

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA
SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

MASTER'S THESIS

**HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT TRANSFORMATION
DURING START-UP GROWTH**

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AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HPWS – High-Performance Work Systems

HRM – Human Resource Management

KPI – Key performance indicators

INTRODUCTION

Human Resource Management (hereinafter: HRM) is an internal function within an organization, aiming to maximize employee performance to reach its strategic goals. Its department is primarily concerned with managing people within organizations, while keeping in line with the policies and systems in the organization (Luenendonk, 2019). According to Snell & Bohlander, HRM practices are divided into Human Resource planning, recruitment and selection strategy, training and development, performance management, compensation, and a few others. Although HRM is often thought to be what big companies and conglomerates can focus on, we will see that this is certainly not the case. Business performance is improved with HRM practices in family-friendly, equal-opportunity, and high-involvement management organizations (Boxall, Purcell & Wright, 2007). This is yet another reason for including HR practices in the beginning.

The term start-up stands for a small business that has just been started. However, start-ups are very unique. It is hard to find a definition that would suit all the different types. Some define a start-up as a company designed to grow fast (Graham, 2012), while others describe it as a “temporary organization, used to search for a repeatable and scalable business model” (Blank, 2013). However, these are not the only two possible definitions. Even though they are very different, most start-ups encounter certain growth phases. The first stage is when one or multiple founders have an idea and the goal is to test the prototype with potential customers. In this phase, they develop a growth trajectory, get funded, and make the actual product. The second phase starts when the product is already being sold to many customers. In this phase, the company needs to define its goals as well as the company culture, job functions, and hiring process (Cohan, 2019). The third phase is called scaling. The owners ask themselves how to accelerate growth - whether through the release of new products, coverage of new markets and segments, or any other form of acceleration of customer acquisition (Maurya, 2014). Keeping a dynamic company culture gets more challenging with every new employee (Robehmed, 2013).

Traditional HR practices offer a beneficial framework, however, small organizations, such as start-ups, manage people differently in more ways than one. If we want to have excellent business performance in the long run, investing in people always is always a good decision to make. No matter if the company is big or small, the product or operations can be copied, while great employees cannot be. Human capital is a term that shows us how much knowledge, skills, and capabilities individuals bring towards an organization's economic value. Human capital presents intangible assets and does not show in the company's balance sheets, but it does have an enormous impact on an organization's performance (Snell & Bohlander, 2013, p. 4–6).

This master's thesis aims to describe how Human Resource practices change during the growth of start-up companies. We will present theoretical approaches and apply and connect them with actual processes in some Slovenian start-ups.

The aim of our research is to define the changes regarding HRM, organizational structure, and culture that occur during the start-up growth. The existing literature offers a useful framework but still leaves much space for further research. HRM practices in start-up companies are still a bit mysterious, meaning there has not been as much research done as there is on HRM practices in bigger companies. The purpose of our master's thesis is to offer one new view on HRM practices that Slovenian start-ups have experienced and used throughout their growth.

Our research is divided into two divisions. In order to set the right research questions, we first studied the existing literature on start-ups, HRM, organizational structure, and culture in small companies. The latter two are part of Human Resource processes, but, in our opinion still deserve more in-depth research. After we read and studied the literature, we set the following research questions.

RQ1: How much focus was on HRM practices in the beginning?

RQ2: What are the differences between HRM practices applied in the beginning of an entrepreneurial journey and those applied now?

RQ3: What kind of changes occurred in the organizational structure during the growth?

RQ4: Were start-ups able to maintain their culture from the beginning through growth?

Our fundamental hypothesis is that Human Resources are still a bit neglected in the early phases of the start-up life cycle. On the other hand, culture at the beginning is more relaxed and rewarding for the employees, but tightens up as the start-up grows. We will see whether our hypothesis is correct or wrong when we get real-life experiences and examples through interviews.

1 START-UPS

As the focus of this thesis is to study how HRM practices change through start-up growth, it is necessary to first define what a start-up is as well as the main concepts around it. Start-ups are very different and unique, which makes it hard to find a definition that suits them all. This chapter highlights the main concepts that will be relevant to our empirical research.

1.1 Definition of a start-up

A start-up is defined as “a small business that has just been started.” (START-UP, no date). Graham's (2012) explanation of a start-up, offers another point of view. He defines a start-up as a company designed to grow fast. In his opinion, being newly founded does not mean the company is a start-up. The only essential attribute is growth. For example, a new barbershop is not a start-up because it is not designed and established to grow fast. In order

to grow really large, a company has to make something that people really want and then reach and serve all those people. This is why barbershops fail to grow really big – they cannot serve all people who need a haircut. In contrast to these two definitions, some founders object that start-ups represent a culture that is not delineated by metrics and that neither the age nor the size of the company matter (Robehmed, 2013).

Many start-up community members agree that a start-up is a state of mind. It is about working hard and fast to create new ways of working or living. It is mostly about the company culture, where start-ups try to differentiate themselves from traditional businesses and claim that this will give them an edge (Ireland, 2015).

Eric Ries (2011), entrepreneur and creator of the Lean Startup methodology, agrees. In his opinion, the definition of a start-up does not say anything about the size of the company or what kind of industry the company operates in. His definition of a start-up is “a human institution designed to create something new under the conditions of extreme uncertainty”.

His colleague, Steve Blank (2011), who is an early adopter of the lean methodology, also has his own definition of a start-up. The meaning of a start-up, in his words, is “a temporary organization, used to search for a repeatable and scalable business model”. Searching means that one does not know what the answer is, so they have to have people who are comfortable dealing with the unknown. The final goal of a start-up, in his opinion, is to get to a point where you can have a repeatable and scalable process within the company.

There is no universally accepted definition of what a start-up really is. As we can see, there are so many different interpretations of the word start-up; therefore, it is hard to define when a company stops being one. Blank (2011), whose definition is that a start-up is an organization searching for a business model, says that once the start-up has tweaked and pivoted to understand the value proposition, channels, customer segments, resources, established repeated sales, and executed that business model; it becomes a business.

Another point of view is shared by TechCrunch writer Alex Wilhelm, who developed the 50-100-500 rule. The rule says that if your company has or exceeds the following criteria, it is not a start-up anymore. The first number stands for 50 million dollars in revenues per year, the second number means you have 100 or more employees, and the last number represents the worth of the company. Therefore, in his opinion, if a company has more than 50 million dollars in revenues per year, more than 100 employees, and is worth more than 50 million dollars, it is not considered a start-up anymore (Wilhelm, 2014).

Another point of view comes from Forbes' writer, Robehmed (2013). In her opinion, the transition from being a start-up to becoming a business coincides with factors such as acquisition by a larger company, revenues greater than 20 million dollars, more than one office, and more than 80 employees.

Perhaps we cannot derive an absolute rule from these definitions, but we can identify some tendencies. What is common to all the start-ups, is that they want to grow fast and that they create a certain kind of environment within the company. A mission to disrupt, change, or enhance the traditional mindset of the industry, is a common goal of most start-ups, regardless of the industry they are in (Ireland, 2015). Despite these tendencies, we think it is up to each start-up or each individual to define their business however they want.

1.2 Types of start-ups

There are multiple parameters by which we can categorize start-ups in general. We can divide them by the number of employees, what industry they operate in, what kind of business model they have, what stage they are in, etc. Each one of those categories gives us a different insight. Blank (2013) divides them into six varieties. The biggest differences between all of these types are their strategies, funding, financial goals, and the types of teams they require.

Lifestyle

Lifestyle start-ups are the ones where entrepreneurs work to fulfill their passion. Their focus is not to rapidly grow and generate large profits but rather to achieve the work-life balance on their own terms. Owners of such companies can make their own choices based on their lifestyle preferences because they do not necessarily worry about aggressively increasing revenue (Dresdale, 2017). Such companies are not likely to become fast-growing with many employees, but rather provide a rewarding lifestyle to the owner (StartupDecisions, no date).

Small business

Contrary to Robehmed's (2013) opinion, small business start-ups include grocery stores, hairdressers, travel agents, electricians, etc. They are made with the purpose of making something on their own that will support them and their family. This type of business is not primarily made for scaling.

Scalable

Scalable start-ups are the ones that are born to be big, such as Google, Twitter, and Facebook. The main interest of these companies is to create equity that will eventually generate a giant payoff. Scalable means that the business has the potential to multiply revenue with minimal incremental cost. Such start-ups are attractive to investors when they already have a validated product and business model (Zwilling, 2013). Owners of such companies believe their creations can change the world.

Buyable

Buyable start-ups are the ones that are usually sold to larger companies in the niche. Such companies create something from scratch, and when they become successful, they attract larger companies to acquire them. Their goal is not to create a billion-dollar company, but rather to create some value and then sell it.

Social

Social start-ups are similar to the lifestyle and small business type of start-ups, which are not made to scale or gain high profits, but rather to make a difference in the world. These are usually made by passionate entrepreneurs who want to make the world a better place. Most of the time, they are non-profit, for-profit, or hybrid organizations.

Inside a large company

Large companies need continuous innovation in order to keep growing and stay current on the market. We live in an age where innovation is crucial. Corporate leaders must respond in order to stay current in the competitive market (Viki, Toma & Gons, 2017). One way of doing this is launching a start-up within an established company.

The main advantages consist of less financial constraints, less risk, already established infrastructure such as Human Resource Management and accounting offices, established distribution channels, and a head-start in the market because the brand is already well-known. Of course, it is much harder to create a start-up culture within a corporation, in addition to bringing other problems, such as excessive control from a senior executive, which can make it hard to move quickly and creates more bureaucracy (Morettini, 2018).

1.3 The lean start-up

A lean start-up is a new approach to business model development. Both, Ries and Blank, are changing the traditional view on entrepreneurship. With the lean methodology, start-ups develop their business model by experimenting, planning, and getting feedback from their customers (Ries, 2011a). In contrast to the traditional method of business development, where the entrepreneur should first prepare a business plan, in which one should analyze the market and make a strategy for the forthcoming years, the lean start-up methodology has three stages of development (Blank & Dorf, 2012):

1. Business model design: The first step is called the market fit. It is about defining the key customers, regulators, and stakeholders, and figuring out their needs. Finding out who the customer is and what we are building, are two of the most important things.
2. Customer development: Secondly, test the hypotheses; not just by saying: here is the product, is it marketable - this is selling. It is important to get out and try to understand deeply what the customer problems are, what their needs are, and what kind of a solution might actually solve these problems. This is how minimum viable products are built.

3. Agile engineering: Building the product incrementally and iteratively – it is important to use agile engineering instead of building the whole product and then finding out people do not want it. This means that the product gets tested in each phase in order to gather feedback and adapt it promptly.

To sum up, the lean methodology focuses on an iterative approach, with improvement in each step, and considering the customer feedback as soon as possible. This means reducing waste in the process of building a start-up. The goal is not necessarily to pursue the initial plan but to find a plan that works before running out of resources (Maurya, 2014).

1.4 The life cycle of start-ups

Bill Gross (2015), who is a founder of multiple start-ups, researched what the key factors for start-ups are in order to succeed. He gathered data from more than a hundred different companies and ranked each one of them by five key factors. Those factors are ideas, the team, business model, funding, and timing. The factor that accounted for most of the company's success, was timing. Consumers need to be ready for what start-ups have to offer them. Timing accounted for 42% of the difference between success and failure. Team and execution came in second, then the idea in third place, the business model in fourth, and funding took the last place.

Each start-up is unique and has a different path. However, there are some growth phases that most start-ups encounter. Paul Graham (2012) divides the growth of successful start-ups into three phases: The first phase is the one where the start-up has slow growth or no growth at all. They are still trying to figure out what they are doing. The second phase is a period of rapid growth. In this phase, the start-up figures out how to create something that people want and how to reach them. And the last phase is when it successfully turns into a big company and the growth slows down.

Another definition of start-up phases is from the author Peter S. Cohan (2019). He defines the four stages of a start-up. The first stage is called “Winning the first customers.” At this point, the founder already has an idea but no employees, partners, or investors. This is the time when they build a prototype and test it out on potential customers. The goal is to get feedback on the product and try to build a better version. This should be iterated until the start-up has its first customer. When they reach this goal, they should start to seek out seed investment. In this first step, a growth trajectory should be developed, as well as the company's culture, job functions, and hiring process should be defined.

The second stage is called “Building a scalable business model”. In this stage, the company is already selling the product to many customers. Clear choices must be made about the goals of the company and how to achieve them. This is also the point where the owner should seek capital from investors that can help prepare for the rapid growth of the company. The third stage of the company is called “Sprinting to Liquidity”. This is the stage where the company

needs to build a global growth trajectory with the goal of expanding rapidly. Specific revenue goals must be set and more capital should be raised. At this point, the company should go global, so global jobs and global culture must be defined, as well as an international hiring and monitoring process. The last stage, called “Running the Marathon,” is the point where the company is already growing rapidly and the CEO’s goal is to keep it that way. The ambitious goal of the company should be set as well as a long-term strategic plan that includes the company’s annual budgets, financial targets, and strategic initiatives.

Since most start-ups nowadays follow the lean methodology, it is quite relevant to also consider the definition of start-up phases from Ash Maurya (2014), entrepreneur, author, and advocate for the lean methodology. He defines three stages of a start-up. The first stage is the problem/solution fit when the founders are asking themselves if they have a problem worth solving, and if they can actually solve it. They are also considering if this is something customers actually want and if they will pay for it.

The second stage is called the product/market fit. In this stage, the start-up already has a product, and they are wondering if they have built something people want. They need to test out their solution on actual customers and try to sell it on the market. Once they validate their product on the market, they reach the third and last phase. This phase is called scaling. The owners ask themselves how to accelerate growth.

Since we are doing our research on Slovenian start-ups, the classification of start-up stages from The Slovene Enterprise Fund might also be relevant. They divide start-up development into 4 phases: the first is product development, the second is market entry, the third is fast global growth, and the fourth is further growth and current operations (Slovenski podjetniški sklad, no date).

To have a better perspective, we have put all the definitions in an overview table below (Table 1).

Table 1: Overview of start-up phases defined by different authors

Author	Phases
Paul Graham	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Slow growth/no growth at all 2. Rapid growth period 3. Start-up turns into a big company and growth slows down
Peter S. Cohen	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Winning the first customers 2. Building a scalable business model 3. Sprinting to liquidity 4. Running the marathon

table continues

Table 1: Overview of start-up phases defined by different authors (con.)

Author	Phases
Ash Maurya	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Problem/solution fit 2. Product/market fit 3. Scaling
The Slovene Enterprise Fund	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Product development 2. Market entry 3. Global growth 4. Further growth

Source: Adapted from Graham (2012), Peter S. Cohan (2019), Ash Maurya (2014) and Slovenski podjetniški sklad (no date).

2 ORGANIZATION DESIGN

Organization design has five components: strategy, structure, culture, tasks, and systems. The culture of the company must support the organizational structure and the strategy. For example, if the outside environment is fast-changing, the organization must be adaptable and responsive; therefore, the company's culture should encourage flexibility. The performance of the organization can be increased if cultural values, strategy, and structure are aligned (Daft, 2016).

2.1 Organizational structure

Nowadays, organizations put more thought into organizational design. The old practice was far simpler and more spontaneous. It was all about having a simple structure that came naturally with the company's needs. Employees are much more efficient if the system supports their work, meaning that the design of the organization is aligned with its strategy (Galbraith, 2014).

Organizational structure is the relationship between various roles in an organization. It shows how roles are related and what each roles' responsibilities are. In addition, it illustrates the hierarchy between the roles within the company, showing the information flows between these levels and how the decision-making power is distributed (Kenton, 2020).

Daft (2016) divides the organizational structure into three parts. First are the formal assignments of employees and divisions of the company. The second are formal reporting relationships, the number of levels in the hierarchy, and decision-making control. The third is the organization's architecture, which makes sure the communication between departments is effective. The company structure can also be divided into tall and flat. This division is based on the span of control used in the organization, meaning how many employees have to report to a supervisor. A tall structure has a relatively large number of

hierarchical levels, while a flat structure has a broad span of control, meaning there are only a few hierarchical levels (Dimovski, Penger & Žnidaršič, 2005).

Organizations can either lean to decentralization or centralization. If the top management makes the decisions, this means the company is leaning towards centralization. On the other hand, if decisions are made by employees in the lower levels of the organization, the company is more decentralized. With decentralization, top-level management is relieved of the burden, and decisions are made by employees close to the action.

2.1.1 Organizational structure approaches

There are five different approaches (Daft, 2016) to structure design based on departmentalization, which describes how departments are grouped around jobs and then connected into an organization. The main difference between these approaches, is how employees are divided into departments and to whom they report.

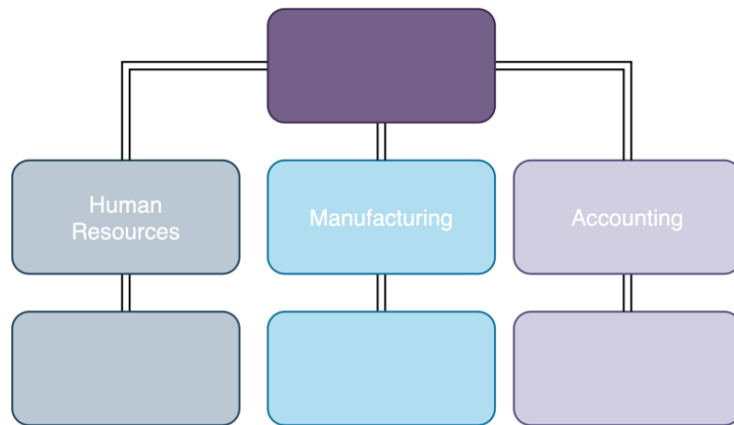
2.1.1.1 *Vertical functional structure*

This type of structure is strongly vertical. The top-level management makes the decisions, which are passed down the hierarchy. As shown in Figure 1, the departments in such a type are put together based on similar skills, tasks, and expertise. Each one of the departments represents particular means for carrying out the task of the organization (Ikeda, Ito & Sakamoto, 2010).

Examples of such departments are Marketing, Human Resources, Accounting, Manufacturing, etc. Each of them takes care of the tasks for the whole organization. For example, the accounting department takes care of all the financial matters of the entire company.

This type of structure permits economies of scale within the departments and enables the company to achieve its goals. However, in the case of environmental changes, this kind of structure might cause a slow response since everyone is separated into departments, so coordination and communication might be flawed. This type of structure is best when a company has one or only a few products (Daft, 2016).

Figure 1: Vertical functional structure



Source: Daft (2016).

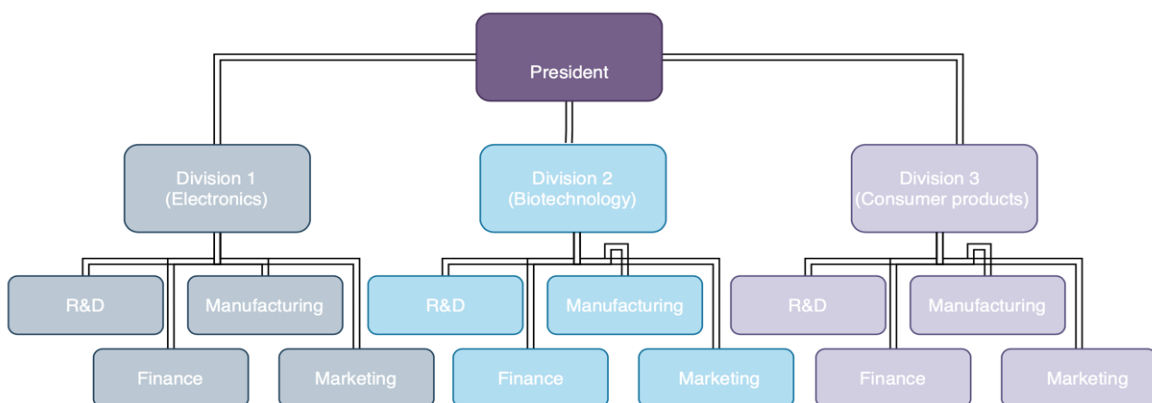
2.1.1.2 Divisional structure

Such organizations have divisions that are responsible for a single output, whether a product, service, or program. In contrast to the vertical structure, each division has its own functional departments; therefore, the same departments are duplicated across the divisions, making them self-contained. The structure is shown in Figure 2.

The control is pushed down to the lower levels, freeing up the top-level management for strategic planning. The top manager only jumps in if there is a disagreement or a failure of coordination.

This structure is often used when companies serve their customers from different regions or different customer groups. It makes the company responsive to changes and permits better communication within the divisions. Nevertheless, communication across the divisions is often poor, and costs might be high since resources are duplicated (Daft, 2016).

Figure 2: Divisional structure



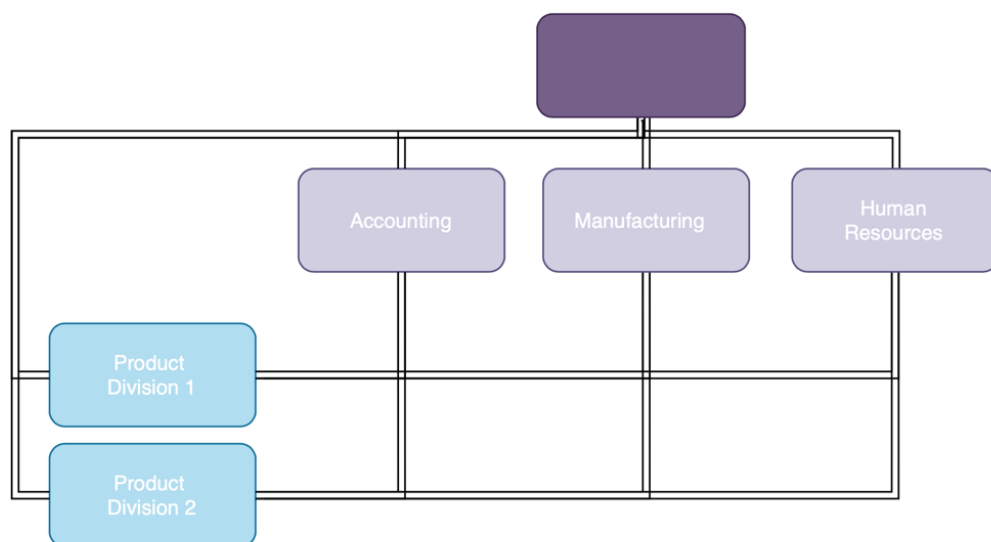
Source: Daft (2016).

2.1.1.3 Matrix

This approach is a combination of functional and divisional structures. It keeps the control from the functional approach and adds the communication from the horizontal. Therefore, the functional departments are not duplicated, but the coordination across them is efficient. This structure is shown in Figure 3. The downside is that some employees might have to report to two managers simultaneously, which can be confusing, frustrating, and time-consuming (Johnson McPhail, 2016).

Nevertheless, this type of structure assures the organization is adaptable, flexible, and innovative in a fast-changing environment. It fits in best with companies that have multiple products and are medium-sized (Daft, 2016).

Figure 3: Matrix structure



Source: Daft (2016).

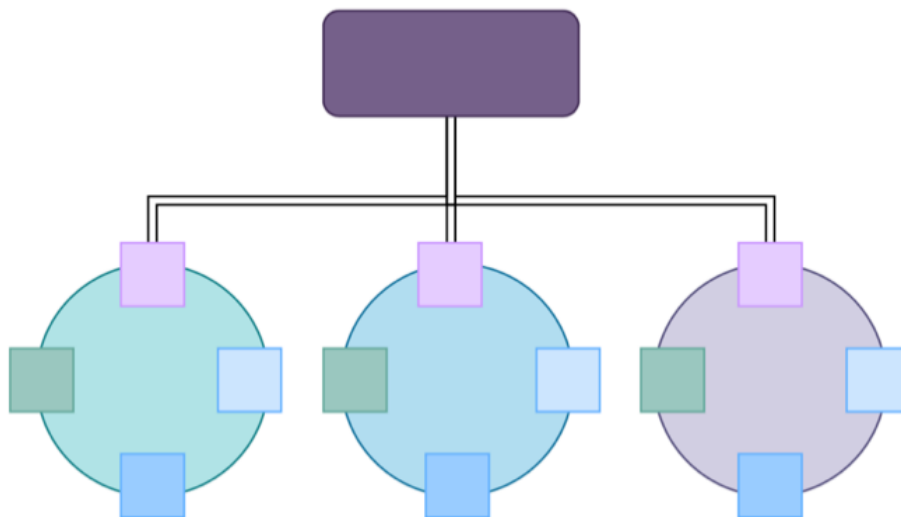
2.1.1.4 Team-based structure

Organizations that use the team approach, are made of horizontal teams, which can be cross-functional or permanent. This approach pushes the control down to the lowest management levels, making the company adaptable to the fast-changing and competitive environment.

As we can see in Figure 4, cross-functional teams are made up of employees from different departments, whose task is to find solutions to shared problems. Permanent teams are groups of employees from all functions who are assigned to a project or a task. It is similar to a formal department, but the highlight is on horizontal communication (Mohrman, Cohen & Morhman, 2016).

This approach is motivating for employees because they are part of the bigger picture. They are involved in larger projects, where they can make decisions and have a responsibility, and not merely doing the narrow tasks from their departments. However, some employees can make decisions that only benefit only group but are harmful to the organization as a whole (Daft, 2016).

Figure 4: Team-based structure



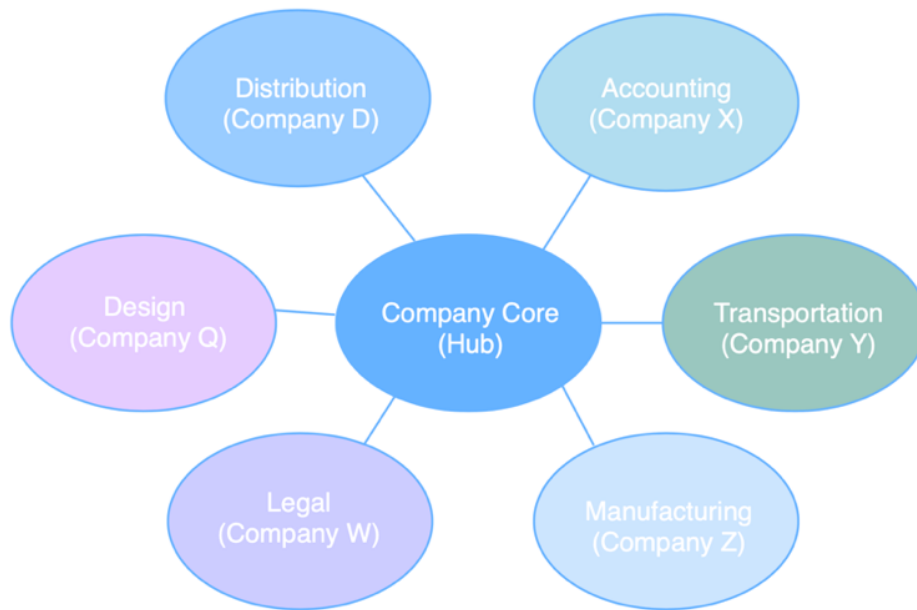
Source: Daft (2016).

2.1.1.5 Virtual network structure

The main concept behind the virtual network approach is outsourcing. Figure 5 visually represents this type of structure. The idea is that the company hires contractors to do the tasks that they find boring and time-consuming while they focus on the highly valued work. The organization can focus on what they do best and outsource the activities to companies who do them best.

The main challenge is not having control over the operations and employees. Managers have to spend a great deal of time communicating and negotiating with the contractors. However, this is the leanest form of an organization and it is extremely adaptable since it does not actually own any equipment or facilities (Daft, 2016).

Figure 5: Virtual network structure



Source: Daft (2016).

2.1.2 Strategy

In order to achieve the organization's goals, a strategy must be defined. Designing the strategy usually begins with the analysis of the environment. The analysis consists of the strengths and weaknesses of the competitors, which it bases its competitive advantage on. This is what sets the company apart from the competition. The structure of the organization is then built to support its strategy (Kim & Mauborgne, 2009).

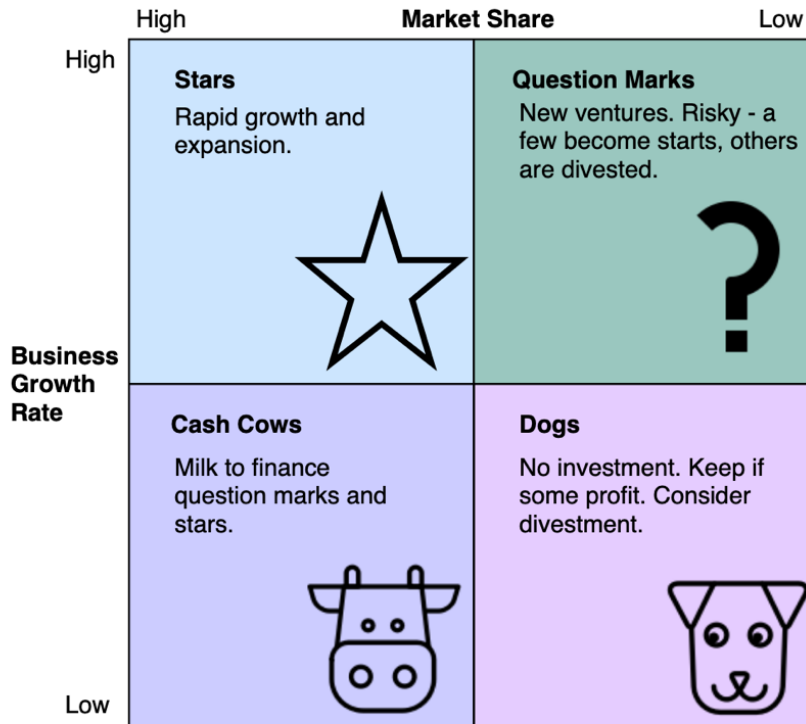
Daft (2016) defines three levels of strategy. One is on the corporate level, which refers to the company as a whole. The second is the business-level strategy, which refers to each product line or business unit within the company. The third is the functional-level strategy, which applies to the departments within the business units.

When developing a strategy, managers often start with the SWOT analysis, which stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It helps them understand the circumstances in their environment, both internal and external, that could affect the business performance (Daft, 2016).

2.1.2.1 Corporate-level strategy

There are three frameworks for the corporate-level strategy: the Boston Consulting Group (no date) matrix that is shown in Figure 6, the portfolio strategy, and the diversification strategy.

Figure 6: The BCG Matrix



Source: Boston Consulting Group (no date).

The portfolio strategy refers to a mixture of SBUs or strategic business units with a one-of-a-kind business mission, competitors, and product line. They enable a competitive advantage for the company.

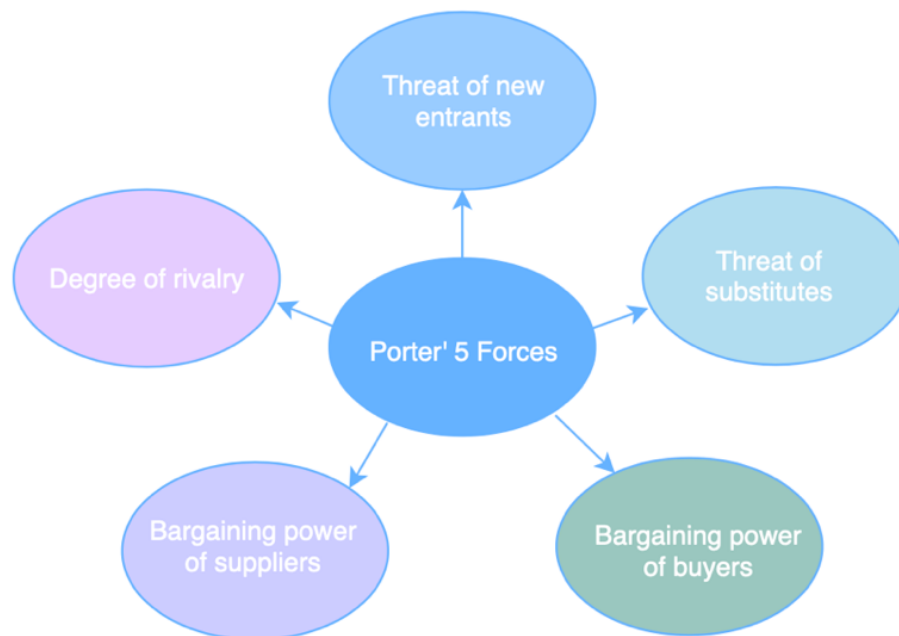
The BCG matrix evaluates businesses based on two aspects - market share and business growth rate. With the combination of low and high market share and low and high business growth, there are four categories for the company's portfolio. Rapid business growth and large market share form the star quadrant. It represents the activities that the company should invest in, for future growth and profits. On the other side, the activities with small market share and slow growth fall in the dogs quadrant. Such activities provide little revenue, therefore the dog is a poor performer. The question mark represents new business ventures that are risky, but could become stars or fail. The last quadrant is called cash cows, which has a slow growth, but has a large market share. These activities do not need large investments anymore, therefore the profits can be milked and used for the stars and question marks.

The diversification strategy is moving to new fields of business. It can be either related to diversification, which means moving in a new business segment that is related to the current activities, or it can be unrelated diversification, which means that the company expands into entirely new fields (Daft, 2016).

2.1.2.2 Business-level strategy

When formulating the strategy within the business units, we use Porter's (Porter, 1998), competitive strategy model. He presented five competitive forces in the company's environment, which managers can do a competitive analysis on, for each business unit. The model is shown in Figure 7. Potential new entrants to the market, buyers' bargaining power, suppliers' bargaining power, the threat of substitute products, and rivalry among the competitors are the five forces. Later on, the sixth force was added to the model. The sixth force are complementary products, looking at the role of similar products or services in the market.

Figure 7: Porter's Five Forces



Source: Porter (1998).

Seeking a significant advantage within the particular business environment, Porter suggests the company adopts one of the three strategies. The first is the differentiation strategy, with which managers strive to differentiate their goods and services from those on the market. They can achieve this by making innovative and unique products and advertisements, new technologies, or excellent service. With this strategy, they achieve customer loyalty since the substitute products on the market are not substitutes anymore.

The cost leadership strategy focuses on lowering the costs, undercutting the competitors' prices, and still offering a substitute product while making a profit. The former two strategies are used for a narrow target market. The focus strategy is focused on a specific (regional) market or group of buyers (Daft, 2016).

2.1.2.3 Functional-level strategy

In order to achieve the company's strategic goals, departments use functional-level strategies. These strategies are based on business-level strategies and are devised by managers (Daft, 2016).

2.1.2.4 Strategy execution

The last and most important step of strategic planning is execution. It is not hard to set a strategy, the hard part is following it. Some of the reasons for failed execution are employee resistance, manager behavior not supporting the new direction, and lack of resources. To avoid failure, everyone in the organization must accept and have a deep understanding of the company's new direction. Leaders must motivate people, shape the culture and values, as well as lead by example. The roles, measures and metrics need to be clearly defined. Communication lines need to be open, debates and honesty must be encouraged. Last but not least, Human Resource practices must be aligned with the strategy (Daft, 2016).

2.1.3 Start-up evolution

Start-ups usually begin with no particularly determined structure. The organization is usually more loosely structured, informal, and very fluid (Picken, 2017b). It is created around the processes, not around departmental functions. The essential work units are self-directed teams and a few traditional roles such as Finance or Human Resources (Daft, 2010).

When it comes to scaling, the company must transition from informal communication and decision-making processes to a more formal and professionally managed organization. Jobs and responsibilities in the beginnings of start-ups, are not clearly defined, as well as there is no control systems and accountability, only on-the-job training. The leaders are usually working directly with the employees. When organizations grow large and more complex, they have to transition to formal planning, such as defining responsibilities of different roles, goals, and measures for each position, as well as related rewards that are specified in advance. Clear profit goals, reports, and variances are all part of the formal planning of the company (Flamholtz & Randle, 2016).

The founders are usually generalists who are very flexible and can adjust their strategies to new information fast. When they find the so-called minimum viable product, is when they start to expand the team. In this stage, the start-up starts to evolve into an organization. From this point on, the growth starts, and the organization starts to move through different developmental stages. It is quite hard to obtain the initial structure while the company grows, and sometimes this change from one type to another can be resisted by the founders. It can be hard for them to let go of the original garage-like atmosphere where everything is more

informal. This kind of transition can be painful because founders sometimes need to be replaced as their company can grow out of their skills (Galbraith, 2014).

When this kind of transition occurs, it is usually due to growth and an increasing number of employees. With every new employee, the number of levels in the hierarchy increases, and communication becomes more challenging. Also, the roles of generalists are replaced by more specialists, who need to work together. The increase in employees brings all sorts of challenges for the company. One of them is communication, which can become a problem since the company becomes divided into many levels and departments (Daft, 2010).

This transition from a small company to a formal functional organization has two steps. The first step is the transformation to a formal system with impersonal control. When the number of people in the company grows above 100, it is hard to keep track of everything and know everyone; that is why processes need to be formal. The second step is transitioning from a centralized system to a more decentralized one. With the increasing number of new employees and new processes, it is not optimal that the founder has to approve everything.

2.1.4 Leadership

In order to lead a rapidly growing business, the skills required are quite different than those needed at the beginning of the start-up. In this transition, the founder must deal with operational and management challenges. Leadership skills, maturity, and domain knowledge are just a few of the necessary skills that the founders have to acquire in a short period of time, in order to lead the organization over the hurdles. The leader also has to cover multiple functions, hire and recruit the management team, create a supportive culture, gain fundamental resources, and handle various risks (Picken, 2017a). The management team is crucial in the organizational evolution. Their experience and competencies are the essential elements in building an organization (Picken, 2017b).

As mentioned before, the leader carries many tasks in the process of scaling, and quite often, the leader is the founder. That is why, after a period of time, founders sometimes realize that they cannot efficiently perform all the managerial functions (Martin, no date). 4 out of 5 founders are bound to step down from the CEO position (Wasserman, 2008).

Leadership is a mixture of personality traits, knowledge, and experience. The first burden they have to carry is choosing the right team, where they have to overlook their ego and hire the best culture fit, personality, as well as best expertise (Lidow, 2014).

The vision of the company can change through time, but the leader must always have a clear vision for the future. All employees look up to the leader, so setting a good example is crucial for their role. Besides transparent communication with the employees, qualities of a good leader include empathy, so they care about their employees' well-being, passion, communication skills, self-awareness, and respect (Burke, 2016).

A common misperception is that management is the same as leadership. The key difference between the two is that management encourages stability within the current organizational framework, which assures suppliers are handled, consumers are invoiced, goods are delivered on time, etc. On the other hand, leadership means challenging the status quo and taking risks to replace obsolete, ineffective, or socially irresponsible standards to address new challenges (Daft, 2016).

One cannot replace the other. Leadership is required to take the organization forward, and good management to fulfill the company's obligations. Leadership should be set up on the foundation of a well-managed company.

Authentic leadership is a popular concept in today's leadership. It emphasizes positive accomplishments over flaws and fosters employee trust, resulting in increased emotional safety and unconventional idea proposition. Being authentic implies being genuine, remaining true to one's principles and beliefs, and behaving in accordance with one's true self rather than imitating others. Authentic leaders inspire confidence and engagement by respecting different points of view, encouraging collaboration, and assisting others in learning, growing, and developing as leaders (Luthans, Norman & Hughes, 2006).

There are five components of authentic leadership: authentic leaders demonstrate self-discipline, connect with others, lead with the heart and the head, pursue their purpose with passion, and practice solid values (Daft, 2016).

A study on authentic leadership, creativity, and innovation (Černe, Jaklič & Škerlavaj, 2013) showed that there is a strong correlation between those. Authentic leaders affect their employees' individual creativity and innovation, which leads to better team performance.

2.1.5 Defining roles

Founders of a start-up will often fill many roles in the company in order to save money. Through growth, it is important for the founders to look at their position and evaluate if they have all the skills for it. If not, it is essential for them to create and define new job positions. Usually, in this case, new specialized roles are created, so generalists are replaced by functional specialists (Picken, 2017b). The functional specialists take the positions in the lower-level management, such as marketing financial managers, so the owners can focus on wider goals. When the new managers take their roles, a hierarchy structure has to be established in order to determine who reports to who and how the tasks are delegated (Forrest, 2015).

Most companies have similar managerial needs and responsibilities, no matter how different they are. Some of the typical roles include the director, someone in charge of sales and marketing, the operations manager, the financial manager, and the technology manager (Deeb, 2013).

Usually, the director of the company also has the title of Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Of course, this is not always the case. Sometimes the founder, who is also the CEO and director, can realize their skills are not sufficient to achieve the company's potential, so they hire a CEO from outside their company. Together with the founders, the CEO sets the long-term strategy and meets with all the potential investors and advisors.

The Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) or Chief Sales Officer (CSO) is in charge of all activities that are connected to marketing and sales. It is an essential role in a start-up because no matter how great the product is if no one sells it, there are no revenues, and the start-up cannot operate.

The Chief Operations Officer (COO) is responsible for all the operations in the company. The tasks include implementing business strategies, establishing policies that promote the company culture, and monitoring the company's performance.

The Chief Technology Officer (CTO) is in charge of all the technological resources in the company. Whether they are hiring IT specialists and engineers or overseeing several development teams, they are now, more than ever, a crucial element of most start-ups.

The last typical function is the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), who is in charge of all the finance and accounting, and makes the company's budgeting decisions.

We already mentioned that the start-up's team is more important than the idea itself (Gross, 2015). A study (Lazar, Miron-Spektor, Agarwal, Erez, Goldfarb & Chen, 2019) shows that most start-ups fail because of the team, not because of the product. The idea and the product are most likely to change as they develop, so it is on the founding team to hold it together through all the changes and uncertainty.

We mentioned the traditional key positions in a company, but in start-ups, the roles are usually distributed between the founding team members, based on their background and skills (Gaskell, 2020).

2.2 Culture

Structure and strategy both need to be supported by the corporate culture to be effective within its environment. Culture refers to the values, norms, and beliefs that guide people's actions in the organization (Gaskell, 2020). It is also used to teach new members how to behave, think and feel. Culture is the part of the company that is not written down, but all members participate in. The power of culture only comes to the surface when managers try to implement strategies that go against the company's cultural norms (Daft, 2010).

Organizational culture is divided into two levels; the observable and the underlying. The observable is the dress code, the behavior of the employees, the symbols, values and stories.

On the other side, there are underlying values, beliefs, and assumptions. Together they form the true culture of a company (Mallak, 2001).

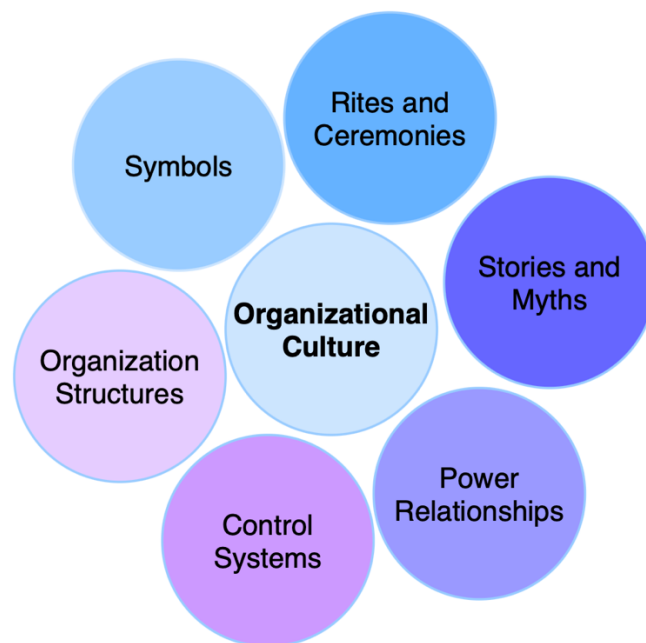
Culture usually starts with the founders' visions, philosophy, or business strategy. It has two vital functions: incorporating employees, so they know how to behave, communicate and work with each other, and help the organization respond to the external environment - customer needs or the competitors' moves.

The company culture is also important when it comes to decision making - when there are no rules or policies, culture can guide employees to know how to react.

2.2.1 Aspects of organizational culture

According to Daft (2010), there are six observable aspects of organizational culture shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Observable Aspects of Organizational Culture



Source: Daft (2010).

2.2.1.1 Rites and ceremonies

Rites and ceremonies are the events that are planned to show what the company values are. Not only do these situations strengthen the values, but they also create a bond between employees. An example of a rite is Wal-Mart employees cheering whenever an executive visits one of the stores. It strengthens the bonds between employees.

2.2.1.2 Stories and myths

Stories and myths are the second type of observable aspects of culture. Stories are based on real events and they talk about the so-called company heroes that acted in accordance with the cultural norms and values. They are told often to the new employees to inform them about the company. Some stories might be considered legends since they include some fictional details. Some of the stories are entirely made up, but they consist of the company's values and beliefs. These are called myths, and they keep the organization's values alive. An example of a story told at the Ritz-Carlton hotels, is about an employee who went out of his way to serve a customer. It symbolizes the value of Ritz-Carlton, which is going above and beyond for customer satisfaction.

2.2.1.3 Symbols

Symbols are tools for interpreting the culture. An example would be an agency that has no doors or private offices. It symbolizes the values of open communication and equality.

2.2.1.4 Organizational structures

Organizational structures can also be a result of culture. The form of the departments, flexibility, and independence of employees tells a lot about the company's culture. For example, Nordstrom has a unique organizational chart, which shows how upper levels actually support the lower levels and empower them, rather than just having control over them.

2.2.1.5 Power relationships

Power relationships are understanding who has the power in the company. One extreme can be a company with separate offices, restrooms, and dining rooms for senior executives and the lower levels. The other extreme example is a company where there are no bosses and only a few titles. Power is not based on the position, but leaders naturally emerge.

2.2.1.6 Control systems

The final element is the control systems. It is primarily how the organization operates - how information travels, how quality is assured, the reward systems, the decision-making processes, etc. An example would be Netflix's policy, which lets employees make their own choices about the compensation and vacation days.

The leaders use these visible behaviors and artifacts to shape the company values and strengthen the culture.

2.2.2 Types of cultures

Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) have developed the Competing Values Framework, a theoretical model developed to identify the factors of organizational effectiveness. It is based on two dimensions. The first one is related to the organization's focus - internal, focusing on the employees' development and well-being, or external orientation, therefore focusing on the market and their competitors.

The second dimension focuses on flexibility. It is either a flexible attitude so they can adapt to the changing environment or stability, where everything is planned and structured.

With the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument, which is based on the Competing Values Framework, companies can analyze their company culture.

Cameron and Quinn (2011) described the four main culture types, but none of them is considered the ultimate best. Each type is best in a domain that aligns with its values.

Adhocracy culture is also known as the "create culture," stating that the working environment is creative and dynamic. Experimenting, failing, and learning from mistakes is typical for companies with such a culture. They are agile and can handle risk and change. The leaders are seen as innovative, visionary, and risk-taking. Start-ups are the spot-on example for such a culture.

Clan culture is also known as collaborative culture, it usually appears in sectors like health care and education. The organization's values are communication, development, and commitment. The environment is friendly, and the leaders are seen as mentors and team builders.

Hierarchy type of culture is highly formalized and is also known as the control culture. The emphasis is on the rules and policies, which keep the organization efficient and organized. Typical sectors that adopt this culture are the government, military, banking, and transportation.

The last type is called market culture, as well as compete for culture. The driver of this type is the focus on the goal. Getting things done, achieving goals, making fast decisions, and delivering results are just a few characteristics of such companies. Leaders are competitive and hard-driving, as well as demanding. This culture is typical in consultant agencies, sales and marketing companies, and accountancy firms.

2.2.3 Culture in start-ups

Any of these four cultures can be adopted by a start-up. Entrepreneurs often adopt the adhocracy culture since it is all about agility and risk-taking, which is what start-ups usually encounter (Cameron & Quinn, 2011).

When a start-up is growing, culture guides people to respond to threats and opportunities and act independently. As mentioned before, start-ups can communicate their culture through values and stories of how these values take part in benefiting their customers, partners, and investors.

The author Peter S. Cohan (2019) observed four common types of culture in start-ups. The first type is customer-focused culture. This kind of culture in a company focuses on creating customer benefits at a low cost. A start-up with such a culture seeks employees who are innovative and motivated to develop new products in order to obtain their customers.

The second type of company culture is performance-driven. Everyone has a specific goal, and it is expected that they exceed the performance targets consistently. In such companies, the focus is on revenue growth, and employees that meet these goals are rewarded, while others are fired. This type of culture can have negative side effects, one being high employee turnover.

The third type is called employee-focused culture. As the name says, the main focus is the employees. Companies with such a culture hire people who are willing to develop their skills in order to carry greater responsibilities. Employees can have a good work-life balance, and they receive substantial bonuses from the revenues of the firm. The con of such a culture is the risk of investing in your employees' knowledge and then losing them to your rivals. The last type is companies that have no articulated culture. The CEO has exceptional technical skills but does not have any leadership skills. If he or she is able to motivate a technical team to make products that bring revenue, culture does not even need to be articulated. But it is hard to scale such start-ups if a new CEO with good leadership skills does not join.

Start-ups tend to have their hands full when building a product and concentrating on their customer acquisition and growth. That is why they might overlook the importance of their culture. Little do they know, they already have a culture, which is heavily influenced by the founders of the company. When start-ups fail, one of the biggest factors is leadership or management, which can be caused by poor team composition or incompetence, which can be associated directly with culture. This is why early-stage start-ups have to nurture and understand their company culture (Burke, 2016).

There are measures the founders can take in order to nurture their start-up culture from the very beginning and through growth. First of all, it is necessary to understand the company's purpose. This is the foundation on which values are then defined (Burke, 2016). According to Cohan, there are six steps in creating the company's culture.

The founders' values may be the basis for the current success; therefore, the first step is to look at the existing values. The next step is to evaluate if these values also motivate the workers to create value for their customers. And once the values are validated, they have to be articulated. Four to six values should be written down by the founder in order to get feedback, improve them and then use them to shape employee behavior (Cohan, 2019).

Once the values are finalized, stories should be created, make it clear what these values mean and what kind of behavior each value symbolizes. The purpose of the stories is for them to be told to new employees because it is much easier to understand and remember things through good stories (Cohan, 2019).

The CEO is the role model of the company therefore they must behave in accordance with the determined values. That is how employees will realize they must take actions that are consistent with the company's values. The values should be used in the hiring, firing, and promoting processes as well. Rewarding individuals who act according to the values and letting go of the ones who oppose them, is a good practice to build the company culture. The last step is for the company to make sure that everyone in the company understands the values, especially when new employees are joining the firm. The CEO should put in the effort to keep the culture alive and reshaping it if needed (Cohan, 2019).

Company values need to be adopted by the employees. If they exist only in a corporate document, everyone will forget about them, so another approach has to be taken at this point. We have to assure they will be adopted, and we can achieve this by printing them out and placing them in significant spots around the office, or publishing them in the internal communication systems. There are, of course, multiple ways of achieving this, and each company has its own approach. The goal is to find a way for the values not to be forgotten (Burke, 2016).

2.2.4 Employing the cultural fit

Having a set of values that explain what the founders and management team hold as important, is necessarily incorporated in the hiring process. They should be displayed on the website or included in the job posts, so applicants immediately know and understand them. During the interviews of potential new employees, it is important to ask questions that determine the candidate's values and personality. The purpose is to find out if they are a good cultural fit. Culture fit is the probability that an individual will be able to adhere to the core values and collective behaviors of the company. It does not necessarily mean that they have to be similar to the leaders - quite the contrary, diversity is important (Blumberg, 2013).

However, it is better to hire someone, who seems like a good fit for the team, but needs some training with their skills, rather than someone with a great skill set but does not seem to fit in the culture. Bringing the cultural fit to the recruitment process will help employ people who will be happy in the environment and are more likely to stay longer in the company. Hiring someone purely on their skills will result in dissatisfaction with their role, they will not adhere to the company values, and they might end up leaving the company (Burke, 2016).

An online shoe retailer called Zappos (Bergeron, 2020) is well-known for its culture and emphasis on customer service. In their hiring process, they focus 50 percent on potential employees' skills and 50 percent on the cultural fit. Cultural fit at Zappos is based on ten

core values: being fun and weird, being passionate, impressing customers with service, and embracing change. The age, gender, race, or grades do not matter at all for the cultural fit. Their philosophy is hiring the right people is crucial to creating a good working environment. That is why they only onboard candidates who they think will protect their culture.

2.2.5 Retaining the company culture

Keeping a dynamic culture gets harder with every new employee (Bergeron, 2020). In the case of Outfit7, original employees started complaining about the cultural changes when the company hit 100 employees. The culture changed, but it was not bad, just different. They set 5 core values, which the staff manifests and uses to describe the company daily. The values are displayed on their shirts, posters on the office walls, their website, which makes the employees highly aware of them and act accordingly. They are also very focused on cultural fit when hiring – using psychological profiling and intensive onboarding of employees, which leads to high awareness of the values among employees and overall really good company culture (Škerlavaj, Harrison & Vavpotič 2019).

When a founder is also a CEO, it sometimes turns out that they are not competent for this position. When they give their position to a new CEO, the culture of the company might change. The founder's values and beliefs shape the culture, and if it has brought success in the previous efforts, it can stay the same, but if it turns out it did not, there is a need for change. It is quite challenging to change an existing culture, especially when there already are some company employees (Javitch, 2004).

In order to sustain the company's culture through growth, leaders must take action. One of the ways that we already mentioned, is to be aware of the company culture when hiring. Even if the new employees are highly qualified for the position, but they will not fit in with others, they should not be hired. In this way, the company culture will be preserved.

Another way of doing that, is to maintain the small traditions, no matter how big the company gets. Employee contributions and achievements need to be recognized as well. Whether it is a birthday celebration, significant milestones, or an anniversary, all these small things will make employees feel appreciated, and it will show that the company leaders care. Keeping the company culture alive during growth will not happen by itself, so conscious effort by the leader must be made (Power, 2017).

3 HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN START-UPS

Understanding of Human Resources (HR) in companies goes beyond Human Resource Management (hereinafter: HRM) personnel. If you want to have a great business performance in the long run, investing in people always turns out as an investment worth

making. No matter if you are a big or a small company, your product or operations can be copied, while great employees cannot be. Human capital is a term that shows us how much knowledge, skills, and capabilities individuals bring towards the economic value of an organization. It presents intangible assets and does not show in the company's balance sheets, but does have an enormous impact on an organization's performance (Snell & Bohlander, 2012).

Human Resource Management is an internal function within an organization to maximize employee performance for reaching the company's strategic goals. Its department is primarily concerned with managing people within organizations, while keeping in line with the policies and systems in the organization (Luenendonk, 2019).

Although HRM is often thought to be something that big companies and conglomerates can focus on, we will see that this is certainly not the case. Start-ups and small companies should not put HRM aside, and think of it as something that comes later in the process of developing and growing.

There are many HR practices applicable and relevant for start-ups, and based on Johnson (2019) these are the practices that can help you survive during growth. The first one is to be careful when imposing current office culture into new offices when expanding. Rather than forcing monoculture, you should encourage new employees to show their unique culture that could lead to a more diverse way of approaching problems and looking for solutions.

The second important thing is to be realistic about what you can offer as a company during the hiring process. The competition for talent is huge, especially in the technology space. However, be mindful of what kind of benefits you offer in the beginning, as it is much easier to increase bonuses and perks than it is to decrease them.

The next important challenge for young companies, is to put enough focus on business operations, even though everything seems to be focused around the product in the beginning. In order to scale and further develop the business, you need a good organizational structure, which is crucial for long – term success of a start-up. Last but not least; plan ahead. Think about how your workplace will look like in the future, and what kind of technological tools you need to support that.

The framework for this chapter is based on traditional HR practices. We divided it into some foundation categories based on books that write about HRM. We then included some differences and additional aspects that are relevant for HRM in start-ups. That way, we can see how the practices and strategies differentiate one from another, but also that in their core they come from the same idea and follow similar goals.

3.1 HRM goals

The goals of HRM are usually implicit, where only large companies have more formal and explicit goals for their HR strategy. In the late 1980s, the biggest framework for HRM was done by Harvard. This framework encouraged companies to set their own HRM goals based on their stakeholder interest and situational factors such as workforce characteristics, business strategy, technology, and laws. Outcomes from this goal-setting framework, are supposed to be cost-effective, reach the commitment of the employees, and organizational effectiveness as well as well-being on an individual level in the long-term (Boxall, Purcell & Wright, 2007).

HRM goal-setting outcomes are economic and socio-political. The critical task in the early growth phase of company development, is to ensure a cost-efficient labor management system that can be altered with growth (Boxall, Purcell & Wright, 2007). In the other subchapters we will see that the element of flexibility is one of the most important in the start-up environment, as they grow quickly and need to be flexible with all the HR practices they use.

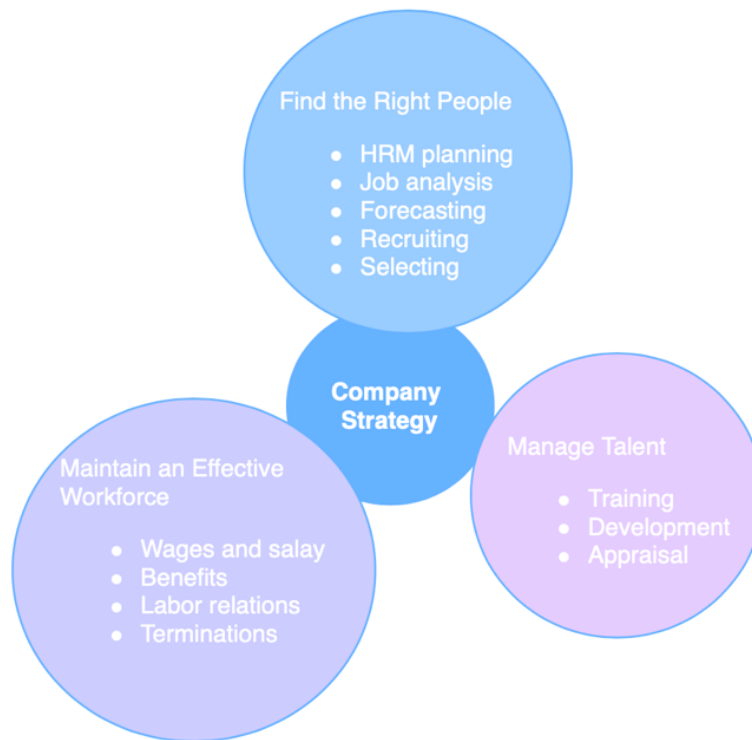
3.2 Strategic Management and HRM

Human Resource Management is very much connected with Strategic Management. Strategic planning for Human Resources is the process of anticipating and providing for the movement of the people in, out, and within the company. Furthermore, it involves a set of decisions regarding the organization's long-term goals and strategies. The connection made between strategic planning and Human Resource planning is essential, and every good Human Resource manager should know that (Snell & Bohlander, 2012).

3.2.1 The strategic role of HRM

There are three key elements in the strategic approach towards HRM. All three of them are connected with the company strategy as you can see in the Figure 8 below. It is important that managers are involved with the process, and that employees are treated as an asset of the company. They present a competitive advantage and should be treated as such. All strategic decisions, from finding the right people to managing talent and maintaining an effective workforce together, should be aligned with the company strategy (Lesser & Hoffman, 2012).

Figure 9: Strategic Human Resource Management



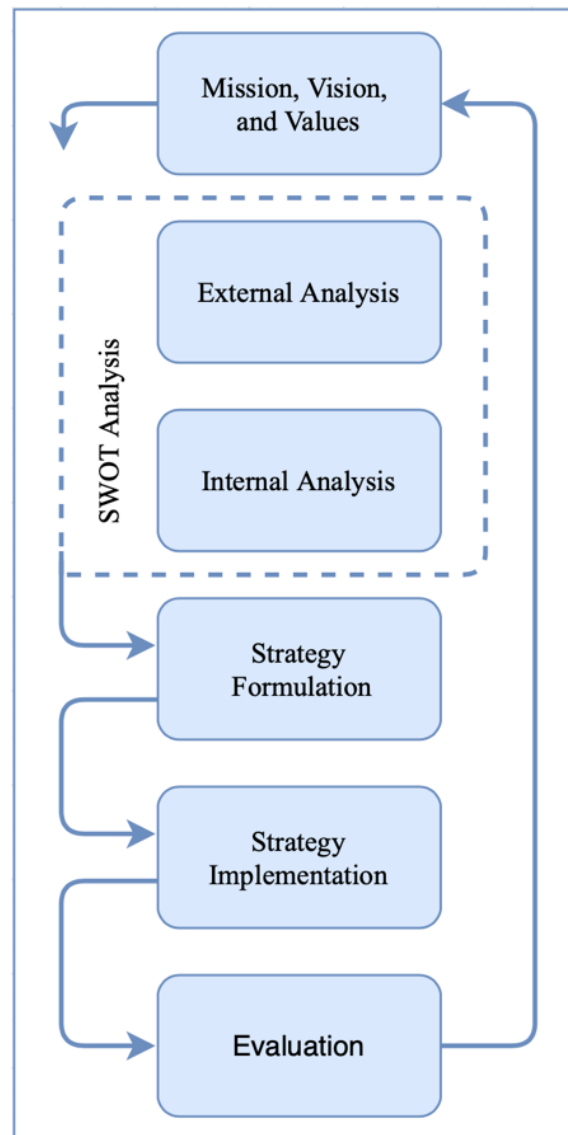
Source: Daft (2016).

3.2.2 Strategic planning and Human Resources

According to Daft (2014), HR planning is forecasting the needs of HR and matching individuals with potential vacancies. As we can see in Figure 9 below, strategic planning starts by establishing a mission, a vision, and values for the organization. Having a vision is strongly connected to the founding team. They were the first to set the mission, the vision, and the values in a start-up. For a start-up to succeed, successful leadership is very important. Good leadership offers a great framework for decision making in the organization. It helps the company recruit, develop and retain talented employees. Decision-making processes aligned to the company's mission and values, are crucial for the company's growth and success (Hemant & Ken, 2019).

The second step in strategic and HR planning is environmental analysis, which is driven by the first step components. The external environment can have a big influence on the organization, and that is the reason why systematic monitoring, such as environmental scanning, is needed. External analysis is followed by internal analysis, which focuses especially on capabilities, composition, and culture in terms of Human Resource planning. After both analyses, it is time to formulate a corporate and a business strategy, as well as to implement it later. The final step of strategic planning is the evaluation and assessment of the organizations' effectiveness. However, planning is a cyclical process, therefore it is ever-evolving (Jamrog & Overholt, 2004).

Figure 10: Linking strategic planning and Human Resources



Source: Snell & Bohlander (2012).

3.2.3 Human Resource Department

When setting up an HR department, each small business should consider a few things. It all begins with hiring a good HR team. Potential employees must be good HR coordinators as well as recruiters. In the role of coordinating, this person will often meet with the managers and try to coordinate relationships between them and their employees, as well as resolve any potential conflicts. On the other hand, a good recruiter knows what kind of qualities a company looks for in a potential employee and what the hiring needs of a department that is looking to expand its team are. In a flexible environment, as start-ups usually are, you need proactive involvement from the HR department. It is expected from the HR department to regularly check on employees, their well-being, and potential dissatisfactions, to put more focus on passive employees, and to welcome new employees with open hands, in addition

to making their first days more comfortable. The HR team should also not be too restricted when performing their tasks. Free communication and representation of employees make them feel empowered and more confident in performing their tasks. Last but not least, to make the HR department more efficient and have more time to focus on important tasks, a company should invest in a good HR software to do some of the more computerized work instead of the employees (Abbas, no date).

Sometimes, start-ups and small business owners see structured Human Resource departments as a threat, and as such implementing structured practices at the very beginning of their development is very narrow. Flexibility is one of the main characteristics of start-ups, and implementing such structured HR practices might take some of this flexibility in exchange for structure. On the other hand, lack of structure, especially in the HR department, might do more damage than good. Confusion and too much flexibility can also cause a lack of focus in the core areas of business (Abbas, no date).

3.3 Recruitment and selection strategy

When you're in a startup, the first ten people will determine whether the company succeeds or not. Each is ten percent of the company. So why wouldn't you take as much time as necessary to find all the A- players? A small company depends on great people much more than a big company does. — Steve Jobs

As Steve Jobs said, recruiting the right employees, identifying talents, and retaining them later on, are one of the most important tasks in the early stages of developing a start-up. The first few employees are of the same importance to the company as the founders are, because founding team members are the force behind growth (Müller & Murmann, no date).

3.3.1 Recruitment

Although years ago, recruitment was just a process that needed to be done to get a position filled, this is not the case anymore. HR managers take this process very seriously as the importance of Human capital is bigger every year. That is the reason why this process needs to be given much consideration and thought, as talent competition is on the rise as the years go by. From an employer's perspective, the goal of recruiting is very clear. To ensure a reasonably big pool of appropriately qualified applicants from which an HR manager can choose later in the process (Snell & Bohlander, 2012).

There are three building blocks of job assessment: job analysis, job description, and job specification. Job analysis consists of gathering information about tasks, responsibilities, and performance in a job. A job description is a pre-prepared summary of a job analysis. Lastly, job specification cites needed skills, knowledge, and abilities to perform this job. All these three blocks help the employer recruit the right employees for a job opening (Daft, 2014).

The way of recruitment depends heavily on the organization's strategy and size. Big organizations often have their in-house recruiters, whereas smaller or more specialized organizations might outsource recruiting. This process is called recruiting process outsourcing, and can sometimes also be needed by bigger organizations in case they fail to find the right talents or have had problems with that in the past (Snell & Bohlander, 2012).

As mentioned in the previous chapter about start-ups, many say that in the start-up world the team is even more important than the initial idea. According to Bergmann, six recruiting principles can help your company build the best team. The first principle is to master the storytelling. When you are trying to convince someone to leave their current well-paid job, you need to be good at convincing them of the opportunity they will get by joining your team (Bastian, 2016).

Another important aspect is to consider every candidate individually. More technical people will appreciate straight forward information with rational arguments more than a sales pitch. On the other hand, some people, who tend to be more emotional, need less exact information and would rather be inspired. Choosing the right channels for recruitment is very important. To have the highest chance of successfully reaching out to the most talented people, you need to do it through the right channel (Bastian, 2016).

The third principle is to be effective during the process. The author (Bastian, 2016) divided the process into three steps: an email with three questions, an interview regarding skills, and a more in-depth interview conducted by the team leader. The last two principles are to stay personal during the process and to never compromise. Candidates usually highly appreciate a personal approach instead of automated email replays. When hiring, whether it is the founding team or even later on, you should never compromise, meaning if you have a clear vision for the culture, quality, and dynamics in your company; you should only hire the people that fit straight in.

When the question of whether to recruit internally or externally arises, it is suggested to the recruit internally if possible. And why is that? When recruitment is done through promotion or transfer of existing employees that sets a great example for others. It makes them believe they too will be promoted one day if they work hard enough. Besides that, it improves the morale and culture of the organization. However, when specific knowledge, experience, and training are needed for a vacant job; it might not be possible to find the right employee (Snell & Bohlander, 2012).

Recruitment can be processed internally or externally. Since internal recruitment is more natural, organizations usually start with it. There are many benefits of internal recruitment, such as faster learning of employees for a new position, less uncertainty regarding the characteristics and performance, no costly job advertisement, and others. There are many ways of finding qualified and interested employees through internal job postings, performance appraisals, or even reaching out to former employees. On the other hand,

external recruiting offers the organization a chance to be more diversified by finding completely new employees. External recruiting methods vary from advertising, campus recruiting, search firms, open door days, job fairs, and others (Snell & Bohlander, 2012).

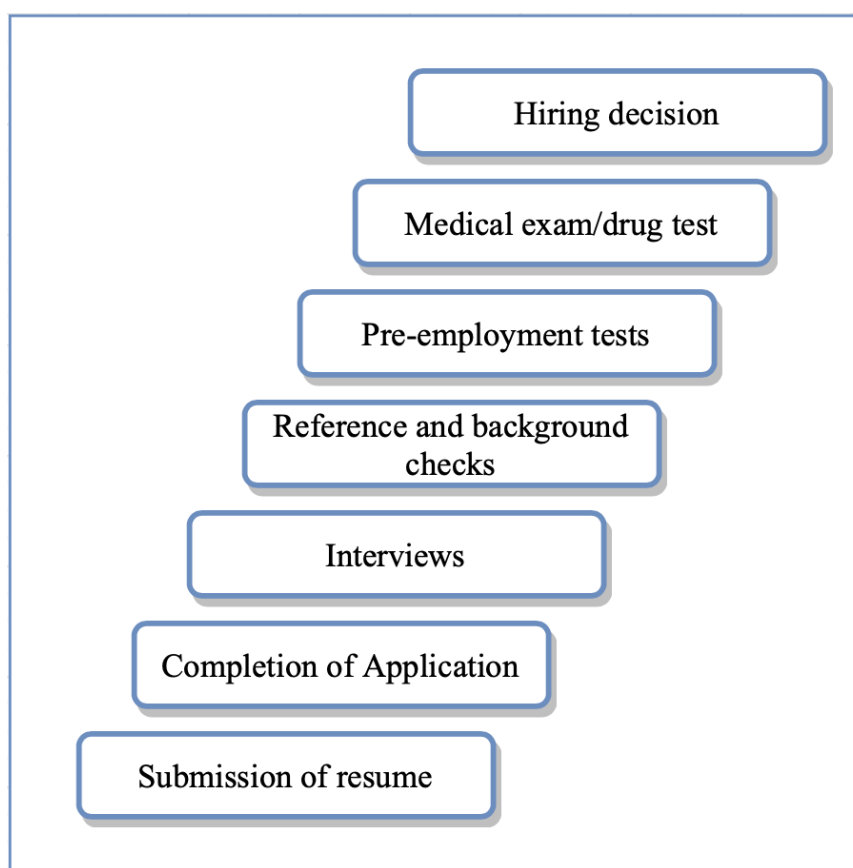
While internal recruiting has high efficiency and low diversity, external recruiting offers just the opposite. For recruiting to be effective, the job preview needs to be realistic. A realistic job preview informs applicants about all the aspects of the job, which means to present also all the negative terms of a job position (Winkler, 2006).

The main goal of career management, is to match individual and organizational needs. HR has the biggest role in the recruitment process by matching and connecting managers with new employees. For newcomers to be satisfied and therefore have a better performance, it is important to identify career opportunities and to gauge employee potential. As finding talent is increasingly important in today's world, so is employer branding. Branding tells the candidates why this organization is a place where they want to work (Snell & Bohlander, 2012).

3.3.2 Employee selection

Another important aspect of managing Human Resources is employee selection. During the selection process, employees with relevant qualifications are chosen to fill job openings. In this process, the employer assesses if an applicant is a good fit for the job based on his characteristics and knowledge (Daft, 2014). As seen in Figure 10 below, steps in the selection process vary from organizations and types of jobs. In the diagram below, some of the typical steps are shown (Snell & Bohlander, 2012).

Figure 11: Steps in the selection process



Source: Snell & Bohlander (2012).

Selection usually begins with screening, which includes resumes, cover letters, and application forms. With application forms, employers can easily gather a lot of information systematically and quickly (Luo, 2009). The screening process is followed by interviews, which can be nondirective, structured, situational, behavioral, etc. Besides the differences in the content of the interview, they can also be sorted by the media on which they are done. The interviews are followed by a post-interview screening if of course, the interview went well. During the post-interview screening, an employer does a reference check, background check, and sometimes also a credit check (Snell & Bohlander, 2012).

After that, a possible new employee usually does a pre-employment test, which means to measure a person's knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics. These tests can be job knowledge tests, work sample tests, cognitive ability tests, or assessment center tests, where individuals are evaluated based on handling situations that might happen on the job. These are only some of the options employers choose when doing tests. After the tests, some organizations also do a medical and drug examination, and after that they begin the decision-making process. The approaches used in the decision-making process vary from type of job positions, but overall, employers can use a statistical or a clinical approach (MacGillivray, Beecher & Golden, 2008).

3.3.3 Hiring process

When hiring, smaller companies are even more careful who they choose to expand their team with, but they might face some difficulties because of limited financial and material resources along with usually very diverse job positions, where potential employees would perform various tasks (Cardon & Stevens, 2004).

According to Müller and Murmann's research paper, two types of skills are crucial for the success of a young company: business skills and technical skills. For business idea implementation and realization, technical skills are required, whereas Market Research, Financial, Legal, and Organization require business skills. Start-ups equipped with both types of skills are more likely to ensure profit and long-term success. The study made in this research paper proved that the appropriate choice of skills in potential employees is crucial (Müller & Murmann, no date).

Although a greater number of selection tools is highly advised, they also mean a more costly procedure, which start-ups would like to avoid (Kotey & Sheridan, 2004). In relation to that, HR specialists are also viewed as a too expensive and redundant factor to fill the job positions in the beginning. This results in the general manager having to recruit and hire new employees. As general managers have so many different tasks to fulfill, hiring practices are usually ad hoc and not given too much thought or time. When the team and the responsibilities of a general manager grow, an organization starts to consider employing an HR specialist (Cardon & Stevens, 2004).

Opposite to some large companies, general managers in start-ups usually provide a realistic job description and task, and communicate both positive and negative sides of job positions. The selection process is mostly done through interviews, where person-organization fit is a very important factor in the selection decision. The absence of an HR specialist presents some challenges that a company can overcome in various ways. Rather than an imitation of standard forms of job advertisement, they should promote their uniqueness as a competitive advantage. One of the possibilities, when a general manager does not feel competent in an HR role, is to outsource recruitment to professional employer organizations. They provide the company HR experts with a rather small financial investment and, most importantly, save them a lot of time. It is also common to recruit temporary workers, independent contractors, interns, or consultants (Cardon & Stevens, 2004).

Workplace culture is a basis for an employer brand, which consequently leads to hiring more suitable employees that share your vision and path. Although the environment in start-ups is more flexible and employees are usually more relaxed, some policies might be needed to organize the workflow and prevent small conflicts before they become big. However, these policies should be implemented uniformly and in line with the culture of the company (Abbas, no date).

Hiring needs to be structured to create more accurate job titles and descriptions to hire more qualified and diverse individuals. Another crucial part of the hiring process is the structure of a job interview. It helps the recruitment team to better evaluate and rate candidates based on fair criteria (Abbas, no date).

3.4 Training and development

After the hiring process is finished, we move to the next goal of the HR department, which is how to train, develop and retain employees. Strong HR practices in start-ups help develop and retain employees together with resulting in business growth. If managers would compensate their employees, this could also be based on their preferences and feelings towards an employee. However, if an HR specialist is included in compensation, the whole process is less biased. For employees to develop, you should also invest in their training. For managers, who perform a lot of different roles at the beginning of a start-up, training is important, as they are usually generalists and not specialized in management roles (Abbas, no date).

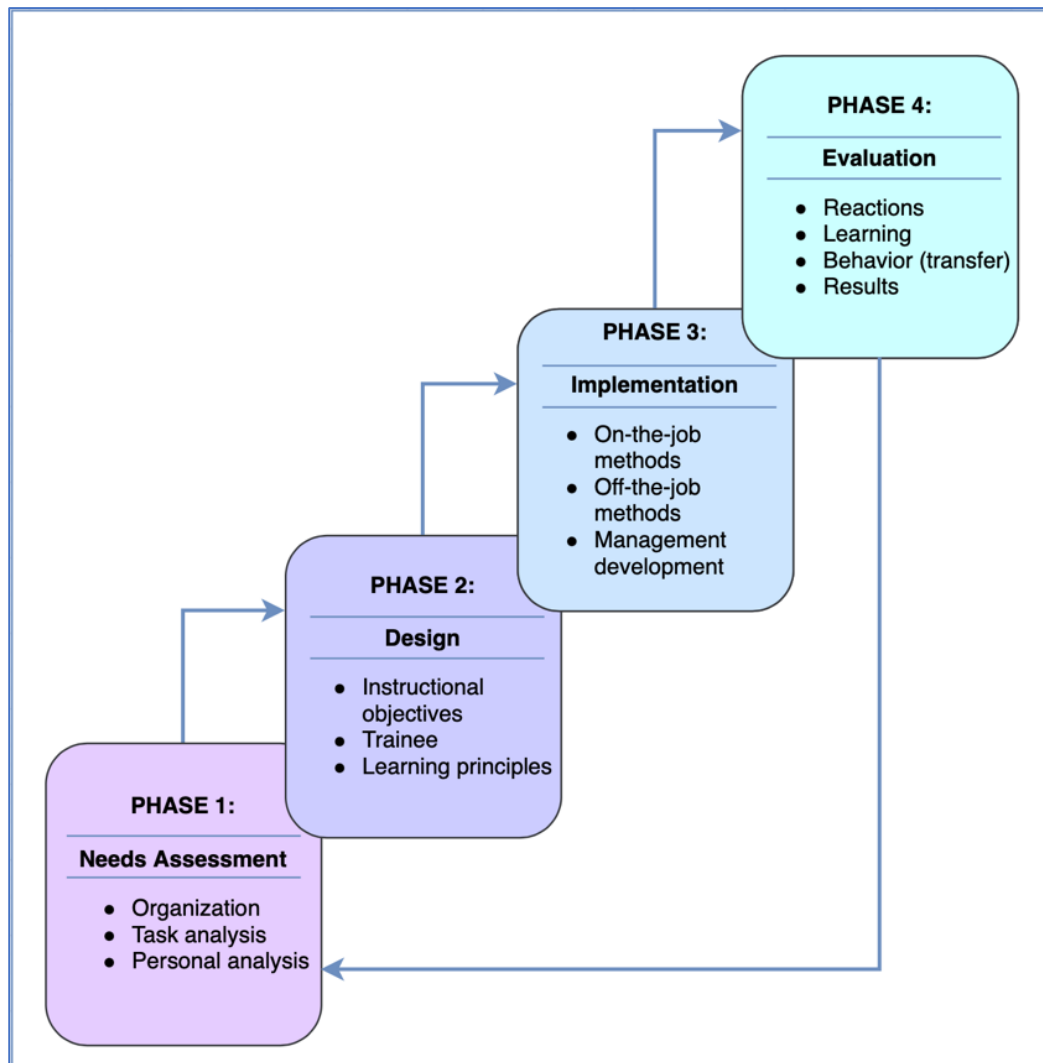
As the start-up grows, it becomes more important for managers to participate in external training. Their roles are shifting and to better contribute to organizational success there is more emphasis on their development and training than there was at the beginning (Kotey & Sheridan, 2004).

3.4.1 A strategic model of training

As elsewhere, traditional HRM training and development practices offer a good framework. In the Figure 11 below, you can see the different phases of the strategic model of training. The goal of training is to contribute to the organization's overall goals. If employees fail to achieve their productivity objectives that can be a sign that training is needed. Training programs need to be effective, designed systematically, and in line with the strategic goals of the company. We can see in Figure 4, that model begins with a needs assessment that includes organization analysis, task analysis, and person analysis. A good starting point for small businesses would be to gather performance and staffing data from the company. (Snell & Bohlander, 2012).

After we assess our needs, we need to design the training program. In the process of designing, we need to focus on instructional objectives, analysis of trainees and their motivation, important principles of learning, and the instructor's character (Freifeld, 2008).

Figure 12: Strategic model of training



Source: Snell & Bohlander (2012).

There is no doubt that in start-ups most employees are multitasking. For that reason, some managers and start-up owners might fear that extensive training could result in too specialized employees that will find it hard to adapt to changing roles and tasks. This could be one of the reasons why employees in start-ups do not focus so much on specializing some of their skills, but rather learn how to quickly adapt to changes and new requirements (Kotey & Sheridan, 2004).

However, no matter the size of the company, training has an undeniably positive impact on employee knowledge and productivity. In smaller companies, managers are more cautious of which pieces of training to do in terms of their limited amount of resources and time. Informal training and unstructured learning are more present in smaller companies, offering their employees more highly interactive learning opportunities. Therefore, training in small companies is both formal and informal but mostly focused on different learning opportunities and not only on common training practices. Employees in start-ups are usually

multitasking because all areas of work need to be covered by a smaller number of employees. A lot of learning is therefore done because of role transitions. Managers need to be careful that employees still have time to adapt to new roles in the transition process, and also provide them with some additional learning options if needed (Cardon & Stevens, 2004).

3.5 Performance management

Performance management includes elements of compensation, training and development, performance evaluation processes, disciplinary procedures, and dismissals of workers that are also shown in Figure 12. Small companies lack formal performance reviews and disciplinary processes. However, for start-ups driven by innovation and flexibility, steady flow of employees is more desired than significant turnover. High turnover of employees can slow the growth of the company, and therefore has a bad effect on the firms' success (Cardon & Stevens, 2004).

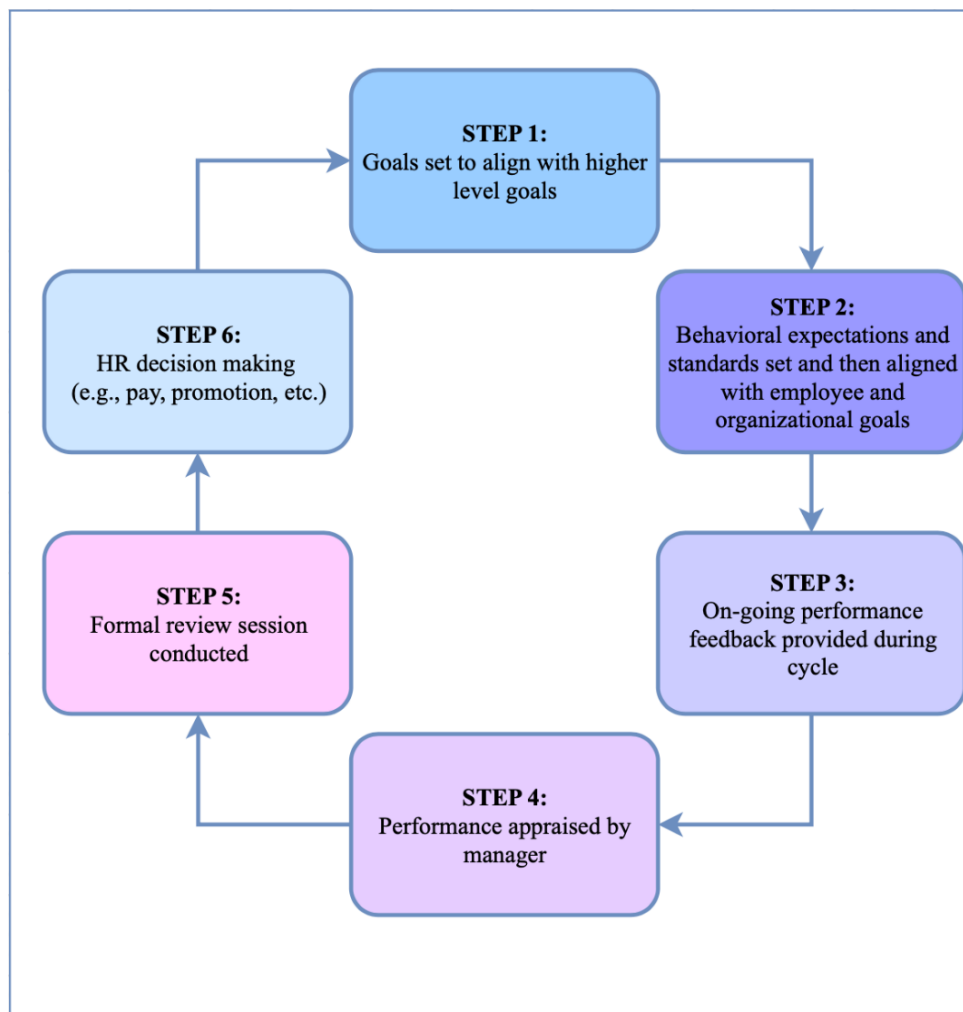
3.5.1 Performance management components

Performance management is the process of creating a work environment in which people can perform to the best of their abilities to meet a company's goals. An important part of performance management systems is performance appraisals, the result of an annual process in which a manager evaluates an employee's performance based on the requirements of the job. It structures the information to show the person where improvements are needed and why. Appraisals serve as a tool that organizations can use to maintain and enhance their productivity as well as facilitate progress toward their strategic goals (Grote, 2000; Cardy & Leonard, 2011).

Besides performance appraisals and aligning the goals of employees as well as the company, providing employees with continual feedback through communication in addition to rewards is also very important (Snell & Bohlander, 2012).

Feedback is most useful when it comes instantly, is specific and comes with an explanation. Ongoing performance management presents an option to immediately change the behavior, which is not only effective but also rewarding for an employee in the long-run (Boxall, Purcell & Wright, 2007).

Figure 13: Steps in the performance management process



Source: Snell & Bohlander (2012).

3.5.2 Performance appraisals

Like many other HR practices, performance appraisals are also one of the things that are not a priority for many smaller firms. Although it might seem that this kind of evaluation is unnecessary, it might be really helpful. One of the reasons behind the lack of formal performance appraisals is the number of employees. Where there is a small number of employees working closely together, managers can give almost immediate feedback to the employee. The intervals are very frequent in the beginning and become less and less frequent as performance appraisal becomes more formalized, and the number of employees grows (Kotey & Sheridan, 2004).

Performance appraisals are not a one-way tool, they initiate a conversation and get employees more involved as well as increase their motivation and inspire better job performance. By evaluating employees, managers also show that they care about their personal and career goals. It can be very helpful for a small business to retain its top

employees rather than losing them to corporations, where they are often treated more impersonally. Small businesses with small teams of employees implementing their performance appraisal systems can help with already made and proven appraisal systems that can be found online (Snell & Bohlander, 2012).

3.5.3 360-degree feedback

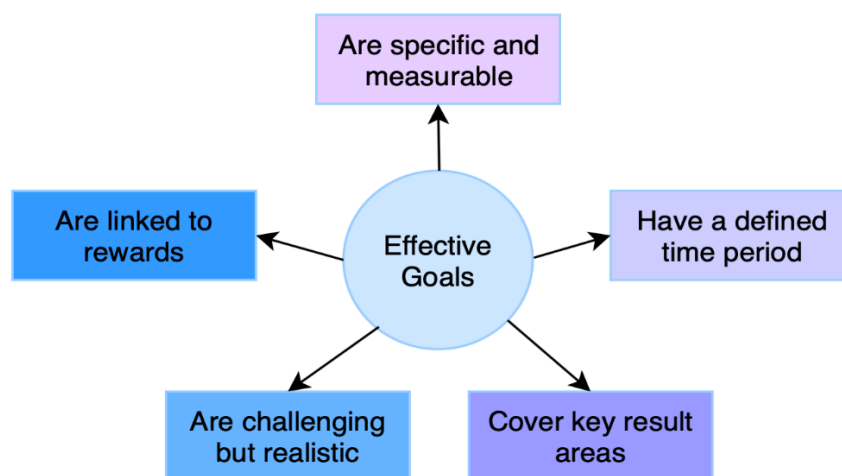
Recently, 360-degree feedback became a very popular form of performance appraisal. It includes an assessment from multiple raters, which also includes self-rating. Self-rating is very important because it helps an individual think about their strengths and weaknesses. Other rates can be managers, co-workers, customers, or other individuals that provide an important insight into employee performance (Daft, 2014).

3.5.4 Key performance indicators

Key performance indicators (hereafter: KPI) serve as a tool to better assess what is important to a company and what their way towards achieving the strategic goal is. With key performance indicators, managers can establish smaller goals such as financial and operational achievement, which drive performance toward the company's strategic goal (Piatt, 2012).

When setting the goals, managers need to be mindful of what measurements goals can be translated into. Goals should also not be set too broadly, but only measure the most important and clear goals. They should be realistic but on the other hand not too easy to achieve. Some examples of effective goals can be seen in the Figure 14 below. After a company reaches a certain goal it should reflect in a salary increase, promotion, or a reward. This is very important for employee motivation and satisfaction (Daft, 2014).

Figure 14: Characteristics of Effective Goals



Source: Daft (2014).

3.5.5 Objectives and key results

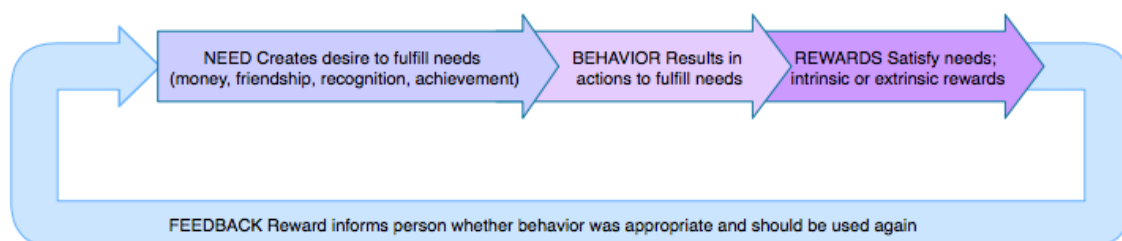
Objectives and key results (OKR) are goal-setting tools, used by teams and individuals to set the right goals, which can have measurable results. They help track progress and encourage engagement from employees. OKRs are composed of two components: objectives (what?) and key results (how?). Objectives need to be significant, well-defined, action-oriented, and inspirational. On the other hand, key results serve as a benchmark, which helps to assess the progress that is being made. Key results need to be measurable and verified as they evolve in time, and more work is done. There are usually 3-5 key results per one objective. OKRs can be either committed or aspirational. The aspirational goal is also called the stretch goal, though the pressure for them to be fulfilled is not as big as it is for commitments (Panchadsaram & Prince, no date).

3.6 Compensation

Compensation is an important part of the hiring process, as well as it is an important part of retaining talented employees in the company. A company needs to be able to offer good payment and other forms of compensation to recruit talent and skills in the hiring process already. Furthermore, they need to communicate rewards to signal legitimacy and nurture the desired behavior of employees (Cardon & Stevens, 2004.) When it comes to paying rates, it is hard for smaller and younger companies to compete with corporations. That is why intrinsic awards are more emphasized in smaller organizations (Mayson & Barrett, no date).

One of the management responsibilities is to find the right combination between motivating and rewarding their employees. The right combination should satisfy the needs of an employee and result in better organizational performance, which results in profits. As we can see in the Figure 13 below, a model of motivation is circular. Employees have certain needs and if these needs are fulfilled, they motivate or trigger a specific behavior. If this behavior is successful, the person is rewarded, which gives a signal that this behavior was appropriate and should be repeated (Kaplan, 2012).

Figure 15: A simple model of motivation

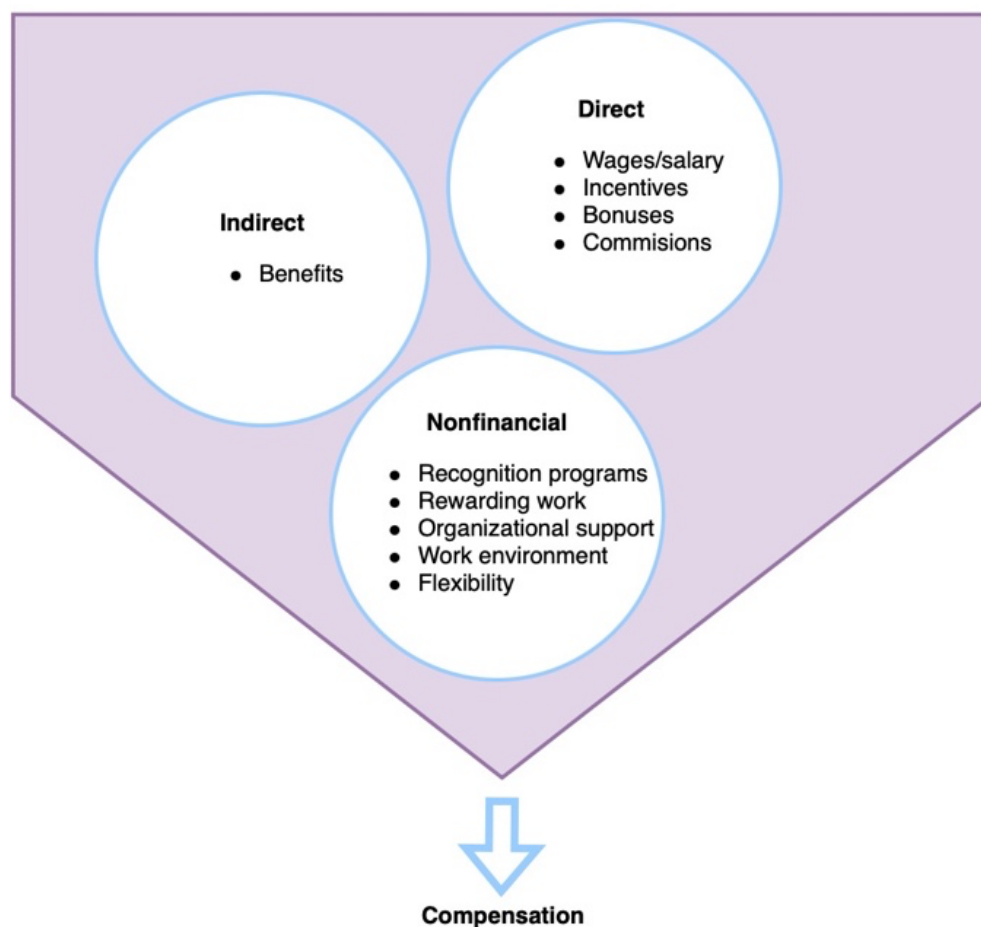


Source: Daft (2016).

3.6.1 Compensation components

We can divide compensation into three main components as seen in Figure 14. First is direct compensation, which encompasses employee wages and salaries, incentives, bonuses, and commissions. Indirect compensation, which comprises of benefits supplied by employers, and the third component, nonfinancial compensation including employee recognition programs, rewards, organizational support, work environment, and flexible work hours. Compensation should be managed strategically to ensure that fixed costs are low, whereas performance and motivation are high (Snell & Bohlander, 2012).

Figure 16: Compensation components



Source: Snell & Bohlander (2012).

There are many differences between start-ups and large companies in terms of compensation. In terms of pay incentives, short-term pay incentives in start-ups often include profit and stock sharing, whereas long-term incentives include equity ownership in some form. These incentives increase motivation among employees and also help them identify more with management because they feel more involved in the growth process. We see another difference when we look at the pay structure. Because of a fewer number of employees,

smaller firms tend to have a flatter organizational structure, which results in treating employees more equally. Annual salary increases are not common in young companies as they are more flexible in their decision-making process. It can also be harder for them to promise something so much ahead since a lot can change positively or negatively in 12 months. Retirement is also a very costly part of a reward system, which is funded by a profit-sharing plan. To gain knowledge, due to multitasking, education funding, travel, school tuition, and other forms of education are a very common reward in start-ups (Cardon & Stevens, 2004).

One of the main goals of compensation is to align employee behavior company strategy with their vision. The positive effects of the compensation would therefore be great performance and employee satisfaction. On the other side, when compensation is not incorporated well in the company pay structure, it can turn out as disincentive along with demotivating, which in turn worsens company performance (Groysberg, Abbott, Marino & Aksoy, 2021).

3.6.2 Compensation dimensions

In this subchapter, we will analyze four dimensions included in modern compensation systems. The first dimension is fixed versus variable compensation. Based on this dimension, salary is made up of a fixed base salary and the variable part which is dependent on achieved goals. The percentages of fixed and contingent parts depend on the industry, size of the company, culture, and work position. The second dimension differentiates between short and long – term compensation. Short-term compensation is usually in the form of cash, whereas long-term compensation is usually in the form of equity. It is most common to mix short and long – term compensation, delivering some of it in cash quickly after achieving certain goals, while the rest of it is delivered later in the following years. Cash versus equity is the third dimension of compensation and is very much in line with the second dimension. There are many different views on what works better but most importantly it depends very much on the strategy and values of an individual organization. The last, fourth dimension, differentiates individual and group compensation. Again, this dimension is very connected with values. Where individual performance is very important, it makes more sense to tie compensation to this rather than to a group or division performance. This dimension also depends on the type of job position in the company (Groysberg, Abbott, Marino & Aksoy, 2021).

3.6.3 Forms of variable pay

Sometimes it is harder for employers to give out large annual bonuses to all of their employees at the same time. A great alternative for annual bonuses is a spot bonus, usually paid to individuals or teams on the spot. This bonus rewards a specific behavior, result, or action. Because they are based on the fulfillment of specific tasks, they are much smaller than the annual bonuses and are easier to payout. They might not be widely known in the

literature but according to one research done in 2018 by PayScale, they rank second in forms of variable pay (Das, 2020).

The most important reason for implementing spot bonuses is the satisfaction level achieved with employees. Because it is more frequent it brings more satisfaction to an individual than a one-time annual bonus does. One option for implementing spot bonuses is to determine a pool of these bonuses for the year and give managers an option to allocate them among their team members as they think is appropriate (Das, 2020).

3.7 Humane Entrepreneurship and High-Performance Work Systems

A recent HRM-related concept, named Humane Entrepreneurship (HumEnt), expresses that organizations should focus more on employees, people, the environment, and society. This should consequently bring higher profits as people feel respected and valuable. There are some important characteristics of start-ups that are also reflected in HR practices. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can usually act in a freer and more agile way, and they focus more on using their resources efficiently and effectively, as well as reacting more quickly. Agile responses are crucial in today's business environment (Heilmann, Forsten-Astikainen & Kultalahti, no date).

HRM practices are challenged by changes many times, as leaders need to seek consensus, delegate, and trust employees, while still giving them some guidelines that lead towards the organization's well-being. On the level of an individual employee, agility is shown through the fast learning of new skills and competencies by using numerous tools, methods, and different technologies. Job satisfaction is on the priority list for many small companies, as it is easier to achieve satisfaction with a smaller number of employees. Flexible working hours, workplace design, appreciations, celebration, and position re-evaluation are a few of HR practices that lead towards job satisfaction. Besides agility, resilience is also very important. It helps an organization to recover faster from changes that result in shocks or crises. Team resilience helps groups of employees recover quickly, and enables them to be more productive and innovative even in shocks and crises (Heilmann, Forsten-Astikainen & Kultalahti, no date).

HRM is an important driver of organizational performance and effectiveness. As smaller firms have fewer employees, their productivity is even more important. Individuals in small firms usually take upon more roles, which means they also need to be agile and resilient, as mentioned in the text above. Human Resources are worth investing in, no matter what the size of an organization is. Although SMEs usually do not pay as much attention to it as big companies, this might be their disadvantage in the long run. There are several HRM practices, from which some are obligatory, and others are voluntary. They also depend on the current needs and strategy of an organization (Heilmann, Forsten-Astikainen & Kultalahti, no date).

Human capital, unique to every organization, is the growth mechanism in start-ups because it determines the quality of the products and services an organization shows to the outside world. Human Resource Management in start-ups or, so to say, developing organizations can be quite different from the traditional approaches that were described in the chapter before (Evans & Davis, 2005).

New organizations such as start-ups and companies on the rise, provide and create new jobs, which is a good enough reason to emphasize the importance of choosing the right Human Resource approaches at the beginning already. In this subchapter, we will research whether start-ups use Human Resource Management approaches as the need for them arises, or do they go above that and develop high-performance work systems. Some researches show that high-performance work systems lead to success no matter the size of a firm, while others show the opposite (Evans & Davis, 2005).

High-Performance Work Systems (hereafter: HPWS) are HRM practices bundled together and typically include staffing, self-management teams, decentralized decision making, training, flexible work assignments and hours, communication, and compensation (Evans & Davis, 2005). Staffing, as one of these typical practices, is based on knowledge, skills, and abilities. Start-ups do not have enough time to do a long-lasting process of recruitment and selection, but it still represents a very important portion of HPWS. Self-managed teams and decentralized decision-making processes go hand in hand. While self-management gives authority to the lower part of a chain of command, decentralized decision making provides empowerment for employees, but also helps them to be innovative and creative (Evans & Davis, 2005).

Moving on to training and development, programs are designed to improve employee's skills and knowledge. Training is mostly done at the beginning of one's journey in the organization, but later on, training can be beneficial to motivate employees and to help them grow. It is easier to have more flexible work assignments in start-ups because of the culture and the number of team members. Flexible work assignments enable the broadening of an employee's skills, which is in contrast to improving skills during the training process. This can happen through job-rotation, but is not very common in a start-up environment as employees in smaller organizations already perform many different tasks in a day. For that reason, job enrichment is a more suitable practice in start-ups. Communication can be closed, open, or something in between. In start-ups, open communication is much easier since teams are smaller, and as such it is easier to involve everyone in the process of listening and contributing to the debate. For employees, it is also easier to understand the strategic plan and follow it. Lastly, compensation is one of the practices in HPWS. Compensating and motivating employees can be done through profit sharing, employee ownership, pay for performance initiate, or team-based pay. All of these methods can be used in a start-up, but since young companies may be limited in cash, employee ownership is very common and also a powerful incentive for an individual (Evans & Davis, 2005).

High-performance work systems work differently in established organizations than they do in start-ups, however, implementing these practices might be crucial while enlarging your competitive advantage. For example, employee ownership will add a greater value to a start-up in comparison with a big organization, as employees have more say in a newly established company. Another important aspect is that if you use HPWS from the beginning, it will be much easier to maintain it rather than start using it when you already have an established work process. The same goes for trust and communication. If you trust your employees from the beginning and they trust the management, it is a great start for open communication that later on brings great results as more different aspects are included in the decision-making process. There is still not much research done on these practices yet such systems inevitably enhance the chance of establishing a great organization with the right base (Evans & Davis, 2005).

We started this chapter with Human capital, and after listing and shortly describing approaches that are used in HPWS, we can say that using these practices will provide a start-up with internal resources that are harder to replicate by others. Using motivating compensation systems, open communication, and on-going training will make your employees want to work harder and achieve greater results that are in synergy with your strategy. Human capital can therefore be a huge added value to your start-up if you invest in it (Evans & Davis, 2005).

3.8 HR strategy

Human Resource Management has many important roles in the company and one of those is its strategic role. HR strategies affect the overall performance of the organization and according to research done with CEOs, Human capital is by far the main factor of competitive success, ahead of customer relationships and product and service innovation. Human capital, a combination of knowledge, skills, experience, and capabilities of employees brings the most economic value to the organization (Daft, 2014).

3.8.1 HR strategy in start-ups

Theory talks about three steps when building an HR strategy for small organizations. The first step is called: Organize. By providing your employees with an employee handbook, including all information on what to do and what not to do. An employee handbook should be easy to understand and to implement. Key points in the handbook should include: code of conduct, organizations policies and protocols, employee benefits and evaluations, and termination and retirement policies of the company. A handbook should clearly define everything to avoid any misunderstandings in the future. Start-up founders usually do not have an HR background, which is also the reason why there are still many start-ups lacking in HR strategy. However, a well-defined HR system in start-ups shows its biggest value in the long-run. As already mentioned many times, Human capital turns usually turns out even

more valuable than it seems at the beginning (Luenendonk, 2019).

The second step emphasizes motivation. Finding the right employees is hard, but keeping them is even harder. Small things, such as recognition of employee contribution, acknowledgment of team members as unique and notable individuals, contribution of team members on an important decision, and other motivational acts; make a real difference in whether an individual will want to stay at your company in the long run (Luenendonk, 2019).

The third step is to retain employees. A friendly and warm work environment that is personalized for individuals that value different rewards is crucial when retaining employees. Asking them and including them in the process of deciding what works for them, is a great option if you are not sure about how to reward them (Luenendonk, 2019). In the Table 2 below, we have listed the top five HR strategies for start-ups.

Table 2: Top 5 HRM strategies

1. Improve employee satisfaction
Employee satisfaction improves morale, productivity, commitment, loyalty and lowers employee turnover rates. It can be improved through different monetary and non-monetary benefits that the company can provide.
2. Construct fair and equitable compensation strategies
All employees must be compensated fairly and equally, depending on the compensation policy of the company.
3. Design effective training and development programs
Training and development programs should be constant, and not only once in a while. But it is sometimes hard to focus so much on achieving all the goals and still actively engaging in the employees' training program. However, employee orientation, team tasks, and mentorships programs should be implemented in every year's HR strategy of the company.
4. Implementation of legal employment practices
All employees should be employed in line with employment rules and regulations.
5. Picking what is right for your business – reactive or proactive Human Resource management

Source: Luenendonk (2019).

With an appropriate HR strategy for your business, you will have a better opportunity to grow it (Editor, 2017). Although proactive HRM might prevent some of the problems, it is not as cost-effective as reactive HRM is. For that reason, start-ups mostly decide on the reactive approach based on their budgets. A proactive HRM approach is more focused on staffing needs before you even need a position to be filled, it will also plan training regardless of crisis and offer employees benefits even when there is no risk of them leaving. On the other hand, the reactive approach activates itself in case of a crisis (Luenendonk, 2019).

Additionally to building three steps HR strategy, there are some other aspects that you need to consider. Throughout building a sustainable HR strategy you need to think of options to increase employee satisfaction. As we mentioned before, Human capital is of huge importance especially for younger companies, so to decrease the employee turnover rate, employees should be satisfied with their jobs, which usually requires some monetary and also non-monetary rewards. They need to be aligned with a consistent compensation system that ensures equal and fair compensation for all employees (Editor, 2017).

Training programs that enable your employees to grow are also an important part of building an HR strategy for your company. Different kinds of training, mentorship, seminars, and other development tools should help employees be more satisfied and have better results in terms of following the company goals and strategy. Needless to say, your HR strategy should follow all the laws and government rules (Editor, 2017). Although it is important to be mindful of the HR strategy, it is also important not to make a strategic plan too rigid and let it evolve with the company growth (Matthews, 2018).

3.8.2 Challenges and objectives of HR strategy

As a company grows in numbers, it also grows in people. Although traditional HR practices offer a very useful framework, small organizations, such as start-ups, manage people differently in more than just one way. Academic journal articles suggest that three areas of HRM stand out, however we still do not have enough information on how they are discussed and understood in companies. Those three areas are: retention and on-going employee issues, integration and interaction among HR practices, and development and changes of HR practices throughout the firm emerge (Cardon & Stevens, 2004).

In smaller and younger companies, we can see a less formalized form of training, some difficulties in recruitment, and a lack of formality and structure in employee management systems. There are some unique HR challenges small and young companies face. Some of them are ambiguous firm identity, difficulties in attracting and retaining talented individuals, lack of legitimacy as employers, and developing sustainable HR policies. Organized approaches toward HRM have shown to have positive effects on the long-term effectiveness and survival of the company (Cardon & Stevens, 2004).

A few of the challenges HR managers are facing, are connected with the following questions: how to retain and reward top employees, how to develop next-generation leaders and how to create work-friendly culture, which attracts talented individuals. While work-friendly culture and flexible work hours are easier to achieve in small companies, they often cannot offer as big rewards as corporations do. Instead of that, start-ups can offer performance-based salaries and other soft benefits. A small company with a few top positions cannot offer as many promotions as a big organizations can, but they can enable their employees to shift job positions and gain new skills (Luenendonk, 2019).

Although some HR strategies might seem the same for big corporations and small businesses, the key challenges they face and key objectives they wish to gain are very different. Here we will list some of the objectives that are applicable for SMEs and start-ups. It starts with the hiring process. In a small team of people, it is crucial to hire the right people with the right set of skills, education, and experience. An employer can achieve that by providing a clear job description and a good and efficient recruitment and selection process (Luenendonk, 2019).

When the competency model is achieved, we move forward to defining organizational dimensions. Culture has a big impact on management style, and the values of the management and organizational dimensions need to be carefully set to enable an effective hiring process. You need to know exactly which job positions are needed and what kind of person needs to fill them.

The third objective is to define the role of mission, vision, and values. All three play an important role when setting up an HR strategy in a start-up. Mission shows why an organization exists, vision tells us what the organization aspires to be, and values are the organization's beliefs. Together they help the HR department choose the right type of future employees.

The next objective is called perform workforce analysis. Performing this analysis analyses the current situation in an organization and where it is going based on the factors we already discussed and shown as other objectives. The last objective is to evaluate the implemented strategy based on measurable factors. Evaluation should give you details on employee turnover, number of vacant positions, customer complaints, and employee grievances (Luenendonk, 2019).

3.9 HRM and Innovation

Fit between the strategy and experiences from team members is a crucial determinant of the long-term performance of high-technological entrepreneurial ventures. Technical expertise in smaller teams is the main determinant for success (Shrader & Siegel, no date).

3.9.1 Innovations in HRM

HRM is constantly evolving as are other fields in the entrepreneurial world. Some important aspects of HRM nowadays are company branding as an employer of choice, temporary and part-time workers, and acquiring start-up to get the talent. Although there are unemployed people all over the world, the demand for talented employees is bigger than its supply. This means employers should work on their employer branding to attract knowledgeable employees before other companies do. To do that, they need to present a desirable and attractive workplace (Daft, 2014).

Workers that do not work permanently or full-time for a company are representing a larger portion of employees than they used to. Some of them work on that basis involuntarily and others prefer working for different companies at the same time. Acquiring start-ups to get talent is especially popular in the technology field. Acqui-hiring, as some call it, means that you acquire a start-up with the main goal to acquire its engineering talent (Daft, 2014).

3.9.2 Creativity and innovative behaviors

It is more probable for an organization to succeed if it is constantly innovating rather than committed to past practices. Creativity is an individual attribute, whereas innovative behavior is required from the whole organization. An innovation process starts with creativity, but requires innovative behavior as an activity within the organization, to reach a creative outcome. Creative people are usually more intrinsically motivated and trained, and that consequently influences their workflow (Shipton, Sparrow, Budhwar & Brown, 2017).

4 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH: GROWTH TRANSFORMATIONS IN SLOVENIAN FIRMS

The aim of empirical research is to define the changes occurring in start-ups regarding HRM, organizational structure, and culture during the start-up's growth. The existing literature offers a useful framework but still leaves much space for further research. HRM practices in start-up companies are still a bit mysterious, meaning there has not been as much research done as there is on HRM practices in bigger companies. The empirical research with a focus on in-depth semi-structured interviews offers one new view to look at the HRM practices Slovenian start-ups have experienced and used throughout their growth.

Our fundamental hypothesis is that Human Resources are still a bit neglected in the early phases of the start-up life cycle. On the other hand, culture at the beginning is more relaxed and rewarding for the employees, but tightens up as the start-up grows. This hypothesis was made as a result of our common knowledge and understanding of the start-up world. We researched our hypothesis with the literature in the theoretical part of our master's thesis and through the interviews in the empirical part. The hypothesis served us as a guiding tool to set the research questions and the interview questions. In the discussion we will merge together our findings from the theory and interviews, and try to analyze the differences and similarities between theory and practice, as well as define some practices that turned out to be very useful for the interviewed companies, in order to help others, implement and acknowledge them as well.

4.1 Methodology

The main focus in the empirical research part was on collecting the data from start-ups through interviews. Due to the nature of our problem and assumption, qualitative research was conducted, which was based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with employees from Slovenian start-ups. The purpose of the interviews is to analyze the differences that happened through the growth of the company. We will try to identify in which phase of growth they are, how they tackled the changes in their organizational structure, if they had any defined HRM practices when they started, and what the situation is today, as well as how they dealt with retaining the original start-up culture. In total, the interviews will be conducted with approximately 5 to 10 start-ups from Slovenia.

Research questions written below, will be the basis for the construction of questions for the interview, which must be carefully created in order to get the answers we need. In-depth interviews were held with early employees or founders of the start-ups that were willing to cooperate with us for the second part of this master's thesis. We divided each research question into sub-questions that served as a framework for our interviews. All four research questions were covered with each interviewee, however some questions under the research question were not answered by all of them, because they are either in a too early phase of their growth, or have not implemented a certain Human Resource practice into their operations by this time. Below you can see our research questions again, this time supported with the sub-questions.

RQ1: How did the HR role and hiring process change through time?

- Do you have an HR department and person who is solely in charge of HR activities?
- What did your recruitment process look like in the beginning? (for example, the first five employees) What does it look like now?
- Do you often use an internal recruitment system?
- Do you have problems with high fluctuation of your employees?

RQ2: How do you cope with HR practices?

- What do you think about training and developing your employees, and what methods of training do you practice?
- How do you evaluate and motivate employees, and how do you give feedback on their work?
- What types of compensation do you use?

RQ3: What kind of changes occurred in the organizational structure during the growth?

- How many employees do you have currently, and how many did you have at the beginning?
- How did your structure change from the beginning?

- Were there any turning points through the growth of the company?
- What is your view on leadership? Were there any obstacles on this path?

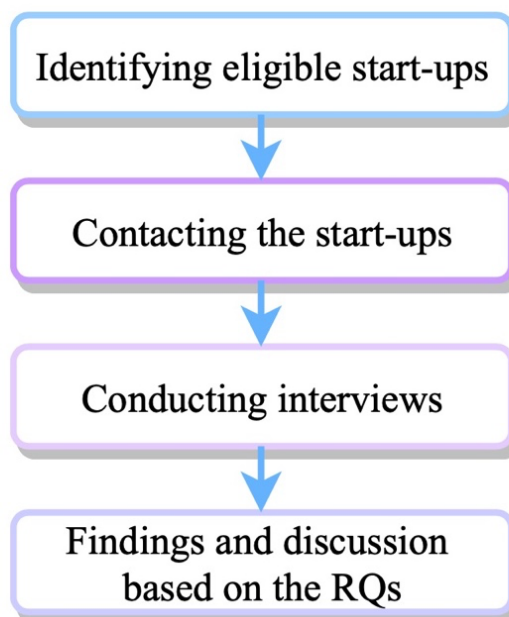
RQ4: Were start-ups able to maintain their culture from the beginning through growth?

- How would you describe the culture in your organization?
- Do you have a list of values that employees have to respect?
- Do you have an employee dress code policy?
- How much did the culture change through growth?

4.2 Research Procedure

Our research procedure, shown in Figure 15, started with identifying Slovenian start-ups that are growing and are already well established on the market. We contacted founders of twelve start-ups, mostly through LinkedIn or through email, if we could find it on the internet. The invitation included the description and purpose of our thesis. Ten responded, and eight agreed to have an interview. Our aim from the beginning of our research process was to do the interview with one of the founders or early employees, because they know how the company changed through growth. In eight interviews, we spoke to one of the founders, and in two interviews, we talked to HR personnel. Both interviewees who were not founders were aware of the changes happening through growth. One of them was the fourth employee in the company, and the other one has been researching this topic for the past six months. It turned out to be really valuable to have two different views on HRM, one from the founders' perspective and the other from the HR department.

Figure 17: Our research procedure



Source: Own work.

The interviews were carried from the 11th of February until the 26th. They were all held through video calls on platforms Zoom and Google Meet. The interviews lasted for around 20 to 60 minutes, and were recorded, with the purpose of doing a transcription after. All of the transcripts can be found in the appendix. From the transcripts, we divided the answers into four categories that match with our four research questions. The categories were then divided into smaller sub-categories that enabled us to compare answers from all the interviewees. These smaller categories are interpreted in the chapter called findings from the interviews, which will be followed by a discussion, where we connect the findings from the qualitative analysis with the theoretical part of the thesis.

4.2.1 Description of the selected companies

With a short description of the interviewed companies, we want to set the context to make it easier to understand the findings and the discussion. The interview transcripts can be found in the appendix. Two of the companies wish to stay anonymous, so we named them Company X and Company Y.

4.2.1.1 *Beeping*

An average household spends 9 hours weekly on household chores, of which more than 5 hours are spent on cleaning. In 2015 Jan Dobrilovič and David Mohar decided to give people more time for themselves and their loved ones, and this is how the platform Beeping was created. The platform offers fast, safe, and efficient hiring of reliable home cleaners. Not only do they solve the problem of finding reliable cleaners for individuals, they are also solving the problem of the black market, which is illegal but yet popular for home cleaners in Slovenia as well as abroad. Their clients can hire occasional help with household chores, as well as subscribe for regular cleaning. Today, they are a team of 10, plus all the cleaners they already recruited over the years. They operate in four European markets, which include Slovenia, Croatia, Italy, and Spain. In 2018, they got the award for Start-up of the year, which is based on four factors: product, investors, the team, and the potential for further growth. We interviewed Dobrilovič, whose role is Chief Executive Officer of the company.

4.2.1.2 *Chipolo*

Back in 2012, six friends were dealing with the same problem: they often misplaced their keys. That is why they created an item finder that can be attached to personal items such as keys and wallets, and then connected to the phone via Bluetooth. With the help of the Chipolo app, users can easily track their items with the attached Chipolo. The app can send a notification if a person leaves without their item, as well as show the location on a map. In 2013 they participated on Kickstarter with the goal of raising 15,000\$, which they achieved in only 17 hours. The campaign ended with 297,000\$ raised, which allowed them to develop

new products. Today, their products are present in more than 200 countries in the world, and have 45 employees. We conducted the interview with one of the founders, who is also the CEO, Primož Zelenšek.

4.2.1.3 Company X

This Slovenian start-up was established in 2017, and has been growing ever since. One of the founders got the idea at a start-up weekend workshop, where he worked on it with a team. After the weekend, he could not stop thinking about the idea, so he decided to work on it. Eight months later, he contacted one of the mentors from the workshop, who also brought the CTO and the designer to the team. This is how the founding team was assembled. Today, they employ 31 people and are still expanding. They work in the technology sector, and their target audience is in the USA. Even though they wish to remain anonymous in this thesis, they were very open and willing to share a lot of information with us. We talked with one of the founders, who is the CEO and his assistant, who is the Chief of Staff.

4.2.1.4 Company Y

This company was founded in 2014 by two entrepreneurs. They operate in the logistics sector with the help of technology. Today, there are more than 100 people employed in three different cities across Europe. Since they are already quite large, we got the opportunity to interview one of the HR staff. She is one of the three employees in the HR department and has joined the company half a year ago. Her job is focused on retaining the company culture and performing other HR activities. She spent the last few months researching the changes that occurred in the company through growth, so she was the perfect co-speaker for our research.

4.2.1.5 Flexkeeping

Flexkeeping was founded in 2013 under the name Facility. One of the founders, Luka Berger, worked in a hotel for a summer job and realized that communication between staff is relatively poor. Even though everyone had smartphones in their pockets, the organization was still based on phone calls and paper sheets. He saw an opportunity to optimize the processes with technology. This is how he and his business partner Aljaž Ketiš developed the operations management and staff communication app for managing hotel tasks. The app enables managers to distribute tasks and manage their employees, all with a click on the app. The hotel staff can easily see which rooms need cleaning and communicate with other staff in case of any malfunctions in the rooms. When the room is cleaned, the staff simply marks it in the app, and the receptionists can welcome new guests. Today, there are more than 20 people in the team, and their app is used in more than 11 countries. Some of their clients include hotel giants such as Hilton, Holiday Inn, Sheraton, and Kempinski. One of the

founders, Luka Berger, who is also the CEO, accepted our invitation for the interview and gave us some insight into their organization.

4.2.1.6 Hooray Studios

In 2017, two founders Mic Melanšek and Rado Daradan, made it their mission to make a product that goes above and beyond personalization boundaries, and creates stories with sparks of magic for children and adults. It is safe to say they are on the right path – by now, they have sold over 2 million books. Customers from 11 different countries, including the USA, Canada, Australia, Germany, and the UK, can purchase their books. Their primary focus are five strategic pillars. The first one is the highest level of personalization, meaning the main character can be completely customized, and the story and order can be selected. The second are uncompromising production standards, which are achieved by selecting the best (scratch-resistant) materials. Strategically placed partners allow them to achieve incredible turnaround time, which is the third strategic pillar. Their products are printed and shipped to clients in 5-14 days after the order confirmation. The books are written by award-winning authors and illustrated by top-notch designers, making them even more special. The last pillar is exceptional customer care - they respond to all customer messages, calls, and comments and treat them personally and with kindness.

This is achieved by a team of 75 full-time employees and an additional 55 to 75 part-time employees and students. In 2019 they won the award of Slovenian Start-up of the year. Mic Melanšek, who stands behind the role of Chief Marketing and Creative Officer, was the one who took the time to talk to us.

4.2.1.7 KingsBox

Like the traditional start-up stories, KingsBox started in a garage in 2015 by two 25-year-old students. With the goal to become the best and largest company in the field of power training and endurance, they started to work 16 hours per day: 8 hours of work and dealing with clients, and 8 hours of educating themselves. In the first year, they reinvested all the profit back in the company. Two years later, they already surpassed a million dollars in sales. In 2020 they sold over 120 thousand pieces of equipment to 28 different countries. Today they have 32 full-time employees and around 20 student employees. Being well aware of the importance of employee satisfaction, is only one of the reasons for their massive success. They invest a lot in employee well-being, education, and health in the workplace. Some of the perks for their staff members include training facilities within the company, massages at their workplace, and pampering at the hairdresser. We interviewed Živa Cotič Bizjak, who is in charge of all HR activities. She joined the company in the very beginning – she was the fourth employee, so she was the perfect candidate for our research.

4.2.1.8 Moja čokolada

This company is making sure their customers are happy - they sell chocolate online, and chocolate releases the hormone of happiness in the human brain. The founder, Andraž Gavez was searching for a gift when he came across an online shop that sold personalized chocolate bars. He was excited to have finally found a unique gift that suits everyone, from friends to business partners. The only problem was they did not deliver to Slovenia. He decided to create his own website that offered chocolate gifts, so he founded Moja Čokolada in 2013. Fast forward to 2021, the company has six full-time employees who all work remotely and meet up approximately once a week. They offer various chocolate brands, as well as their own. Their most popular products include personalized chocolate bars, a 3D Slovenia-shaped chocolate, and their own brand of chocolate for baking called BAM. Our interviewee was Gavez, the CEO of the company, an entrepreneur, consultant, mentor, and the Online Merchants Association Slovenia president.

To have a better overview, we put the information about interviewed companies in the Table 3 below.

Table 3: Interviewed companies with additional information

Company	Year established	Number of founders	Number of employees	Product/ service
Beeping	2015	2	10	Platform for hiring home cleaners
Chipolo	2012	6	45	Bluetooth item finder and tracking app
Company X	2017	4	31	Technology sector
Company Y	2014	2	100+	Transport sector
Flexkeeping	2013	2	20+	App for managing hotel tasks
Hooray Studios	2017	2	130+	Personalized books for children and adults
KingsBox	2015	2	52	Equipment for power training and endurance
Moja Čokolada	2013	1	6	Online chocolate store

Source: Own work.

4.3 Findings from interviews

4.3.1 Hiring process and the role of HR

HR department and activities

The first question, with which we started the conversation about the HR role and hiring process, was whether a company had an HR department or an employee who was solely in charge of HR activities. This was the first question on purpose, as it gave us an insight into what their point of view regarding this was. The list of companies with information about employees can be seen in Table 4.

Out of eight companies, three of them have an HR department. Two of these companies have more than 100 employees and one has 52. Company KingsBox, with 52 employees, had an HR specialist from the very beginning. She was the fourth employee and is still in charge of HR activities. In the beginning, the HR work field only demanded around two hours a day from her, and she helped in Customer Support the rest of her work time. When asked why she thinks the founders employed an HR specialist so early on, she replied with: *“I think their goal was to lay some foundations very early on, which they would later build on. They were very aware that the company will grow and that they needed to lay the foundations right from the start.”* Training, personal and business development, and culture were very important for them from the beginning and perhaps that is also connected with the fact that their fourth employee was from the HR field.

Besides KingsBox, Company Y with more than 100 employees, and Hooray Heroes with more than 130 employees also have an HR department. In Company Y, there was only one employee in charge of HR activities until 2019. His role was mainly administrative as he took care of the contracts. In 2019 they employed an HR specialist and her first task was to revive and maintain the culture in the company. Currently, she is HR manager, with two other employees in the HR department. They employed an HR specialist relatively late and our interviewee commented: *“You only think you need someone in HR when you cannot hire people fast enough on your own, or when your culture starts to squeak. It takes time to find an HR person, when you start looking for them, and you only take it when water starts to run down your throat.”*

The response of the Hooray Heroes founder was: *“We started thinking of the HR function too late. Currently, we have an HR leader and her assistant. A lot of things happened in the past five years and we needed to organize and systematize everything, so this is still their main focus besides taking care of employee satisfaction.”*

In Company X, they currently do not have an HR specialist, but they do have a unique position, which is similar. An employee, who is currently in the position of Chief of Staff, came into the company as an assistant of the CEO. Now, they are the gate-keeper between

the employees and CEO regarding employee and other internal issues. Besides that, they implemented a skills model for which a better expression would be a people development model. This model rates teams and various fields of work differently based on their performance. The Chief of Staff is also in charge of the well-being of the employees and the culture.

Besides Company X, four other interviewees said they currently do not employ a person, who would solely be in charge of HR activities. Out of the four, Chipolo, has the highest number of employees, which is 45. They tie the decision for employing an HR specialist with the demand for new employees. The CEO, Primož Zelenšek, said they will consider employing that person when there will be a need to employ more people in a shorter period of time, but right now they are handling the hiring process themselves. Beeping and Moja Čokolada, with ten and six employees, currently do not see the need for an HR employee as they are all taking different roles in the company and can manage it like that. Beeping employs ten people who work in the office but they have a lot of cleaners employed, who solely take care of the main operation of the company, which is an on-demand online cleaning platform. Flexkeeping, with currently 20 employees, plans to employ an HR specialist when they surpass 35 – 40 employees.

Table 4: Interviewed companies and HR department

Company	Number of employees	HR department or employee
Beeping	10	No
Chipolo	45	No
Company X	31	No
Company Y	100+	Yes
Flexkeeping	20+	No
Hooray Studios	130+	Yes
KingsBox	52	Yes
Moja Čokolada	6	No

Source: Own work.

Recruitment process

The second question under the first research question was regarding the hiring and recruitment process. An overview of their answers is shown in Table 5 below. In Beeping and Moja Čokolada, the CEO is in charge of the hiring process, since there are only ten and six employees. In Beeping the CEO, who we also conducted the interview with, is in charge of the whole process. However, the second interview is held with his co-founder as well. They are considering doing the third interview with the other employees present, to see how the potential employee would fit in with them. The CEO said the standards for employment were much lower at the beginning, and that today they are more careful when defining what

kind of knowledge and previous experience they are looking for. The hiring process is very similar in the company Moja Čokolada. When there is a need for a new employee, they define what kind of profile and knowledge is needed. The CEO holds the interview, and then the other employees meet the final two candidates, who also join the team for a day or two at the offices to see if they are a fit.

With the previous question, we discovered that three companies have an HR department. In those three companies: Company Y, KingsBox, and Hooray Heroes; an HR person plays a big role in the hiring process and is also the first one to interview a potential employee. In KingsBox, they try to keep the interview stress-free. The interviewee Živa, who is an HR specialist said: *“We invite them over for coffee in a nearby café. The atmosphere is more relaxed and they tell you more if they do not feel like they are being interrogated.”* After the first coffee interview, the potential employee has an interview with the two founders and the head of the department concerned. In the past, they also had a third interview with the closest employees but they have removed it. In the other two companies with HR departments, team leaders or managers are included alongside HR and the CEO. In Hooray heroes, the founder told us: *“Until six months ago I was always present in the interviews, asked questions, and then made a final decision. But this is not sustainable for the employee–manager relationship. Now, managers are always included in the hiring process and also take responsibility for who they decide to employ.”* The interview order in Company Y is the following: the first interview is done with HR, the second with the team leader, and the third one with the founders. When there were fewer employees and no HR department, they did four interviews before the on-boarding process.

In Chipolo, Company X, and Flexkeeping with 20 – 45 employees, the team leader holds the main role in the hiring process. Regarding the importance of cultural fit, the CEO of Chipolo said: *“We try to find people that really fit into the company as much as possible – it is their desire to create, sell, and a willingness to work hard that is most important to us.”* In Company X the hiring process is led by team leaders. The CEO approves the hiring but the team leaders are in charge of the decision process. Flexkeeping has a well-defined process for hiring, which serves as a framework for team leaders in departments that are hiring a new employee. Our interviewee described it like this: *“They lead the processes, but we have a framework in place, how the hiring goes, what the steps are, how many rounds of interviews there are - this is the base for improving the quality of the candidate selection process. We implemented this framework a couple of years ago. When someone is selected, we have an on-boarding process that is precisely defined, and know precisely who implements this process and how it goes. Let us say that the first month or at least the first two weeks are more or less known in detail. From there on it is an internal matter.”*

Table 5: Interviewed companies and recruitment process

Company	Number of employees	Interview leader	Importance of cultural fit
Beeping	10	CEO	Big
Chipolo	45	Team leaders	Very big
Company X	31	Team leaders	Very big
Company Y	100+	HR, Team leader, CEO	Very big
Flexkeeping	20+	Team leaders	Very big
Hooray Studios	130+	HR, Team leaders (managers)	Big
KingsBox	52	HR, Founders	The biggest
Moja Čokolada	6	CEO	Big

Source: Own work.

Internal recruiting

Based on the answers to this question, an internal recruitment system is present in companies with more employees. This makes sense, as the first employees take on different roles in the company. There are not many promotions as departments usually do not grow in employees but rather in their versatility. CEO of Beeping said: *“Internal recruiting is very challenging if you have a team of 8-10 people with very different skills. I cannot turn a Customer Support Representative into a programmer. I do not need another Customer Support Representative at the moment, unless the market doubles and I can then upgrade them to some operational function.”*

In Company X, they believe that internal recruiting is very important since this person already shares the company values, internal relationships, and culture. However, they think the balance is very crucial here. Sometimes a person from the outside brings new knowledge, experiences, and also culture, which is very important as well. The CEO gave us a real-life example: *“In one Slovenian video developing company, they had one designer and when they hired more they said the designer that was first hired was the manager. There were no results and no success. They found out for themselves that this role did not suit them. However, it can also be the other way around, you have someone at the beginning who is not a generalist but is a specialist in a certain field, and has ambitions to lead, but they also have another field in which they work. You would like to give them a team to lead but you do not have one, and still want to keep them. This can be complicated because you want to build a structure around one person. We currently have a couple of generalists who can do more things, and depending on where the need arises you redirect them to some more specialized area. This also happened with our designers, the head of the department left, there were four designers left, but none of them were suitable for the head.”*

Company Y mostly uses internal recruiting for managing positions but also shares junior positions with their current employees. Hooray Heroes highly promote internal recruiting. Externally, they only employed one manager. The other management positions were filled internally. In Chipolo they say that many students were later on employed. They first look inside and only then start looking for new employees externally. KingsBox on the other hand, also had some mixed feelings when promoting employees to leadership positions as some of those employees were not enjoying leadership tasks. Now, they try to look for the managers, who already have leadership experiences rather than promoting their own employees.

Fluctuation of employees

None of the interviewed companies experienced any special problems with high fluctuation. In Company X one team fell apart recently and that increased their turnover percentage. The CEO expressed concerns that it might have happened because of Covid-19. They said that programmers, who were usually more introverted, might have found that they very much enjoyed working from home. This might have given them the possibility to work for more high-end start-ups all around the world and still be based in Slovenia. Because of the ease of working from home, lack of talent willing to work for Slovene companies can occur.

Our interviewee from Company Y said: *“Employees do not change too often. Our turnover is pretty normal. In startups, especially as we are, the pace is quite fast and people change because it is not for everyone. But since I have been here, it has not happened yet that someone would leave, and that you really would not expect them to go.”* We got a similar response from Kingsbox. She said that some people left, because of their 4-pillar system, which pushed you to improve and some people simply did not find themselves in that system. They do not see that as a problem, however.

4.3.2 HR practices

Training and development

Regarding the budget for education and training, almost every interviewee answered positively. We presented our main findings regarding education in Table 6 below. The three companies that have the smallest number of employees do not have a budget, especially for education and training. They try to support employees if they really feel they want to attend a certain conference or seminar but they do not have a budget for every employee. At Moja Čokolada and Beeping they said that if an employee approached them with a specific wish to attend a seminar, they would support it financially. However, when you have less than 20 employees and you are in the starting phases of your business development, there is not much time to educate, since everybody needs to do everything and there is a lot of work.

Our interviewee, an employee in the HR department of Company Y, said that they are motivating their employees to attend more seminars and other educational practices. They

recently implemented a new policy that gives every employee a certain budget to educate themselves, and they are looking for ways to motivate them to spend it. Employees can decide freely, what kind of education they wish to receive, and sometimes the team leaders suggest them some seminars. In Hooray Heroes, every employee had a budget for education. After the first year, almost nobody used it, so the managers told them that the budget will be removed if nobody decides to use it. After that employees still did not use it. The founder said: *“We removed the budget for sport and education because obviously, we did not know the right way to motivate our employees to use it.”* Since they are a premium partner of Facebook, Google, and Pinterest they have a lot of options to send employees to seminars offered by their partners. These seminars or sessions are more focused on the marketing department. Although they removed the permanent budget, they still support almost every request for education but the initiative must come from the employee’s side.

At Flexkeeping and Chipolo, they support the educational initiatives from their employees but do not have any standardized systems to check and supervise that. When asked if employees take a chance to educate themselves if possible, the CEO of Chipolo told us: *“The iOS developers went to San Francisco every year for an iOS developer conference, the web team went to Amsterdam, Android has some conferences of their own, and sales and marketing went mainly to Slovenian ones - so yes, they used it.”*

With regards to the education of employees, we were most positively surprised by Company X and Company KingsBox. At Company X, the Chief of people gave us a little insight into their Friday gatherings: *“It’s about having someone present something related to their position or their project every Friday. Someone introduced us to animations in app, while someone else introduced the American school system, etc. We have a very interactive but more informal type of education. We would like to invite our connections and outside people to our Friday gatherings where we would have a talk show in some way. Employees would send me questions and there would be a debate. It is about socializing, education, and team building as well. We have one employee from the USA, they are an English teacher and now they hold English lessons for an hour in the morning.”* If someone goes to a conference or attends a seminar, they do not need to write a report about it, but they present their learnings the next Friday. Besides these interactive Friday gatherings, they support their employees to attend online workshops, and also send each other interesting articles, books, podcasts through their internal channel on Slack called “Insights”.

At KingsBox they highly value education. Their founders were reading, listening to podcasts, and attending seminars eight hours a day when they started this company. Their system is very structured. Our interviewee said: *“In each quarter, each of us tries to educate themselves in the field that they work in, and we also work on our soft skills. At the end of the quarter, we then have more knowledge on a certain topic. All expenses of education are covered by the company. However, if someone is educating themselves, they also receive a reward in addition to their salary.”* This information about tying education to the salary, was really impressive to us, because we were able to see from the other interviews that

companies struggle with motivating their employees to educate themselves. KingsBox works in the sports industry and therefore the employees' level of activity is very important to them. Employees need to attend some sort of sports activity two times per week. The expenses are covered by the company, and employees also get a reward if they fulfill the obligation to be active.

Table 6: Education in the interviewed companies

Company	Number of employees	Budget for education	Self – initiative education	Company initiative
Beeping	10	No	Yes	No
Chipolo	45	Yes	Yes	No
Company X	31	Yes	Yes	No
Company Y	100+	Yes	Yes	No
Flexkeeping	20+	Yes	Yes	No
Hooray Studios	130+	Yes	Yes	No
KingsBox	52	Yes	Yes	Yes
Moja Čokolada	6	No	Yes	No

Source: Own work.

Employee evaluation and motivation

Based on the answers we have gathered we learned that four companies do not have yearly appraisals, and four do. Some of them also measure the performance of separate departments with OKR, KPI, or different systems. Although this can be a good indicator of a company's overall performance that is seen on revenue parameters, those indicators usually measure things differently than interviews with employees would. Our main findings regarding employee evaluation and motivation can be seen in Table 7 below.

The four companies that do not practice yearly appraisals have different reasons for not doing so. Beeping, with 10 employees excluding the employees that work on-field and carry their operations, has daily and weekly appraisals. These appraisals are based on 3–4 parameters. The CEO also presented a way of communicating that works for them: *“I want to have meetings weekly and I reversed the logic a bit and said to my employees - each individual leads the meeting, not me. I am just a listener; the employee needs to prepare so everyone sees what happened last week and marks what will happen this week. This way they need to come up with a solution on their own and realize they do not actually need me. It is a good thing that everyone knows exactly what they need to do, and they actually find a solution in the meeting. This is a model that has proven to be good for us and although I have not read about it anywhere, it is working for us at least for now.”* In Beeping, with 10 employees' yearly appraisals do not make much sense, since you can communicate with every employee on a daily or weekly basis. It is very similar in Moja Čokolada, where there

are six employees. They measure performance with a KPI system and regarding the employee's self-reflection, they communicate constantly.

In Flexkeeping, with a little bit over 20 employees, they currently do not have yearly or monthly appraisals. The CEO said: *"We have a clearly defined goal in the company. And then these goals are broken down into individual departments. Within that, we need to know what the activities are, and how we can measure them to eventually lead us to the goals. Performance is very well measurable in this regard. If it was not, it would mean that we are setting tasks in the wrong way. We are really doing this a lot and so far, it has had good results."* Regarding the employees' feedback on their leaders he smiled and told us to ask him this question in six months, as they currently do not have any appraisals of that kind. Hooray Heroes, currently employs more than 130 people and performs appraisals every three months.

Company X thinks that waiting a whole year for an interview is too long and feedback should be more frequent. Regarding their six-month appraisals, he said: *"Every six months we have an official document, where we all give feedback. The Chief of Staff and I then send it back anonymously to the team leaders. In a half-year interview, you give feedback to everyone you work with. Only the Chief of Staff and I are given feedback by everyone. The management team and team leaders have a meeting once a week to discuss any issues."*

Same as in Company X, KingsBox also has reviews twice a year but also a more in-depth interview once a year. Their approach is very structured and the HR manager described it like this: *"We have interviews twice a year. Salary promotion is tied to our 4-pillar system and everyone needs to know how they are approximately doing: are you doing well or can you improve it. This interview is very short, and once a year we have a longer one-hour interview. This interview is more serious, because we are also talking about a raise, and we also come to this interview more prepared, the employee fills in the questionnaire, as well as Luka (the CEO) and the manager. The questions are about the past, present, and future. Then we talk about what is great and what could be improved. The department manager is only there for the first part of the conversation, and then they RE no longer present so that the employee can then say something about them in a slightly more intimate environment."*

After the first six months in Company Y, employees have a performance review. After that, the interviews happen once a year. Our interviewee thinks that this could be improved by having them more frequently. In the HR department, they are currently looking for ways to help team leaders and to motivate them on giving employees task-related feedbacks. In Chipolo, the yearly appraisal is structured, more formal, and includes some standardized questions. However, they try to regularly communicate all the ups and downs.

Table 7: Performance management in the interviewed companies

Company	Number of employees	Yearly appraisal	Feedback	Measure parameters
Beeping	10	No	On the spot	Soon
Chipolo	45	Yes	Yearly	No
Company X	31	No	Twice a year	No
Company Y	100+	Yes	Yearly	No
Flexkeeping	20+	No	On the spot	Yes
Hooray Studios	130+	No	Every three months	No
KingsBox	52	Yes	Twice a year	Yes
Moja Čokolada	6	No	On the spot	Yes

Source: Own work.

Compensation

As shown in all the previous answers from the HR leader in KingsBox, their overall approach to all HR activities is structured, and results in the overall satisfaction of their employees. Besides being compensated for all sports activities and education material, employees also value the non-monetary compensation height. Regarding non-monetary rewards, the HR lead said: *“Non-monetary forms are also very successful. After the first wave of Covid-19, the whole company went glamping for two days and this was covered by the company entirely. We had fun there for two days, and at the beginning of the year, when we had annual interviews, all the employees highly praised it. All team-buildings mean a lot to our employees.”* Another monetary compensation they have is tied to one parameter. The founders want to be very transparent, and the whole company monitors one sales parameter every month. The CEO then reports to employees where they stand with this parameter because their holiday pay and their Christmas bonus height depends on it.

Flexkeeping and Company Y both said that the Marketing Department’s success is most easy to measure. Therefore, this department also has performance rewards. In Flexkeeping, marketing is the only department, which gets a reward based on their performance. However, they try to enhance employee satisfaction with little non-monetary rewards such as an option to use the company’s camp house. Although the marketing department is the only department in which performance is rewarded in Company Y, they have other monetary rewards: *“If you are successful in the first year, you get a certain percentage increase in salary. There is also always the possibility of some extraordinary rewards chosen by the director. In our company, the big turning points are very easy to notice.”*

In Company X, the CEO expressed that bonuses can be very dangerous as it is hard to be fair to everyone in the company. They canceled the bonus options, but they have many non-monetary rewards. Besides the unlimited use of computers bought by the companies, which

employees can also use in their personal time, coffee and drinks available in the offices, the CEO also mentioned an interesting option. In his own words: *“There is part of the company which is reserved for an equity pool for employees. It is an option, which employees will get. Not everyone will get the same, but everyone will get something. This will be established.”* Chipolo ties the bonuses to the success of the whole company. The CEO said that he is working on that matter a lot, trying to improve it. They are also very flexible with their work schedule. Beeping, with the on-demand cleaning platform, offers free cleaning to every employee. It has proven to be a good practice not only because of employee satisfaction but also because employees can be customers in this situation. They get a chance to experience what their customers do.

4.3.3 Changes in the organizational structure

The employees

Most of the interviewed companies have two founders, except for Company X with four, Chipolo with six, and Moja Čokolada with one. For the latter, an employee joined the founder quite fast, and it was only them for quite a while. They added the third member later on, and in the past year, three other employees have joined. Today, they are a team of six, and they plan to expand to ten by the end of the year. Beeping has had a similar path. It was only the two founders for the first eight months, and then the team started to grow. Ten people are employed today, and the plan is 15 by the year 2022. Company Y had five employees quite soon, and in their second year of business, they expanded to 15. Fast forward to 2021, and they have more than 100 employees working in three different offices across Europe. Companies Hooray Studios and KingsBox both have two founders, and the seasons affect both of their businesses, so besides their full-time employees, they employ more than 20 students for the season peaks.

The structure

Most of the start-ups from our sample, did not have a structure in the early days since there is no particular type of structure for two people. The companies and their departments are listed below in Table 8.

Berger, the co-founder of Flexkeeping, says that in the beginning, there was no structure. He was doing the business part, his co-founder was taking care of the product, and a third person joined to do the development. Contrary to that, they now have six departments: Sales, Marketing, Client Onboarding, Support, Product, and Operations. "The structuring happens somehow naturally. You look at your product and your clients and see what their needs are, and so you divide." They have a horizontal approach to leadership, meaning each department has a leader, and then those leaders have to communicate and coordinate with each other.

A similar structure has developed in the company Hooray Studios. They have a management team that makes the decisions, and each member has their department below them. They have seven departments: Art and Design, Marketing, Information Technology (IT), Project Management, Production, Customer Care, and Finance. But it was not like that from the beginning. In the early days, the two founders were hiring according to their needs - whether they did not know how to do something or could not handle all the work themselves. From 20 employees on, the actual growth started.

"At the time, we were hiring a little mindlessly. This means that we were very much looking for people who have their hearts in the right place at that time, not necessarily the knowledge. I still think it was the right decision, but it was not a very professional one." Nevertheless, Melanšek still thinks it was the right decision for that period. *"Back then, we were growing so fast that there was something new every day, so we did not want to have people who have knowledge fixed on one thing. This flexibility, enthusiasm, and the fact that they understood us and shared this vision was very important to us."* In the last year, they did a restructure. They looked at the redundant processes, positions, products, and markets and restructured their employees accordingly. They also built the management team, which replaced his and the co-founder's place.

Before, the structure in Hooray Heroes was flat, meaning everyone was reporting to one of them directly, which was too overwhelming since they already have more than 100 employees. They looked up to the Zappos Holacracy, which means that the employees are self-managed. But at one point, they had to set boundaries and make an order. *"That is why we hired managers, who now have a lot of responsibility, but there has to be some chain of command, otherwise it could be a disaster."*

The CEO of Company X agrees. "The flat structure seems very difficult to maintain. It is possible perhaps in the beginning when there are few employees". They currently have a hierarchical structure with five departments: Marketing, Analytics, Product/Design, Frontline, and Strategy as well as Operations. Otherwise, they are very open to changes in the structure. They allow it to change three times a year, based on their projects, the number of employees, and their learnings. They aspire to be very agile and to change it according to their needs.

Nevertheless, the flat structure is currently working quite well in the start-up Beeping. There are no bosses, and each person covers their own field. They have their central function in the headquarters, which supplies all markets with technology, marketing, and finance. Each market has two primary operations - customer care and the relationship with cleaners. When we asked Dobrilovič, the CEO, what led to such a structure, he replied: *"Business growth and expansion into foreign markets. We are empowering people because, of course, you cannot manage every process by yourself. You have to trust that a person, with his knowledge and his best possible will, executes"*.

Contrary to other interviewed companies, Chipolo has had a set structure from the beginning. Each one of the founders had their area of expertise, therefore each one of them is the leader of their department, except for the CEO. Together they form the executive team. Their departments are Sales, Marketing, Design, Development, and a team that takes care of customer support, quality assurance, administration, operation, and production.

Company Y and KingsBox both also have a hierarchical structure with departments. Company Y consists of eight departments. The largest is the Operations Department, under which they have three sub-departments: Customer Support, Customer Success, and Sales. The other ones are Logistics, Strategic Business Development, Finance, Marketing, HR, IT, and UX Design. KingsBox's largest department is the Warehouse; then they have Logistics, the Purchasing Department, Mechanical Team, Customer Support, Sales and Marketing, and HR.

Table 8: The departments of the interviewed companies

Company	Number of employees	Number of departments	Departments
Beeping	10	/	/
Chipolo	45	5	Sales, Marketing, Design, Development, Operations (Customer Support, QA, Administration, Operation, Production)
Company X	31	5	Marketing, Analytics, Product/Design, Frontline, and Strategy/Operations
Company Y	100+	8	Operations (Customer Support, Customer Success, Sales), Logistics, Strategic Business Development, Finance, Marketing, HR, IT, UX Design
Flexkeeping	20+	6	Sales, Marketing, Client Onboarding, Support, Product, and operation
Hooray Studios	130+	7	Art and Design, Marketing, IT, Project Management, Production, Customer Care, and Finance
KingsBox	52	8	Warehouse, Logistics, Purchasing, Mechanical Team, Customer Support, Sales, Marketing, HR
Moja Čokolada	6	/	/

Source: Own work.

Turning points through growth

Most of the interviewed start-ups had at least one significant moment through growth that changed something for them. For the most, it was the early days, when things started to grow from an idea into a real company. Another tipping point that three of the companies mentioned, was the global pandemic that occurred last year. It did not necessarily have a negative impact on their businesses, but rather on the culture.

Company X describes the first phase as the one where friends and family came to the rescue. Soon after they started the company, the CEO's younger brother joined. The roles of the first employees developed the most through growth. His brother is currently a project manager, where his main role is to coordinate three departments, so he currently has almost 30 people to manage. In general, the initial employees expect to become leaders, and it can be challenging since being a good worker does not mean being a good leader.

Since the initial employees are mostly family and friends, the transition when it grows to 20 employees can be strange for them. The start-up starts to shape more into a corporate form, and some processes have to be defined. *"To those who have been with you from the beginning, this may be a little strange because they do not understand this transition. But it cannot be otherwise."*

"It is important to employ generalists in the early days. You want to have them in the beginning, but when you grow, you want to have as few of them as possible." They currently have a few generalists capable of doing multiple things that can be moved to a specific area if needed and become specialists.

Flexkeeping has had a similar experience. *"Up to eight or ten people, we all knew each other, and we all did everything. By default, you do things that are not meant for you. Around 15 employees, the need for structure started to show. This transition can be a problem, especially if you have never dealt with something like this."* They grew to 33 full-time employees, and they implemented a structure with rules, responsibilities, KPIs, and everything else that was needed. The main difference that occurs through growth in Flexkeeping CEO's words is *"The HR process and the internal structure. Also, the company becomes goal-driven, KPI-driven, and metrics-driven"*.

Beeping experienced the most significant shift last year when they moved to new offices. Before that, the CEO was doing everything, from interviewing and onboarding the cleaners to handling the finances. *"When we moved to the new spaces, we started to become a real company, and the perception changed."*

Systematization of jobs in KingsBox happened around the time they employed the 10th employee. But the most considerable shift happened last year when the pandemic started. Most companies were at risk, but this was certainly not the case for KingsBox. *"We have so much work that we can see our system falling apart,"* says Cotič Bizjak, who is in charge of

all HR activities. A big shock for the founders was not knowing all the employees personally due to enlarging the team so much in the past year. However, they are hopeful that things will go back to normal once the pandemic ends.

Hooray Heroes also encountered the most notable change when the Covid-19 crisis hit. Until then, it was all about scaling. Their only goal was to grow and be the market leaders. They employed many people, developed new products, and had little to no negative news. When the virus hit, news started to change from positive to negative. Suddenly, the cracks in the culture showed. *"Until then, we had no reason to quarrel in the company. But when the crisis and the uncertain future came, people began to withdraw a little - some quit, and some were fired. So that was a major milestone as far as the culture is concerned."*

Contrary to all the bumps fellow start-ups encountered, Chipolo has had no drastic changes overall. *"Mostly things happen naturally, or we saw it needed to be fixed, and we fixed it,"* says the CEO. Nevertheless, the pandemic has had a bit of an effect on them as well. *"We were so busy focusing on the problems that came with the pandemic that we did not focus enough on the people. This was a mistake."*

Leadership

The transition between being a founder and becoming a leader can be challenging. With this question, we wanted to capture their experience with it. *"We are lucky to have good investors who are experienced. Whenever I encounter an obstacle, I turn to them."* says the CEO of Company X. They still find it hard not to interfere with the product itself like they did in the beginning, but they have other tasks that need their attention now. The Chief of Staff helps them in those moments to put their focus on the task in demand. Another bump on the way was them being the youngest of the co-founders, so they had to gain respect from the team. *"The one who is the CEO must have the last word, and others must trust them. If you have to defend your every decision, it takes too much time and energy."*

"Each period has had its own challenges," says the Chipolo CEO. In the early days, the main issue was employing. They did not know how to hire the right people, so it often turned out they were not a match for their team. They also did not know how to delegate, which resolved itself in time, due to two reasons. They grew and gained more experience as well as they were joined by people who were self-initiative and understood the situation.

Dobrilović says that he had to do so many different operational things that he could not just coordinate and lead others until now. *"You cannot just say: I am the boss, you do everything, I will go home, and we will talk and brainstorm later. This is definitely not the case."*

In Gavez's opinion, the leadership role comes naturally. Of course, you make mistakes, but it is important to be transparent about being new to this role, which is something everyone can understand. *"When you have a team of up to 15-20 members, leadership skills can more*

or less be taught, but what happens after that scares me a bit." Yet, he says that *"Being the leader is probably the least attractive and fun position in the company"*.

Melanšek from Hooray Heroes agrees with that. The role of the CEO, in his opinion, is the necessary evil that comes with having a company. *"I do not even remotely enjoy it. I prefer to do other things such as developing products and creating campaigns."* Their biggest challenge was not taking the time to grow managers under them. *"This resulted in us being the direct line for everyone, and all the decisions were ultimately ours to make."* When they were still a team of 20, it was much easier to control everything since they were all in the same room. Now, they are on two floors and have their own offices, which makes things quite challenging. *"You have to be really tough to put up with it - 100 people expect the perfect decision from you, and you have to stand behind it."* It was not sustainable, that is why they decided to employ department leaders.

Berger describes leadership as continuously growing. Making a lot of mistakes and then learning from them. *"It is quite painful because the mistakes you make in the beginning drag on for a very long time, cost a lot, make you slower, and cause poorer results."* If he were building a new company now and have more than 20 employees from the start, things would be quite different. He would implement all the knowledge he has now, and the framework would be completely different.

4.3.4 Culture through growth

The culture in the organization

This question aims to see how culture changes from the initial one, which is usually quite relaxed in start-ups. Both Company Y and Hooray Heroes pointed out that a significant shift happened when they moved from everyone working in one space to several offices or floors. When everyone is in the same room, they are also included in the decision-making process or know what is going on. However, when the team grows, at some point, they do not know everything anymore and may feel a little excluded.

Two companies pointed out that age also plays a factor in the culture. Chipolo's average employee age is between 30 and 33, and Company X's is 28. *"It is not hard for the team to be connected since we are all quite young."* says the Chief of Staff from Company X. He also pointed out that they were hanging out a lot in the offices, whether it was playing ping pong or having a drink together, which contributed to their culture. However, ever since the pandemic began they have had to try harder to maintain the culture, as working from home does not allow for a lot of communication.

The same can be said for four other companies. In Chipolo's case, it was the canceled annual trip to Vegas. They went there every January for a month, and hired a big house for the whole team, which lead to better relationships and atmosphere in the company. Flexkeeping

is trying to solve this through online socializing events, internal newsletters, and sending presents to employees' homes. Moja Čokolada's team have been working remotely since before the pandemic, but met in offices once a week and had some team buildings, which they currently cannot have. *"As soon as the regions open, we will go back to meeting in person once a week, which will contribute to building our culture."* Melanšek from Hooray Heroes explained that they did not feel the need to write down their values or mission for a long time. The team was always together, hanging out and having fun. *"Even if there was no contact during work hours, we ate together or something like that. These are very small things that are significant for the culture."*

When asked what kind of culture they have in the company, a word used in almost all the interviews was relaxed. The Flexkeeping CEO defined their culture as modern and relaxed, meaning they do not have fixed working hours, employees can choose to work from home, and they organize some events to cultivate the culture. Beeping's philosophy on the culture is relaxed but with formal guidelines. It is important for them that employees are satisfied even if the pace of work is fast. In Company Y, the culture has been international since the beginning. Since they work in the logistics sector, they need international workers who speak different languages. That is how the culture formed. Today, they are already quite a large team, so the culture is becoming more corporate. In our interviewee's words: *"I would say that we are still a start-up with one foot, and with the other, we are entering the corporate world."*

The culture in Chipolo has not changed much from the beginning. When asked to describe the culture, the CEO replied: *"It is based on normal relationships, encouragement to talk to each other, getting things resolved on an ongoing basis, and no lies in the background."*

Contrary to the usual framework, when a company first defines the values, mission, and vision, before thinking of ways to achieve that; KingsBox did the opposite. They defined the so-called four pillars, based on which a culture emerged, and later on they used this to write down the vision, mission, and goals.

Salary promotion based on the performance of an individual can be hard to measure in most jobs. That is why they tied it to these four pillars. The first pillar is based on objectives and key results (OKRs). Every three months, each employee sets their OKRs for the next period. The second pillar is sport. Since the company operates in the sports industry, they need to include it in their lives. Most of the employees meet these goals already, so there is no need for strict rules.

The third pillar is compatibility with the culture. Every three months, they fill out questionnaires, connected only to the culture, team spirit, and communication. Each person also receives their score on a sheet of paper, with recommendations attached. *"They can use this sheet to light a fire at home if they want, or they can actually use it. I have to say that these scores reach their hearts, and they all try to improve in the next period,"* says Cotič

Bizjak, who is in charge of all HR activities. The fourth pillar is education. Every individual creates their own educational plan, where they set one goal and three activities for achieving that goal. The goal can be connected to their OKRs, but it is not necessary. The activities can be anything, from a book to a podcast or a webinar.

At the end of the year, they look at the reports, and if they have partaken in more than 70% of the activities, they get a raise. The initiative for this system came from our interviewee, Živa Cotič Bizjak. The founders, Luka Železnik and Dejan Kobal supported her idea; the most important thing for them was to include education and OKRs in the model.

Values

Six out of eight interviewed companies have written values. Starting with Company X, they have written down four core values: “We do it for the impact”, “We together strong”, “It is done when we measure it”, and “Courage over professionalism”. Their product helps people all around the world, so they can attract employees with the same and similar values.

Three interviewed companies have three defined values. “People”, “Passion”, and “Hospitality” are Flexkeeping's values. They also use them as an explanation of who they are as a company. KingsBox likewise has three values written down, which are: “We are driven by innovation”, “We are committed to growth”, and “We exceed expectations”.

Hooray Heroes' co-founder explained that they did not feel the need to write down the company values for a long time. They are now a large team from different countries and cultures, and they had to write them down, so the employees take them into consideration. All the values revolve around taking responsibility and customers being their primary focus. One of the values is also connected to being flexible, meaning that if a new opportunity arises, they go for it.

The company Beeping has seven values: “We are candid and trust each other”, “We do more with less”, “We are humble”, “We get shit done”, “We are customer-obsessed”, “We are data-driven”, “We do more with less”, and “We are passionate and committed”. They set values they can truly get behind and comply with. For example, “We get shit done” is all about their execution. They do not care how you get things done; if you set a deadline, you have to meet it no matter what. *“When we were the start-up of the year, we got carried away. We realized we want to be grounded, simple and respectful to everyone around us - from the cleaners to our partners. This is what the value humble means to us,”* explained the CEO.

Last but not least, Company Y's values are “Collaborate”, “Bold”, and “Progressive”. Part of their recruitment process is also a booklet explaining their values, and what they mean in practice. They actively communicate these values in their internal communication systems, and will soon put them on their offices' walls.

Below in Table 9, we can see the list of values of each company.

Table 9: Values of the interviewed companies

Company	Number of values	Values
Beeping	7	We are candid and trust each other, we are humble, we get shit done, we are customers-obsessed, we are data-driven, we do more with less, and we are passionate and committed.
Chipolo	/	/
Company X	4	We do it for the impact, we together strong, it is done when we measure it, and courage over professionalism.
Company Y	7	Collaborate, bold, and progressive.
Flexkeeping	3	People, passion, and hospitality.
Hooray Studios	7	/
Kingsbox	3	We are driven by innovation, we are committed to growth, and we exceed expectations.
Moja čokolada	/	/

Source: Own work.

Dress code policy

Last but not least, this question was placed to see if there is was a pattern in the start-ups. The general perception of start-ups is a relaxed environment and having fun. The list of companies with information about the dresscode can be seen in Table 10.

What came as a surprise to us was that one of the companies actually had dress code rules. Company Y created two documents with rules of behavior and dressing. This emerged when one of the employees was dressed inappropriately for a meeting. That is why they had to put it down as a rule for everyone to respect.

Besides them, none of the companies have any rules about dressing. Except for one minor rule in Hooray Heroes - everyone has to wear slippers. But this rule is there only because they want their employees to feel comfortable. Flexkeeping's CEO allows employees to wear whatever they feel best in, but a certain style is expected when it comes to meetings with clients, which everyone respects without complaints.

Table 10: Dress code policy in the interviewed start-ups

Company	Dress code
Beeping	No
Chipolo	No
Company X	No
Company Y	Yes
Flexkeeping	No
Hooray Studios	No
Kingsbox	No
Moja čokolada	No

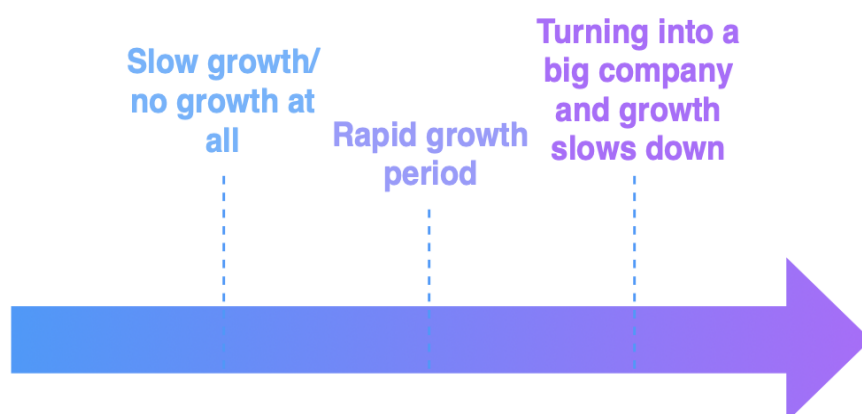
Source: Own work.

5 DISCUSSION

After conducting theoretical and empirical research on how start-ups look on Human Resource Management and how their view changed through growth, we got some interesting results. We tried to connect those results with theory to see how theoretical approaches work in real life. The discussion is divided into four subchapters, as we have four research questions, which we based our thesis on.

Every start-up is different, but they all encounter similar growth phases. We decided to use two models for the discussion. The first are Graham's (2012) three phases: slow growth or no growth at all, rapid growth period, and turning into a big company and growth slowing down. And the second is Cohan's (2019) four stages: winning the first customers, building a scalable business model, sprinting to liquidity, and running the marathon.

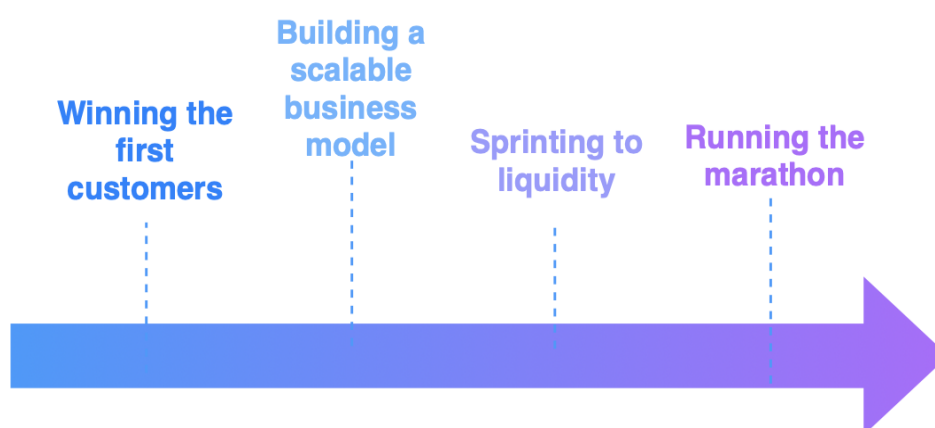
Figure 18: Graham's growth model



Source: Graham (2012).

We sorted the eight interviewed start-ups based on our belief in which growth phase they currently are. The first model can be seen in Figure 16. In the first phase of slow growth or no growth at all, we listed startups: Beeping and Moja Čokolada, for which we believe are now entering the phase of rapid growth. In the second phase based on Graham's model (2012), which talks about rapid growth, we categorized Company Y, Flexkeeping, Company X and Kingsbox. Hooray heroes and Chipolo ranked into the last, third phase, which means that the start-up is turning into a big company, and that the rapid growth is slowing down.

Figure 19: Cohan's model of start-up growth



Source: Cohan (2019).

The second model, based on which we sorted the startups, can be seen in Figure 17. The first start-up stage, based on Cohan (2019) is winning the first customers. This is the stage where the founder already has an idea but does not have employees or investors. All of the interviewed start-ups have already passed this stage. The next stage is building a scalable business model. We would put the company Beeping and Moja Čokolada in this phase. The following phase is sprinting to liquidity, where we would place Flexkeeping, Company X, and KingsBox. Running the marathon is the last phase, in which we would put Company Y, Hooray Heroes, and Chipolo.

5.1 Discussion based on the research questions

5.1.1 Hiring process and the role of HR

When we were reading the literature on Human Resource Management, we learned that investing in people always turns out to be worthwhile. While your product and operations can be copied by other companies', great employees cannot be. It is because of this that Human capital deserves to be invested in. Although these intangible assets might not show in the company's balance sheets, they still have an enormous impact on an organization's performance (Snell & Bohlander, 2012).

Our first question in the interview, was whether they have an HR department in the company or a person who is solely in charge of HR activities. We learned that only three out of eight companies currently have an HR department. These three companies also have the highest number of employees. Only one company, Kingsbox showed us that they are really mindful of their HR activities, as their fourth employee was already an HR specialist. This was very surprising to us but as the interview continued, we realized how much of a good impact that has had on their overall business performance.

Sometimes, in our opinion wrongfully, start-ups see structured Human Resource Departments as a threat to their flexibility and relaxed culture. There can be a mix of both structure and freedom, however, the lack of structure can not only harm your employees' well-being but also your business performance (Abbas, no date).

In both of the interviewed companies that have the smallest number of employees, we can understand the lack of an HR department and the feeling they do not need it. Although the literature supports implementing HR practices in the early stages of your business development, you still need to follow your own pace. With 10 and fewer employees, usually, the roles of employees shift heavily and everybody helps in the department that needs an extra pair of hands at the moment. In both of the two companies, the CEO is the one that manages HR activities and takes care of employee well-being. This might be possible to manage at this stage, but they should probably consider employing a person to take care of this later on.

The response from our interviewee, who is an employee in the HR department of Company Y, really stayed with us. She said: *"You only think you need someone in HR when you cannot hire people fast enough on your own, or when your culture starts to squeak. It takes time to find an HR person, when you start looking for them, and you only take it when water starts to run down your throat."* We think this is very true and also reasonable. When you are starting your company, you have a million things on your mind and can easily forget about the importance of Human Resource Management.

The main finding from these first answers, is that most start-ups think about HR function as a reactive function rather than proactive. Meaning, they employ an HR specialist when they are not able to do the necessary things on their own.

We moved on to the question regarding the hiring process, internal recruiting, and employee turn-over. Finding A-players as your first few employees would definitely be ideal, but sometimes it is hard to achieve because of various reasons. There are many theoretical approaches and principles regarding the recruitment and hiring process. Through the interviews, we found out that some of those principles come out naturally and some stay in theory.

Although we read that many small companies outsource the recruiting process in comparison with big corporations, none of the interviewees mentioned anything about outsourcing (Snell

& Bohlander, 2012). There were three options given by our interviewees. In small start-ups, the CEO is in charge of recruiting and hiring. However, where there is an HR department, they take care of it, and in between are startups with some frameworks set for team leaders to follow when hiring new employees for their departments.

All the interviewed start-ups said that culture plays a very big role during the hiring process. If a person is not a cultural fit, they will hardly accept them even though they might have excellent technical skills. Most interviewees test the cultural fit by bringing a potential employee into the offices and see how well they fit with the environment and other employees.

In start-ups with an established HR department, an HR specialist plays a big role in the hiring process. They usually hold the first interview and prepare everything beforehand. After the interview with the HR department is finished, some of the interviewees move to the next round, in which team leaders and managers come in and play their role in the hiring process. The absence of an HR specialist presents some challenges that a company can overcome in various ways (Cardon & Stevens, 2004). In start-ups with over 20 employees, but without an HR department, team leaders play the biggest role. There are some frameworks prepared for them, but they are in charge of employing people for their own departments.

Although theory advises the use of a greater number of selection tools, they also represent a more costly and structured procedure, which start-ups would like to avoid (Kotey & Sheridan, 2004). We look into the question regarding the specific steps in their hiring process in depth, but from their answers, we saw that they mostly do not practice any specific tests regarding technical skills, but rather trust their instinct and focus on cultural fit, besides the obvious skills that are needed to perform a certain job.

In contrast to some large companies, general managers in start-ups usually provide a realistic job description and task, and communicate both positive and negative sides of job positions (Cardon & Stevens, 2004). The CEO of Beeping expressed this exactly. He tries to offer a realistic job description rather than offering blue skies, as he thinks it is very important that expectations from future employees are realistic.

We also asked about their opinion regarding internal recruiting and received different responses. Theory suggests recruitment is done through promotion or transferring existing employees to different positions. This makes employees believe they too will be promoted one day if they work hard enough. Moreover, it improves the morale and culture of the organization (Snell & Bohlander, 2012).

Our interviewees mostly agree with this. In Hooray Heroes all, except for one manager, were there from the early stages and got promoted to management positions, so they highly believe in internal promotions. On the other hand, start-ups in the early phases need to recruit externally when specific knowledge, skills, and experience are needed (Snell & Bohlander, 2012).

There can also be downsides to recruiting internally. Some employees, who are great workers and great at doing their current jobs, might not be good leaders on the other hand. Promoting such a person can turn out to be a bad idea, as the position is neither a good fit for them nor the company. In Company X they have had such experience by promoting certain employees. Now, they are more careful to assess whether a certain employee has leadership skills before promoting them to a management position.

For start-ups, which are driven by innovation and flexibility, a steady flow of employees is very important. Having a high turnover of employees can slow the process of company growth and has a bad effect on the firms' success (Cardon & Stevens, 2004). Regarding employees' turnover, none of the interviewed companies experienced any special problems with it.

5.1.2 HR practices

The second research question was concerned with different HR practices and their implementation. The first question posed to the interviewees under this research question, was regarding the training and development of employees. The main problem start-ups are facing is how to motivate employees to use their budget for educating themselves. Out of eight interviewed start-ups, only one found a very efficient way to do it, by tying bonuses to education.

There is no doubt about the positive effects of training on employee knowledge, productivity, in addition to satisfaction by learning new things. In start-ups, the budget might not be as high as it can be in bigger corporations, and there is also a time constraint (Cardon & Stevens, 2004). Limitations on budget and time were also proven to us when we did the interviews. Although all our interviewees expressed their willingness to support their employees for educational purposes, we saw that especially in smaller start-ups budgets for that are not unlimited. This seems very reasonable to us.

All interviewees said that in case an employee showed interest to attend a certain seminar, webinar, or education in any form, the budget was not a problem. However, although the financial side was taken care of by the company, employees still did not use that option. As this happened very often, some start-ups decided to stop giving out bonuses for education as so few employees used them. It was also very surprising to us that the start-ups that supported their employees with yearly budgets set for education, did not have great outcomes in terms of the proactive behavior of their employees. It would be interesting to dig deeper into the reasons behind such behavior.

Although many start-ups have had difficulties with motivating their employees, this does not seem to be a problem for KingsBox. Their 4-pillar system, which supports and directs their business strategy, has a well-defined bonus system among other things. The head of the HR department told us that in each quarter, employees have to educate themselves on topics they

are currently working on, and they can also choose some other topics for soft skills building. We did not dive deeper into how they measure it, but employees receive a reward in addition to their salary if they do any type of relevant education. The company covers all expenses for books, seminars or other forms of education. Besides that, since they operate in the sports industry, their employees are also encouraged to participate in organized forms of physical training, which, of course, is paid for by the company. For that, they get another reward in addition to their salary.

Theory (Cardon & Stevens, 2004) talks about both, formal and informal training in small companies, but focuses mostly on different learning opportunities. As most employees in start-ups multitask, a lot of learning is done as role transition training. We did not hear about many roles transitioning training from our interviewees, but rather extending the knowledge they need to better perform their tasks.

The next question under the second research question, focused on ways of providing employees with feedback on their work. We got the information that four companies do not have yearly appraisals, and the other four do. Some of the interviewed companies mentioned that they measure the performance of separate departments with OKR, KPI, or different performance measurement systems.

With key performance indicators (KPI) managers can establish smaller goals, such as financial and operational achievement, which drive performance toward the company's strategic goal. They help companies track progress and encourage engagement from employees (Daft, 2014). Despite being a good indicator of a company's performance as it shows on revenue parameters, those indicators usually measure things differently than interviews with employees would.

During our theoretical research, we acknowledged that performance appraisals are not a priority for many smaller firms. One of the reasons behind that is the number of employees. With a smaller number of employees who are working closely together, managers can give almost immediate feedback to them (Kotey & Sheridan, 2004).

This has proven to be correct through our empirical research. Two start-ups with six and ten employees, do not feel the need for formal performance appraisal systems as they work so closely together with their employees that waiting for a yearly appraisal would not make much sense to them. It is much more effective to give immediate feedback.

The intervals are very frequent at the beginning and become less and less frequent as performance appraisal becomes more formalized, and the number of employees grows (Kotey & Sheridan, 2004). In Hooray Heroes, with a little bit more than 130 employees, they have performance appraisals every three months inside the departments.

In Company X they give feedback every six months. In this half-year interview, employees give feedback to everyone they work with. Only the CEO and the Chief of Staff are given

feedback from everyone. Similar to Company X, KingsBox also has interviews regarding performance twice a year. In addition to that, they also have a more in-depth interview once a year.

Based on the answers we received, the formality of performance appraisal increases by the number of employees. This was both confirmed by the theory and by the interviewed companies. They are all aware of the importance of giving feedback to their employees and are mindful of implementing the right practices to find out what type of performance appraisal works best for their current situation.

Lastly, the question that was posed as a part of our second research question, was regarding compensation and the different types of it. Compensation plays a big role in the hiring process as well as no doubt in retaining talented employees in the company.

One of the common practices in start-ups, which is different from the ones in bigger corporations, is the option to buy equity. Short-term pay incentives in start-ups often include profit and stock sharing, whereas long-term incentives include equity ownership in some form (Cardon & Stevens, 2004). Only one start-up mentioned an equity pool that is reserved for the employees, who will have an option to buy the equity of the company. This might not be a common practice in Slovenian start-ups, but it is definitely a good way of motivating the employees to work harder and be more devoted to the company.

Another very common form of compensation in start-ups, is a budget meant to gain knowledge, education funding, school tuitions, and other forms of education (Cardon & Stevens, 2004). We confirmed this theory with our interviews. Most interviewed start-ups are supporting their employees with education by giving them special bonuses if they attend different seminars and sports activities.

Granting compensation has many different goals, one of them is to align employee behavior with company strategy and vision. The positive effects of the compensation, would therefore be great performance and employee satisfaction (Groysberg, Abbott, Marino & Aksoy, 2021). Chipolo, one of the interviewed companies, ties the bonuses to the success of the whole company, which serves as a motivational tool for employees. It is similar in KingsBox; their holiday pay and Christmas bonus depend on the overall performance of the company, which is transparently measured throughout the year.

At Kingsbox they expressed the importance of non-monetary bonuses and their importance of employee well-being. They said that although monetary rewards seem to be very efficient for them, employees highly value their team-building and other forms of being together.

Sometimes it is harder for start-ups to give out large annual bonuses and a great alternative to that is a spot bonus, which is paid on location. It rewards a specific behavior, result, or action. Because they base it on specific task fulfillment, they are much smaller than the annual bonuses and therefore easier to payout (Das, 2020). We could say that the bonuses

employees at KingsBox receive for proactively educating themselves and engaging in sport activities, are a form of spot bonuses as they reward certain behavior.

5.1.3 Changes of the organizational structure

According to Daft (2016), we can describe organizational structure based on different parameters. Depending on the span of control, it can be flat or tall, or centralized or decentralized based on the decision-making. Another aspect is looking at how employees are divided into departments and whom they report to.

From our interviews, we can conclude that only one of the companies has a flat structure at the moment. Two companies mentioned that they used to have it, but it was no longer sustainable when they reached a certain number of employees. The same goes for centralization and decentralization. Most of the companies in our sample are going toward decentralization, meaning the managers are making decisions instead of the founders.

Regarding the five approaches of structure design based on departmentalization, most of the interviewed start-ups have a vertical functional structure. The range of departments is five to eight, except for two companies. One of them has a flat structure with only ten employees, so every person is their own boss. The other company has only six employees, and they each take care of their own segment, which could turn into departments if and when they employ more people.

Concerning the departments, six companies have the Marketing Department, four have the Design Department, three have the Operations Department, and other departments can be seen in the word cloud below (Figure 18), sorted by frequency.

Figure 20: Departments in the interviewed companies



Source: Own work.

Picken (2017b) described start-ups' organizational structure, as loosely structured, informal, and very fluid. This happens to be very accurate in our sample. Most interviewees explained that the early days are more about friends and family helping, and with no particular structure since there are not as many people at the start. Only in one company, the structure was more or less set from the beginning since six founders covered different fields, which turned into departments.

In theory, organizations are created around the processes and not around departmental functions, and there are few traditional roles such as Finance or Human Resources (Daft, 2010). This, as well, was proven to be correct. To quote the Flexkeeping CEO: *"The structuring happens somehow naturally. You look at your product and your clients and see what their needs are, and so you divide."* Only one of the eight companies employed an HR specialist at the very beginning, and none of them have a Finance Department.

When growing, start-ups have to transition from informal communication and decision-making processes to more formal ones. When we asked about this transition, Company X's CEO pointed out that one thing they had to limit was the jokes in the presentations. When the team is small, and it is mostly friends and family, the atmosphere is very relaxed, sometimes almost too much. With new employees coming in, the organization must transform into a more professionally managed and formal one (Flamholtz & Randle, 2016). The Flexkeeping CEO affirmed that this is a challenging change to make: *"This transition can be a problem, especially if you have never dealt with something like this."*

Along with the transition comes bigger responsibility. Formal planning, defining obligations of different roles, creating goals and measures are only a few of the changes (Flamholtz & Randle, 2016). The HR specialist from KingsBox shared her experience of that change with us. She was the fourth employee, and when she joined, there was a "disaster". They didn't have the personnel maps, and the contracts were all thrown into one folder. She set her goal to organize things, and when they were a team of ten, they started to do the job systematization. *"Of course, we have to constantly adjust the systematization to add new jobs, which is a little awkward, but we have to do it."*

The transition from a small company to a formal functional organization has two steps, according to Daft (2010). The first one is transforming processes into a formal system, and the second is transitioning from a centralized approach to a more decentralized one. The reason behind it is freeing the founder from approving everything, which is quite time-consuming. We did not exactly discuss the switch to formal processes in the interviews, but we would conclude that they all reached this first phase already.

Regarding the second phase - transitioning to a decentralized system, we got an interesting insight from Hooray Heroes' CEO. His biggest challenge was not being able to grow managers under him and his co-founder. It resulted in them being the direct line for everyone and responsible for all the company's decisions. They decided to make a change about a year

ago, when they already had 100 employees. *"It was not sustainable, so we decided to hire department leaders."*

In six out of the eight interviews, we got the opportunity to talk with the founders of selected companies. Since leaders have to cover multiple functions, from hiring, recruiting, and creating a supportive culture; we wanted to know how they confronted these challenges.

To sum up, they all agreed it was a challenging position, and they have all made some mistakes. For some, the struggle was hiring the right people. For others, it was not knowing how to delegate. Two of them referred to being a CEO as a necessary position that comes with owning a company, but it is not as cool as it sounds. But they got better with time and the help of fellow entrepreneurs who have been through the same thing.

5.1.4 Culture through growth

Organizational culture can be divided into two aspects; the observable and the underlying. The observable includes people's behavior, the dress code, the values, and the underlying covers employees' beliefs and assumptions (Daft, 2010). Since we mainly chatted with the founders and CEOs, the underlying aspect can be hard to determine. Nonetheless, the values and the dress code policy can reveal an interesting aspect of the company culture.

None of them mentioned they have any of the observable aspects defined by Daft (2010), which include stories and myths, symbols, organizational structures, power relationships, and control systems. Six out of eight interviewed start-ups have written down their values, and only one has a dress code policy. As we assumed, most of them let the employees wear whatever they feel most comfortable in. Hooray Heroes go for that extra mile with having the policy to wear slippers, so employees feel even more comfortable.

To dive a little deeper, we tried to determine each company's type of culture based on the Competing Values Framework (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). There are four main culture types, but none of them are considered the ultimate best. Start-ups can adopt any of these types, but the most usual is the adhocracy culture (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). The adhocracy culture is all about working in a creative and dynamic environment. Typical behavior is experimenting, failing, and learning from mistakes.

The clan culture is also known as collaborative, where they value communication, development, and commitment. The hierarchy culture is emphasizing rules and policies, which keep the organization organized and efficient. Last but not least, the market culture, is fueled by getting things done, achieving goals, and delivering results.

We tried to find the type of culture that best represents each start-up. The list of companies with assigned cultures can be seen in Table 11. We assigned the adhocracy culture to Company X. Through the interview, we got to see that they are all about creativity, helping

others, and agility. They talked about their initiative for Friday gatherings, table football, and after-work activities, which gave us the impression of a relaxed company culture.

The clan culture, which focuses on communication, commitment, and friendly environment, in our opinion, suited three companies: Beeping, Chipolo and Flexkeeping. Communication and collaboration are essential for these companies. But they are still developing and all employees are participating in the growth, so we thought it suited them the best.

Hierarchy culture is focused on rules and policies. Our interviewee from Company Y mentioned that they have created two booklets, the company policy and house rules. Additionally, she mentioned they are slowly turning into a corporation, which is why we decided to assign them the control culture.

The market culture focuses on getting things done, and gaining a competitive advantage on the market, so we thought companies Hooray Heroes, KingsBox, and Moja Čokolada were the perfect fits. They all strive to become the market leaders and are really focused on the customers.

Table 11: The interviewed companies with assigned types of cultures

Company	Type of culture
Beeping	Clan
Chipolo	Clan
Company X	Adhocracy
Company Y	Hierarchy
Flexkeeping	Clan
Hooray Studios	Market
Kingsbox	Market
Moja čokolada	Market

Source: Own work.

Theory suggests that it is hard to sustain the company culture through growth (Power, 2017), but what happened to almost all of them is maintaining it through the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Five companies pointed out how much harder it is to maintain a culture when working from home. Hanging out on coffee breaks, celebrating birthdays, and eating lunch together are little things that have a powerful impact on culture. Flexkeeping, for example, tries to solve this situation with online celebrations and sending surprises to employees by mail.

Company culture will not be kept alive through growth by itself, so the leader must put in the conscious effort (Power, 2017). The company KingsBox took an interesting perspective on keeping the company culture alive. They connected salary promotion to four aspects, one of them being the respect for the company culture. Every three months, they evaluate each

other based on behavior, team spirit, and communication. The HR specialist then creates charts, so employees can see where they performed well and what needs to be improved. This system works well for them because employees take the reports to their heart.

The only company that mentioned a big shift in growth is Company Y. Our interviewee explained that their culture is already transitioning to a more corporate one. They currently have more than 100 employees, and our interviewee explained that they are still a start-up, although in some aspects, they are already turning into a corporation.

Hooray Heroes also pointed out that growth (with the help of the pandemic) made them write down the values and mission. Before, they were hanging out in the offices together, and the company was growing, so everything seemed great. However, now, they were forced to work from home, and as they were already such a big team from different nationalities and cultures, they felt the need to sit down and set their values and mission in stone.

5.2 Practical implications

The following chapter includes practical implications and summarizes most important findings we gathered from the interviews we had with start-up founders and their HR personnel. These practical implications can serve as a base for the further research or can be a guide on which Human Resource practices are worth implicating in the early stages of start-up growth.

Even though the main focus in the early days of a start-up is to hire people who can help with the product or service, founders must be mindful of retaining the culture. One way to do so is by hiring an HR professional in the very beginning. This showed to be very rewarding in the culture-creation process in one of the interviewed companies.

Preserving the culture is also an essential part of the hiring process. All the interviewed start-ups mentioned that even if a person has excellent technical skills, they will not compromise with them not being a cultural fit. According to Burke (2016), hiring a person purely on their skills will result in dissatisfaction with their position, and they will not adhere the company values. Having a set of values displayed on the website or included in the job posts makes it easier for applicants to immediately know if they would be a fit or not.

Interview is an important tool to determine if a potential employee is a good fit for the organization, therefore questions have to be prepared accordingly before. Beside the most common interview questions we noticed that multiple interviewees often bring potential employees into their office to see how well this person fits in their environment and what are the first impressions of the existing team members.

From the interviews we gathered that it is very important for CEO to let department or team leaders to take charge of the interview. This can be implemented when a start-up has a bigger

team or even many departments. If the CEO is the one who hires everyone, the department leaders do not take responsibility. CEO should be present only in the last round of interviews with the potential employee to approve the interviewee but still let team leaders take responsibility for the hire. The Horray Heroes founder told us that it was not sustainable for him to be present at all the interviews and selecting which candidates get picked. Managers didn't take responsibility for those hires as well as those employees did not respect the managers as much as they did the founder. That is why he removed himself from the process and meets the new hires only in the last round of interviews that are more informal.

In our interviews we saw many suggestions for the first interview to be done in a relaxed environment, so the applicants feel more relaxed and open up more than they would in an office feeling more tension. KingsBox interviewee emphasized that it is important for them to do the interviews through a coffee date in a café or similar. That is how they make sure they really get to know the potential employees.

Although this is not always possible, internal recruiting proved to be an important aspect of improving the morale and culture in the organization. Promoting or transferring existing employees sets a great example for others. It boosts the morale and makes them believe that if they work hard enough, they too will be promoted (Snell & Bohlander, 2012). However, most companies emphasized that not all great workers are good leaders as well. It is not always possible to find the right employee within the company, especially if the job requires specific knowledge, experience, and training. Internal recruiting therefore maintains a great practice that needs to be followed when all requirements can be met by an existing employee.

Most of the start-ups we interviewed, did not know how to motivate employees to use the company's budget to educate themselves. One of the companies stood out the most with their solution. They named it a 4-pillar system. They tie education, sports activities, achieving KPIs, and compliance with culture to a monetary raise in salary. This motivates their employees to be better and try harder. On the other hand, this system also feels as a peer pressure to some employees and it does not work for them.

Giving employees feedback on their work proved to be very important to all interviewees. However, ways of giving feedback to the employees varies in company size and employee number. Every company needs to find a type of performance appraisal that works best for them, whether this is immediate feedback or in the form of monthly/yearly reviews. Performance appraisals are one of the things that is usually not a priority in smaller firms. This kind of evaluation might seem redundant, but in reality it is really helpful. Not only do they give important feedback to the employees, managers also show they care about their personal and career goals (Kotey & Sheridan, 2004).

Regarding the structure of the company, there is no right or wrong. Even though two start-ups pointed out that the flat structure did not work for them, especially as they grew, one of

the start-ups has a flat structure, which suits them. The lesson would be that every start-up has to find a type of structure that works best for their current situation.

The same goes for the company culture. There is no universal recipe for a good culture. Activities that helped the interviewed companies to maintain the culture include:

- Team buildings
- Gatherings after work
- Having lunch together as a team
- Going for a drink
- Organizing internal events

With this, we conclude our suggestions for practical implications of different Human Resource practices and approaches. Some of those implications are more common and some are specific to an organizational type. When different practices are implemented into different start-ups employees can react differently to them as each organization has its own system. We hope this implications can in any way help young entrepreneurs make at least one less wrong decision, while managing their Human Resources.

5.3 Limitations and future research suggestions

While writing this master's thesis we bumped into some theoretical and practical limitations. Theoretical limitations in the research, mainly happened in the search for scientific literature from the studied fields published in academically ranked journals. Albeit there being an abundance of scientific literature done on Human Resource Management and organizational structure of the companies, such as Daft (2016) and Snell & Bohlander (2012), there is not as much literature written on Human Resource Management in start-ups, and more specifically Human Resource practices in start-ups. All the articles we found were recent and there were still a lot of them but we could not find a book or a more in-depth study of all those practices together.

One of the most insightful articles in our opinion was the one from Cardon & Stevens (2004). Besides reviewing Human Resource practices in small organizations, the article also offers a very structured review on the existing literature in each individual chapter of the article. This is a very good starting point for further analysis of different Human Resource practices in start-ups.

The research's practical limitations were in the in-depth interviews, as the answers from our interviewees were very different, and it was difficult to draw parallels based on the selected companies in the findings, where our goal was to compare their answers. An additional simple questionnaire with some yes and no questions would make the comparison easier.

There could be many benefits for having a questionnaire. With questionnaire some people feel more comfortable disclosing their information because it is not as confrontational. Respondants can answer these questions at their own pace and in the time space they choose. We think that such questionnaires given to employees would greatly supplement the in-depth interviews with start-up founders. Besides giving us a better insight in to the organizational structure and Human Resource Management, they would also enable us to easier compare the answers and code them into smaller categories.

Although we did an overall research and covered many different aspects of HR activities and how they change through growth, we realized that the choice of start-ups could be better in terms of their diversity. If we chose start-ups based on Cohen's (2010) model, it would offer more differences in findings regarding the HR activities and their overall structure. None of our interviewees were in the very early stage of development. We decided not to choose this type of start-up as we assumed they currently do not practice any type of HR activities, and our analysis would therefore be very limited.

However, younger start-ups in the very early stages can be interesting to study in terms of culture and employee selection. They usually do not have many Human Resource practices in place, but their founding team and early employees would be interesting to study. Discussion paper from Müller and Murmann (no date) talks about the complementarities in the skills of founders and their early employees and how important is the Human capital factor in the early stages. Although we did not include this kind of start-ups in our research, they would be interesting to study.

We have two main suggestions for future research in the topic of HR transformation during the start-up growth. The first one would be, to do an in-depth case study on one large start-up or already a corporation that used to be a start-up. With this kind of research, we could get more details regarding their changes in culture, organizational structure, hiring process, training and development, and changes in compensation policy.

A similar in-depth study has already been done on Outfit7, one of the biggest Slovenian start-ups (Škerlavaj, Harrison & Vavpotič 2019). We suggest doing an in-depth case study with also some of the smaller start-ups, as the Human resource management approaches are still less researched with them and as written above there are many interesting aspects regarding the founding team and early employees to investigate further.

Furthermore, we suggest doing a research on HR activities in start-ups with employees. Our master's thesis offers an insight into these changes through the eyes of founders or HR personnel, and we believe the answers from employees would offer a greater view onto how these HR activities are perceived by the employees.

According to Muller and Murmann, a further research into employees of innovative new firms is very important as we do not know much about it. We already know that Human

capital is very important in start-ups but we do not know how much, and in what ways it contributes to the company's success (Müller & Murmann, no date).

Objectives and key results are tools that track goals with measurable results. Despite that we saw an interesting link between OKRs and culture, which by means is not easy to measure. This gave us an idea on how interesting it would be to research the impact OKRs have on those aspects or practices in the start-up that are not measured.

During our interviews we saw how well the goal-setting tool, objectives and key results work for start-ups that implemented it. As they help tracking the progress and encourage engagement from employees, they have a very positive effects on the startups' overall performance. We think that objectives and key results are an area and an important management practice that would be worth further researching in connection with start-ups.

CONCLUSION

The main goal of this master's thesis was to describe how Human Resource practices change during the growth of start-up companies. We first presented the theoretical findings, continued with empirical research, and finished with a discussion, where we tried to connect both theoretical and empirical findings.

Traditional HR practices offer a great framework for similar practices in start-ups, but while we were studying the literature, we realized that start-ups manage people differently. Despite the differences in practices, this saying remained: "no matter if you are a big or a small company, your product or operations can be copied, while great employees cannot be."

Before starting with the research, we structured our fundamental hypothesis, which was: Human Resources are a bit neglected in the early phases of the start-up life cycle. On the other hand, culture is more relaxed in the beginning but tightens up as the start-up grows. At this point we think our hypothesis is confirmed and supported with arguments in theory, findings from the interviews, and discussion.

Regarding the HR activities, only one of the interviewed companies realized the importance of HR specialists in the very beginning. All other companies either waited until they grew really big or still don't have an HR specialist. The CEO or the department leaders usually perform such activities in those firms.

Our interviewees had a range of employees from 6 to more than 130. Albeit the number of employees is not the only parameter to follow, we realized that with the increasing number of employees, all the processes become more formal. The communication is not constant, the culture is not as relaxed, and the need for formalized hiring process and performance appraisals arises.

Nevertheless, one thing all the interviewed start-ups have in common is the desire and drive

to keep the company culture alive. They do so by organizing team buildings and similar internal events. The larger they grow, the harder it is to maintain their culture, so another initiative they take is assembling a list of values, which help employees understand what they stand for and have guidance for their work.

Overall, we think that the purpose and the goal of this master's thesis have been achieved. We gathered some very valuable information from Slovenian start-ups that will hopefully help other entrepreneurs in the process of growing their start-ups make more good decisions than bad ones.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Povzetek (Summary in Slovene language)

Osrednji namen magistrskega dela je opisati, kako se prakse upravljanja s človeškimi viri spreminjajo skozi rast zagonskih podjetij. V magistrski nalogi sva naredili pregled literature s področij organizacijske strukture zagonskih podjetij in prakse upravljanja s človeškimi viri. Ker je literature na tematiko upravljanja s človeškimi viri veliko, sva tradicionalne pristope uporabili kot okvir, v katerega sva umestili tudi posebnosti, ki veljajo za zagonska podjetja. Ob opisovanju posameznih dobrih praks, ki jih zagonska podjetja uporabljajo, sva bili pozorni predvsem na prakse, ki se razlikujejo od tradicionalnih. Cilj najinega magistrskega dela je ponuditi nov pogled na prakse upravljanja s človeškimi viri, ki so jih slovenski start-upi izkusili in uporabljali med svojo rastjo.

Po pregledu literature sva pridobljeno znanje želeli potrditi oziroma zavreči preko polstrukturiranih globinskih intervjujev, ki sva jih opravili z osmimi slovenskimi zagonskimi podjetji. Teoretične pristope, ki sva jih zasledili v literaturi sva uporabili in povezali z dejanskimi procesi v slovenskih zagonskih podjetjih.

Med pisanjem magistrske naloge sva se skušali nenehno vračati k najini hipotezi, da je upravljanje s človeški viri v zgodnjih fazah življenjskega cikla zagonskih podjetij še vedno nekoliko zapostavljeno. Po drugi strani pa je kultura v zagonskih podjetjih na začetku bolj sproščena in koristna za zaposlene in se z zagonom zaostri. Po opravljeni empirični raziskavi, ki nama je dala vpogled v razmišljanje podjetnikov in zaposlenih v oddelkih za upravljanje s človeškimi viri, sva najino hipotezo potrdili. Meniva, da je podprta z argumenti tako v teoriji, kot tudi z ugotovitvami, ki sva jih zbrali preko intervjujev. Intervjuvana podjetja imajo od 6 do več kot 130 zaposlenih in čeprav število zaposlenih ni edini parameter, ki mu je treba slediti lahko potrdiva, da z naraščajočim številom zaposlenih procesi postajajo bolj formalni.

Na splošno meniva, da sta bila namen in cilj magistrskega dela dosežena. Zbrali sva nekaj zelo dragocenih informacij slovenskih novoustanovljenih podjetij, za kater upava, da bodo pomagala tudi drugim podjetnikom, ki so na začetku svoje samostojne poslovne poti.

Appendix 2: Transcripts

1. Company X

Interviewees: CEO (A) and Chief of Staff (B)

1. Kdaj ste ustanovili podjetje in koliko je bilo na začetku zaposlenih ter kakšne so bile njihove funkcije v podjetju? Kako se je čez čas to spreminjalo?

A: Ideja se je začela s start-up vikendom, kjer smo z eno ekipo začeli delati na tej ideji. Meni je ta ideja ostala v mislih in se mi je zdelo, da gre za problematiko, ki jo je vredno rešiti, saj sem imel tudi sam težave z govorom. Eden izmed mentorjev je bil tudi na tem start-up vikendu in po osmih mesecih razvijanja ideje sem ga kontaktiral. Dobra stvar pri tem je bila, da je imel on veliko poznanstev in po tem, ko sem mu povedal, da to še vedno delam, me je povezal s trenutnim CTO-jem in dizajnerjem. Mi štirje smo potem delali naprej in počasi se je začejala graditi ekipa. Na začetku gredo vsi start-upi čez to fazo, ko ti pomagajo prijatelji in družina. Zelo hitro se nam je pridružil moj mlajši brat, ki je na začetku delal vse. Vloga prvih članov se je tudi najbolj razvijala med našo rastjo in moj brat je trenutno vodja projektov kar pomeni, da nadzoruje tri oddelke in ima pod sabo približno trideset ljudi vse od produkta, do marketinga in developmenta. Vsak oddelek ima sicer svojega nadrejenega, ampak on trenutno nadzoruje delo teh treh oddelkov. Takrat se nam je pridružil še en developer in kar se mi zdi zelo pomembno na začetku je to, da ne zaposluješ zelo specializiranih ljudi ampak bolj generaliste. To je na začetku zelo dobro, ko pa podjetje odrasča želiš imeti čim manj generalistov. Ko začneš z delati z ljudmi, zelo hitro padeš v start-up sceno in si začneš podeljevati nazive, ubistvu si pa edini v tej ekipi. Tudi ni nujno, da nekdo, ki je na začetku s tabo lahko prevzame celoten oddelek. Po tihem pa začetni zaposleni na nek način to kar pričakujejo. Ni tako lahko razložiti tega, da čeprav je nekdo s tabo od začetka, da potem nekdo ne more voditi oddelka. Najbolje je, če to sam ugotovi. Lep primer tega je Zootfly. Imeli so enega dizajnerja potem pa so jih zaposlili več in so rekli, da je on vodja. In potem ni bilo rezultatov in uspeha. Potem pa je on sam ugotovil, da mu ta vloga ne odgovarja. Lahko pa pride tudi do obratne situacije, da imaš na začetku nekoga, ki ni generalist ampak je specialist na nekem področju ima ambicije, da bi vodil, ampak ima poleg tega še eno področje na katerem dela. Rad bi mu dal neko ekipo za voditi ampak je nimaš, vseeno pa ga želiš obdržati. To je lahko zapleteno, ker okoli enega človeka želiš zgraditi strukturo, kar pa na začetku ne gre. To je lahko problem, če tega ne ugotoviš hitro. Če imaš preveč generalistov, ga lahko tudi ti malo usmeriš v to, da se specializira. Mi imamo trenutno par generalistov, ki lahko delajo več stvari, in glede na to kje se pojavi potreba, ga preusmeriš na neko bolj specializirano področje, kjer lahko sam napreduje. To se je pokazalo tudi pri nas v oddelku iOS developerja. Tudi pri dizajnerjih je bilo tako, vodja oddelka je odšel, ostali so štirje dizajnerji, ampak noben izmed njih ni bil primeren za vodjo. Treba je biti pazljiv na to, da je na začetku to bolj družinsko, potem ko pa greš čez neko številko 20 zaposlenih pa se spremeni, ker greš v malo bolj korporativno obliko in moraš nekatere procese uvesti v podjetje. Tem zaposlenim, ki so s tabo od začetka je mogoče to malo čudno,

ker ne razumejo te tranzicije. Ampak ne more biti drugače. Težave s tranzicijo imajo predvsem začetni zaposleni. Ampak to se da rešiti.

B: Včasih je bilo tako, da se je CEO lahko se pogovoril z vsakim teamom. Zdaj pa ima veliko nekih nalog in mora postaviti strukturo tako, da vodje oddelkov koordinirajo in da se ne rabi CEO vključiti v vsako debato, ker ima tudi druge naloge.

A: Meni pri tem pomaga Chief of Staff, je kot ena zavora. Jaz bi še danes kar skočil na nek customer support, ker čutim, da je to moj produkt in da moram. Ampak v bistvu pa imamo dva zaposlena za customer support in to ni moj naloga. Več kot dobiva start-up prepoznavnosti več ljudi se bo začelo prijavljati na bolj senior pozicije. V nekem večjem podjetju je lahko človek, ki se zaveda, da bo v svojem trenutnem podjetju čakal zelo dolgo, da bo napredoval in se mu zdi bolje, da bi menjal službo in prišel v tvoje podjetje v zgodnji fazi, ker čuti da bo tu lažje napredoval. Javila se nam je ena senior programerka za iOS, ki je želela delati v produktnem managementu in kljub temu, da je bila zelo dobra kandidatka, nismo imeli pozicije zanjo.

2. Kakšna je bila vaša organizacijska struktura na začetku in kako se je v času spreminjala do tega trenutka?

A: Trikrat na leto dopuščamo, da se struktura v podjetju spremeni glede na projekte, število ljudi in na naše learningse. Druga situacija pa je, ko moramo reagirati takoj, če kakšen pomemben zaposlen odide in je treba prilagoditi strukturo.

B: Želimo biti zelo agilni in glede na potrebe spremenimo strukturo in zaposlene. Za prejšnje obdobje smo imeli front line, ingeniring, web, marketing in produkt, ki smo ga delili na dva dela. Pri nas user in customer nista isti osebi.

A: Pomembno je da svojo strukturo prilagodiš svojim potrebam. To je ključno, in pa tudi, da se pogovarjaš z ostalimi vodjami, kaj se njim zdi smiselno. Zdaj nam je uspelo implementirati neke nove spremembe in nam je to zelo dobro. Pri strukturi je pomembno, da zbiraš mnenja ljudi potem pa, ko se odločiš, kaj bi bilo najboljšo potem pa to implementiraš in ne sprašuješ več za isto stvar. Meni se flat-struktura zdi zelo težka za vzdrževanje. To je mogoče na začetku, ko je malo zaposlenih. Jaz sem si kot najmlajši co-founder moral izboriti neko zaupanje od co-founderjev in ekipe. Pomembno je, da se točno določi kdo je odgovoren za kakšne odločitve. Pomembno pa je tudi, da ima tisti, ki je CEO zadnjo besedo in se njemu zaupa. Če se moraš ves čas zagovarjati za vsako odločitev to vzame preveč časa.

3. Ali ste se srečali s kakšnimi ovirami na poti od “founderja” do “leaderja”? Kako ste jih premagovali?

A: Jaz sem bil na začetku na produktu, sedaj pa nisem več. Moj fokus je sedaj na drugih stvareh. Včasih me mika, da bi se ukvarjal s produktom in tudi mi ni všeč čisto vse kar naredi

ekipa ampak ni pravično, da se jaz vtikam. Ko si postavljen na to pozicijo, plavaš. Imamo zelo dobre investitorje, ki so z nami že od vsega začetka. In nanje se obračam, ko se mi pojavljajo kakšne ovire. Z njimi se veliko slišim, zdaj predvsem za stvari, ki jih delam jaz, za produkt pa gre sedaj do investitorja že vodja produktne ekipe.

B: Pomembno je, da imaš okoli sebe ljudi, ki so korak pred tabo in ti lahko svetujejo, saj so oni že rešili ta problem. Nam veliko pomagajo investitorji.

4. Kako bi opisali kulturo v vašem podjetju in kako jo ohranjate? ali imate v podjetju kakšna pravila glede oblačenja, obnašanja, kulture na sploh in kdaj ste jih uvedli? ali imate seznam vrednot, ki jih morajo zaposleni vedeti? ali jih na kakšen način spodbujate pri tem?

A: Kultura se zelo spreminja. Na začetku je vse zelo družinsko. Nikoli ne bom rekel, da gre za družino, ker se mi zdi, da je to pretirano. Želimo pa vzpostaviti energijo, kot da smo v eni šoli v naravi in skupaj delamo en projekt. Ne bomo za vedno skupaj ampak zdaj smo in poskušamo narediti najboljše. Posebnih pravil glede oblačenja ni. Lahko bi rekli business casual ampak nimamo nekih pravil, pustimo, da so zaposleni do neke mere kreativni. Na začetku je bilo tudi več vicev ob predstavitvah, zdaj pa smo to malo omejili in malo bolj pazimo. Pri nas je dobro, da imamo produkt, ki pomaga ljudem. In tukaj so tudi ljudje, ki jih to zanima in zato tudi pride večina s temi vrednotami. Eni čutijo to bolj, eni pa manj. Mi imamo zelo mlado ekipo, katere povprečna starost je 28.

B: Imamo štiri temeljne vrednote:

- We do it for the impact
- We together strong – skupaj smo močnejši
- It is done when we measure it – vse odločitve sprejemamo na podlagi podatkov
- Courage over professionalism – bodi pogumen

Tukaj pri nas je lažje imeti povezano ekipo, ker smo mladi. Veliko se tudi podružimo, imamo ping pong mizo in se tudi tako družimo. Okoli takih stvari se je gradila tudi naša kultura naravno. Zdej med covidom se je pa pokazalo, da zdaj ko ni veliko komunikacije izven delovnih obveznosti je treba bolj aktivno delati na povezanosti. Odnosi se razrahljajo in ohladijo. Opazili smo, da je zdaj, ko nismo fizično skupaj treba bolj aktivno delati na temu.

A: Ni pa čisto vse naravno, moraš se tudi potruditi, da se ljudje počutijo dobro. Se pa jaz vprašam, koliko ljudem resnično ustreza to druženje izven delovnih obveznosti.

5. Ali imate oddelek ali osebo, ki koordinira zaposlene in skrbi za HR aktivnosti? na začetku verjetno niste imeli HR specialista, ali je bila oseba, ki je zaposlovala šolana na tem področju ali je to vlogo prevzel kar trenutni manager oziroma vodja?

A: Trenutni Chief of staff je prišel kot moj asistent. Zdaj ima uradno čez operacije. Boljši

naziv za njegovo pozicijo pa je Chief of staff. On je nekakšen gate-keeper med težavami oziroma predlogi, ki jih lahko rešijo zaposleni med sabo in med tistimi, kjer je pomembno, da se vključim tudi jaz. On je poskrbel za skills model oziroma people development model. Najprej smo imeli enega, ki ga uporabljajo tudi v nekem drugem start-upu. To je bila velika napaka. Ta sistem je sestavljen iz šestih levelov pozicij. Postavljen je tako, da je važno samo v kolikšni meri menedžiraš ljudi, vzgaja samo managerje. Zaposleni so ugotovili, da če želiš napredovati moraš biti manager. Imeli smo zaposlenega, ki je delal FB oglase in je rekel, da bi nekoga vodil, pa sploh ni bilo potrebe. Ta sistem za nas ni bil funkcionalen. Zato imamo zdaj več sistemov za različne ekipe in področja.

6. Kdo je vodil zaposlovanje na začetku vaše poslovne poti in kdo ga vodi sedaj? Koliko vam pomeni, da je nekdo cultural fit?

A: Intervjuje in zaposlovanje vodijo vodje ekip. Jaz kot CEO samo odobrim, da se lahko na novo nekoga zaposli, če imamo dovolj sredstev za to in pa če je resnična potreba po dodatnem zaposlenem. Potem pa to prevzamejo vodje določenega oddelka. To, da je nekdo cultural fit nam veliko pomeni. Iz tega razloga je zdaj med covidom toliko težje zaposlovati. Znanje je seveda zelo pomembno, pa ne govorim o fakulteti ampak o znanju, ki se potrebuje za tisto delo, na katero se prijavlja. V okviru zaposlovanje se kandidatom najprej da testno nalogo, 2 ali 3 pa se potem povabi na testni dan, kjer pridejo v pisarno, mi pa tudi vidimo kako se ujememo.

7. Ali se pogosto poslužite notranjega rekrutiranja ali novo delovno mesto vedno odprete tudi za ljudi izven podjetja?

A: Druga dva co-founderja bolj podpirata zunanje rekrutiranje, meni pa se zdi, da je notranje rekrutiranje zelo pomembno, ker ta oseba že pozna medsebojne odnose, kulturo. Tudi nasveti, ki jih dobivamo pravijo naj rekrutiramo od znotraj, če je to mogoče. Veliko se dela na tem. Težava pa se lahko pojavi, če imaš preveč notranjih na višjih pozicijah, saj ni svežega znanja. Treba je imeti nek balance.

B: Imamo pa tudi situacijo, ko v oddelku ni nekoga, ki bi bil dovolj senior, da bi prevzel vodenje oddelka in smo primorani poiskati nekoga od zunaj. Odvisno od situacije, pozicije.

8. Ali imate težave s pogostim menjavanjem zaposlenih?

A: Zdaj nam je razpadla ena ekipa iz različnih razlogov. Nekateri so bili na naši strani, nekateri pa na njihovi. Včasih je bil turnover 10%, zdaj pa je z razpadom te ekipe zrasel na 30%.

B: Na začetku zaposluješ junior pozicije in oni večinoma nimajo velike predstave kakšna je neka povprečna zaposlitev. Jaz sem zamenjal že nekaj služb in lahko rečem, da je tukaj nadpovprečno. Nekdo, ki pa ni videl drugega pa tega ne ve in mogoče misli, da je to

podpovprečno. Si lahko misli, trava je pri sosedu bolj zelena. Iz tega razloga nekateri tudi gredo.

A: Covid nam je zdaj pokazal, da lahko delamo od doma. Programerji imajo v večini manj socialnih veščin in jim to odgovarja. Problem bo nastal v vprašanju, zakaj bi delal za nek slovenski start-up, če lahko delam od doma za ameriškega. Programerji, ki jim ne pomenijo veliko socialni stiki bodo šli delati za podjetja iz drugih držav.

9. Ali vam izobraževanje vaših zaposlenih veliko pomeni? kakšnih načinov izobraževanja se poslužujete? ali opazite pozitivne učinke izobraževanja na zaposlenih?

A: To pri nas ni tako formalno, da bi imel vsak zaposlen tako in tako število tečajev. Smo spodbujali konference in tudi veliko se povezujemo z drugimi start-upi in z investitorji, ki nam potem pomagajo, pa tudi mi njim. Če pa greš na konferenco ne rabiš napisati prav poročila ampak imaš potem v okviru Friday blubsov neko predstavitev.

B: Mi imamo ob petkih Friday blubs. Gre za to, da vsak petek nekdo predstavi nekaj kar je povezano z njegovo pozicijo ali z njegovim projektom. Nekdo nam je predstavil animacije v app-ih. Nekdo je predstavil ameriški šolski sistem in tako dalje. Imamo zelo interaktivna ampak bolj neformalna izobraževanja. Te povezave, ki jih imamo, bi radi povabili in bi imeli na nek način talk show. Meni bi zaposleni poslali vprašanja in bi bila neka debata. Gre za druženje, izobraževanje in tudi team building. Imamo enega američana, ki ima zdaj angleščino zjutraj eno uro. Druga stvar pa so online delavnice, in to omogočimo in tudi delimo vsem ostalim, da lahko tudi ostali dostopajo do teh delavnic, predavanj. Tretja stvar pa je slack, kjer imamo en kanal insights, kjer si med sabo delimo neke zanimive članke, knjige, podcaste.

10. Kako ocenjujete in motivirate zaposlene in na kakšen način jim predajate povratne informacije glede njihovega dela? ali imate v podjetju opravljati letne razgovore z zaposlenimi (performance appraisals)? kako ste prilagodili/spremenili komunikacijo z zaposlenimi glede na rast in posledično večje število zaposlenih?

A: To loči dobrega team vodjo od slabega. Če ti ne podaš feedbacka se nekdo ne more popraviti. In če ti čakaš na letni razgovor in šele potem poveš kaj je nekdo delal narobe je slabo. Enkrat na pol leta imamo nek uraden dokument, kjer vsi damo na vse feedback, midva s Chief of Staff potem to anonimizirava in pošljeva nazaj team lead-u. Mi, management in team lead-i imamo enkrat na teden sestanek, kjer se pogovorimo o kakšnih težavah.

B: na polletnem razgovoru, daš feedback na vse s katerimi delaš. Edino name in na CEO-ja feedback podajo vsi.

11. Kakšne vrste kompenzacije se poslužujete? indirektne (benefits), direktne (plače, bonusi), nedenarne (fleksibilnost, možnost prilagajanja delovnega časa in okolja, napredovanja).

A: Variabilnega dela plače nimamo, razne božičnice. Poskusili smo že skoraj na začetku z bonusi, ki so bili do 10% na plačo, ampak z bonusi se lahko zelo hitro zapleteš. Kako potem to razdeliti, ali če gre podjetju dobro ali potem vsi dobijo bonus. Lahko pride do krivic in zato smo se s tem tudi hitro ustavili. Imaš tudi različne pozicije in ljudi znotraj podjetja, in uspeh ene ekipe je povezan z uspehom druge ekipe.

B: Skoraj vsi imamo zelo dober računalnik, ki ga imaš lahko tudi za osebno uporabo. Vsi imamo tudi velike monitorje, tipkovnice. To so sicer neki higieniki, da so ljudje dobro. Imamo pa tudi zastonj kavo vedno.

A: Problem pa lahko nastane, ker ti nekaj naročiš, neko pijačo itd. In potem se ljudje začnejo zmišljevati kaj bi vsak želel. Še ena stvar je ta,

2. Flexkeeping

1. Koliko vas je bilo na začetku, kako se je to spreminjalo in kako je zdaj?

Na začetku sva bila dva oziroma trije, takrat organizacijske strukture praktično ni bilo – jaz sem bil zadolžen za prodajo pa za poslovni del, co-founder je bil za produkt, tretji je bil pa za razvoj. To je bilo leta 2013. Danes nas je dobrih 20, imamo naslednje oddelke: prodaja, marketing, onboarding, support, produkt in operations, torej 6 oddelkov in je čisto druga filozofija vodenja.

2. Ali so kakšne prelomnice od 2013 do zdaj – glede komunikacije pri zaposlenih, utemeljevanju procesov in tako naprej?

Tam do nekje 8-10 ljudi je vse po domače, vsi se poznamo in vsi delamo vse. Za vsakega se ve za kaj je zadolžen, ampak hkrati vsi delajo vse. Privzeto je, da delaš stvari, ki v osnovi niso mišljene zate. Potem se začne tam pri 8-10 lomiti in kazati potreba po strukturi, pri 15 pa postane že res nujna in je res preskok – tukaj lahko rata problem, če se s tem v preteklosti še nisi srečal, ker ne veš čisto točno kako naj bi to izgledalo in traja kar nekaj let. Mi smo vmes potem zrastle do največje velikosti, 33 zaposlenih in v tistem trenutku smo imeli že kar precej oprijemljivo strukturo s pravili in znanimi odgovornostmi, KPI-ji, dinamikami in vse ostalo. Ključna razlika je HR proces in pa interna struktura ter da podjetje postane goal-driven, KPI-driven in metrics-driven.

3. Kako ste lotili tega strukturiranja?

Nekako naravno – pogledaš svoj produkt in svoje stranke in vidiš kaj rabijo – se razdeliš. Pri nas je razvoj produkta in business, zraven je marketing na eni strani in pa programiranje na

drugi strani, potem potrebujejo stranke support in pa onboarding in okrog vsega tega so se potem gradile vse dodatne stvari.

4. Kako pa je z vodenjem, ali ste se srečali s kakšnimi izzivi?

Vodenje je dokaj horizontalno, to pomeni da imamo področne leaderje/head-e, ki vodijo svoje oddelke, potem pa imamo horizontalno usklajevanje med vsemi head-i, tako da jaz kot CEO nimam posebne funkcije oziroma ni tako, da bi jaz imel review vsakega oddelka. Znotraj tega pa mikro zadeve kot so HR ali pa operation zadeve, za to skrbi CEO + operations oseba. Imamo cilje za celotno podjetje, ki se razbijejo v oddelčne cilje, namen tega pa je bolj kot to, da bi merili ali nekdo dobro dela ali ne to, da razumemo kaj delamo in kakšen vpliv ima naše delo na končen rezultat.

5. Ali imate HR oddelek oziroma osebo, ki skrbi za HR aktivnosti, ali se to delo porazdeli med oddelke/head-e?

Nimamo še specifično HR človeka, ker še nismo tako veliki. To je sicer relativno, kdaj je pravi čas za HR, pri nas še ni. Ko bomo imeli približno 35-40 zaposlenih načrtujemo uvedbo HR pozicije za polni delovni čas.

6. Kakšni izzivi so se pa pojavili pri vodenju in kako ste premagovali te izzive? Od tega da ste ustanovili podjetje pa do tega da ste postavljeni na pozicijo kjer imate pod sabo 30 ljudi?

Nisi postavljen na to pozicijo, ker ubistvu rasteš z njo. Pri nas ni tako eksplodiralo, v smislu da bi zrasli iz 2 oseb na 20, tako da to poteka na ta način, da rasteš in narediš milijon enih napak in potem se naučiš zelo prepozno in potem to implementiraš in si misliš zakaj nisem že 5 let nazaj tega vedel. Če bi zdaj spet gradil neko podjetje, pa bi imel že na začetku 20-30 ljudi, bi bilo čisto nekaj drugačnega – bi implementiral vso znanje in framework bi bil čisto drugače. Tako pa ja, je dokaj boleče, zato ker napake, ki jih delaš na začetku se vlečejo zelo dolgo, veliko stanejo, te naredijo počasnejšega, povzročijo slabše rezultate. V resnici zaradi HR-a, ker ljudje gradijo podjetje, ne produkt.

7. Kako pa je glede kulture v podjetju? Ali imate pravila glede oblačenja in obnašanja? Imate zapisane vrednote, ki jih morajo zaposleni vedeti in jim slediti?

Kultura je taka stvar, ki nastane sama – ne moreš je čisto sam producirati, lahko pa upaš kaj bo nastalo in delaš na tem, da bi. Pri nas je tako, da poskušamo biti zelo sproščeno podjetje – to pomeni, da nimamo fiksnih delavnikov, ne rabiš biti v službi od določene ure do določene ure. Če želiš, lahko delaš popolnoma na daljavo, večina ljudi tudi je. Dress code-a sploh nimamo, torej v pisarno lahko prideš oblečen v whatever makes you happy, drugo je ko gremo k strankam – spet nimamo dress code-a ampak se pričakuje nek stil. Kulturo smo dokaj probali vzgajati, delamo merchandise, veliko dogodkov organiziramo, oziroma smo – odkar je covid je malo težje te stvari zrealizirati. Mi želimo imeti moderno in sproščeno

kulturo. Zakaj pa pravim želimo, zato ker v celoti ti nikoli ne uspeva. Pri 20 ljudeh je to že toliko, da ni več tako da bi se vsak z vsakim zelo dobro poznal in pogovarjal, kar pomeni da mora celotna organizacija delati svoje. Mi smo šli v tranzicijo iz primarno biti skupaj v pisarni v primarno delo na daljavo in se še malo lovimo. Poskušamo vse prestaviti v online, imamo razna druženja, interni newsletter, pošljemo presenečenja komu na dom in podobno. S takimi stvarmi torej poskušamo ohraniti kulturo, dokler se spet vse ne odpre. Mi nismo šli po poti, da bi definirali 20 vrednot in jih nalepili na vrata zato da se jih naučimo, ampak imamo take čisto high-level vrednote napisane. People, passion, hospitality so naše vrednote. Mi jih bolj uporabljamo za razlago kdo sploh smo, kot pa kaj moraš ti biti, ampak v resnici gre eno z drugim. Nismo pa šli do te mere, da bi bila vizija in vrednote v obliki playbooka, ki bi ga vsak dobil – ne še, bomo pa verjetno tudi to kdaj imeli.

8. Glede na to da nimate HR oddelka, me zanima kdo potem vodi procese zaposlovanja in ostale HR aktivnosti?

HR procese vodijo tisti, ki so odgovorni za področje kjer se kadruje. Torej oni vodijo procese, imamo pa narejen framework, kako poteka, kakšni so koraki, koliko krogov intervjujev in podobno – neke osnove za izboljšanje kvalitete postopka izbire kandidatov. To smo naredili par let nazaj. Potem pa imamo definirane procese, ko je nekdo izbran imamo onboarding proces, ki je točno definiran, tudi kdo ga izvaja, kaj dobi, kako to poteka in podobno. Recimo prvi mesec ali pa vsaj dva tedna sta več ali manj do potankosti znana. Od takrat naprej pa je to že interna zadeva, imamo potem operations pa CEO in jaz sodelujemo in je malo bolj razpršeno. Torej postopek iskanja in pa kako se validira kandidata, to je precej standardizirano. Tudi kako se on-boarda novega team-memberja je standardizirano, za tem pa je razpršeno. Vse skupaj pa je podprto s strani operations managerja – to je oseba v našem podjetju ki skrbi med drugim tudi za HR aktivnosti (kaj ekipa dela, kaj organizira, ipd).

9. Ali vam je pri zaposlovanju pomembno da ima nekdo enake vrednote kot vi, ali prevladuje tehnično znanje kandidatov?

Oboje je zelo pomembno, v bistvu eno brez drugega ne gre. V zadnjem času iščemo zelo skilled ljudi, kar pomeni da so skills izredno pomembni, ampak če človek ni fit naši kulturi, potem to ne deluje. Vedno gre eno z drugim in ne delamo več takih izjem (da bi zaposlili nekoga, ki ni cultural fit), ker ko smo jih delali se to nikoli ni obneslo.

10. Ali ste imeli v procesu rasti kakšno obdobje velikega menjavanja zaposlenih? Veliko novih zaposlenih ali pa da jih je veliko odšlo?

Ja, obe strani smo imeli. Pred covid-om jih je veliko prišlo, zdaj pa jih je nekaj odšlo oziroma še vedno odhajajo tu in tam. Nič posebnega zares. Med rastjo je seveda normalno da jih veliko pride. V obdobju kot je covid sta bila pa dva razloga, eden je ta, da posel ne prenese kratkoročno in to je zgolj business, drugo pa je to, da imajo ljudje v takem času svoje skrbi in svoje pomisleke in tudi to je čisto objektivno. Zaenkrat zaradi tretjih razlogov ni bilo še dosti odhodov ali pa prihodov pri nas.

11. Ali imate za zaposlene kakršnakoli izobraževanja? Ali vam je to pomembno?

Pomembno nam je, da se ljudje izobražujejo, nimamo pa mi za njih izobraževanj. Na primer, jaz nisem strokovnjak programiranja, zato jaz ne bom njim organiziral osnove programiranja 1.0. Ampak želimo da se izobražujejo, to nam je pomembno – je tudi vprašanje v hiring procesu – kako se oni izobražujejo in podobno. Spodbujamo in se trudimo financirati. Nimamo standardiziranih procesov, da mora biti enkrat na 3 mesece izobraževanje, ampak spodbujamo na ta način, da to omogočamo, da ljudi tudi kam pošljemo. Zaposleni so veliko hodili po Evropi na več dnevne evente, ali pa kakšne course/tool-e našli in smo potem mi jih podprli tako, da smo jim to financirali.

12. Kako ocenjujete in motivirate zaposlene? Kako jim predajate povratne informacije glede tega kako opravljajo svoje delo? Glede na to da vas je zdaj veliko več kot vas je bilo na začetku me zanima, če je ta komunikacija zelo drugačna?

V tem hipu nimamo idealno tega zastavljenega – nimamo še neke šablone, kjer bi rekli enkrat na mesec pa enkrat na tri mesece pa enkrat na leto – žal še ne. Mi imamo v podjetju jasno določen cilj. In potem so te cilji razbiti na posamezne oddelke in znotraj tega mora biti znano katere aktivnosti in kako jih merimo, da nas pripeljejo do ciljev. Performance je v tem smislu zelo dobro merljiv. Če ne bi bil, bi pomenilo, da naloge zastavljamo na napačen način. To res veliko delamo in zaenkrat ima to dobre rezultate. Potem review-i znotraj tega, tukaj pa na žalost nimamo frameworka – vprašajta me to čez kakšne pol leta ☺

13. Kako pa je s komunikacijo? Ali je to zdaj bolj znotraj oddelkov?

Zdaj ko nismo skupaj – ko smo vsi digital imamo dvotedenske team meetings, imamo Slack kanal in več drugih kanalov kjer komuniciramo, ampak seveda, ne pogovarja se vsak z vsakim. Več ali manj se pogovarjaš s tistimi, ki jih rabiš. Ravno zato smo imeli včasih več eventov na leto da smo se vsi z vsemi spoznali in povezali.

14. Ali imate poleg osnovne plače tudi dodatne bonuse, ali pa nedenarne oblike kompenzacije za svoje zaposlene?

V osnovi je plača in regres, potem spodbujamo zaposlene na načine, da plačujemo kakšne vadbe in tečaje. Edini oddelek, ki ima trenutno nek rewarding je sales, ampak to je zelo merljivo, zato to lahko izvajamo. Za ostale pa trenutno nimamo nekega denarnega rewardinga, mogoče v prihodnosti, če bomo v taki točki da bo to smiselno – smo odprti. Denar je lahko zelo slab v rewardingu in mora biti izredno objektiven in merljiv. Imeli smo tudi kamp hiško čez poletje, pa ostale majhne stvari s katerimi se trudimo povečati zadovoljstvo zaposlenih.

3. Moja čokolada

1. Kako je bilo z zaposlenimi na začetku, kako se je to spreminjalo skozi čas in kako je zdaj?

Mi smo še vedno zelo majhna ekipa. Na začetku sem bil praktično samo jaz, dokaj hitro sva bila dva, potem sva bila kar nekaj časa dva, potem smo bili trije, lansko leto smo pa vzeli še tri. Tako da, ko enkrat gre, gre hitreje. Zdaj nas je 6, plan pa je tak, da nas bo letos 10.

2. Ali bi lahko razdelil rast podjetja na kakšne faze? Mogoče ključne točke?

Po mojem mnenju je glavna faza k ugotoviš product/market fit, tko da to je prva stvar, druga pa je faza rasti. Prva faza je ciklanje in učenje – da ugotoviš kaj narediti, da bo stvar funkcionirala, potem sledi prehodna faza, da pokažeš market traction – ali da si finančno stabilen, druga možnost pa je, da najdeš financiranje, kateremu sledi rast. Ali ga “bootstrapaš” s profitom, ki ti ostaja in gradiš glede na hitrost, ki ti jo omogoča podjetje samo, ali pa financiranje z krediti, investitorji in tako naprej.

3. Kakšna je organizacijska struktura? Je nekdo vodja ali imate kakšen oddelek?

Na začetku itak vsi delamo vse, potem pa gre čedalje bolj proti strukturi, da na koncu prideš do nekih oddelkov, kjer je na vsakem oddelku vodja oddelka in tako naprej. Večja kot je ekipa, bolj postaja vse strukturirano. Zanimive stvari se začnejo dogajati, ko nekdo v štartu ni narejen za vodjo oziroma ni vodja in ljudje to hitro ugotovijo, in potem ne veš kam bi tega zaposlenega postavil na drugi strani pa je tudi on izgubljen. Ta preskok je lahko zelo stresen za nekoga, ki ve da recimo noče biti vodja ampak ne ve kaj naj naredi.

4. Ali so bili kakšni izzivi z vodenjem ekipe?

Jaz mislim da je kar naravno. Zdaj nas je 6 v glavni ekipi, potem pa imamo še 4 dodatne zaposlene, tako da nas je približno 10, ki delamo s polnim delovnim časom. Jaz mislim, da se naučiš sproti, narediš seveda kar nekaj napak, ampak ključna se mi zdi transparentnost, da vsi razumejo, da nimaš 10 let izkušenj in da boš vse naredil pravilno kot vodja in da tudi drugi razumejo, da to kar delaš je del tvoje funkcije, ki jo moraš opravljati. Čeprav izgleda drugače je biti vodja mogoče celo najmanj privlačna pozicija v podjetju. Jaz mislim, da je dokaj naravno in ko imaš ekipo 15-20 ljudi se sorazmerno da naučiti vodstvenih veščin, tako da tukaj ne vidim težav, za naprej pa ne vem, me malo straši.

5. Kako bi opisal kulturo v podjetju? Ali imate kakšne vrednote ali pravila oblačenja? Ali pride kultura sama po sebi ali se jo trudite vzdrževati?

Poskušamo ustvarjati svojo kulturo, oziroma vsaj nek občutek skupine, kar je mogoče težko, ker vsi delamo na daljavo, razen skladišče, ki je posebej, vsi ostali pa smo praktično razpršeni po Sloveniji, tako da enkrat na teden se dobimo vsi skupaj. Imamo nekaj stvari, ki so dokaj klasične za podjetja – izobraževanje, enkrat na mesec za 40€ produktov in podobno. Taki

bonusi so za vsakega zaposlenega. Skozi team-buildinge pa se trudiš povezati ekipo med seboj, kar pa je pa na remote precej težje. Kulture oblačenja ni – lahko je tudi no pants. Bomo pa takoj, ko se spet odprejo regije nazaj uvedli to, da se enkrat na teden dobimo in trudimo graditi na ta način. Smo zelo transparentni že od samega začetka – transparentna komunikacija in to se mi zdi glavna vrednota pri odnosih. V podjetju ne skrivamo nobenih pogodb, nobenih plač, vse so vidne, vsaj točno ve kdo ima koliko, ko pride nova oseba se vsi odločamo o novem v ekipi, tako jaz sem pobudnik v stilu – priporočam, da se zaposli nekoga novega, ampak so pa potem vsi zaposleni vključeni v hiring – vsaj na koncu, da ga odobrijo. Po eni strani nam to malenkost upočasni hitrost, ampak po drugi strani imamo pa dokaj zadovoljno ekipo.

6. Ali se vam zdi pomembno da se zaposleni izobražujejo? Kakšne vrste izobraževanj imate?

Ja seveda, to je zelo pomembno. Načeloma to prepuščamo posamezniku, da si izberejo karkoli želijo. Glede na to da se nam zadnje leto v podjetju ogromno dogaja je časa za izobraževanje manj, ampak puščamo to še vedno zaposlenim na voljo. Po en tečaj na leto povprečno si zaposlen izbere, malo bolj tehnično, vsebinsko polno zadevo. Glede področja izobraževanja pa se trudimo vzpodbujati v drugo smer, recimo če nekdo obvlada npr facebook ads, se smatra da to tematiko že itak spremljaš od blizu, in je bolje, da se izobražuješ na tečaju za klekljanje, ker na ta način krepiš osebnost. Meni se zdi najpomembnejša vrlina čustvena inteligenca, in je to v bistvu glavna kompetenca, ki jo želimo graditi v ekipi, ves know-how se spreminja tako hitro, da jaz rabim na krovu na koncu ljudi, ki so zreli in znajo komunicirat, naučimo se pa že skupaj.

7. Kako pa poteka proces zaposlovanja? Kaj vam je pomembno in kakšne so faze?

Mi HR-a še nimamo v ekipi, mogoče tam pri 15-20 bomo nekoga rabili. Poteka tako, da vidimo področje, kjer nam manjka – to se naravno zgodi, da vidimo kje nam primanjkuje zaposleni, potem naslednja faza je to, da res definiramo kakšno osebo si želimo – eno je vsebinski fit, torej kaj mora ta oseba početi, potem pa tudi nekako karakternost določimo kaj želimo – introvert/ekstravert, pogledamo kdaj kakšen horoskop in druge zanimive stvari. Tako da skušamo si oblikovati že prej kaj bo super pa mogoče tudi nivo ekspertize. Potem pa ko damo razpis ven, vidimo kaj točno dobimo – nikoli ne dobiš točno to kar si si zamislil, tako da potem mal skalibriraš. Načeloma dam jaz te razpise čez, sledi prijava, sledijo razgovori in na koncu izberem dva – izmed teh dveh izberem enega in ga predstavim ekipi, preživimo skupaj kakšen teden z nekim praktičnim delom, in če ga ekipa potrdi in če se najde približno noter, če je njemu v redu. Največja ovira pri zaposlovanju oz nasploh pri ljudeh je to da smo trenutno na daljavo – ljudje še vedno ne želijo biti remote. In je v redu, da imamo zdaj praktično vsi izkušnjo remote work-a in vemo kaj to pomeni, če delaš to doma in ali ti to paše ali ne.

8. Kako ocenjujete, motivirate in predajate povratne informacije zaposlenim?

Kar se tiče motiviranja – naša glavna motivacija so stranke in dejansko prav dodatnega motivatorja res ne rabimo. Rast je res tako visoka, da se konstantno delajo nove stvari, tako da kdaj moram ekipo malo zaustavljati in jih spomniti, da obstajajo tudi sobote in nedelje, ki jih rabijo osebno preživeti. Glede performance-a imamo pa postavljene dokaj objektivne KPI-je – tako, da vsak sam ve ali je naredil dobro ali ne, ker so kazalniki tako postavljeni. Subjektivne ocene skušamo preseliti na objektivne in da vsak pri sebi ve ali dela dobro ali slabo, je pa logično da imaš kot oseba ups and downse, tako da to probamo skalibrirati z nekim pregledom posameznikom, drugo pa je s pregledom podjetja. Pustimo, da te stvari tečejo, ne dopuščamo pa 2-3 mesece slabega performinga.

4. Beeping

1. Kdaj ste ustanovili podjetje, koliko vas je bilo na začetku, koliko vas je zdaj in kako se je to spreminjalo skozi čas?

Leta 2016, ustanovitelja sva bila dva, jaz sem bil operativno 100% od prvega dne, soustanovitelj David je imel še drugo podjetje zraven in je polovično delal zraven. Tako je bilo prve pol leta oziroma 8 mesecev, potem pa so sledile prve priključitve ljudi. Danes smo ekipa desetih, ravnokar zaposlujemo dve novi osebi v Španiji, do konca leta je plan imeti ekipo 15ih ljudi.

2. Ali bi lahko rast svojega podjetja razdelili na faze?

Prvo leto, ko si sam dobesedno za vse, ni dopusta oziroma, če je dopust imaš vedno telefon s seboj in odgovarjaš na customer support, finance, urejaš, izobražuješ, iščeš ljudi... To je prva faza. Jaz sem recimo intervjuval več kot 2000 ljudi – čistilcev in uvedel preko 70 ljudi na dveh tržiščih.

Potem se začne dodajanje. V tej točki smo najeli kakšnega študenta ali Erasmus – tako da poskušaš gledati tudi na stroškovni del. Tukaj se začne boj za preživetje in tega je ogromno – glavni izziv tukaj je kako izplačati 15. plače. To je bilo relativno dolgo – nekje 3 leta osebnih posojil in podobno. Potem pa počasi postajaš podjetje in se že formira ekipa. Pri nas se je zgodil preskok lansko leto, ko smo se preselili v nove prostore in postali že kot neke vrste podjetje. Tudi dojemanje je drugačno. Vmes se je zamenjalo nekaj ljudi, še vedno pa imamo omejena sredstva in omejeno tehnologijo, kar pomeni veliko ročnega dela in počasnejši tempo kot bi si ga želel – če bi imeli tehnologijo bi bilo hitreje ampak tehnologija in razvoj je drag in se ne moraš privoščiti tega. Temu se reče inovativno iskanje rešitev, oziroma boj za preživetje, oziroma pritisk na rast. To je vse zmešano v eno zadevo, ki je zdaj, ko pogledamo nazaj, koristna ampak resnično težka.

3. Kaj pa organizacijska struktura? Kako se je razvijala od začetka pa do danes?

Mi imamo popolnoma lean strukturo. Ni šefov, ni vodij in ničesar v tem trenutku. Lean pomeni da vsak, ki pokriva svoje področje je tudi odgovoren za to področje. Organizacijo imamo narejeno tako, da brez enega dela ni drugega dela. Imamo organizacijo samo iz tega vidika, da imamo neke iniciative, ki so na trgih (Španija, Slovenija, Hrvaška, Italija) – kjer imamo ključne operacije. Imamo dva ključna dela za te zadeve: customer operations – ekipa ki skrbi za odnos s strankami ali pa za odnos s čistilci. Potem pa je še headquarter organizacija – centralna funkcija, ki vse trge podpira z vidika tehnologije, marketinga, usmeritev financ in tako dalje. Te zaposleni so oziroma smo popolnoma enakovredni – dokler smo majhni nam je bistveno, da je output pred inputom – nimamo nobenih regulativ, prihodov, odhodov ali dopustov. Dopusta je kolikor ga potrebuješ, tudi bolniških ni – če si zbolel si doma in ne potrebuješ zdravniškega opravičila. Prideš ko prideš, greš ko greš – seveda je bistvena eksekucija - mora biti narejena v dnevih, ki smo se dogovorili. Če nekdo dela ob polnoči ali ob 6ih zjutraj je nam vseeno. Zadeva se skozi čas spreminja, organizacija se zdaj bolj postavlja – od reportinga, tedenske, bi-weekly, all hands meetingov, pa tudi na mesečni bazi. **Kdaj se je to začelo?** To se je začelo bolj intenzivneje šele leto in pol nazaj – ta način vodenja se spreminja skozi čas. Intenziviramo pa zadnje leto, nadgradnja pa od januarja. **Kaj pa je pripeljalo do tega?** Rast poslovanja, širitev na tuje tržišče, opolnomočenje ljudi, ker seveda ne moreš sam nadzorovati vsakega procesa. Največji izziv je ta, da je napaka dopuščena in da jo dopuščamo vedno in si je dejansko želimo. Dejstvo je, da si vsak ne želi delati napak - ker si počasnejši, ampak mi si to želimo - večkrat ko damo napake ven, hitreje preverimo, ocenimo in popravljamo zadeve sproti.

4. Ali lahko opišete kulturo v podjetju? Ali imate zapisane vrednote, pravila, itd.?

Jaz prihajam iz korporacije in na koncu vidiš da so osnovne želje posameznika enake. Torej jasna komunikacija na strukturiran način. Mi smo vsi v enem prostoru, ozračje je zelo sproščeno, seveda ko je delo je delo. Seveda se tudi kaj spiše, poheca, po Slack-u šale itd. Zelo sproščeno vse skupaj, na koncu pa vseeno vsak potrebuje neke formalne smernice in informacije o tem kaj se dogaja in kam se gre. Tega je vedno premalo, ker te povezuje druge stvari. Osebnostno je moj cilj v tem letu, da z vsakim opravim vsaj kvartalni razgovor – to pomeni, da greva za eno uro na kosilo in se pogovoriva osebne stvari oziroma kako se počuti. Zelo nam je pomembno, da je človek zadovoljen, motiviran, da se dobro počuti na delovnem mestu in da rad prihaja v službo, čeprav je tempo močan. Veliko delamo na sproščeni in zabavni kulturi. Glede komunikacije pa ja, vedno malo zmanjka... to je tudi moj cilj - da več delam na tem.

5. Ali ste kulturo začeli malo bolj v tej smeri v neki točki – ali to pride z rastjo?

Te stvari prihajajo iz evolucije poslovanja. Kakšna sva midva kot ustanovitelj, pa potem smo ustvarili skupne vrednote – te stvari predstavljamo ekipi na sestankih - kot taka je letošnja zadeva, ampak to niso puhljice v smislu skrbimo za okolje ampak vrednote res izhajajo iz

nas – npr. get things done je res ta naša eksekucija – če se dogovorimo, da se nekaj naredi do petka, zaradi mene pregrizni to. Ko smo bili start-up leta nas je malo odneslo, ker si misliš kaj boš naredil ampak se je izkazalo čez čas, da ni to to kar hočeš biti – želimo biti z nogami na tleh, da veliko komuniciramo, preprostost, spoštljivost do vsake zadeve, do beeperjev – čistilcev, do strank, partnerjev itd – to je value humble. Trust each other – da jaz vem, da bo vedno nekdo tukaj, da bo nekdo, ki bo naredil napako, to rekel in se iskreno opravičil. To ne pomeni, da nekoga kaznujemo, ko naredi napako, samo želimo si tako atmosfero, da nekdo prizna, da rabi pomoč. Potem pa še v zvezi biznis dela – okoli customer »assessmenta« smo zgradili celoto – da nas res zanima kako razmišljajo, kaj delajo – od trackinga, heatmapov po samem pagu. Na koncu je tega seveda premalo. Da delaš neke fokuse, ocene, da spremljaš vse, da vsak dan, ko je neka slaba ocena se s stranko komunicira, se proba rešiti. Pa seveda mi smo zelo omejeni s sredstvi in moramo narediti več. Če od 10 ljudi vsak dela 20% več kot bi moral, smo tukaj 2 človeka rešili, ki bi jih morali drugače zaposliti. Pa tudi recimo ko je bila korona smo se res trudili ekipo zadržati, celo zaposlili smo dodatne ljudi, pa je bil prihodek 0 ampak, da si rečemo gremo skupaj čez težke čase. Ko smo začeli graditi ekipo konkretnije lansko leto, smo si rekli, zdaj bomo naredili ekipo in gremo naprej no matter what – ne moremo si privoščiti, da izgubimo koga na tej poti. Komuniciramo še vedno premalo.

6. Kako pa je z vodenjem? Kako ste se spopadali s tem da ste ustanovili podjetje in bili postavljeni v pozicijo vodje?

Ja, to je velik izziv. Načini vodenja se spreminjajo. Ko si enkrat operativec v ekipi 3 ljudi in delaš vse – od nakupovanja zaloge izdelkov, do upravljanja čistilcev, ne moreš biti samo vodja. Ne moreš reči “ej jaz sem direktor, naredite te stvari, jaz pa grem domov pa se bomo potem pogovorili in pobrainstormali” – tega ni. Vse delaš in problem je, ko pride do preskoka in obrneš podjetje, da ga pripraviš za rast. V tej točki poskušaš tudi razmišljati o rasti, ampak je res težko. Preprosto je treba povedati – delamo samo stvari, ki peljejo do treh ključnih števil, ki jih imamo – drugega ne delamo. Šele zdaj prihajamo počasi na to zadevo, da lahko koordiniram in vodim v tem smislu, pa še zdaj ni to to, ker ostaja še toliko operativnih opravil.

7. Kakor sem razbrala iz vaših odgovorov nimate prav oddelka za hr, me pa zanima če imate kakšno osebo ki skrbi za neke hr aktivnosti/zaposlovanja ali ste to kar vi?

Ja, to sem jaz. Če povem konkretni primer, trenutno zaposlujemo v Madridu, ker se širimo na španski trg in smo pred dvema dnevoma dali oglas za customer operations in smo v 26 urah dobil 310 prijav, potem sem moral jaz to ustaviti, ker je bilo preveč. Danes moram preveriti 10 ljudi zato, da naredim peak 10-20 ljudi, da se bom slišal z njimi na klicu. Tako to poteka.

8. Kako pa greste čez ta proces zaposlovanja? Katere so ključne stvari, ki jih iščete in kako pomembno vam je da nekdo tudi kulturno paše v podjetje (cultural fit)?

Tukaj smo imeli kar veliko dobrih in slabih izkušenj v preteklosti. Jaz sem velik kritik mlajše generacije med 22 in 25 let. Zelo sem razočaran nad to generacijo. To je neverjetno, vdanost v usodo, ne risk-takerji, neradovednost, zdaj, tukaj, danes, on demand – razmišljajo: jaz se smatram, da sem strokovnjak v marketingu in hočem tako plačo, potem pa kandidata vprašaš ali si pripravljen veliko delati na tem področju, da delaš celoten trg Španije in je odgovor ja okej, a parkirišče imate – to je pač ta generacija. Imaš vmes briljante, ampak generalno gledano se mi zdi, da se precenjujejo, veliko zahtevjo, delajo po liniji najmanjših odporov, da bi se kdo potrudil, da bi naredu follow-up. Tako, to je moje osebno videnje in to se mi je dokazalo že čez čas.

Mi imamo načeloma kar lažjo to zadevo, ker smo bli start-up leta in nam ni težko zaposlovati, ampak tukaj je bil velik challenge in še vedno je. To lahko primerjam z nasprotjem v Španiji, kjer vsak kandidat naučeno po intervjuju pošlje še nek reminder/follow-up email »lej tuki sm, razmišljam o temu«, pa si rečeš kul, jo zanimajo stvari – tukaj ne boš tega doživel.

Jaz nikoli ne pogledam faksa, za CV si vzamem 4-5 sekunde, pomembne so mi samo izkušnje – kdo je šel čez kakšno težko situacijo v življenju, to je meni zelo pomembno ali pa nekega športnika, ki je moral v življenju nekaj žrtvovati – to je veliko bolj pomembno kot pa ostale stvari. Seveda vrednote – najbolj idealno je low ego, high iQ – to iščeš. Če imaš high ego, to pri nas ne gre, ker je preveč kontrastov in nasprotnih razmišljanj v nekih zadevah tko da to ne gre - to izveš preko debate.

V španiji na primer zdaj iščem dotično izkušnje iz Uberja, Deliveroo, Wolta, Glovota – take iščemo dotično, ker sem ugotovil, da to potrebujem. Verjetno bom vmes velik dobrih spustil, ampak potem v naslednjem krogu imamo 20 minutni pogovor – tukaj si že sestaviš sliko in dobiš občutek – zelo me zanima, če so imeli kakšno težko izkušnjo v življenju in kako so jo reševali – lahko je to smrt bližnje osebe – tukaj vidim kako se je nekdo boril in to mi je res pomembno, da vidiš da imaš borca. Ključna stvar, ki jo tudi želim izvedeti je odnos do dela.

V Madridu konkretno je ta drugi krog še pogovor s co-funderjem, skušamo pa zdaj nastaviti še 3. krog, ki bo pogovor z zaposlenimi. Redko se zgodi, da je občutek zelo dober in vse, potem pa v živo ni okej. Nimamo nobenih psiholoških testov, ful smo free – želiš pogodbo za nedoločen čas – dobiš. Če nekdo ne gre skupaj, potem ti tudi pogodba ne pomaga.

9. Ali je bilo zaposlovanje na začetku bistveno drugačno od tega sedaj?

Ja ja seveda, se je, logično. Po pravici povedano, ko smo na začetku iskali marketing so bili kriteriji zelo nizki - ta pa zna excel uporabljat in je blo to dobrodošlo – danes si veliko bolj izbirčen in vrednote – če nekdo v intervjuju govori samo jaz jaz jaz, to so te neki kvazi superstarji, k jih ne želiš imeti v podjetju, ker si z njimi na koncu samo beliš glavo.

Primer na hrvaškem – imeli smo dva razgrajača in so zdej punce stabilizirale situacijo. Ena izmed njih je predlagala in zaposlila ostale in se res dobro razumejo in imajo cel trg pod nadzorom. In če ona reče, to je vredno oseba, z njim želim delati - to je najbolj pomembno, zakaj bi se potem jaz vmešal in preverjal.

10. Ali se poslužujete notranjega rekrutiranja?

To je zelo zahtevno, če imaš ekipo 8-10 ljudi z zelo različnimi znanji. Jaz ne morem iz customer supporta naredit programerja in jaz trenutno ne rabim še enega customer supporta, razen če se trg podvoji in potem lahko njega povišam v neko operations funkcijo. Mi smo zdaj naredili tako, da imamo cross market initiatives in ti razvijaš po celi vertikali za beeping – to naredi ena oseba kot projekt poleg rednega dela – ti skoordiniš za to trzišče in si potem odgovoren, da še drug trg to naredi – s temi iniciativami želimo vzpodbuditi, da ima človek nekaj novega poleg svoje rutine. Itak pa neka zadeva zraste na primer punca iz Hrvaške in rečeš ali bi ti meni pomagala pri operacijah, ker jaz odpiram druge stvari in če lahko ti preveriš neke stvari - to je neke vrste promotion. Nikoli pa ni nekih debat kako pa je zdej s plačo. Težko je, ker nimaš nekih novih pozicij, ne moreš se zafrkavati, ker moraš preživeti. Dobro je to, da lahko nekoga pošlješ ti si dober prevzemi operacije na tem trgu operacije, ker se ne rabiš zafrkavati z nekimi novimi.

11. Kaj pa kakšna izobraževanja v ekipi, lahko tudi neformalna znotraj ekipe, karkoli?

Ja, premalo. To je ena stvar kjer ti vedno zmanjka časa in je na žalost na zadnjem mestu. Kar bi lahko dobil zastoj bi vključeval v proces, ampak tega je relativno malo. Če bi lahko imeli nekega coacha bi bilo dobro, ampak ko ti razmišljaš v marketingu evro notri evro ven, ti je težko plačati 2000 evrov za en tečaj. Nimamo in nebomo. In ljudje tudi razumejo, ko rečemo dajmo to raje investirati v marketing. Mi še nismo tam. Teh sistemov ki jih imajo večja podjetja in letnih razgovor, kjer se dobiš pa nekaj pišeš samo da pišeš, tega na žalost še ni in mi ne moremo zagotavljati tega. Kakšne coachinge 1 na 1 da naučim jaz na primer kolegico, ki nikoli ni delala project managementa nekih osnov, to ja. Ampak tudi ne vem če je kdo prišel in rekel, da je videl na Udemy-ju eno stvar in da bi si zelo želel se to naučiti, to bi z veseljem podprl.

12. Kaj pa performance management? Kako informirate, podajate povratne informacije?

Mi imamo dnevno, tedensko. Postavili smo sistem, kjer vsak spremlja samo 3-4 svoje parametre. In razmišljamo, da bi postavili sistem OKR – po Googlovem modelu pa ubistvu tudi »rookers« - responsibility ? – cilj imava s founderjem da do poletja urediva OKR-je in da se popiše vsakega zaposlenega z vsakim – kdo pošto odpira, itd. Postaviti sistem tistih 3 ali 4 parametrov, ki se jih gleda in vse se prilagaja samo temu. Tako da, to je cilj in temu primerni bodo potem tudi KPI-ji oz neki primerni benefiti. Zaenkrat je pa tako da imamo v tem vmesnem času nek merit money, ki ga lahko razdelimo.

Te tri ključne parametre res dnevno spremljamo – že zjutraj kje smo. Se pa potegujem, da bi imeli to na tedenski ravni in sem malo obrnil logiko in sem rekel – vsak posameznik vodi sestanek, ne jaz. Jaz sem samo še poslušalec, on se mora prej pripraviti, da vsak vidi kaj je bilo prejšnji teden, da si morajo označiti kaj bo ta teden in kar se je izkazalo je to, da že sami pridejo do rešitve in ne rabijo zares mene. To je dobro, da vsak ve kaj točno mora narediti in na sestanku dejansko pridejo do zaključka. To je model, ki se mi je zde izkazal kot dober in dejansko ga nisem prebral nikjer, ampak recimo da zaenkrat deluje.

13. Bi potem rekli da se je komunikacija bolj strukturirala s časom, če primerjate z začetkom?

Ja seveda, še vedno pogrešam zapisovanje na sestankih na primer. Ja je neka evolucija.

14. Kaj pa glede kompenzacije, poleg plače kakšne denarne ali nedenarne nagrade?

Vsak zaposleni ima čiščenje zastoj – vsak dobi beeperja ker nam je tudi pomembno, da doživijo ta experience, ali pa testirajo zadevo in vidijo. To je ena zadeva, ki je nice to have, mi rečemo, pogled zastoj ti to enkrat omogočimo, potem si pa vsak malo dokupi sam, ker jim je dobro. Pravična kompenzacija, ne govorimo o minimalni plači, daleč od tega, da je to top plača če sem čisto iskren, se pa trudimo. Je pa motivacijsko okolje, kjer lahko nekaj narediš – da ti imaš idejo in jo lahko narediš. Sproščeno/jasno strukturirano okolje, jasno narejen on-boarding, vsak zaposleni ve točno kaj je naloga in kaj dela.

5. Company Y

1. Kakšna je bila vaša organizacijska struktura na začetku in kakšna je zdaj?

Pri nas smo trenutno razdeljeni na oddelke in sicer: največji oddelek je operations, znotraj katerega spadajo customer support, customer success in sales. Poleg operations oddelka imamo oddelek za logistiko, strategic business development. Poleg teh pa imamo okolično tega to pa so finance, marketing, HR, IT in pa UX design.

2. Kdaj ste ustanovili podjetje in koliko je bilo na začetku zaposlenih ter kakšne so bile njihove funkcije v podjetju? Kako se je čez čas to spreminjalo? Koliko zaposlenih imate sedaj?

Podjetje ima dva ustanovitelja. Potem pa je bila kar nekaj časa to ekipa 5ih ljudi. V prvem letu in drugem je bila to ekipa 15ih ljudi lociranih zgolj v Sloveniji. Kar se tiče števila ljudi je bila največja porast v letu 2019 in 2020. Trenutno nas je nekaj čez 100 zaposlenih v pisarnah v Ljubljani, Luxemburgu in Kijevu.

3. Kako bi opisali kulturo v vašem podjetju in kako jo ohranjate? ali imate v podjetju kakšna pravila glede oblačenja, obnašanja, kulture na sploh in kdaj ste jih uvedli? ali imate seznam vrednot, ki jih morajo zaposleni vedeti? ali jih na kakšen način vzpodbujate pri tem?

Na začetku je to bolj družinsko okolje, zaposleni so veliko časa skupaj, navadno v nekih manjših pisarnah. Do leta 2015 se je vse delalo iz ene pisarne in je bilo to tudi zelo kaotično, po drugi strani pa so vsi vse vedeli in bili tudi zelo aktivno vključeni v proces odločanja. V takem okolju je tudi lažje splesti prijateljske vezi. Ko pa ekipa zraste pa v nekem trenutku ne vedo vsi vsega in se mogoče počutijo malo izključene. Tukaj se organizacijsko tudi zaposleni razdelijo v oddelke. Vzpostavi se neka struktura. Tudi zdaj nimamo hierarhije in ne bi rekla, da se ne pogovarjamo. Vsak ima vodjo in je največ v stiku s svojo ekipo. Ko se vzpostavi struktura se tudi omeji odgovornost ljudi in omeji se tudi kdo vse sprejema odločitve.

Kultura je že od samega začetka zelo mednarodna. Ustanovitelj je idejo za to podjetje dobil na izmenjavi. Že od samega začetka so sodelovali mednarodni sodelavci. Internacionalnost je ostala tudi do tega trenutka in si to tudi želimo. Tudi naše potrebe so zelo mednarodne, ker rabimo veliko ljudi, ki govorijo različne jezike. Vsi zaposleni so zelo odprti za raznolikost. In to je tudi zaposlenim zelo všeč, da je duh zelo odprt in mednaroden. Po eni strani pa kultura postaja bolj korpo. Sedaj moramo pisati kdaj delamo, torje kdaj pridemo na delovno mesto in kdaj gremo. Tega na začetku ni bilo, ker je bilo ljudi veliko manj in to ni bilo potrebno. Jaz bi rekla, da smo z eno nogo še start-up, z drugo pa vstopamo v korpo svet.

Imamo tri glavne vrednote in sicer: collaborate, bold in progressive. S tem se intenzivno ukvarjamo sedaj. Del našega procesa zaposlovanja je tudi knjižica, kjer so razložene naše vrednote in kaj to v praksi pomeni. Ni rečeno, da pričakujemo od ljudi, da se bodo tako obnašali ampak čez vse kar delamo se to nekako vidi in odraža. Tudi vse kadrovske aktivnosti, ki jih delamo povezujemo s temi vrednotami. Vrednote tudi komuniciramo preko naših internih kanalov. Zdaj bomo te vrednote tudi fizično napisali oziroma postavili v prostore. Posneli bomo tudi video, ki bo pokazal kaj je primer dobrega vedenja za to vrednoto.

Glede oblačenja in obnašanja imamo dva dokumenta, ki sta zelo pomembna: prvi je company policy, ta je splošne narave in ga dobijo vsi, ki se zaposlijo pri nas, gre za pravni dokument, kjer piše, da smo v pisarnah urejeni in da skrbimo za urejeno delovno okolje. Drugi dokument pa je house rules, ki se razlikuje od države do države. Tam pa piše, da s svojo obleko in pojavnostjo izražaš spoštovanje do sodelavcev in gostov. Pred tem je bilo več manjših pravilnikov in potem smo vse to združili v House rules.

4. Ali imate oddelek ali osebo, ki koordinira zaposlene in skrbi za HR aktivnosti? kaj je bil razlog, da ste osebo s HR znanjem zaposlili kasneje? je ta razlog povezan s stroški ali enostavno niste mislili, da tako osebo potrebujete? če/kdaj oziroma v kateri točki razvoja ste se odločili za zaposlitev osebe, ki ima znanja na področju HR?

Do leta 2019 je HR dela opravljal dela en zaposleni, ki je imel zraven tudi druge naloge. On je opravljal bolj admin funkcijo glede pogodb. Šlo je za hibridno funkcijo, ki ni bila čisto

samostojna. Potem pa so ugotovili, da bi rabili nekoga, ki ne bi bil samo za pogodbe. Potem pa je prišla Taja in ona je bila prva, ki se je obdržala na te poziciji samostojno. Ona je začela jeseni 2019 in njena ključna naloga je bila kultura v podjetju. Takrat je bilo v Ljubljani približno 30 zaposlenih in približno 10 v Kijevu. Na začetku je bila ona nekaj mesecev sama, potem pa se ji je pridružila sodelavka v Kijevu, in je tam pokrivala recruiting za celo podjetje in HR aktivnosti v Kijevu. Če bi si vsebinsko morale razdeliti: Taja je vodja, vsebinsko pokriva stik z managementom in pravne zadeve, Elena pokriva recruiting za skoraj celo podjetje in je vodja pisarne v Kijevu, jaz pa sem za recruiting in development potem pa imao še Sandro, ki pa ima admin vlogo.

Zakaj tako pozno? Ti misliš, da rabiš nekoga v HR, ko sam ne moreš več tako hitro zaposliti ljudi ali ko ti začne kultura škripati. Tudi ko iščeš HR osebo, rabiš čas, in tega si vzameš šele, ko ti voda teče v grlo.

5. Kdo je vodil zaposlovanje na začetku vaše poslovne poti in kdo ga vodi sedaj? čemu ste dajali prednost, kaj so bile tiste ključne stvari zaradi katerih ste se odločili, da boste nekoga zaposlili? ali bi v okviru zaposlovanja raje zaposlili nekoga, ki je boljši cultural fit ali nekoga, ki je boljše tehnično usposobljen? ali se pogosto poslužite notranjega rekrutiranja ali novo delovno mesto vedno odprete tudi za ljudi izven podjetja? ali imate težave s pogostim menjavanjem zaposlenih?

Zaposlovanje so na začetku prevzemale vodje ekip in pa en intervju je bil tudi s founderjema. Ko nastane potreba recimo za customer support je prva stvar da se ugotovi potreba potem se vodja customer supporta pogovori s Tajo, da ona preveri pri managementu ali obstajajo sredstva za zaposlovanje. Potem Taja preveri pri nama z Eleno katera bo vodila recruiting. Potem objavimo oglas na spletni strani, če ni prijav potem head-huntamo. Potem imamo razgovore, prvi razgovor je z HR-jem, drugi je z vodjo oddelka, tretji pa z ustanoviteljema. Na začetku, ko jih je bilo 10 ali 15 v podjetju, so imeli prvi razgovor z enim ustanoviteljem, potem drugi razgovor z vodjo ekipe, tretji razgovor z drugim ustanoviteljem in četrti s prvim ustanoviteljem. Tako da takrat so bili 4je razgovori.

Na to, da je nekdo cultural fit, dajemo zelo veliko. Tudi če je oseba zelo tehnično usposobljena in ni cultural fit ne gremo naprej. Cultural fit ne pomeni, da mora biti oseba ista kot mi, ampak da je odprt, da se sklada z našimi vrednotami, veliko pa se zanašamo na občutek. Če to obkljukamo potem gremo na tehnična znanja. Je pa odvisno od pozicije do pozicije.

Notranjega rekrutiranja se poslužujemo. Nekaj časa nazaj je odšel en vodja in je potem management podjetja imenoval za novega vodjo nekoga iz ekipe, ki je že prej kazal sposobnosti, da postane vodja. Interna napredovanja so se precej dogajala na začetku. Tudi na nižje pozicije objavimo na naših Teamsih.

Zaposleni se ne menjavajo prepogosto. Naš turnover je precej normalen. V startupih, sploh v takem kot smo mi je tempo kar hiter in se ljudje kar menjavajo, ker to ni za vsakega. Odkar

pa sem jaz tukaj, se še ni zgodilo, da bi odšel nekdo za katerega ne razumeš zakaj je šel in da res ne bi pričakoval, da bo šel.

6. Ali vam izobraževanje vaših zaposlenih veliko pomeni? kakšnih načinov izobraževanja se poslužujete? ali opazite pozitivne učinke izobraževanja na zaposlenih?

S tem se jaz zdaj intenzivno ukvarjam. Odkar imamo nov policy je notri zapisano, da mora vsak zaposleni tudi nek budget za zaposlovanje. Zdaj pa iščemo načine kako bi jih motivirali, da bi ta budget res porabili. Glede izbire izobraževanja pa imajo zaposleni čisto prosto izbiro. Včasih pa predlaga tudi vodja kakšna vrsta izobraževanja bi bila dobra.

7. Kako ocenjujete in motivirate zaposlene in na kakšen način jim predajate povratne informacije glede njihovega dela? ali imate v podjetju opravljati letne razgovore z zaposlenimi (performance appraisals)?

Konstanto podajanje feedbacka je težko. Po pol leta, ko ti poteče poskusna doba imaš performance review, potem po enem letu. In potem imamo tudi letne razgovore. Ampak to je premalo po mojem mnenju. V veliki večini je to vezano na komunikacijo v ekipi in tudi kakšno tehnologijo imaš za spodbujanje le tega. Tega mi še nimamo ampak upam, da bomo v prihodnosti to uvedli. V HR oddelku si želimo izboljšati ta vidik. Vodje oddelkov lahko podajo najboljši vsebinski feedback, zato tudi iščemo načine kako pomagati vodjam, da bi se počutili čim bolj opolnomočeni pri podajanju povratnih informacij. Gre pa navadno feedback direktno od vodje do zaposlenega.

Z rastjo števila zaposlenih je komunikacija vedno težja z vidika pogostosti. Pri isti količini dela, ko imaš vedno več zaposlenih in je težko vzdrževati konstantno komunikacijo glede podajanja povratnih informacij. Mi imamo zdaj dve pisarni v dveh državah in je zato še težje. Kot vodja tebi na začetku postavljata vprašanja dve osebi potem trideset, iz tega vidika je težje. Težko je vzdrževati komunikacijo na istem nivoju kot na začetku.

8. Kakšne vrste kompenzacije se poslužujete? indirektne (benefits), direktne (plače, bonusi), nedenarne (fleksibilnost, možnost prilagajanja delovnega časa in okolja, napredovanja)

Osnovni finančni del imamo določen s sistemizacijo. Bonus sistem je različno implementiran v različnih oddelkih. V marketingu in customer supportu je to najlažje meriti. Zdaj pa še pri drugih oddelkih vpeljujemo to. Imamo torej osnovno plačo in nek variabilni del. Imamo tudi tudi standardne povišice, ki jim nočemo reči standardne. Če si ti uspešen v prvem letu dobiš za določen odstotek povečano plačo. Vedno je možnost nekih izrednih nagrad za katere se odločiti direktorja. Pri nas se prelomni dogodki zelo poznajo. Ravno letos pa se dogaja tako, da kakšen vodja prepozna zaposlenega, da se je zelo izkazal, se mu ne da takoj nek denarni bonus ampak se mu kaj kupi, kakšno knjigo. Ko se nam nekdo

pridruži, se lahko že obstoječi zaposleni prijavijo, da so njegov buddy. To je taka stvar, ki ni denarni bonus ampak ti naredi bolj zanimivo delo.

6. Hooray heroes

Mic Melanšek, ustanovitelj in vodja marketinga (chief marketing and creative officer)

1. Koliko je bilo zaposlenih na začetku in kako se je to spreminjalo skozi čas? Koliko vas je zdaj in kakšno imate strukturo?

Sva dva ustanovitelja, jaz in Rado. Najino ozadje ni bilo niti približno podjetniško. Podjetje sva začela kot operativca – jaz sem delal marketing in kreativno že prej, Radovo ozadje pa je bilo bolj iz customer care vidika. Prve zaposlitve niso bile strateške. Tam kjer sem imel jaz pomanjkanje sem najel nekoga – na primer nisem imel časa za slikanje in sem najel fotografa za 4 ure, pa še to nekoga ki ga ni bilo potrebno zaposlit – ker je to na začetku za podjetje, ki se samofinancira edina možnost. Tam nekje do 20 zaposlenih sva zaposlovala glede na potrebe - tam kjer je bilo dela preveč ali pa ga nisva znala opraviti sama. To je bilo približno leta 2019, nismo še zelo rastli, smo pa dovolj da smo potrebovali toliko ljudi. Največja sprememba se je zgodila, ko smo scale-al iz malega podjetja (ko smo bili samo v Sloveniji in malo v Nemčiji) na to da smo bili v Sloveniji in Nemčiji že kar močni in zraven še na 3-4 trgih. Takrat smo zaposlovali malo brezglavo. To pomeni da sva v tistem trenutku zelo iskala ljudi, ki imajo srce na pravem mestu, ne pa nujno znanja. Jaz še vedno mislim, da je bila to prava odločitev, je pa zelo neposlovna. Takrat smo tako hitro rastli, da je bilo vsak dan nekaj novega, zato nismo želeli imeti ljudi, ki imajo znanje fiksirano na eno stvar. Ta fleksibilnost, zagnanost in to da so naju razumeli in z nama delili to vizijo, nama je bilo zelo zelo pomembno. To je bilo med letoma 2016 in 2019. Zadnje leto smo pa bili primorani stvari malo sistematizirati. Tako hitro smo rastli in stroški zaposlenih so rasli ne premo-sorazmerno hitreje kot pa je bila EBITDA podjetja. Zdaj smo - malo tudi zaradi korone, čeprav ni bil to zares razlog ampak je bila bolj brca v rit – naredili refokus. Pogledali smo, kateri procesi so v podjetju odveč, katere pozicije so odveč, kateri produkti so odveč in kateri trgi so odveč, in temu primerno tudi prestrukturirali zaposlene. V zadnjem letu smo šli tudi v grajenje management ekipe – prej tega nismo počeli, prej sva bila jaz in Rado, potem pa je bilo flat pod nama več ali manj, zdaj pa je struktura hierarhična. Imamo management ekipo, nekje 10 ljudi, ki jih gradimo in se skupaj z njimi odločamo, oni pa potem skrbijo za svoje ekipe. Prej je bila direktna linija do naju, ampak je bilo že preveč tudi iz osebnega vidika.

Zaposlenih je zdaj na redno pogodbo 75 ljudi, imamo veliko s.p.-jevcev, veliko študentov na tistih področjih, ki so fleksibilni. Imamo sezono, kjer rabimo veliko customer agentov, ko pa ni sezone jih rabimo manj. Vse skupaj nas je med 130 in 150, potem so pa še zunanji partnerji ampak to niso naši zaposleni.

2. Kakšni so bili izzivi z vodenjem podjetja?

Jaz nisem rojen leader, oziroma manager, oziroma direktor. Meni je ta funkcija nujno zlo, ki pride zraven podjetja. Niti približno ne uživam v tem. Raje delam stvari, delam produkte in kampanje in to. Midva sva imela izziv, da si nisva vzela časa in nisva znala vzgojit managerjev pod sabo, kar je rezultiralo v tem, da sva bila midva direktna linija za vse in so bile tudi vse odločitve na koncu na naju. S tem je tudi prišlo to da se zaposleni niso počutili odgovorne za stvari ki jih delajo, predvsem pa so nehali deliti to vizijo z nama – če se ti vse odločaš namesto nekoga drugega in on nima pojma zakaj je prišlo do te odločitve, potem ne mora dolgoročno deliti vizije. Na začetku, ko nas je bilo 20 in smo bili vsi v eni sobi še vsi vedo kaj se dogaja, zdaj pa ko smo v dveh nadstropjih pa imamo svoje pisarne je pa to veliko težje. Zato sva se midva enostavno morala umakniti. Res moraš biti tough, da to preneseš – da 100 ljudi pričakuje od tebe popolne odločitve in moraš stati za vsem tem.

3. Ali bi lahko rast podjetja dali na časovnico in označili kakšne mejnike? Lahko organizacijsko ali pa kulturno.

Največji mejnik se je zgodil zdaj med korono. Mi smo od 2013, ko smo začeli in do 2020 ves čas rastli. Nikoli nismo gledali na EBITDA, cilj je bil res samo scale – mi moramo biti glavni na trgu in gremo gor. Kar je pritično tudi pri temu da smo toliko zaposlovali, da smo razvijali veliko novih produktov in negativnih novic je bilo zelo malo. Imeli smo piknike, na njih goste kot so Jan Plestenjak in Tabu, fino je blo in vse, napaka je bila edino (ki jo zdaj vidim), da smo živeli v enem balončku. In s korono so prišle težave ne toliko pri nas kot pri naših partnerjih – tiskarne so se zapirale in bila je kriza. Takrat je 60% novic postalo rahlo negativnih, 10% pa zelo negativnih. In takrat se je začelo videti razpoke v kulturi. Do takrat nismo niti imeli razlogov da se kregamo v podjetju. Ko pa je prišla kriza in negotova prihodnost, so se pa ljudje začeli malo umikati – eni so dali tudi odpoved, ene smo mi mogli dat stran. Bila je slaba volja – zakaj to delamo, zakaj zdaj gledate kar naenkrat na dobiček prej pa niste, zakaj smo se prej lahko “preseravali” zdaj se pa ne več. Torej to je bil glavni mejnik kar se kulture tiče.

Glede same organizacije pa kot sem že prej omenil, najprej je bilo flat – tako kot je imel Zappos. Midva sva se zgledovala po tem, ampak to da so vsi flat v praksi ne deluje. Pri nas je bilo tako dobro dokler je šlo, potem pa pride čas ko moraš postaviti meje in narediti red. Zato smo potem zaposlili managerje, ki imajo sicer veliko odgovornost - tako da enostavno mora biti nek chain of command, drugače je lahko katastrofa.

4. Kako bi opisali kulturo v podjetju, ali imate vrednote ipd.?

Zelo dolgo nismo čutili potrebe da bi vrednote in pa mission zapisali. Zelo smo delili to – vsi smo bili skupaj, veliko smo se družili, ni bilo korone, smo šli vsak petek na pivo; vse je blo v redu, vse je blo preprosto. Tudi ko nas je bilo manj se je vsak družil z mano v delovnem času - tako ali drugače smo bili skupaj. Tudi če ni blo z stika smo jedli skupaj ali pa karkoli podobnega. To so zelo take nedolžne stvari, ampak so zelo zelo pomembne. Zdaj pa ko nas

je več – smo že v dveh nadstropjih, iz različnih držav in različnih kultur, je potreba po tem da to zapišemo, da ljudje to razumejo. Imamo 6-7 glavnih vrednot. Vse se vrtijo okoli ali tega da prevzemaš odgovornost, tako ali drugače. Sliši se zelo klišejska ampak rezumira na toliko področjih, da je mogoče krovna. Druga je da se res vrtimo okoli stranke – vse izhaja iz tega, kaj mislimo da bo stranko pripeljalo do čustvenega odziva na naše knjige. To razmišljamo ko delamo design, ko delamo tekste, kako delamo marketing, kako delamo PR in tako naprej. Tretji sklop sem jaz poimenoval da smo »quantum« ampak so me družno zavrnili s tem poimenovanjem. To pomeni, da enkrat smo tu, enkrat smo tam, ne vemo kam gremo, smo pa zelo prilagodljivi. Ne da si zdaj postavimo strukturo, potem pa pride nova priložnost in je ne bomo zgrabili, ker smo včeraj rekli da bo struktura taka pa taka. Če je dobra priložnost, damo pač ladjo tja in smo vsi veseli in sprejememo to.

5. Imate pravila oblačenja ali obnašanja v pisarnah?

Ne. Razen tega, da moramo biti vsi v copatih. Ker želimo, da smo vsi bolj domači. Tudi glede delovnega časa, imamo okvirne zapovedi kdaj, ampak se ne štempljamo ali trackamo. To je stvar, ki ni bila pod nadzorom ko nas je bilo res veliko in je šlo izpod kontrole, zato smo bili primorani določiti ure, zdaj pa spet ni več nujno da to poudarjamo.

6. Na spletni strani sva zasledili, da imate HR oddelok. Zanima me, v kateri točki ste se odločili, da rabite HR specialista in kaj so glavne aktivnosti za katere ta oseba skrbi?

Res je, imamo HR in sicer dve puncici – ena je lead in ena je njena asistentka. Odločili smo se za to v principu zelo prepozno – šele pri 100 ljudeh smo začeli to osmišljati, tako da v tem trenutku smo še vedno tam, ko je funkcija HR-a reaktivna. Še vedno se je v zadnjih 5-6 letih zgodilo toliko stvari, ki jih je treba za nazaj posanirati. Postaviti strukturo, postaviti pravilne pogodbe, sistematizacija in vse te zadeve. Mi tega prej nikoli nismo imeli, oziroma smo imeli zelo pavšalno narejeno in zdaj se onidve predvsem s tem ukvarjata. Kar ostane časa se ukvarjamo z zadovoljstvom zaposlenih – urejanje pisarn in tako naprej. Sicer na tem področju ni bilo takega primanjkljaja, bolj je bilo na razumevanju zaposlenih – njihove vloge, njihove pozicije, tromesečnih ali mesečnih razgovorov, ocenjevanj in tako naprej. Da imamo nek sistem postavljen, sicer zelo organsko, da ni samo zato da ga imamo, ampak da res nečemu služi, ampak še vedno je to nekaj kar moramo imeti.

7. Ali te dve puncici iz HR oddelka tudi vodita zaposlovanje? Katere stvari so vam najbolj pomembne pri kandidatu in kako poteka zaposlovanje?

Na vseh razgovorih sta prisotni – vsaj glavna izmed njiju. Preko njiju grejo tudi vsi razpisi, ki jih dajemo ven. Razpisi vseeno temeljijo na junior do mid-level zaposlenih, medtem ko managerje in c-level pozicije težko dobiš na razpis, tukaj gre bolj za headhunting. Tudi s tem se ukvarjamo, sicer manj in slabše, ampak sploh zdaj ko smo v fazi kjer ni več srce toliko pomembno kot je znanje. Za razliko od pol leta nazaj, sem jaz redko na katerem razgovoru – zakaj to? Ker se buildajo managerji. Če sem jaz zraven, ne morem biti tiho in potem

začnem spraševati in se na koncu jaz odločim. In to ni prav, ker kot prvo jaz nisem niti približno toliko pameten, da bi se lahko o vsemu odločil, in kot drugo če se jaz na mesto nekoga odločim, ne bo on prevzel odgovornosti in tisti ki bo na novo zaposlen ne bo čutil neke afinitete s tem človekom ampak prej z mano in to ni trajnostno. Se vključim mogoče na koncu, ampak to je zelo neformalen razgovor, samo toliko da res vidim če se čutimo. Redko bom šel kontra nekomu – povedal bom svoje mnenje, ne bom pa prepovedal da se nekoga vzame. S tem tudi sprejem tveganje, da bo ta manager prevzel mino ampak bo tudi on rešil situacijo.

8. Ali se za višje pozicije poslužujete tudi internega rekrutiranja?

Praviloma ja. Na novo smo zaposlili samo enega managerja. Vse ostale smo naredili sami. Na primer language department, kjer so vsi tujci in skrbijo da so vsi trgi poservisirani, je prišel k nam iz Nemčije leta 2015 kot asistent k nekomu drugemu, se zaljubil in ostal v Sloveniji in je zdaj pri nas. To je samo en primer. Praviloma je lažje, če narediš nekoga znotraj podjetja. Mi imamo tudi investitorje, ki so super ampak imajo tudi svoje muhe. Oni bi, če bi midva to pustila, zaposlovali svoje ljudi. Midva sva ekstremno proti, vsaj dokler sem jaz v podjetju. Dokler sem jaz tukaj, tega ne bomo delali, ker je to razdiralec kulture. Jaz mislim, da ga jaz ne bi znal pravilno shendlat, ker če pride nekdo notri samo s politiko investitorja, ti bo mogoče naredil finančno korist, ti bo pa naredil drugje škodo in na dolgi rok ne bo vredno.

9. Kako pa je z izobraževanji? Ali vi kaj organizirate za zaposlene ali si mogoče sami kaj najdejo, kako je s tem?

Na začetku je vsak imel določen budget, ki ga je lahko uporabil za šport in budget za izobraževanje. To je bilo lahko karkoli, sicer nam je bilo ljubše če je povezano s tem kar boš lahko uporabil pri delu, ampak lahko si šel tudi kleklati. No, samo eden se je tega poslužil in se šel učiti francosko. Noben ni za šport uporabil, in zato smo po enem letu rekli, okej zresnite se, zdej vam to ponudimo še eno leto in če ne boste uporabili damo stran. In potem smo dali pač stran, ker očitno nismo znali prav delati s tem. Kar se tiče izobraževanj, jih imamo veliko preko naših partnerjev. Mi smo premium partner od Facebook-a, Google-a, Pinterest-a in tako dalje in imamo z njimi velikokrat neke session-e. Tako da kar se tiče marketinga imamo tukaj poskrbljeno. HR se tudi izobražuje, za ostale pa ne vem ali smo tukaj slabi ali ne čutimo/čutijo potrebe. Se mi zdi da smo glede tega vsak sam za sebe – če pa pride nekdo do mene in reče da bi se učil kitajsko, ne bom dvakrat pomislil preden bom rekel ja seveda podjetje to financira. Ne bom pa jaz tisti, ki te bo ujškal in iskal zate kje se boš izobraževal. Vsak, ko hoče kaj dobiti, dobi. Redko kaj da bi rekli ne. More pa priti iniciativa iz tvoje strani, ne pa da jaz rečem ta tečaj moraš zdaj narediti.

10. Kako pa ocenjujete in motivirate zaposlene? Kako se podaja povratne informacije?

Imamo sistematizirano, da imamo razgovore vsake 3 mesece. Jaz z mojimi tega ne delam – direktno pod mano je nekaj 5-6 ljudi. Tega pa ne delam, ker imam dnevno z njimi stik in ne

želim nabirati tega 3 mesece. Mamo to zapisano, ker moramo imeti, ampak jaz teh razgovorov ne delam. Drugi pa imajo vsake tri mesece. Res je nujno, da ljudje razumejo zakaj nekaj delajo. Vmes, ko nas je bilo že toliko smo imeli kar neke naloge, ko ljudje niso vedeli zakaj to delajo ampak so samo prišli na delo, odkljukali te naloge in šli. Ni bilo osmišljeno zakaj to delajo, kaj je cilj tega. Zdaj smo šli nazaj, ker smo skrčili ekipo in ker smo dali neke produkte stran, ki so samo jemali fokus in niso imeli pointa in se lahko tudi jaz in ostali managerji posvečamo zakaj nekdo nekaj dela. Ne samo da padeš v nek kalup in delaš kljukice. To je prvi motivator ki se mi zdi da je zelo pomemben. Finančne nagrade so pa drugi tak oprijemljiv.

7. CHIPOLO

Primož Zelenšek, soustanovitelj in direktor

1. Kdaj ste ustanovili podjetje, koliko vas je bilo na začetku in koliko vas je zdaj?

Delati smo začeli leta 2012, ampak uradno je bilo podjetje ustanovljeno leta 2013. Bilo nas je 7 soustanoviteljev in tudi lastniški delež smo si razdelili na 7 enakomernih delov. Leta 2012 smo šli na Kickstarter in po tem se je ekipa začela povečevati, tako da danes imamo s pogodbeniki in s študenti skupaj okoli 45 ljudi.

2. Kakšno organizacijsko strukturo imate?

Že pri začetku naše zgodbe se je naredila neke vrste struktura. Vsak izmed soustanoviteljev je imel čez svoje področje, tako da smo bili že takrat kar dobro razdeljeni. Ta struktura se je ohranjala še naprej. Imamo prodajni oddelek, marketing oddelek – del marketinga skrbi tudi za spletno prodajo, potem imamo design ekipo, ki je nekako vpeta čez celotno podjetje kar se tiče produkta, potem imamo razvojno ekipo, ki je razdeljena na hardware in software. Software del se razdeli na aplikacijo in pa na web razvoj. Potem pa imamo še support, quality assurance, administracija, operativa in proizvodnja. Vsak oddelek ima svojo vodjo, skupaj nas je 6 (jaz sicer nimam oddelka pod sabo) in skupaj smo executive team.

3. Ali ste na poti od ustanovitelja do vodje naleteli na kakšne izzive?

Vsako obdobje ima neke svoje izzive. Na začetku je bilo težko predvsem glede zaposlovanja – nismo znali pravih ljudi zaposliti in se je velikokrat izkazalo, da ne pašejo v ekipo, predvsem je bil pa problem da nismo znali delegirati. To se je potem tekom časa samo po sebi začelo reševati, ker so v podjetje prihajali ljudje, ki so bili samoiniciativni in razumeli stvari, hkrati smo pa tudi mi malo zrasli in prišli do več izkušenj.

4. Ali so bili kakšni posebni mejniki med rastjo podjetja?

Nekako smo se počasi spreminjali, ni bilo tako da smo prišli do neke točke in ne znali naprej. Večinoma se stvari zgodijo naravno, oziroma smo videli da je treba popraviti in smo to uredili. Smo pa imeli turbulentna leta od 2017 naprej, ko nam je razpadla prodajna ekipa in

smo posvetili veliko časa temu. Poleg tega je en izmed soustanoviteljev zapustil ekipo in imeli smo težave s financami in se zato z nekaterimi stvarmi sploh nismo ukvarjali. Ko smo šli čez ta obdobja so bile organizacijske težave veliko lažje. Smo naredili tudi nekaj napak, recimo lansko leto nismo imeli letnih razgovorov. Veliko časa smo se ukvarjali s težavami ki so prišle z epidemijo in se nismo dovolj posvečali ljudem, kar je bila napaka. Imeli smo tudi premalo informiranja ljudi glede dogajanja. Določene stvari smo uredili še pravi čas, določene bomo pa popravili v letošnjem letu in gremo naprej.

5. Kakšno imate kulturo v podjetju? Imate zapisane vrednote in pravila oblačenja?

Načeloma nimamo nič zapisano. Imamo vrednote dela – načeloma smo bolj družinsko orientirano podjetje, povprečna starost zaposlenih je med 30 in 33 let. Razmik med najstarejšim in najmlajšim je manj kot 10 let, zato tudi ni tako velikih razlik v dojemanju sveta – tukaj torej nekih gromozanskih težav nimamo. Je pa kultura na podobnem nivoju kot je bila na začetku. Temelji na normalnih odnosih, spodbujamo to da se ljudje pogovarjajo med sabo, da se stvari sproti rešujejo, da ni laži v ozadju. Jaz osebno sem zadovoljen s stanjem kakršno je. Mi gremo vsako leto v Vegas (razen letos), kjer najamemo vilo in vsi skupaj en mesec živimo tam, se zabavamo, kar prinese k boljšemu vzdušju in odnosih.

6. Ali imate v podjetju zaposleno osebo, ki skrbi za HR aktivnosti in zaposlovanja?

Ne, nimamo. Je to kar bolečina v resnici. Bolečina iz tega, ker se vsak oddelek posebej ukvarja s tem, da bo najdel pravega človeka in to zna biti zoprno, ker mogoče nimajo največje motivacije in potem izgubimo potencialnega zaposlenega da bi se nam pridružil, po drugi strani je pa to smiselno, ker jim damo odgovornost da sami poskrbijo za svoje kadre. Seveda je postopek z HR osebo verjetno zelo drugačen kot trenutno. Verjamem, da bo prišlo do tega, ne verjamem pa da bo prišlo do tega v zelo kratkem obdobju. Zelo odvisno je od tega, kako hitro bo podjetje raslo. Trenutna rast je relativno počasna in pri tej rasti je to še obvladljivo, ko pa moraš naenkrat zaposliti 10 ljudi naenkrat, je pa to težko narediti kot naredimo trenutno. Mislim, da če se bo pokazala potreba, da bomo rabili zaposliti več ljudi hkrati, potem bomo nujno rabili HR. Torej, v tem trenutku ga ne rabimo, bi pa ga rabili če bo pospešek zaposlovanja večji in pa ko bomo dosegli določeno število ljudi, jaz mislim da je to število 100, ali pa vsaj 75.

7. Kako poteka zaposlovanje?

Vedno damo oglas, naredimo krog intervjujev – število krogov je odvisno od oddelka do oddelka. Določenim ljudem damo kakšno nalogo, ki jo rešijo čez vikend, nekaterim jo damo kar tukaj in potem imamo 3-6 mesecev uvajanja, da vidimo če sploh pašemo skupaj. Če ni, potem hvala lepa, če je, potem super.

8. Torej vam je pomembno, da nekdo kulturno paše v vaše podjetje?

To je pravzaprav nujno. V preteklosti smo naredili napake in imamo nekatere ljudi v podjetju ljudi ki gledajo drugače na stvari kot večina. Poskušamo da res čim bolj pašejo v podjetje – to je želja po ustvarjanju, prodajanju in pripravljenost na trdo delo. Je pa vseeno malo drugače, ker smo iz Trbovelj, zato je fluktuacija ljudi manjša – v Ljubljani je priložnosti več in se ljudje hitreje menjajo. Delo od doma je seveda prineslo to, da ni več enake kulture in če bi bilo to pogovarjanje preko kamere tako dobro, bi ta model ostal, ampak mislim da ne bo.

9. Ali se poslužujete notranjega rekrutiranja?

Ja, tega je veliko. Kar precej ljudi je šlo iz študentskih pozicij v proizvodnji na nekatere bolj smiselne pozicije, kar nekaj je bilo tudi študentov s štipendijami, ki smo jih potem zaposlili. Tako da ja, prvotno pogledamo znotraj, potem pa igramo iskati ven.

10. Ali ste imeli v kakšnem obdobju težave z menjavanjem zaposlenih?

Ne, to se na srečo še ni zgodilo.

11. Ali vam je pomembno izobraževanje zaposlenih? Ali se to spodbuja?

Ja, se spodbuja ampak mogoče premalo. Določeni ljudje so naravnani k temu malo bolj in se konstantno izobražujejo, določene pa to ne zanima. Vsakemu omogočimo, da če najde konferenco kjerkoli na svetu, se lahko udeleži. Nimamo pa strukturirano, da bi moral vsak to narediti.

12. Ali se zaposleni poslužujejo tega?

Ja, kar se. iOS developerji so hodili v San Francisco vsako leto na iOS developersko konferenco, web ekipa je hodila v Amsterdam, Android imajo neke svoje konference, sales in marketing pa so hodili predvsem na slovenske - tako da ja, so se kar posluževali.

13. Kako ocenjujete in motivirate zaposlene?

V resnici kar sproti. Določene stvari se naberejo in je potreben letni razgovor, ki je malo bolj strukturiran in vsebuje določena vprašanja, ki so pomembna. Drugače pa ja, bolj kot ne poskušamo stvari reševati sproti (znotraj oddelkov).

14. Kakšne vrste kompenzacije se poslužujete poleg osnovne plače?

S tem se veliko ukvarjam v zadnjem obdobju. Drugače smo imeli vezano dodatno plačo na uspešnost celotnega podjetja, torej ko dosežemo določen revenue in profitabilnost se izplača dodatna plača. Imamo pa tudi precejšno fleksibilnost delavnika.

8. KINGSBOX

Živa Cotič Bizjak, project management/HR

1. Kakšna je bila struktura na začetku in kako je zdaj?

Jaz sem bila četrta zaposlena in je bila res katastrofa. Nismo imeli niti kadrovskih map za zaposlene in pogodbe so bile kar vržene v en fascikel, res je bilo grozno. Jaz sem si na začetku zadala nalogo, da malo organiziram zadeve. Za vse sem pripravila kadrovske mape in tako naprej. Zadeva je rastla, tako da ko nas je bilo 10 smo naredili sistematizacijo delovnih mest in smo s tem še dodatno uredili organizacijski del. Seveda moramo sistematizacijo konstantno prilagajati zaradi dodajanja novih delovnih mest, kar je malo nerodno ampak to moramo početi. Trenutno nas je 50, ampak to je skupaj s študenti. Imamo veliko študentov, ker je korona, ki je na druga podjetja vplivala slabo (da morajo odpuščati delavce ali jih dajati na čakanje), pri nas imela čisto drugačen vpliv in sicer dodati smo morali veliko ljudi. Zdaj pa ne vemo koliko časa bo ta norija trajala in smo že videli med prvim in drugim valom, da se je število naročil zmanjšalo na neke normalne ravni, tako da smo zato dodali študente. Skupaj nas je torej 50, redno zaposlenih pa nas je 31. Na začetku nismo imeli definirane kulture ali nekih ciljev, vizije, misije in tako naprej. To smo začeli v 2018 in sicer smo šli obratno kot ponavadi. Ponavadi se definira vrednote, misijo, vizijo in šele potem načine za doseganje tega, mi smo šli pa ravno obratno. Definirali smo naše 4 stebre in na podlagi tega se je definirala neka kultura in te elemente smo vzeli, ter jih pretvorili v neko zapisano vizijo, misijo, cilje in tako naprej.

2. Na kakšen način vzpodbujate zaposlene, da se držijo vrednot in ohranjajo kulturo?

Kot sem omenila, mi smo najprej definirali te 4 stebre, na podlagi katerih je potem zelo enostavno tudi implementirati kulturo v podjetje. Ena izmed naših vrednot je rast – to spodbujamo na tak način, da je en izmed stebrov izobraževalni načrt preko katerega spodbujamo zaposlene, da se izobražujejo in tako rastejo.

Plačno napredovanje pri nas ni vezano na neke uspehe pozameznika, ker je to zelo težko ovrednotiti, ko govorimo o nekom ki dela na primer v logistiki ali nabavi - to je dosti lažje meriti pri nekom ki dela v prodaji. V prejšnjem podjetju, kjer sem bila jaz, smo imeli dodatek vezan na uspešnost in ko sem to opazovala, sem ugotovila da je to zelo slabo za podjetje, ker se zgodi espeizacija - da vsak dela samo še zase in grabi samo k sebi, ne gre pa več za kolegialnost in tako naprej. Zato sem se odločila da tega ne bomo imeli in ustanovitelja sta to tudi odobrila. Tako smo vzpostavili malo drugačen sistem plačnega nagrajevanja, ki je vezan na te naše štiri stebre. Prvi steber so OKR-ji (objectives and key results), ki si jih postavljamo na vsake 3 mesece. To spremljamo v aplikaciji "Week done", ki je narejena samo za spremljanje OKR-jev, tako da si na začetku vsakega tromesečja določimo OKR-je, ki jih Luka potrdi in ko del cilja opraviš, to označiš v aplikaciji.

Drugi steber je ukvarjanje s športom – ker smo tako podjetje bi bilo čudno če tega ne bi imeli. Tega pravzaprav ne merimo, ker večina že tako ali tako izpolnjuje to. Pravilo je, da se moramo dvakrat tedensko organizirano ukvarjati s športom – moramo biti nekam vpisani ali včlanjeni.

Tretji steber je kompatibilnost s kulturo. To preverjamo vsake tri mesece z vprašalnikom, ki je podoben vprašalniku 360 ampak smo premajhni oziroma nimamo vzpostavljeno neke hierarhije, da bi lahko o tem tako govorili, tako da v bistvu bi lahko rekli da ocenjujemo vsi vse. V tem vprašalniku so vprašanja vezana samo na našo kulturo, ekipni duh, komunikacijo in tako naprej. Vsi izpolimo vprašalnike in jaz potem naredim oceno. Vsak dobi graf s svojimi ocenami, vidi kje je povprečje in izdamo priporočila. Ta list lahko uporabijo za kurit ogenj doma če želijo, ali pa to dejansko uporabijo. In moram rečt, da jim kar sežejo te ocene do srca in se vsi potrudijo da se izboljšajo ali pa ostanejo na tisti ravni kjer so do zdaj bili dobri. Četrty steber je pa vezan na izobraževanja. Vsake 3 mesece si zaposleni določimo izobraževalni načrt, kjer si zadamo en cilj in potem določimo še 3 aktivnosti, ki jih bomo naredili za doseg tega cilja. Ponavadi so te izobraževalni cilji vezani na OKR-je, lahko pa tudi ne. Na koncu sledi še pregled iz moje in Lukatove strani, zato ker ne odobrimo čisto vsake oslarije, ker je človek po naravi len, zato obstaja nevarnost da bi nekdo želel prebrati tri članke iz Wikipedije in bi bilo to to. Zato to na koncu pregledamo, da ni na primer samo en podcast ampak je sklop podcastov, ni en webinar ampak je sklop webinarjev in tako naprej.

Na primer v nabavi je bil en izmed OKR-jev, da se vzpostavi logistični center v tujini in Marko, ki je vodja nabave se je izobraževal o tem kako se pogajati, kako to vzpostaviti in tako naprej. V izobraževalni načrt je potem zapisal, da bo prebral eno knjigo o pogajanjih, eno knjigo o logističnem postopku in tretja aktivnost je bila da si je ogledal primere dobrih praks, torej obiskal podjetja ki že imajo logistični center v tujini in preveril kako to deluje. Na koncu meseca mi je potem oddal poročilo in je bilo to zaključeno.

Lahko pa je ta izobraževalni načrt totalno ne vezan na OKR-je – recimo Rok iz logistike je bil malo bolj grumpy guy in se je izobraževal kako komunicirat, kako biti bolj samozavesten v komunikaciji in podobno, tako da ni bilo vezano na OKR-je ampak je bilo vezano na njegovo osebnost in kaj mora narediti zato da bo boljše sodeloval z ostalimi.

3. Kako pa ste prišli do ideje za model 4 stebrov?

Dobro vprašanje, tudi jaz se tega ne spomnim več. To je moj otrok, ki je nekako prišel iz moje glave. Takrat sta Luka in Dejan rekla da je njima pomembno da se izobražujemo, da so del tega OKR-ji in to je bilo to. Jaz sem potem brskala po spletu, gledala kako imajo drugi – nisem se toliko osredotočila na slovenska podjetja, ampak bolj na tuja, ker mislim da vseeno so včasih slovenska podjetja še malo zadaj kar se tiče kulture in nekih zanimivih pristopov, tako da sem potem pogruntala nekako ta 4 steborni sistem. Nekako je zraslo na mojem zeljniku s pomočjo Google-a in gledanja kako imajo druga podjetja.

4. Ali imate v podjetju pravila oblačenja ali obnašanja?

Ne, nimamo ne enega ne drugega. Kar se tiče oblačenja, smo zelo zelo casual tako da glede tega ne. Glede obnašanja pa tudi ne. Je pa res, da že iz vrednot izhaja neko obnašanje. Ena izmed vrednot je da presegamo pričakovanja in v obrazložitvi te vrednote piše, da moramo biti spoštljivi do stranke ki kupi en najmanjši izdelek pa do tiste ki kupi celo telovadnico, spoštljivi moramo biti do naših obrtnikov in do največjih dobaviteljev. V preteklosti smo imeli malo probleme s tem, da so v customer supportu opravljali vse, ki so se kaj pritožili ali kaj podobnega in je to potem prerastlo vse meje. To je porabilo ogromno enega časa, ker so se pri vsaki stranki potem že pregovarjali in če porabiš za vsak mail še 5 minut za te oslarije, potem ti to vzame res več ur na dan. To zadevo smo potem preko vrednot malo porezali.

5. Ali so bile med rastjo podjetja kakšne prelomnice?

Nobena od teh rasti ni bila tako drastična, tudi zato ker je veliko ljudi prišlo k nam kot študenti in smo jih potem zaposlili, torej jih ni bilo potrebno zelo uvajati, ker so poznali že našo kulturo, tako da so potem delali samo pod drugačno pogodbo. Od marca lani ko se je korona začela je pa res viden en shift, ker je tako veliko dela in tako malo se ukvarjamo s temi stvarmi, da že opažamo da sistem malo razpada prav zato ker nimamo časa. Ves fokus je na skladišču ali pa customer support, torej da zadovoljimo potrebe stranke. Tako da je zadnjih par mesecev vidno, predvsem zato ker se je res tako povečalo število ljudi, da recimo Luka in Dejan ne poznata več vseh, kar je zanju velik šok. Jaz bi rekla, da je korona prinesla res neke opazne razlike, je pa res da nekako sklepamo ko bo korone konec, se počasi vrnemo spet na neke stare tirnice.

6. Zanima me, kako to da sta se ustanovitelja odločila da bo že 4. zaposlen kadrovnik?

Mislim da je bil njun cilj to, da sta želela že zelo zgodaj postaviti neke temelje, na katerih bi potem gradili. Zavedala sta se da bo podjetje raslo in videla sta kako delajo z dokumenti in podobnimi stvarmi, zato so zgodaj videli da rabijo postaviti temelje že na začetku.

7. Ali se vam zdi da se je vaša vloga kot HR oseba spremenila od začetka pa do danes?

Absolutno. Na začetku ko sem prišla sem imela zelo malo kadrovskega dela, mogoče dve uri na dan, da sem uredila vse zadeve. Tako da sem preostali čas pomagala na customer support-u ker znam italijansko in je bil takrat trg večinoma italijanski. Potem je bilo tega seveda vedno več in zdaj v bistvu sploh ne vem več kaj se v customer supportu dogaja in v cel dan delam na HR-ju - na OKR-jih ostalih, na izobraževanju, razgovorih, zaposlovanju in tako naprej.

8. Ali je poleg vas še kakšna oseba v kadrovskem oddelku?

Ne, zaenkrat sem edina in Luka pravi da bom še nekaj časa, zato razmišljam o tem da bi se malo polenila, zato da bi mi še koga dodal (smeh). Je pa res da mi Luka res veliko pomaga

pri vzpostavitvah in mi vse projekte odobri/podpre.

9. Kakšen je potek zaposlovanja in katere lastnosti so vam pri kandidatu najbolj pomembne?

Skoraj edina stvar ki je važna je cultural fit. Izobrazba nas bolj kot ne ne zanima, zato se redko poslužujemo oglaševanja na zavodu za zaposlovanje, kjer moraš nujno vstaviti izobrazbo. Kar se pa tiče samega zaposlovanja, smo pa ugotovili da je najbolje če naredimo oglas in ga delimo zaposleni na Facebooku, saj na ta način najdemo največ ljudi. Jaz sprejemem vse prijave in jih pregledam in povabim ljudi na prvi razgovor – v normalnih razmerah je to kava v lokalni. Zmenili smo se, da bomo vedno delali tako, da bomo povabili ljudi na kavo, ker na ta način lahko vzpostaviš sproščeno vzdušje in ti ljudje povedo več kot bi ti, če bili v pisarni in bi vse skupaj izgledalo kot neko zaslišanje. V teh časih imamo pa razgovore preko Zoom-a. Drugi krog sta potem Luka ali vodja oziroma najbližji sodelavec tega mesta. Včasih smo imeli še tretji krog, da so bili ostali sodelavci zraven, ampak glede na to da smo se odločili da gremo proti neki vitki organizaciji, smo ta tretji krog odstranili. Ko osebo izberemo, imamo zaenkrat bolj slab on-boarding, ampak je to moj OKR za naslednje trimesečje. Poleg mize, računalnika in teh stvari dobijo brošuro z vrednotami, misijo in vizijo in pa manjšo brošuro v kateri imajo naloge za prvi mesec, kot na primer da morajo v prvem tednu vprašati vsaj 5 vprašanj na dan, konec tedna prinesiti čokolado in take stvari, da se malo vpeljejo v podjetje. Zapisane so tudi vse telefonske številke, tiste najbolj nujne ki jih gotovo vedno rabiš in tako naprej. To je nek mini welcome package poleg naših majic in tako naprej. Tako da zdaj v prihodnjem trimesečju bomo bolj delali tudi na tem.

10. Ali se poslužujete tudi notranjega rekrutiranja, torej da objavite oglas za mesto samo znotraj podjetja?

Nas je še tako malo, da nam ni treba dajati internih oglasov, ker se samo ozreš naokoli in vidiš vse ljudi ki so v podjetju. Smo večkrat že tako naredili, da smo ljudi povišali na vodjo. Smo pa vedno naleteli na težave, ker smo po tolikih letih ugotovili da dober delavec ni enako dober vodja. Zato zdaj probamo najti nekoga ki je bil vodja že drugje prej, da ima neke vodstvene sposobnosti, kot pa da povišujemo ljudi ki so že v podjetju, ker smo imeli res že slabe izkušnje.

11. Ali ste imeli v kakšnem obdobju težave z prevelikim menjavanjem ljudi?

Ne, nimamo velike fluktuacije in mislim da je šlo vse skupaj 10 ljudi stran. Nekako se sami izločijo iz sistema, to pa je zaradi našega 4-stebernega sistema. Če se z njim ne poistovetiš, boš zelo hitro izpadel iz sistema. Tvoja ekipa se trudi, da bodo naredili OKR-je, ti pa se samo zraven priklopiš in ne vložiš enako veliko dela in seveda bo ta najšibkejši člen ekipe želela izločiti, ker predstavlja samo neko škodo. Tako da ponavadi tisti ki so se izločili so se sami, ker so videli da se v 4-stebernem sistemu ne najdejo.

12. Kakšne vrste kompenzacije se poslužujete?

Indirektne (benefits), direktne (plače, bonusi), nedenarne (fleksibilnost, možnost prilagajanja delovnega časa in okolja, napredovanja) 4 stebri ti prinesejo plačno napredovanje. Vsa izobraževanja so plačana s strani podjetja, vse knjige, ki jih kupiš, vsi seminarji so plačani in mislim da zaposleni zelo cenijo. Zelo uspešne so pa tudi nedenarne oblike. Po prvem valu covid-a je celo podjetje odšlo za dva dni na glamping in to je v celoti krilo podjetje. Tam smo se zabavali dva dni in v začetku leta, ko smo imeli letne razgovore, so to vsi zaposleni zelo prehvalili. Vsi team – buildingi zaposlenim ogromno pomenijo. V preteklosti smo imeli tudi možnost, da nam je podjetje plačalo kakšno masažo. To je zdaj vse zamrlo ampak bomo vse vrnili nazaj, ko bo konec korone. Še ena denarna kompenzacija, ki jo imamo pa je vezana na en parameter. Ustanovitelja sta želela, da je naše poslovanje zelo transparentno, vsak mesec spremljamo en prodajni parameter in Luka sporoča kako stojimo s tem parametrom in od tega sta odvisna tudi regres in božičnica. Imamo pa tudi secret santa. Omenjam jo zato, ker je v večini podjetij ta secret santa v vrednosti 5 evrov, mi pa smo imeli 360 evrov za nakup nekega darila za drugega zaposlenega.

Komunikacija: Najprej smo imeli slack, zdaj pa imamo teamse, kjer so različne skupine in ti si potem vključen v tiste skupine, ki so potrebne.

Letni razgovori: Razgovore imamo dvakrat na leto. Plačno napredovanje je vezano na 4 stebre in vsak mora vedeti kje približno je. Na pol leta imamo razgovor: dobro ti gre ali pa to lahko izboljšaš. Ta razgovor je zelo kratek, enkrat na leto pa imamo daljši enourni razgovor. Ta je bolj resen, ker se pogovarjamo tudi o povišici, pridemo pa na ta razgovor tudi bolj pripravljeni, zaposleni izpolni vprašalnik, prav tako ga izpolnita Luka in vodja. Vprašanja so glede preteklosti, sedanjosti in prihodnosti. Potem pa se pogovorimo o tem kaj je super in kaj bi se lahko še izboljšalo. Tvoj vodja je tam samo prvi del razgovora, potem pa ni več prisoten, da lahko tudi zaposleni potem pove kaj glede vodje v malo bolj intimnem okolju.

Špica podcast:

Ustanovitelja sta začela s svojim kapitalom in na začetku sta delala 16 ur na dan: 8 ur sta se ukvarjala s strankami, 8 ur na dan pa sta se izobraževala. V prvem letu sta bila brez plačila in sta vse vložila v podjetje.

Kako motivirati zaposlene? Ko iščemo kadre poiščemo motivirane, ki jim je všeč šport in da jim delo predstavlja tudi neko strast. Potem pa jim predstavimo naš sistem, pri čemer je ena izmed naših vrednot to, da gremo extra mile. Naš 4 steborni sistem temelji na tem, da plačujemo za to, da se izpolnjujejo cilji, da je oseba kompatibilna s kulturo podjetja in da se izobražuje. Stremimo k doseganju ciljev in da smo čim bolj uspešni kot podjetje.

Kako pomembno se vam zdi izobraževanje? Izrednega pomena, ustanovitelja sta se na začetku izobraževala po 8 ur na dan. Zato jima je to zelo pomembno, ko nekdo od zaposlenih

želi na kakšen seminar, se jima kar zasvetijo uči. V vsakem trimesečju se vsak izmed nas izobražuje na področju, ki ga opravlja v podjetju in pa tudi za naše soft skills. Na koncu trimesečja imamo potem več znanja na neko tematiko. Vsi načini izobraževanja so stroškovno kriti s strani podjetja. Če pa se nekdo izobražuje pa dobi še nagrado ob plači.

Z letom 2021 spreminjamo naš sistem, do sedaj je bilo tako, da smo 4 stebre preverjali na tri mesece, koliko je kompatibilen z našo kulturo, koliko se je izobraževal in kako je izpolnjeval te naše OKR (objective key results). Na podlagi tega je potem zaposleni dobil neko nagrado. Zdaj ta nagrada ne bo takojšnja ampak bo vezana na višanje plače, ki se bo zgodila enkrat na leto.

Dodajamo tudi polletne bonuse, ki so regres, višina katerega se lahko zviša glede na to kako smo uspešni potem pa bo en bonus še na koncu leta. Luka bo na začetku leta postavil nek parameter in če bomo dosegli cilje na točno tem parametru potem si lahko obetamo ta bonus. Dodali smo jih zaradi večje transparentnosti podjetja. Luka bo na začetku leta povedal nek parameter, ki ga bomo spremljali tekom celega leta. V primeru, da bomo po pol leta in po enem letu dosegli ta cilj potem bomo prejeli ta bonus.

Kako merite športno udejstvovanje? Delež nagrade dobimo, če se dvakrat na teden organizirano udejstvujemo neke športne dejavnosti. Športno udejstvovanje je na nekem višjem nivoju.

Oddelki? Delimo se na skladišče, ki je naš največji oddelek, potem imamo logistiko, ki skrbi za prevoze, potem imamo nabavno službo in cilj je, da imamo za vsak izdelek več dobaviteljev, če je le to mogoče. Potem imamo strojni oddelek, zelo zagriženi športniki, oni predstavljajo neko vez med izdelki in customer supportom, potem imamo customer support, ki se deli na jezike. Potem imamo še prodajo in marketing, ki je res odličen oddelek, njihove kampanje so izredno uspešne in potem sem tukaj še jaz, ki skrbim za naše zaposlene.

Zakaj ste se odločili za Allhours program? najprej zato, da zadovoljimo zakonske potrebe. Preden smo uvedli ta sistem, nismo varovali GDPRja, in tudi meni je ogromno časa vzel obračun plač na koncu meseca. Uporabljamo vse funkcije, ki nam jih Allhours ponuja. Vpeljava te aplikacije je bila del večje celote izpolnjevanje OKRjev. Zaposleni so to dobro sprejeli. Nismo imeli nikoli težav z zaupanjem sodelavcev, je pa prav, da imamo sistem, ki je tudi zakonsko primeren.