**Dissertation Interview - Participant F – 30 April 2024**

Fanie Mordaunt: Your organisation. What kind of business is it?

Participant F: So it's a linked investment services provider. What we do is essentially that we administrate principal investments. So, it's pure time and turn voluntary products.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay, and investment products.

Participant F: Or Investment products.

Fanie Mordaunt: And what is your role in the business?

Participant F: So I'm a team leader. I'm in the client Services Department managing eight administrators and consultants combined.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay. And how would you describe the culture of your organisation?

Participant F: Maybe elaborate further culture in terms of?

Fanie Mordaunt: What kind of like culture in terms of if, if somebody who was new walked in there, how would they? What would they see? What kind of people work there? What's the vibe or the atmosphere like?

Participant F: Okay, that most here is quite easy going in the sense that everyone knows each other. I mean, we sit on the same floor with our CEO, our heads of departments and we interact with these people on a daily basis. I think we have more of an open-door policy where obviously from time to time you would have to follow formalities, but half the time not and then in terms of the interaction itself, I think everyone does get along. So yeah, I think that's it.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay. You mentioned that you manage eight people. How long have you been managing people? How many years?

Participant F: Two years and four months.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay, so how would you describe your leadership style?

Participant F: I think, 60% autocratic and maybe 40% democratic. I think I'm strict and I have to be, but I also allow my team to voice their opinions and I think I've built very close relationships with the people that I manage in the sense that should they have a problem with me, they're able to approach me about it vice versa. And I think we really have an open relationship between ourselves and I think I'm quite close with the team.

Fanie Mordaunt: So you started managing two years ago, so it was obviously post COVID-19.

Participant F: Yes, post COVID.

Fanie Mordaunt: So in, in the company that you work for, do you guys work remotely or is it full time in the office or is it hybrid?

Participant F: Okay, so it's hybrid, we work at home two times a week, so I'll schedule looks like in client services, which is the entire team or the entire department. Rather, we do Thursday, Friday at home Monday, Tuesday at home. Then Wednesday will all in and then the next group will then take Thursday, Friday, Monday, Tuesday, while the other group is in in the office that Thursday and Friday, Monday and Tuesday.

Fanie Mordaunt: So there's two teams?

Participant F: Yeah, there's two teams rotating so that each team can then get almost like 4/4 full days at home separated obviously by the weekend.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay, and do you work from the office or do you work from home? Well, hybrid.

Participant F: I work. I'm also hybrid, yes.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay.

Participant F: So when my team is at home, I'm at home as well.

Fanie Mordaunt: So let's talk about that time when you at home with your team as well and what have you encountered? Any challenges since you started now managing people remotely and maybe something that you struggled with personally just given the fact that they're not in front of you? And how did you overcome that challenge?

Participant F: Okay, so I had an issue with one of the consultants who would assign work late when they working from home and essentially what that would do is you don't distribute work on time and we miss cut off cases or consultants are not able to work on the cases on time. So literally this is the person that hands out the work on a daily basis, right? Is essentially the most important person for that particular day, because they are then controlling how the day will flow for that specific day, and so how I overcame that was obviously I had the conversation first and warned the person that this would be the implication should the behaviour not change. What we do is we almost try and rehabilitate as opposed to punishing, you know. So basically, what I then did, because the situation didn't change after we even spoke about it, the consultant needed to come back to the office and between me and my Co team leader, though, always be someone at the office. And then we had to then train this person again on how to distribute the work in order of importance and timeously. And I think obviously with him having to come to the office every day now with the work from home situation being revoked, he then learned how to manage his time once again and prioritise all the cases etcetera.

Fanie Mordaunt: It's interesting. So how do you deal with power cuts and water cuts? So, let's say for example it's my turn. That's a Thursday, Friday, and then we've got like extended loadshedding.

Participant F: Power outage.

Fanie Mordaunt: It's not even load shedding, it's a power cut. How do you deal with that?

Participant F: Okay, so from a management point of view, I always trust my team to make the right decisions, right? I almost let them decide what it is that they want to do, as long as they've got a plan. If, for instance, you have an extended power cut, but you've got a friend that lives nearby your house and they don't have the same power cut, then you're more than welcome to go and work at their house. You don't really have to discuss it with me unless it impacts, you're working, right? So, for me, work from home doesn't necessarily mean that you need to work from your own place. Can be your desired place, but obviously it's still needs to then maintain the same principles it needs to be acquired space because you're on the calls. It needs to be a space that is free from distraction and it needs to have stable connection.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay. And then you spoke about trust. So how do you develop trust with your team, especially when you know like people are going to be working from home and things like that?

Participant F: Okay, like so basically depends on when the person trained the team. So, if I have a new joiner, obviously they first start off by working in the office until they fully comfortable with the with the work, and then once we fully comfortable with the work, we can then do maybe one day at home just to see how that goes. They can test their connections, but on this day then I need to have a stable team for the day, so I can't be on maybe a skeleton staff or maybe like a few people on leave as well. So as soon as I have full capacity, I can then give that person a chance to then start working from home. See how they perform? Have feedback session if I'm happy with everything then they can continue with the work from home schedule. If we do encounter problems, we need to then sit down and identify those problematic areas. Try and fix them. Come up with solutions and then I see how exactly I can help them.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay.

Participant F: Obviously, if the situation doesn't change then we then have to go into the rehabilitation process, but usually it does work out and I think obviously before I do that, I didn't try to give them bigger tasks or responsibilities just to see that just certain if they actually are responsible individuals.

Fanie Mordaunt: You keep referring to it as rehabilitation. I'm assuming and correct me if I'm wrong. That implies sympathy, empathy and the option to give people a second chance.

Participant F: Yes, definitely is.

Fanie Mordaunt: Interesting.

Participant F: I believe in that more than anything, I think that's what both team I don't necessarily think that at least 19 to 98% of individuals that are working try to do stuff on purpose. I think I tried to understand the problem first before we can actually make a decision on what to do next.

Fanie Mordaunt: And how do you welcome new people into the team? Do they start off in the office? Because I know you said when there's a problem with performance, you bring them in. So, do they also start in that office or how do you?

Participant F: In terms of the work from home.

Fanie Mordaunt: And yeah, and you join now do they start in the office or do you allow them to?

Participant F: Years full time in the office. What is essentially happens is that those start in the training team. That usually is so at least three months, and then once they've done the training officers then bring them up to for us to then start like introductions to the different Team Leaders, the different departments, managers, et cetera. And then they allocated to a team. If it is my team, then obviously because me and Thabang soft ships swap shifts. We will then monitor the person on a daily basis depending on who's in the office, just to see their performance consistently assist them, and then we pay them with someone that is more experienced than the team.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay. That makes a lot of sense. So how do you guys manage performance when people are working at home and you're not there to see them working?

Participant F: Okay, so we have morning stats, so if someone has a breaching case are then I see it from there. But what we do on our side is that throughout the day, we consistently monitor their dashboards so dashboard, meaning we're all their workers assigned. So, on their dashboard, they've got an SLA and utilisation measures which measure they performance. SLA would measure the service level agreement. Has this case been touched in time, or has the instruction been touched on time and then you totalisation would then measure their performance. So, throughout the day, are they working? So, if they're not working, they utilisation would be low and the SLA would be low. So those are the two things that we depend on. And then our morning taste starts would then have. Abandoned and rejected calls, meaning that they weren't attending to their phone calls that are inbound. And then. Yeah.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay.

Participant F: And then also breaching cases as well.

Fanie Mordaunt: So have you ever had a situation where there's been a conflict in the team and the persons may be working from home and you haven't been able to speak to them face to face?

Participant F: Had a situation where someone was working from home and then I wasn't able to get a hold of him. Okay.

Fanie Mordaunt: There was a no listen, there was a conflict situation. But it happened that the person was working from home. So, like a disagreement or something, has that have you been in a situation like that?

Participant F: Oh yes, a lot of times.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay.

Participant F: But I mean, I always prefer having a face-to-face conversation. So, at that point in time, what I would then try to do is diffuse the situation for the moment and then have them do whatever it is at the supposed to do in terms of the work.

Fanie Mordaunt: They talk.

Participant F: And then once we get back to the office, we'll then say to let, yeah, obviously I think having conflict situations does not necessarily mean that the person isn't doing their work right. It just means that there's a disagreement between ourselves and sometimes it could be not really personal, but it could be a personality clash or communication issue. So, I usually try to park it until we can meet face to face, but that doesn't necessarily mean that I would then revoke their work from home based on something like that.

Fanie Mordaunt: You know this as we wrap up like you've touched on quite a few words. Trust you've spoken about. Sympathy. Empathy. Second chances, but like, what do you think you need to have if you're going to be managing people that are not in front of you? What behaviours or character traits do you think you must possess to be successful in that kind of leadership role?

Participant F: I think for one you should be a leader, one that leads by example. So, each and every day I start off by greeting the team very early in the morning, which almost alerts them that we're on the same page. I've started working and then I'll send them the morning day starts, which also suggests that I'm already working and this is usually way before they start working. So, I think obviously in terms of that, it's just to get them ready for their day. So, I think it involves a lot of hard work leading from the front, a lot of trust and communication. And what I'll then do is after my morning huddle, which is at 8:30, so usually at around 9:00 or didn't have a team meeting, there's nothing pressing. Then literally I'll just write it in the group, or maybe I'll focus points for that day and then yeah, we're ready to go in terms of getting to the day to the day work basically.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay. Well, I thank you so much. You've given me quite a lot of useful information. I really appreciate it. And obviously, like I said, your name and the name of the business will be kept confidential.

Participant F: Okay.

Fanie Mordaunt: But if there's anything else that you'd like to add, I mean you all come to.

Participant F: Okay, I don't think there's a lot right.

Fanie Mordaunt: From which side?

Participant F: I just think it really takes a lot of trust more than anything and a lot of close relationships from the team leader side. I don't think it's if you as a team leader, have doubt in your team, then I think they're more likely to disappoint you because you haven't formed that relationship with them to then try and. You know, if you trust someone, they less likely to disappoint you. And because you've kept them close and both relationship with them, it just becomes much better. Yeah.

Fanie Mordaunt: I agree with that. Thank you so much.

Participant F: So I think that's what it takes more than anything.

Fanie Mordaunt: That's very insightful. I really appreciate it.

Participant F: Not a problem. I'm sure think I'm in an interview.

Fanie Mordaunt: No, just telling me speaking to \*\*\*\*\*. Cool. Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

Participant F: Okay, not a problem.