduced within the company, is to be pushed in a proactive manner. Earlier it was more flexible and, therefore, less efficient: each team was asked whether they would like to try new approaches and, based on their answers, the new practices would not become used company-wide. Now, the approach is more determined, so that teams are to think about how the practices would be adapted to their internal processes, not if the practices should or should not be used. In other words, new approaches are to be adapted towards each team separately to ensure the actual efficiency of their implementation, instead of pushing a universal approach across all the teams. The end result will be the best practices being present across all teams in slightly different ways.

Commit. The goal of this element is to ensure commitment and dedication towards work. The focus, hence, would be made on communicating the role purpose (so that the employees are aware of a deeper meaning of why they are a part of the company), developing career vision & growth plan (Performance management initiative), as well as encouraging solution-driven loosely-coupled approach across teams. That would mean that teams are connected, yet act independently from one another, while employees are also collaborating on team goals, yet all act independently, taking full responsibility towards processes.

Involve & engage. That part of the coaching culture model stands for working on boosting employees' awareness of their own potential and encouraging their personal and professional growth. This is to be made through delivering meaningful 1-1s with the managers which are developed from the prism of established trust, empathy, support, respect and other coaching principles mentioned earlier (chapter 3.1, 'Support' element).

As for the particular practices that the given coaching culture model is focused on, there are the following:

- 1-1s between the employees and managers;
- Check-ins (company-wide surveys on how the employees are doing);
- Knowledge sharing practices (trainings);
- Quarterly 1-1s interaction between the researcher and team leads on the following topics:

- OKRs (personal OKRs apart from the team ones);
- Manager competencies development (through 1-1s with the researcher on a quarterly basis);
  - Performance management initiative: role clarity, career vision, growth plan for each employee, performance review meetings.

To sum up, none of the elements which were introduced initially were eliminated, yet each one of them is optimized based on the data gathered from the interviews and surveys.

6.2.1 Theoretical contributions

The given research process has led to a few theoretical insights. First, coaching appears to be a multidimensional concept that embraces not only aspects of facilitation of individual growth through the interaction process, but also involves the autonomy or self-management aspect: coach focus is to empower the coachee towards own progression through various techniques which encourage coming up with own insights and solutions, but without a direct guidance on further steps.

Second, there is no universal definition of coaching as a theoretical concept, which enables turning to various approaches in order to develop a customized one for a particular environment. On that note, the third conclusion would be that, in order to ensure the full potential of coaching techniques or approaches within the business environment, one can consider addressing the whole business culture, otherwise certain coaching practices may stay outside of the overall mindset of the team behind the business. Thus, trying to implement such techniques requires addressing the overall environment of the business.

Another insight refers to the benefit of using various data collection and analysis methods to ensure the in-depth analysis and conclusions. As within the given research, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used, which allowed to elaborate on both the subjective (since coaching culture model is more about quality and nature of the team management processes, not solely on metrics-driven data) and objective data (to see whether qualitative changes actually lead to certain improvements).

6.2.2 Practical contributions

Overall conclusion brings the insights below into the picture. First, it is crucial to realize that a coaching culture model, such as the one developed throughout the given research, is a highly customized thing and cannot be applicable to every single business environment (even if the size and structure of the team are similar): it should represent the key differentiation points of a particular team, reflecting on its needs and desired deliverables and ways of working.

Next, collaboration is the key when it comes to the research like this, since the model is supposed to represent and adapt to the company culture, which is impossible to be done without the internal insights from the employees. Next to it, their willingness of the latter to cooperate also plays a significant role, since employees' feedback is the key to ensure the culture model fits the team well and is smoothly integrated in the daily operations.

In conclusion, applying and nurturing a certain company culture proves to be an efficient tool to address the employee wellbeing and, potentially, retention and performance in the future. Such a concept adds a human touch and enables people to feel belonging to something more than a set of processes they need to follow on a daily basis. That, in turn, encourages people to be more open-minded, curious, encouraged for further growth and, as an outcome, a better performance. Moreover, applying a coaching-like perspective motivates people to start thinking on their own about how to continue growing and manage themselves towards reaching company, team or individual (professional) goals. Therefore, working on such a concept proved to be worth working on.

6.3 Action plan on further coaching culture model implementation

The final coaching culture model enabled the further actions that would ensure a successful coaching culture model in the future.

Firstly, the final draft of the culture model is shared with the team, addressing how each individual contribution ensures the cultural set is live. When it comes to the practical steps the team was advised now to take, these are the following:

1. Monitor check-in results on a regular basis by the team leads, adding the results to the agenda of the next 1-1 if needed;
2. Shape the concept of Performance management initiative as an explicit knowledge and confirm the structure and timing with the leadership team: formulating the role clarity, growth plan, set of steps from both manager and employee;
3. Update the agenda of the quarterly calls and confirm the following structure reflecting the final coaching culture model: reflection on the ending quarter performance and metrics-wise, strategy for the next quarter (hiring needs, team evolvement), manager's competencies (checking what resources and support can be helpful for the team leads), wellbeing of the manager and team;
4. Ensure OKRs & KPIs are reviewed and given an update each month by every team, sharing the updates across all teams and levels to enable transparency.

On a general level, a few suggestions were formulated and shared with the team to ensure the final coaching culture model is present and solid within the case company. Firstly, it is essential to start initiating changes from the key decision-makers, otherwise the process will not be that efficient time- and outcomes-wise.

Secondly, new ideas are to be classified as explicit knowledge first, meaning they need to be formulated clearly and tried by the employees (with the support and guidance of the team lead) so that they are easy to be described, justified and coordinated further. Considering the dynamic and fast-growing environment the case company has, it is extremely challenging to be transferring the tacit (intuitive) knowledge further - a proper structure is the key for knowledge sharing and waterfalling of the practices.

Another suggestion for the future would be to introduce new practices or processes already at the start of any team's existence / early stages: it is better to establish a new process instead of changing the existing one. Moreover, such a proactive approach will help to foresee potential risks and challenges, addressing them in advance. That would also naturally complement the strategic thinking that the case company is applying to its operations these days.

As one more further step, managerial guidelines are being developed collaboratively and shared with the team in order to ensure the aforementioned elements of the coaching

culture model are implemented, since team leads (especially the ones representing the leadership team) would be the engine to make it happen as the key decision-makers when it comes to team or process management in the company.

6.4 Limitations

Among the limitations, it is worth mentioning only one company being studied for the action research. Therefore, it is challenging to generalize the outcomes of the study to other organizations. Getting more companies involved into the research would be a valuable opportunity to gather more statistically reliable data, yet that has not been done for several reasons: limited resources and time frame dedicated to the research, nature of the research. As for the latter, the goal of the thesis is not to come up with a theoretical knowledge, but to actually develop the organizational culture, which appears to be quite an individual matter, highly challenging to be copied across other work environments.

Another limitation would be the number of participants, since the number of company representatives does not allow to rely on the gathered data as reliable. One more limitation refers to the qualitative data, which played a significant part in the data collection overall, thus leading to higher risks of subjective interpretations of the results. Based on that, classic validity, reliability, generalizability are not fully applicable towards the given research data. Yet, considering the given scope of work and focus area, such limitations were impossible to be addressed anyhow within the given research.

6.5 Further areas of research

It might be an exciting area to integrate developmental practices on a deeper level and introduce mentoring culture to the team as something more long-term, relationship-focused, open-ended and having a stronger focus on the personal development overall, not on specific skills and competencies (Hussey, 2021).

Another suggestion would be to take a few companies into consideration and get more reliable data when it comes to development and implementation of the coaching culture model. Bigger scope of participants companies-wise would also enable the researcher to

address the similarities and differences among different companies when it comes to the structure of the model and/or the ways it should be implemented and customized.

One more area of research would be to address the self-management aspect of the team management, considering the environment like the one in the case company where this aspect is especially crucial to accomplish tasks successfully: tolerance towards innovation and failures, lack of micromanagement, coaching-like management style (where people need to guide themselves and be proactive).

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Appendices

Appendix 1

360-degree survey announcement and onboarding information

Hello team! For quite some time, we've been testing the [15Five platform](). It's a tool that helps achieve clarity on the goals for both you and your manager + ensures you feel great at work.

The testing has led us to a decision **to step-by-step start using 15Five company-wide.** The invites to join the platform were sent to everybody (check your inbox). Did not receive one? Ping Irina.

Now, 2 things:

First. On Monday (27th of June) we're starting 2 surveys that will run company-wide (Devisory including) and are hosted on 15Five. One is called **self-review** where you evaluate yourself and your peers, and the second one is **the engagement survey** - it will ask you about how you feel at work. The instructions on how to fill them out can be found [here]() and here.

The surveys **will be open for 2 weeks starting from Monday** and should take no more than 1.5 hours to complete. Please fill them out.

Second. The platform has many features to offer, but for now, we'll be focusing on only a couple of things:

- **Weekly (or bi-weekly) check-ins** where you provide quick feedback on the progress to your manager;
- **Weekly (or bi-weekly) 1-on-1s** where you plan your meetings with the manager.

The frequency of check-ins and 1-on-1s and when you will start actively using the platform within your team depends on your manager and will be communicated by the manager at your team level.

Sections of the survey:

- **360-degree review**: You will complete a review about yourself.

  - **Growth & Development**: your strong sides, areas of growth, goals, ideas on more initiatives

  - **Company values**

  - **Competencies**: collaboration, commitment, open-mindedness, management, proactivity, responsibility & reliability

  - **Manager review**: Your manager will answer the same questions about you as you will within the 360-degree section + Private manager assessment focused on whether it might be the time for your promotion. The purpose of that section would be to see if you both are on the same page of perceiving your performance.

- Peer review (Participant initiated peer review)**:** You will nominate peers to review you, and may be nominated as a peer reviewer for other review cycle participants. So, you get to provide feedback on another person on the same angles: growth & development, company values, competencies: decision-making, EQ, innovative mindset, open-mindedness, responsibility & reliability, proactivity.

- Upward review: If your manager is a participant in the review cycle, you will complete an upward review about them. You will get to provide feedback to your manager from the angles of growth & development, company values, communication.

Anonymity: that is to be checked with the team on what their preferences are. The only thing which will not be anonymous is the upward & self-review, as these are to ensure feedback exchange between yourself and your manager. Peer review is possible to be anonymous.

Once the survey starts, you will get an email notification, these are supposed to be coming each time you're running towards the deadline for any section of 360-degree survey.

Appendix 2

360-degree survey - questions

Part 1. Q2_Cloudvisor - self & manager questions - self & manager review (questions are asked for both the employee and the manager, thus ensuring self-reflection and evaluation of the former one).

Growth & development:

1. Are you clear on your own role and its further evolvement? Are your responsibilities transparent to yourself?

2. Are you provided with enough feedback, resources and communication for your own progress?

3. What are your top three strengths and how did you apply them to your work at Cloudvisor?

4. What are up to three wins you want to celebrate since your first day at Cloudvisor?

5. What are your top three areas of growth to focus on before the next review?

6. What are the top 3 professional/personal goals you'd like to focus on within this role before the next review? Please be precise and try to formulate the actual final destination you'd like to achieve

Scale-rating questions:

Scale: Never demonstrates, Rarely demonstrates, Sometimes demonstrates, Often demonstrates, Always demonstrates.

Company values:

1. Rate your contribution to the company value : Do things fast

2. Rate your contribution to the company value : Experiment and learn

3. Rate your contribution to the company value : Establish friendship

Competencies:

1. Collaboration - ability of both parties to share respect, acknowledge the differences in their views and opinions, have the common idea of exchanging ideas for the purpose of generating new solutions or knowledge.

2. Commitment - the mutual pledge to overcome struggles and celebrate successes acting together.

3. Open-mindedness, drive to learn and self-grow - ability to keep the mind open for new ways, perspectives and approaches towards the processes.

4. Management - ability to distribute tasks among employees

5. Proactivity - being initiative to take action without waiting for such instruction from the manager.

6. Responsibility & Reliability - ability to take ownership of the process and its outcomes.

Private manager assessment

Yes/No questions:

- [Name] is ready for a promotion today

- [Name] is at risk for low performance

Opinion questions:

- Given what I know of [Name]'s current performance, and if it were my money, I would award them the highest possible increase and bonus

- Given how well I know [Name] works with others, I would always want them on my

- Given what I know of [Name]'s performance, if [Name] got a job offer somewhere else, I would feel

- If you feel like [Name]'s focus area at work should be different, what changes would you make?

Part 1. Q2_Cloudvisor - peer questions - peer review

Growth & development:

1. What are [Name]'s top strengths?

2. What might be [Name]'s main superpower that contributes to the company progress?

3. What can [Name] improve to make better progress on their work goals?

4. Do you consider [Name] your teammate? Have you managed to establish such a connection?

Company values

- Rate [Name]'s contribution to the company value : Do things fast

- Rate [Name]'s contribution to the company value : Experiment and learn

- Rate [Name]'s contribution to the company value : Establish friendship

Competencies

1. Decision making - ability to make choices when needed

2. Emotional Intelligence (EQ) - ability to listen to others, express own feelings, manage interaction with others in a constructive way (i.e. with no misunderstandings, conflicts etc.)

3. Innovative mindset, ability to seize opportunities - ability to bring new ideas and suggest things for improvement of the current processes

4. Open-mindedness, drive to learn and self-grow - being eager to learn new things

5. Responsibility & Reliability - ability to carry on tasks on his/her own, take ownership of the processes etc.

6. Proactivity - being initiative to take action without waiting for such instruction from the manager.

Rate the aforementioned competencies of your peer colleague.

- Never demonstrates

- Rarely demonstrates

- Sometimes demonstrates

- Often demonstrates

- Always demonstrates

Upward review (employee's evaluation of a manager)

Growth & development:

- What are [Name]'s top strong sides?

- What would you consider [Name]'s areas of growth?

- What do you think would be helpful if you add that to your interaction with [Name]?

Competencies

- Rate [Name]'s contribution to the company value : Do things fast

- Rate [Name]'s contribution to the company value : Experiment and learn

- Rate [Name]'s contribution to the company value : Establish friendship

Communication

1. I've got enough communication with [Name]

2. I receive enough feedback from [Name] as my manager

3. [Name] sets clear expectations on my deliverables, so I'm always clear on what I've got to do

4. I feel myself comfortable having [Name] as my manager, we've built a good rapport

5. If I think of anything we can change in my communication with the manager, I can suggest the following:

Appendix 3

Engagement survey

Meaning

1) The work I do on this job is very important to me.

2) My job activities are personally meaningful to me.

3) I feel that the work I do on my job is valuable.

4) On the scale from 1-10 (10 is the highest rate) how important this factor is to your engagement?

Role clarity

1) Overall, I have a good understanding of what I am supposed to be doing in my job.

2) I understand how my role fits into the purpose of the organization.

3) There is a clear link between what I do and organizational objectives.

4) On the scale from 1-10 (10 is the highest rate) how important this factor is to your engagement?

Feedback

1) I get sufficient feedback about how well I am doing.

2) I get feedback that is constructive.

3) I receive feedback on a regular basis.

4) On the scale from 1-10 (10 is the highest rate) how important this factor is to your engagement?

Purpose

1) I have a good idea of what this organization is trying to accomplish.

2) I know why this organization exists.

3) I feel a shared sense of purpose with my work group.

4) On the scale from 1-10 (10 is the highest rate) how important this factor is to your engagement?

Professional development

1) There is someone at work who encourages my professional development.

2) I am encouraged to expand my skills and abilities.

3) I have opportunities to increase my influence in the organization.

4) On the scale from 1-10 (10 is the highest rate) how important this factor is to your

engagement?

Utilization

1) My job makes good use of my skills and abilities.

2) My skills are being utilized to their fullest potential.

3) My job challenges me in a positive way.

4) On the scale from 1-10 (10 is the highest rate) how important this factor is to your engagement?

Coworker relationships

1) My coworkers value my input.

2) I trust my coworkers.

3) My coworkers and I have mutual respect for one another.

4) On the scale from 1-10 (10 is the highest rate) how important this factor is to your engagement?

Goal support

1) There is a great support system at this organization that helps me achieve my work goals.

2) My organization helps to limit the number of distractions that keep me from achieving my goals.

3) My organization provides me with what I need to help achieve my goals.

4) On the scale from 1-10 (10 is the highest rate) how important this factor is to your engagement?

Leader integrity

1) I can depend on the leaders of this organization.

2) The leaders in this organization are reliable.

3) The leaders in this organization follow through with what they say they are going to do.

4) On the scale from 1-10 (10 is the highest rate) how important this factor is to your engagement?

Capacity

1) I am confident in my ability to handle competing demands at work.

2) I am confident in my ability to deal with problems that come up at work.

3) I am confident in my ability to think clearly at work.

4) On the scale from 1-10 (10 is the highest rate) how important this factor is to your

engagement?

Autonomy

1) I can make meaningful decisions about how I do my job.

2) I have freedom to do my job in the best way I see fit.

3) I am not micro-managed at my job.

4) On the scale from 1-10 (10 is the highest rate) how important this factor is to your engagement?

The drivers-related questions that were excluded from the follow-up engagement survey:

Leader availability

1) The leaders of this organization can be easily reached by the employees.

2) The leaders of this organization make themselves available for the employees.

3) The leaders of this organization are often connecting with people at work.

4) On the scale from 1-10 (10 is the highest rate) how important this factor is to your engagement?

Shared values

1) I have shared work values with my coworkers.

2) The people who work here share common work values.

3) On the scale from 1-10 (10 is the highest rate) how important this factor is to your engagement?

Rest

1) I feel like I can take a vacation when I need it.

2) I feel like I can take personal time off when I need it.

3) On the scale from 1-10 (10 is the highest rate) how important this factor is to your engagement?

Psychological safety

1) I am not afraid to be myself at work.

2) I am free to express my opinions at work.

3) I do not sense any kind of threatening environment at work

4) On the scale from 1-10 (10 is the highest rate) how important this factor is to your engagement?

Fairness

1) Decisions here about people are made using a fair process.

2) I feel the rewards I get are equitable given the work I do.

3) Overall I feel this organization is just and fair in the way it treats and rewards employees.

4) On the scale from 1-10 (10 is the highest rate) how important this factor is to your engagement?

Manager

1) My manager helps me develop confidence in my own ability to do my job well.

2) My manager treats me fairly in the way they interact with me.

3) On the scale from 1-10 (10 is the highest rate) how important this factor is to your engagement?

Appendix 4

Interview questions (Initial data collection)

1.   How would you describe the way you manage your team nowadays? What is your style: authoritative, coaching etc.?

2.   What is your role in team management as a leader: to guide, facilitate, give direction yourself? How do you achieve that goal?

3.   How is the communication organized within your team?

4.   How would you describe the relationships you build within the team?

5.   What gaps can you identify already now when it comes to the team management processes?

6.   Which coaching culture practices introduced (or perhaps some other) you can benefit from as a team?

7.   How would you define the steps to make it happen?

Appendix 5

The first part introduces the survey results, which are reflected in Chapter 4.3.2. These are followed by the calls-to-action based on the metrics received and the outcomes of the interviews (Chapter 4.3.1).

First of all, it's great to confirm metrics-wise that we're actually doing good 🙂 Yet, of course, there is always space for improvement:

1. **Responsibility**. We don't micromanage at Cloudvisor, we respect and believe in one another. That also means we trust and rely on each other, that is why it's a 50/50 responsibility between yourself and your manager to set the direction, shape the vision of your future results, suggest ideas, etc. If you feel like we're missing something - it's up to you to bring that to the table, you'll be heard.

2. Get the **meaning**. If you cannot answer why you're doing a certain task, it's worth bringing the question up. As soon as there is no value in the activity, it's worth asking whether you actually need that. Once you're clear on why you do things, you'll more likely to figure out how to do them.

3. Encourage, nurture and be brave enough to initiate **feedback** between you and your manager / somebody in your team. It's worth maintaining a strong connection instead of making your calls a mere to-do-list discussion. One good point to start with would be suggesting your ideas for the **management** part. That refers to both the way your workload is managed by your manager and the way the workload is split within your team.

4. Don't be afraid. Things progress fast, yet you're always welcome to bring new ideas to the table and initiate changes because you feel it might be worth it.

Surely, the surveys you went through are just a part of the bigger picture - performance management initiative, so we worked on helping you make things better setting a direction of our common growth: it is time to start pushing **15Five initiatives** further, starting with quick things like check-ins etc., and up to Career vision development and performance management meetings.

Appendix 6

Coaching culture model implementation follow up interview

Introduction: Recently, we have initiated new P&C (People & Culture)-related practices. Your feedback is essential now to help us understand what impact all of them have on your performance and wellbeing, if any.

1. To what extent were you willing to adopt the new practices within your team / own daily routine?

Weak market test - defining the extent to which managers were willing to apply changes

2. On the scale from 1-10 (10 being the highest extent), to what extent have you incorporated the coaching-related practices which were introduced 3 months ago?

Define the most efficient coaching culture practices

3. On the scale from 1-10 (10 being the highest extent), to what extent do you feel you personally have succeeded in integrating new practices in your work generally?

Define the most efficient coaching culture practices

4. Which initiatives do you find the most useful so far?

Define the most efficient coaching culture practices

5. Which initiatives do you find the least useful / helpful and why?

Define the least efficient / successful implementation-wise practices of coaching culture

6. What, in your opinion, has changed since the aforementioned practices were implemented?

Define the qualitative outcomes of the coaching culture implementation

7. How do you think the coaching culture can be enhanced further within your team in particular and the company generally?

Defining the areas of growth for the final coaching culture model development

8. What other related initiatives can you suggest to boost own, team or company-wide performance?

Finding out potential additional steps in the action plan for further nurturing of the coaching culture implementation

9. Do you think the practices introduced and implemented fit the coaching culture model presented initially? Why / why not?

Checking the appropriateness of the managerial practices related to the coaching culture model

Appendix 7

Follow-up interview answers

Team	Operations, Leadership	CEO, Leadership	Engineering, Leadership	People
Position	Chief Operation Officer	Chief Executive Officer	Head of Engineering	People Team Lead
To what extent were you willing to adopt the new practices within your team / own daily routine?	Fully willing to adopt new practices, a bit sceptical about initial practices suggested by the coaching culture model.	Fully willing to adopt.	Fully willing, yet a bit sceptical due to the following reasons: 1) the intense workload within the team; 2) specifics of the team's specialty: engineering professionals are usually less enthusiastic about people & culture matters.	Yes, fully, since the team has got a pure People focus (before it was a mixture of People & Operations), so establishing such practices were a good first step to encourage the change
On the scale from 1-10 (10 being the highest extent), to what extent have you incorporated the coaching-	The practices introduced: - 1-1s - Casual talks (coaching, personal matters), - Company-	The practices which were used and aligned with the coaching culture model: sharing	1) Agile methodology got more shape; 2) Technical sessions were introduced	The practices introduced: - Check-ins - 1-1s - Agile-like methodology - Performance management

related practices which were introduced 3 months ago?	wide surveys (through 15Five) - OKRs (+KPIs are taken more seriously) - Check-ins (+ pulse aspect) - Mentoring for oneself Overall scale: 8 (actively used)	decisions on a strategic level, having monthly review meetings Overall score: 7	as meetings for knowledge sharing; 3) 1-1s became more structured thanks to the summary emails which are generated automaticall y through 15Five. Overall score: 6	reviews Overall score: 6
On the scale from 1-10 (10 being the highest extent), to what extent do you feel you personally have succeeded in integrating new practices in your work generally?	Personal growth as a leader: empowering employees to make decisions - Mentoring - Conscious about no micromanag ement - Leadership literature Overall score: 9	Full engagement on a personal level with the introduced practices Overall score: 9	Fully engaged: applying various team management tactics, going through mentoring sessions Overall score: 9	Fully engaged as to encourage other teams become motivated to nurture the cultural model further Overall score: 9
Which initiatives do you find the most useful so far?	Check-ins, 1-1s, career-growth-focused conversations	Check-ins, 1-1s	1-1s, Check-ins, agile methodology	1-1s, Performance management reviews
Which initiatives do you find the least useful / helpful and why?	None, ye some are challenging: career-growth conversations, since it addresses various	None, yet some are challenging: OKRs, company-wide surveys	Check-ins (frequency and in-depth)	Check-ins: the frequency could have been less and the content could be a bit different, more in-depth

	personality types			
What, in your opinion, has changed since the aforementioned practices were implemented?	• Surveys were quarterly - they became half-annual, timing to fill in also increased • Significant self-improvement of oneself as a manager: more self-consciousness, mentoring sessions	1-1s became more structured, the practices leadership team was using became adapted across teams	The team has started to test more practices and, having some key roles fulfilled, is aiming towards a better structure team-wise	The initial idea of applying just particular practices has become a big initiative. The team has switched to ClickUp for task management, looking to automate hiring process in order to pay more attention towards Performance Management practices
How do you think the coaching culture can be enhanced further within your team in particular and the company generally?	No particular preferences, building on top of that instead of changing. The only challenging initiative potentially is career planning (career vision and growth plan).	First the current practices need to get a solid foundation, then it's possible to address further initiatives.	Peer evaluation forms to encourage communication within the team.	The team has started to use more solution-driven approach, encourage employees to be owning the tasks and make decisions on their own up to a certain level.
What other related initiatives can you suggest to boost own,	Define ways to nurture connectivity within and across teams a	Nothing in particular.	Checking the engagement of the engineers through metrics-focused	Building a Wellbeing program, pushing more HR metrics in

team or company-wide performance?	bit more: interest clubs etc.		activities.	use when it comes to employee attraction, retention and performance.
Do you think the practices introduced and implemented fit the coaching culture model presented initially? Why / why not?	The initial idea has got a bigger and more solid initiative / direction of further growth.	It involved more activities on the way and, at some point, allowed the other team experience (and introduce more) practices that the leadership was testing before.	Yes, yet the team was following the current direction of evolvement on its own naturally.	Same as COO: the idea was received more support to become a bigger initiative, consequently becoming a more challenging thing to implement due to the increased complexity.

1. *Weak market test - defining the extent to which managers were willing to apply changes*

2. *Define the most efficient coaching culture practices*

3. *Define the most efficient coaching culture practices*

4. *Define the most efficient coaching culture practices*

5. *Define the least efficient / successful implementation-wise practices of coaching culture*

6. *Define the qualitative outcomes of the coaching culture implementation*

7. *Defining the areas of growth for the final coaching culture model development*

8. *Finding out potential additional steps in the action plan for further nurturing of the coaching culture implementation*

9. *Checking the appropriateness of the managerial practices related to the coaching model*