

Exercises to support leading multilocational work



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Picture: Jonne Renvall, Tampere University

Multilocational work, in which at least some of the work is conducted outside of office, is common in current expert work. This limits face-to-face encounters which are important in creating and supporting a sense of belonging and learning. We have gathered some exercises in this toolbox, which can support leading teams that utilize multilocational work. This toolbox includes an introduction page which provides tips and instructions on using the tool, followed by the exercise itself that can be shared with the participants.

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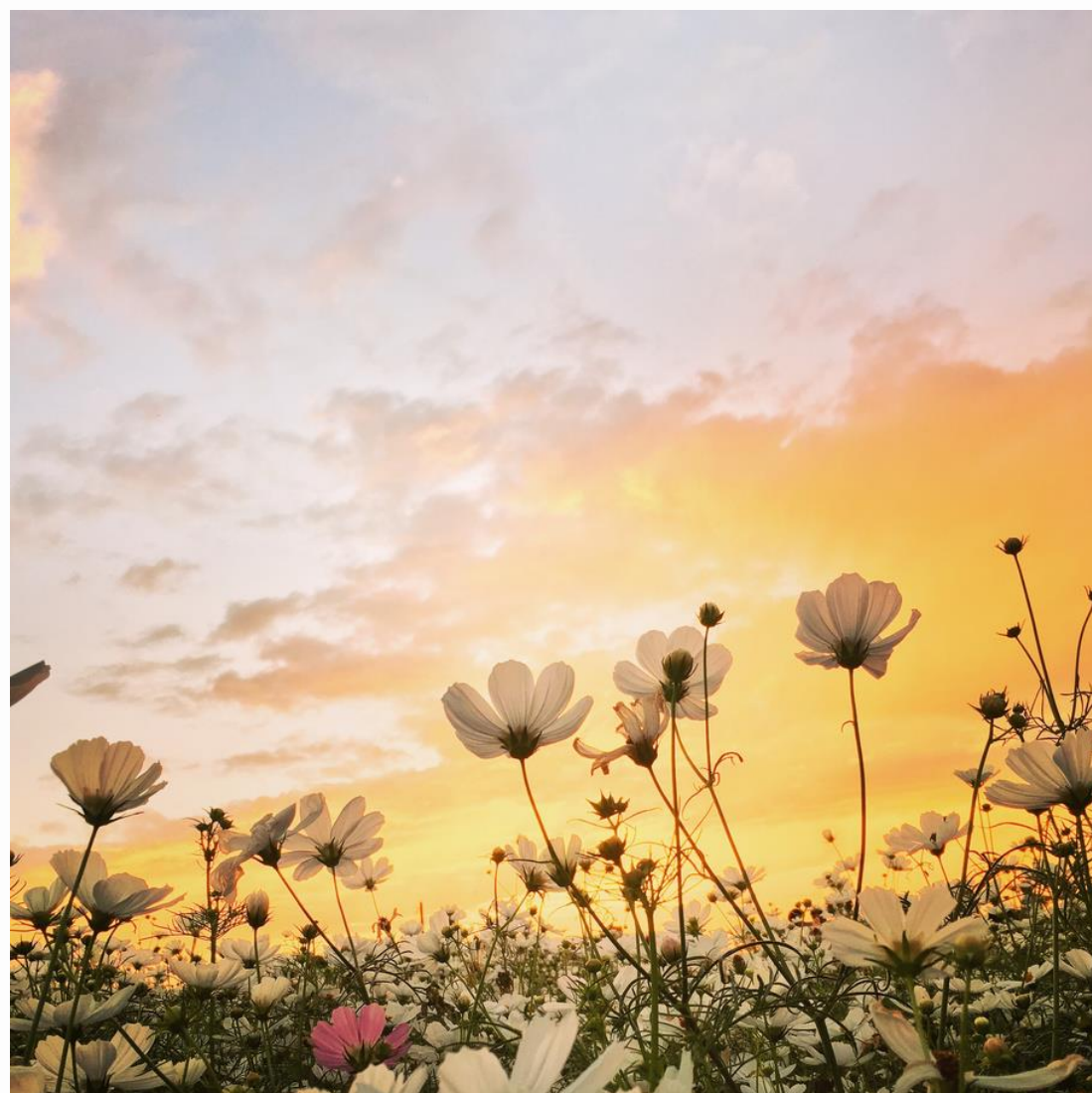
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Checklist for multilocal work helps to recognize and develop both leader's and team's practices for multilocal work.

Fluent practices for multilocal work

In multilocal work, leader's own needs regarding remote and office working have to be reconciled with the needs of the team and organization. At best, the benefits of both ways of working can be captured.

Exercise:

1. Team members go through the multilocal work checklist on their own.
2. After this, team members can discuss the current situation and how the practices could be improved to support working and well-being at work.

Guiding questions for discussion:

- What kind of needs individuals, teams, and organization have related to office-based and remote working?
- How teams can make sure that there is enough informal interaction and encounters? Informal discussions and encounters at work are important for both learning and sense of community.
- How working practices of individuals and teams support the balance between work and well-being, as well as recovery?

Checklist for multilocational work

On the right, there is a list of factors related to multilocational work. Take a look at your own and your team's practices, and think about what's working well, what could be improved and what you could do differently.



	In order	Room to improve	What could I do differently?
I take advantage of opportunities to choose where and how I work.			
I take my own needs and wishes into account when planning my work and choosing where to work.			
I take into account the characteristics and needs of different tasks when planning work and choosing where to work.			
I take into account the needs of my work community and colleagues when planning my work and choosing where to work.			
I give my time to colleagues and the work community.			
I plan my work proactively, for example on a weekly and monthly basis, and try to prevent peaks in workload.			
I try to find the right balance between remote and onsite working.			
I modify my working environment to enable ergonomics and efficient working (e.g. different aids and adjustments).			
I interact actively with others, regardless of where I work.			
I offer help and ask for it when needed, including virtually.			
I try to maintain porosity and opportunities for breaks in my working days.			
I set limits on my work by managing my working hours, availability and use of technology.			
I take care of my own well-being, for example by taking breaks from work, taking lunch breaks, going outdoors and exercising.			
My free time allows me to recover and provides a counterbalance to work.			

Translated from the original source:

Eskelinen, J., Kuula, M., Bordi, L., Heikkilä-Tammi, K., Larjovuori, L-R., Mansner, S., & Miettinen, M. (2024). Etätyöstä eteenpäin. Arvioi monipaikkaisen työn valmius ja hyödynnä hyvät käytännöt. Aalto publication series. Crossover 1/2024.



This exercise helps team members to reflect on their own motivational factors. By identifying our own and each other's motivational factors, we can also better support motivation. What makes you excited about your work?

Supporting motivation and engagement

Motivation is the driving force that makes us strive towards a goal, even in the face of adversity. Working remotely for a long time can blur our understanding of our own work, the work of others and our shared goals, which can undermine motivation and a sense of meaningfulness.

Exercise:

1. Each person independently completes the “What motivates me” survey.
2. If the team is large, this can be followed by a discussion in small groups of 2–3 people about their choices and the thinking behind them.
3. The motivational factors for each of members are then discussed by the whole group. The discussion continues with how team members can strengthen their own motivation and that of others.

Guiding questions for the discussion:

- In what areas would you like to grow and develop in your work? What new things are you most excited about learning?
- What kinds of opportunities to influence your work are particularly important to you?
- What values are important to you that you can put into practice through your work?

What motivates me

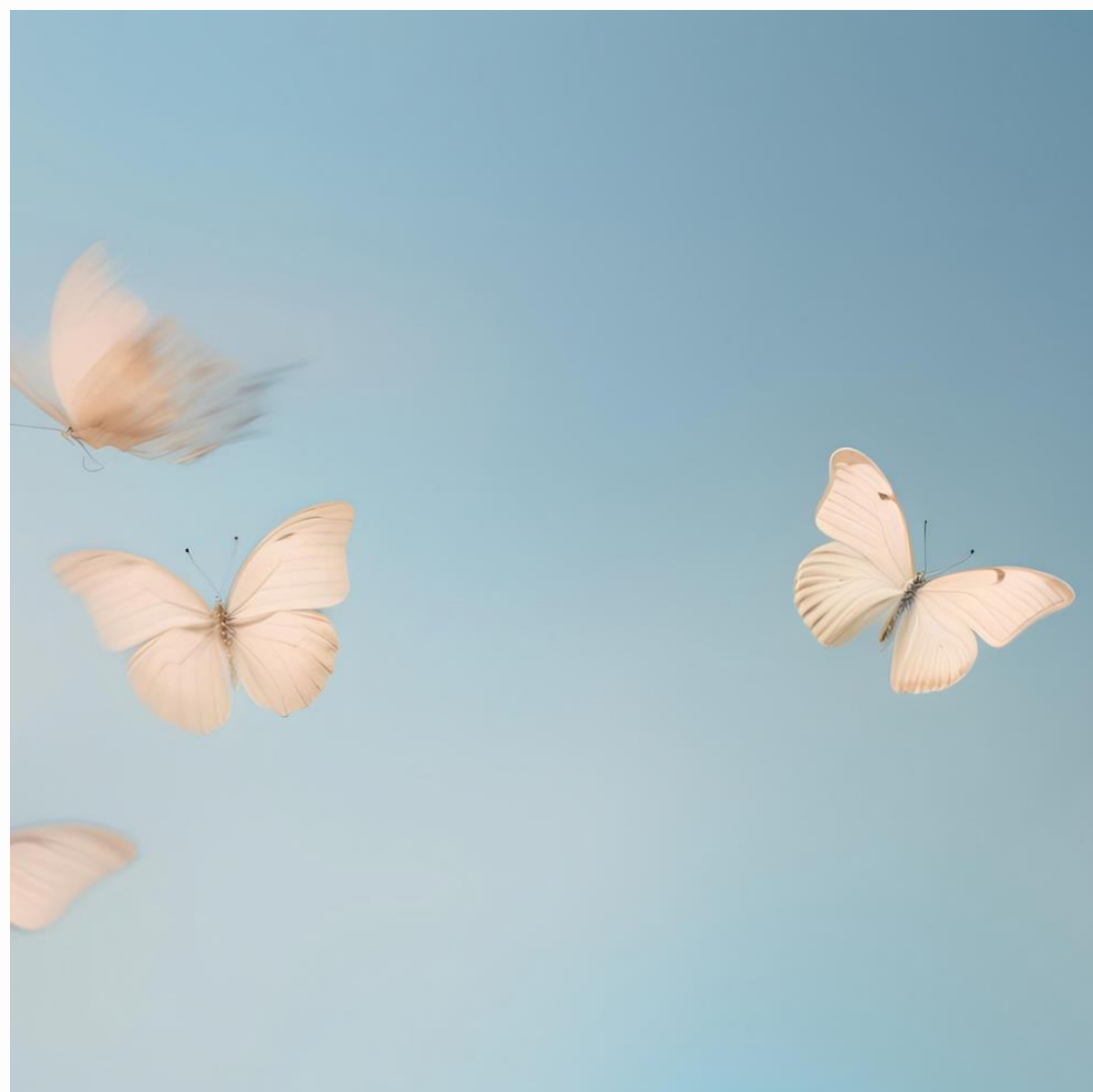
Motivation is the driving force that guides and inspires us to work towards goals or achieve something important to us. Motivation influences how much effort we are willing to put in.

Choose from the list the things that motivate you in your work.

Choose three most important factors.



- My work is linked to goals and values that are important to me.
- I am genuinely interested in what I do.
- I have the opportunity to be creative in my work, for example to create and implement my own ideas.
- I achieve the goals I have been given.
- My work involves challenging tasks that offer opportunities for growth and learning.
- Salary or other remuneration.
- I can see how my work contributes to the success of the work community as a whole.
- I can influence where I work.
- I can influence the way I do my job.
- I get responsibility.
- I get positive feedback from others about my work.
- I have the right balance between challenging and routine tasks.
- The people I get to work with are important to me.
- Through my work, I make the world a little better place to live and be.
- Something else, what?
-



This exercise can make visible the small everyday practices that enable each team member to support the psychological safety and sense of community of the group.

Supporting psychological safety and a sense of community

People have a fundamental need to belong and be accepted to a community. Psychological safety means a culture based on trust, where everyone feels valued. Differences of opinion and mistakes are dealt with constructively, which promotes learning together.

Exercise:

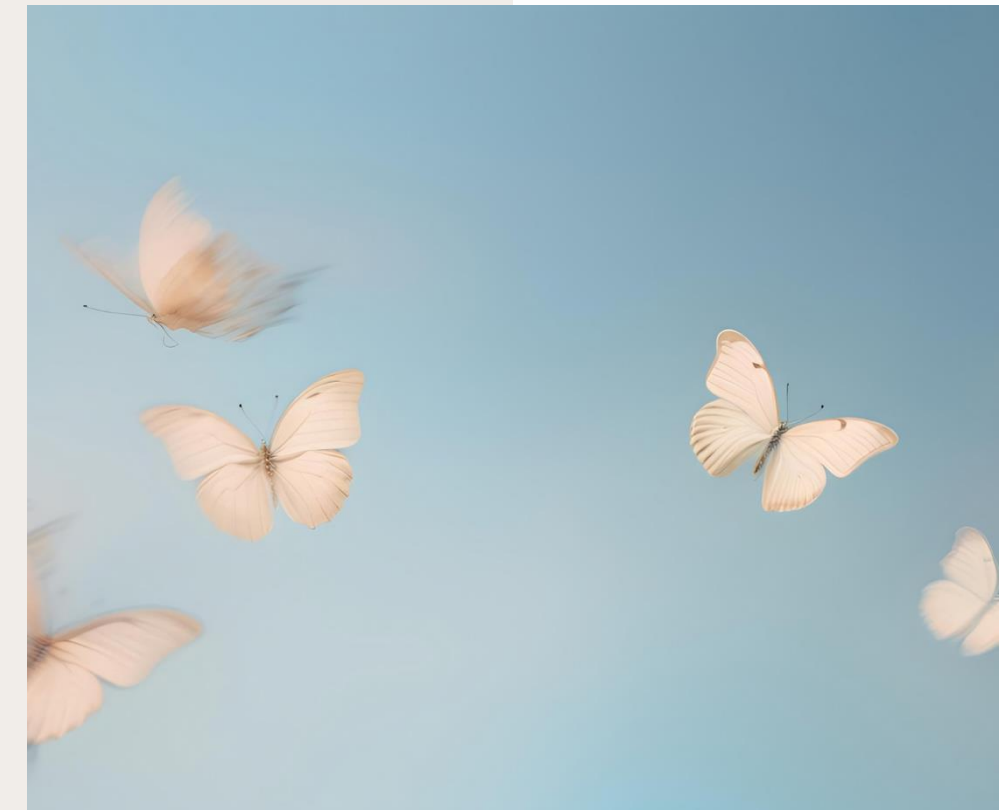
1. Read the story aloud.
2. Divide the team into small groups of 3–4 people. Ask them to reflect on concrete actions that have been taken to achieve the situation described in the story. Encourage them to write down their ideas, for example on post-it notes or in a shared document.
3. Together, discuss and compile the practical actions produced by the groups.

Guiding questions for the discussion:

- What kind of meeting practices can help ensure that everyone can express their views and ideas - and that people dare to point out mistakes?
- What kind of encounters with colleagues are particularly important to you? For example, coffee breaks, lunches, corridor discussions or walk-in meetings?
- How can you promote a natural team spirit of asking for and offering help, including in remote settings?

We have a good team

"We have a good team. I feel heard and understood. I feel I can trust people. In our team, it's easy to say if you don't know something, to ask for help and also to come up with new ideas. We dare to share our misfortunes and learn from them together. I can be myself and I feel that I am valued, both for who I am and for what I know. I feel a strong sense of belonging with my colleagues."



Put yourself in this situation and describe what the team leader and the team have done over the past year to reach the current situation.



This exercise helps team members to identify their own and each other's strengths. In addition to their hard skills, each person has many personality traits, tendencies, and skills that are also useful at work.

Recognizing strengths

Identifying and building on individuals' strengths contributes to both personal well-being and organisational success.

Exercise:

1. Ask each person to choose strengths that describe him or her from the list.
2. Divide the team into groups of 3–4 people and each person talks about their strengths.
3. Discuss the strengths you have found with the whole team.
4. Everyone selects one or more strengths from the list that they have identified in each colleague. Each team member takes a turn to praise, while the others talk about the strengths they identified.

Guiding questions for the discussion:

- What strengths do you feel you use in your work?
- Do you have any strengths that you wish you could use more of at work?
- In what situations and how could strengths be discussed more and used to provide positive feedback?

Strengths

Choose from a list of strengths that you recognise in yourself.

Select the strength or strengths that describe each of your colleagues.

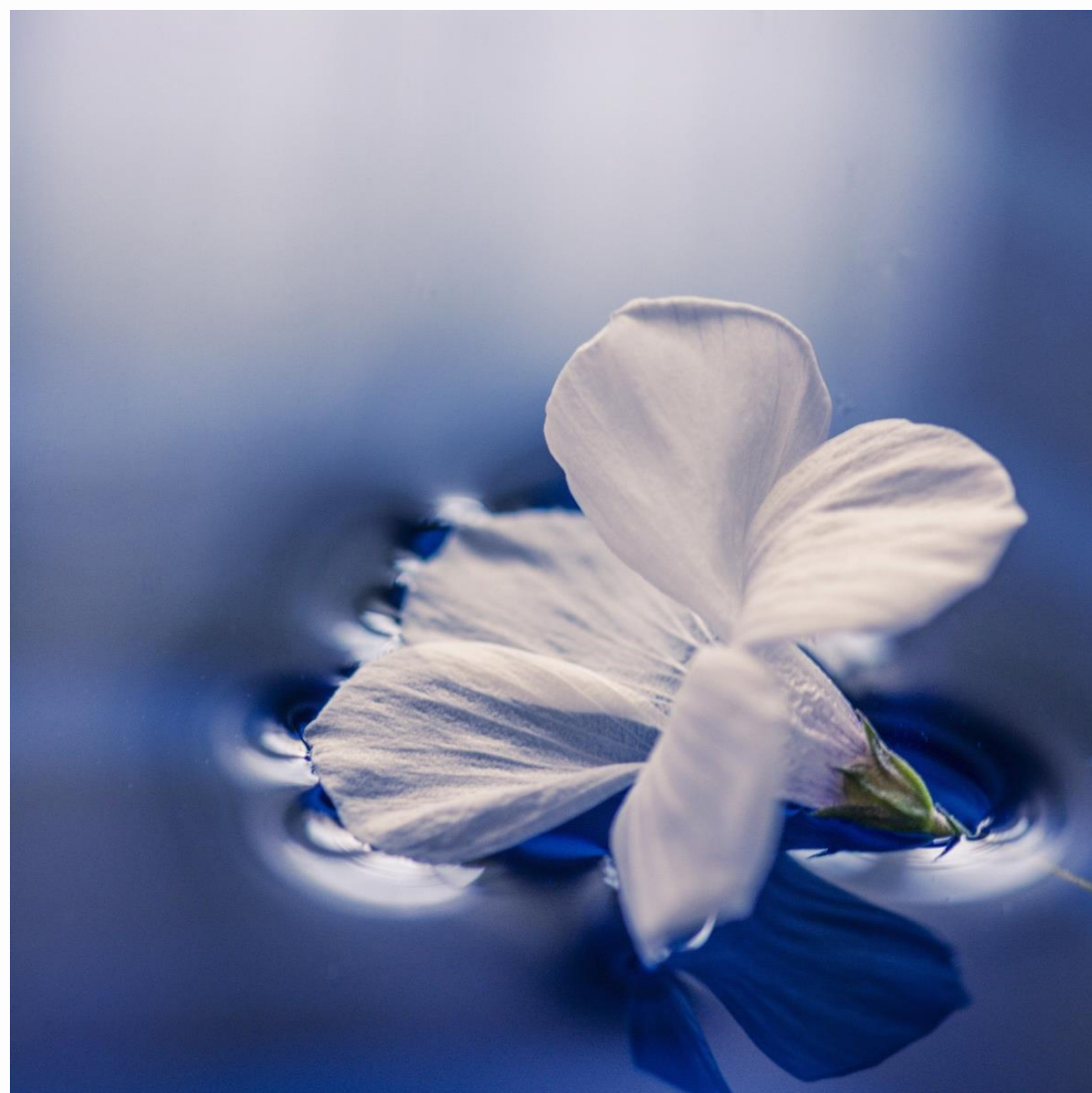


Able to concentrate
Adaptable
Ambitious
Balanced
Benevolent
Broadminded
Capable of leadership
Charismatic
Clean
Clear in expression
Committed
Communicative
Compassionate
Competitive
Conciliatory
Confident
Conscientious
Considerate
Contemplative
Cooperative
Courageous
Creative
Curious

Dedicated
Determined
Effective
Emotionally intelligent
Encouraging
Energetic
Enthusiastic
Fair
Flexible
Friendly
Goal-oriented
Has common sense
Hardworking
Helpful
Honest
Humble
Humorous
Idearich
Imaginative
Independent
Innovative
Insightful

Intuitive
Just
Listening
Motivated
Objective
Outspoken
Participative
Passionate
Patient
Peaceful
Perceptive
Persistent
Persuasive
Polite
Positive
Practical
Precise
Present
Proactive
Problem-solving
Punctual
Qualified

Quick
Realistic
Relentless
Resourceful
Respectful
Responsible
Responsive
Self-directed
Self-disciplined
Sensible
Sincere
Social
Solution-oriented
Systematic
Team player
Tenacious
Thorough
Thoughtful
Trustworthy
Versatile



This exercise helps team members to identify and articulate the emotions they experience at work. Good emotional skills help to deal with difficult situations and emotions in a constructive way.

Work and emotions

Emotional skills refer to the ability to perceive, be aware of, and understand both your own and others' emotions. Emotions are the force that drives us towards our goals, but also the force that can prevent us from acting.

Exercise:

1. Ask each person to choose emotions they have recently experienced at work from a list.
2. Divide the team into groups of 3–4 people and have each person talk about the emotions they have chosen and the situations they have been involved in.
3. Discuss the feelings among the whole team.
4. This exercise can also be applied by having everyone choose three positive emotions they have recently experienced at work and three emotions that are difficult to deal with for one reason or another. Discuss them.

Guiding questions for the discussion:

- How do you feel about talking about feelings in a team?
- What ways have you found to deal with challenging emotions at work?
- How can you as a team support each other, especially when work feels stressful?

Work and emotions

Choose emotions you have recently experienced at work from the list.

What emotions did you choose? What situations have they been associated with?



A sense of victory
Acceptance
Affection
Agitation
Alarm
Amazement
Amusement
Anger
Anxiety
Apathy
Bitterness
Boredom
Calmness
Certainty
Competence
Confusion
Courage
Curiosity
Cynicism
Delight
Depression
Desperation
Disappointment
Discomfort

Disgust
Dissatisfaction
Distress
Dreaminess
Embarrassment
Empathy
Enthusiasm
Excitement
Exhaustion
Fatigue
Fear
Feeling abandoned
Feeling bad
Feeling good
Freedom
Frustration
Gratitude
Grief
Guilt
Happiness
Hate
Helplessness
Hopelessness
Humility

Hurt
Indifference
Inferiority
Injustice
Insecurity
Insufficiency
Interest
Irritability
Jealousy
Joy
Justice
Kindness
Loneliness
Longing
Melancholia
Nervousness
Optimism
Passion
Perseverance
Pity
Playfulness
Pleasure
Pride
Regret

Relaxation
Relief
Respect
Responsibility
Restlessness
Satisfaction
Security
Sense of obligation
Shame
Shock
Shyness
Startled
Strain
Stressfulness
Suffering
Tenderness
Timidity
Trust
Uncertainty
Vengeance
Wistfulness
Wonder
Worry