



NO HOME, NOW ONLY OFFICE: THE CONFLICT WITH RETURNING TO FACE-TO-FACE WORK AFTER COVID-19 AT UWL DO BRASIL

SEM HOME, AGORA SÓ OFFICE: O CONFLITO COM O RETORNO AO TRABALHO PRESENCIAL APÓS A COVID-19 NA UWL DO BRASIL

SIN HOME, AHORA SOLO OFFICE: EL CONFLICTO CON EL REGRESO AL TRABAJO PRESENCIAL DESPUÉS DEL COVID-19 EN UWL DO BRASIL

ABSTRACT

Dilemma: UWL is facing the challenge of returning to the office after the pandemic lockdown, and the dilemma that UWL managers face raises the question: whether to remain with these employees who showed resistance to returning and in what terms both parties would deal with the outcome of these obstacles related to the return to the face-to-face modality of work in the organization.

Educational objective: Develop experiential reflections of a real situation experienced by almost the entire population regarding the change in work regime, from office work to home office, and consequently, its return (or not). Realizing the importance of considering this new work model is also part of the objective.

Contextualization: The entire world faced a completely atypical and unusual situation in 2020 and 2021, facing a pandemic caused by an unknown virus that changed the dynamics of an entire planet in a matter of weeks. Naturally, this was also reflected in work relationships.

Main theme: The topic of people management is going through a process of transformation, especially after the Covid-19, and the main theme of the case presents precisely the conflicts generated during this period in a company in the foreign trade sector in the city of Itajaí.

Audience: The case can be applied to Administration courses (*lato* and *stricto sensu*), in People Management disciplines.

Originality/value: The case makes it possible to reflect on the Organizational Culture Theory, applying its concept to the management conflicts identified in the UWL problem.

Keywords: Conflict management. Team motivation. Engagement. Organizational culture. Telework. Home office.

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RESUMO

Dilema: A UWL enfrenta o desafio de retornar ao escritório após o bloqueio pandêmico, e o dilema que os gestores da UWL enfrentam levanta a questão: permanecer com esses funcionários que mostraram resistência em retornar e em que termos ambas as partes lidariam com o resultado desses obstáculos relacionados ao retorno à modalidade presencial de trabalho na organização.

Objetivo educativo: Desenvolver reflexões vivenciais de uma situação real vivenciada por quase toda a população quanto à mudança do regime de trabalho, do trabalho em escritório para o home office, e conseqüentemente, seu retorno (ou não). Perceber a importância de considerar esse novo modelo de trabalho também faz parte do objetivo.

Contextualização: O mundo inteiro enfrentou uma situação completamente atípica e inusitada em 2020 e 2021, enfrentando uma pandemia causada por um vírus desconhecido que mudou a dinâmica de um planeta inteiro em questão de semanas. Naturalmente, isso também se refletiu nas relações de trabalho.

Tema principal: O tema gestão de pessoas passa por um processo de transformação, principalmente após a Covid-19, e o tema principal do caso apresenta justamente os conflitos gerados nesse período em uma empresa do setor de comércio exterior na cidade de Itajaí.

Público-alvo: O caso pode ser aplicado em cursos de Administração (lato e stricto sensu), nas disciplinas de Gestão de Pessoas.

Originalidade/valor: O caso permite refletir sobre a Teoria da Cultura Organizacional, aplicando seu conceito aos conflitos de gestão identificados no problema da UWL.

Palavras-chave: Gestão de conflitos. Motivação de equipe. Engajamento. Cultura organizacional. Teletrabalho. home office.

RESUMEN

Dilema: UWL se enfrenta al desafío de regresar a la oficina después del cierre pandémico, y el dilema que enfrentan los gerentes de UWL plantea la pregunta: si permanecer con estos empleados que mostraron resistencia a regresar y en qué términos abordarían ambas partes el resultado. de estos obstáculos relacionados con el retorno a la modalidad presencial de trabajo en la organización.

Objetivo educativo: Desarrollar reflexiones experienciales de una situación real vivida por casi toda la población respecto del cambio de régimen laboral, del trabajo de oficina al home office, y en consecuencia, su retorno (o no). Reconocer la importancia de considerar este nuevo modelo de trabajo también es parte del objetivo.

Contextualización: El mundo entero enfrentó durante 2020 y 2021 una situación completamente atípica e inusual, enfrentando una pandemia provocada por un virus desconocido que cambió la dinámica de un planeta entero en cuestión de semanas. Naturalmente, esto también se reflejó en las relaciones laborales.

Tema principal: El tema de la gestión de personas está pasando por un proceso de transformación, especialmente después del Covid-19, y el tema principal del caso presenta precisamente los conflictos generados durante este período en una empresa del sector de comercio exterior en la ciudad de Itajaí.

Público: El caso puede aplicarse a cursos de Administración (lato y estricto sensu), en disciplinas de Gestión de Personas.

Originalidad/valor: El caso permite reflexionar sobre la Teoría de la Cultura Organizacional, aplicando su concepto a los conflictos de gestión identificados en el problema UWL.

Palabras clave: Manejo de conflictos. Motivación del equipo. Compromiso. Cultura organizacional. Teletrabajo. Oficina en casa.



INTRODUCTION

Always enthusiastic, sometimes using emoticons, the Human Resources manager at UWL do Brasil, Heron Colzani, sent out emails about the return to face-to-face work in the office, a format that employees were used to before having to adapt to the home office format in a hurry due to covid-19. It was March 2021. As the new State Decree No. 1218 had just allowed the Human Resources team to request that employees return to the office, giving them 15 days' notice, this was UWL's idea: to bring the staff back.

While the head office in the USA felt a certain resistance to bringing its folks - the term used for employees by UWL - back to the office, the company in Brazil, located in the port city of Itajaí (SC), felt a certain excitement in its teams about returning to face-to-face work. However, in April of the same year, four employees were still working from home.

Following the guidelines of the head office, which requested that everyone return to work in person in order to maintain the organization's culture through the proximity of people, the HR manager, Heron, upon sending the notice demanding the return to the office, began to face the first challenges of this decision: four employees claimed that the risks of contamination inside the office were too high, as well as other personal justifications.

Such behavior put Heron in the middle of a major dilemma: should he demand that the four employees return to the office, since all security measures were being taken? Should he accept their objections, accept their claims and allow them to stay at home? Or should he take a re-deployment plan with new working relationships and reduced working hours to financial director Raquel?

Manager Heron, well known for being an excellent conflict mediator within the company, was in the middle of this difficult decision. Certainly, it had to be resolved as soon as possible, since the other employees who were already back in the office were muttering about the supposed

favoritism of these other four still working from home. What should Heron do?

Getting to know the history of UWL do Brasil

UWL do Brasil, a Brazilian representative of the American company from Ohio, UWL, Inc., belonging to the World Group, a holding company consolidated since 1960, was born in Brazil in 2011, in the interior of São Paulo. In 2016, the structure was transferred to Itajaí, with a team of seven employees. At first, with a small staff, the employees worked in a wide variety of roles, made things happen and "solved the problems" of foreign trade with ease. They were the perfect people to wear the colors of the company and fight for its growth, which happened very quickly, because in February 2020, when manager Heron took over the HR department, the staff had already jumped to 25 people.

UWL established itself in the Brazilian market to meet a very specific demand: transporting cargo on the Brazil-USA route. It soon specialized in transporting hazardous liquid cargo, which was and still is its strong point. It serves importers and exporters from all over the world, making operations easier for its clients, since it has a specialized team of 89 employees. In other words, since transferring its operations from São Paulo to Itajaí, it has seen its staff grow by approximately 1271%. When Heron gets the chance, he is proud to say: "Our values are focused on people. We take care of them so that they take care of our customers!"

In fact, UWL's values focus on its Folks. The group's mission is to "Move the world with people who care", which is why the company's values are people-oriented: "Safety first", both in the office and on the way to it; "We are a family", because at UWL we follow the Golden Rule (treat others as you would like to be treated); "We are passionate about what we do"; "We are people-oriented", all decisions are made with the well-being of everyone involved in mind; "We value creativity" to solve our challenges; and "We create positive energy, aiming to develop long-term relationships with our customers, community,

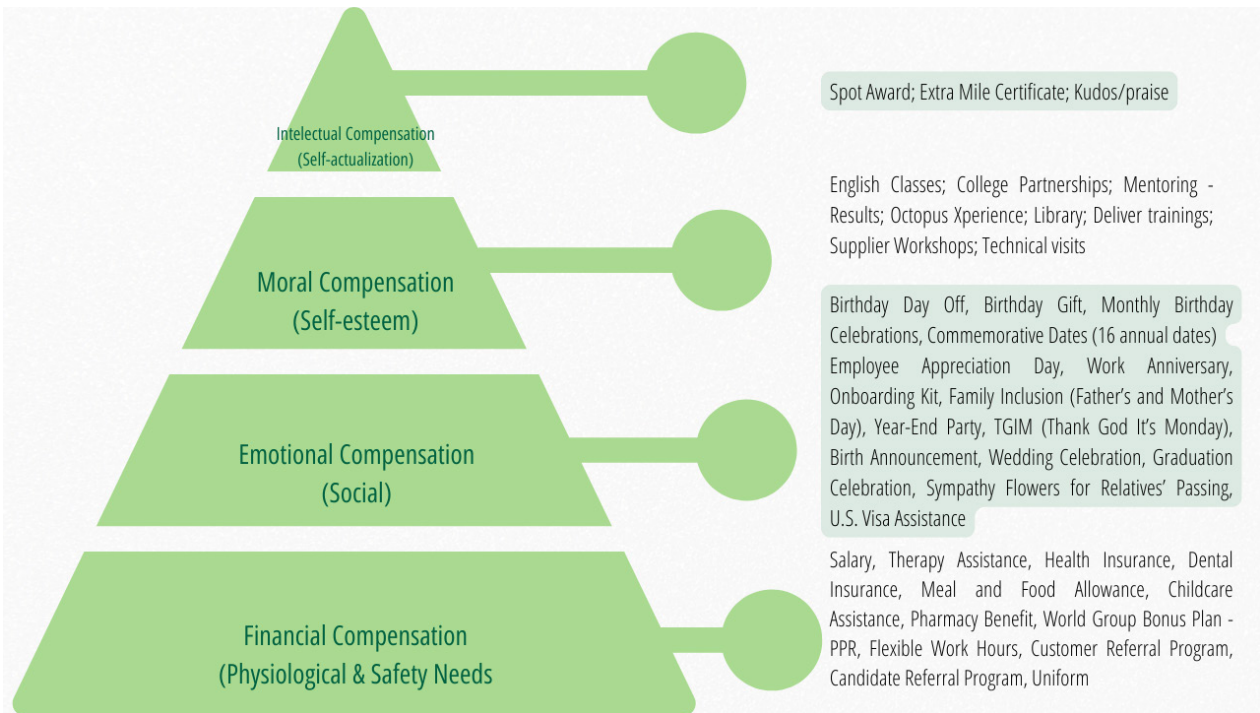


employees, suppliers, and all stakeholders”.

Heron emphasized: “Our values are based on the basic human needs from Maslow’s Theory.

We think of our employees first and foremost.” To this end, the company has adapted Maslow’s Theory to the benefits it offers, which can be seen in figure 1 below:

Figure 1
Brazil’s UWL benefits pyramid



Also, with the development of its employees in mind, a restructuring that began in 2016, which can be seen in the figure below, has led to improvements in internal processes and controls. The company obtained security certifications such as the AEO - Authorized Economic Operator - from the Brazilian Internal Revenue Service and joined international associations to expand the networking of global partners in 2021. Another

major project put into practice was the Octopus Xperience, a series of eight annual training courses based on the capabilities of the animal octopus, which has eight legs and nine brains. The aim was to bring in knowledge every year and put it into practice to empower teams, promote upcoming leaders and develop current managers.

Figure 2
Timeline





Where the challenge begins

It was March 18, 2020, when HR manager Heron and finance director Raquel received the official notice from the municipality of Itajaí decreeing a lockdown. The instruction was to close all establishments (with the exception of those essential to life). Heron was already prepared, as the company's headquarters, located in Cleveland (Ohio), USA, had already dealt with the lockdown a few days earlier, and the virus had arrived in the USA faster than in Brazil (Sars-Cov-2 arrived in Brazil on February 26, 2020).

Heron even chauffeured several employees on this unforgettable day of March 18, 2020, transporting their laptops, monitors and mouse pad and keyboard sets to their homes. As if by magic, the entire company was transferred to the home office. "How are we going to deal with employees who don't have a good internet connection at home?" Heron asked Raquel worriedly. She replied: "We'll upgrade their data networks and provide them with a stipend."

The concern about the data network was justified, since not all the employees had the same electrical and technological structure to support the connection needs that the demands sometimes required. Heron was right to be concerned about the quality of the data connection, but Raquel probably didn't imagine that setting up such a structure overnight wouldn't be such a simple task.

That same day, some corporate swivel chairs also took up a new residence. That was a long day of transferring material and intellectual goods from a physical structure called an office to another known as a home.

In a way, Heron and Raquel were right: the lockdown began on March 18, 2020, but there was no end date and the return to the office was uncertain. In addition, the uncertainty of the difficulties the company would experience from that day on was unimaginable. The home office was still uncharted territory for Brazilian legislation, even more so in the circumstances of a pande-

mic, making the risk inevitable. The employees had never worked 100% from home before, so at that moment a new era of learning began for both the company and its teams.

Acting and thinking like UWL do Brasil

"We need to take care to keep our culture alive, the continuation of our ongoing engagement and integration activities" was one of the concerns Heron expressed to his American colleagues on March 18, 2020, the day everyone migrated to the home office.

In addition to working on employee development through the Octopus Xperience training, the company has valued and still values the development of its leaders through external consultancy from a company specializing in leadership development, from Brusque, in the region close to the company. In these sessions with a corporate psychologist, the leaders have contact with tools for the practical resolution of problems they are experiencing in their departments. Tools such as SWOT, 5W2H and Canvas are used, and action plans are developed together with the psychologist to find the clearest way to solve the challenges.

The employee development process starts during the probationary period with a tool called Roadmap, where the employee has visibility of the path they need to follow to get through the first three months of probation. To do this, they have a mentor who will help them complete these stages. After the probationary period, the employee has their daily/weekly/monthly activities and metrics, and their performance is evaluated every three months with Quarterly Reviews, and every six months with the 360° evaluation.

In addition, the process of developing people at UWL is fostered on a daily basis with the career plan, access to dozens of books in the UWL Library, and the World Group University, which is an HR system with thousands of videos, in English and Portuguese, on a variety of subjects, from the most technical to self-knowledge, personal finance, self-help, etc.



Adapting to the comfort of home...

Concerned about communication between employees, the company continued to hold meetings with employees, holding weekly meetings called 'Get Together', using the WebEx digital platform, where employees could express doubts, ask questions about the current situation, and maintain engagement with colleagues. The HR manager, Heron, was always very concerned about the organizational culture, and made a point of creating collaborative activities between the teams so that everyone felt heard.

Events such as celebrating the birthday of the month went digital. The memes that colleagues made to joke about their birthday were sent by email and no longer printed out and left on the table. Direct meetings with leaders, the one-on-ones, also went digital. And you can't forget the stretching time, which continued to take place with a live link via YouTube.

Among the control practices, the leaders played a fundamental and direct role in monitoring the goals and results of the teams in their sector. HR monitored the electronic time clock, absences, vacations and medical leave, all remotely. IT was also concerned about information security, and reinforced the use of internet networks with passwords, restricted use of websites and applications, and more secure software that blocked any sign of viruses or malware. Once again, the magic happened, as the adaptation phase to the home office by all departments happened very quickly and with the help of everyone on the team, especially the employees who always followed the guidelines.

For UWL do Brasil, it was essential that all practices carried out in person were adapted to the digital format, as one of the company's primary concerns was maintaining the quality of life of employees, ensuring that they felt part of a group, maintained a network with colleagues, exchanged ideas and experiences and preserved

the Core Values. As such, the company spared no effort in keeping close to its employees, offering all the tools necessary for their good performance and results. However, in life not everything blossoms. Some employees found it difficult to meet targets and perform the work expected of them.

Luana, one of the employees who was a mother, found herself in a complicated situation, with no day care available and having to work eight hours a day, without a support network. This situation meant that she was unable to deliver results, sometimes causing problems with clients, and also with colleagues who had to take over her duties. Concerned about the situation, Heron and Luana's direct leader discussed an action plan and then, together with the employee, worked out a solution. One of the solutions adopted in the short term (it helped the employee to take a week of banked hours to understand her son's routine) was the flexibilization of the compensatory time off, a benefit offered by the Federal Government for the period of the pandemic, where the employer, together with the employee, could negotiate the time bank hours to be consolidated and extended for up to 18 months (Provisional Measure 927, of March 20, 2020).

In addition, the HR manager asked himself several times: "What should we do with employees who aren't delivering results?" Together with the sector leaders, Heron evaluated the performance of these employees and found that they were failing to complete the daily tasks that were on the schedule, which caused a certain amount of discomfort among the teams, since everyone was evaluated in the same way, and many, but not all, employees maintained high performance throughout the period they worked from home. The team felt that some colleagues stopped doing activities and the other members had to complete them so that the sector didn't miss the deadline for delivering projects to clients.



What's next? Back to the office?

In the midst of the uncertainties about returning to the office, a new State Decree, 1218, came into force, allowing UWL to effectively return in person. It was March 2021. At one of the Get Together events, Heron announced the decree... shouts of joy and grimaces of dissatisfaction, a combination of feelings from the employees.

Working from home during this period of almost a year and a half was a huge challenge in which many employees succeeded, proving to be mature and delivering the results of their jobs. They learned to adapt and experience the new working system, the home office, away from their colleagues and leaders, learning self-discipline. The company received positive feedback, as these employees were able to enjoy more time with their families, cut down on transportation costs, not to mention that there was more left over from the meal voucher since they could prepare their own lunch at home.

On the other hand, some employees distanced themselves, didn't take part in online events and reduced their exchange of ideas with colleagues. In addition, the company had already seen a decrease in the delivery of results and the number of tasks handed in by some employees, which, despite all the feedback given, was still happening.

A major concern for the company was the loss of values and culture due to this distancing, so much so that pressure from the US parent company to have all employees return to the office put pressure on the HR manager, who sent an email to all UWLers at the end of March 2021 to return to the office on April 14, 2021.

And here began one of the most difficult periods...

In the meantime, the HR team prepared the office with all possible safety measures: temperature check at the main door, entry only with masks, desks 1.5m apart, weekly covid tests with LEAC - Univali's Clinical Analysis Laboratory, an anamnesis form for anyone who had the slightest sign of symptoms, or who had family members at home with symptoms. Everything was ready for

employees to return to the office safely.

In addition, UWL introduced a new benefit for employees as soon as they returned to the office: the Flexible Work Arrangement. The benefit allowed UWLers to choose one or two days to work from home and the other days to work in the office with their colleagues. The benefit also made it possible to change the time of entry to up to two hours before or two hours after the traditional time of 8am.

"Isn't it about time we thought about the wave of work reduced to four days a week like Microsoft did in 2018?" Raquel asked Heron.

Heron replied: *"Well then, I feel that the pandemic is bringing these new developments much sooner than we imagined, which is why we need to plan and be prepared for these changes as soon as possible, otherwise we will have resistance from our employees and possible turnover."*

Raquel agreed with Heron and added: *"Adapting to the new, to new market trends and new labor relations is part of employee retention. The home office, something that was still a long way off for us, came like a comet and we had to adapt at the speed of light. What else are we going to adapt to in order to evolve with the needs of our employees?"*

Heron, very positive and frank, replied to Raquel: *"Let's set up a meeting and review our employee retention and maintenance plan? I'm already coming up with ideas for changes in labor relations, thinking that the changes brought about by covid-19 are here to stay. It's important to analyze the pros and cons of all the current employment contract alternatives and those that could be implemented in the near future."*

Heron received several calls and emails with a great response to the return to the office, as well as some resistance. These were from four employees who said they didn't feel safe going back to the office because they were afraid of catching the virus in the company.



"My parents are elderly, and I don't want to contaminate them with the virus," Gustavo explained to the HR manager by email, shortly after receiving the notice to return to the office at the end of March 2021. Gustavo had worked with UWL for three years and had always been a productive employee, even working from home. He was in a pre-management position, where he was responsible for training colleagues who were changing departments, as he mastered the tasks of several departments and also the new employees who were hired in 2021 in the department he worked in. Gustavo explained to Heron that, even in lockdown, he visited his parents every weekend, and that by returning to the office, he put their health at risk. Gustavo also claimed that he couldn't leave his dog at home alone, as his fiancée worked in a bakery every day, in contact with the public, and came home late.

Gabriela and Luiz showed resistance to returning from the home office at the same time as Gustavo. Because they lived in neighboring towns and didn't have the direct transportation offered by the university they were studying at, they found it difficult to get to the office on time as the only option was private transport via an app, which was very expensive at the time, or public transport. They told their HR manager that it took them around 1.5 hours to get to work by public transport, which normally takes 30 minutes with direct transport. They were dissatisfied with having to return to the face-to-face format. Luiz had the greatest difficulties, as he lived even further away. He went through some delicate moments during the pandemic, where his productivity dropped to the point where he was asked by his direct supervisor in the USA what was going on, since he had always been an outstanding employee when it came to delivering results and had been working with the company since 2018. Gabriela, on the other hand, delivered exceptional results in the home office mode, and showing dissatisfaction at having to return to the office, informed him that she had decided to live at her boyfriend's house in Itajaí, the same city where UWL's office was located.

The case of the fourth employee who resisted returning to the office was Luana's, which was a little more complex as it involved her son. Luana found herself without a support network during the pandemic. Her son's nursery closed, her parents couldn't look after her son and she needed to dedicate time to him, as her husband also had a job and was required to return to the office ahead of schedule. Luana's HR manager and direct leader felt that they did need to moderate her personal issues, just as they needed to be in line with the company's values and the employee's delivery of results. Luana was on an IDP (Individual Development Plan), a development plan for career advancement within the operations department, which is crucial to the operation of customer shipments, and under the conditions she was in, the plan had to be frozen. Her direct leader, needing Luana's support, expressed his dissatisfaction with the situation to Heron and felt that by helping Luana, he could create a certain favoritism within the department.

Luana suggested to Heron: "*We work with time banking at UWL. What do you think about me staying at home for a week with my son until I can find a babysitter? I can make up for those hours as soon as I return to work.*"

Heron replied: "*Wonderful idea, Luana! This move will help you a lot, as you'll have the time to devote to your son, find the nanny, without jeopardizing the progress of the department, as we'll reassign a colleague of yours to replace you during this time.*"

After that week, Luana, having part-time help from a nanny, still had to spend part-time with her son, which slowed down her results for a while and caused a restructuring in the department as her colleagues had to take over part of her tasks.

Faced with this scenario with the four employees, HR manager Heron found himself in the middle of a major dilemma: should he force these employees to return to the office, since all safety measures were being taken? Or go along with



their objection, accepting their individual claims and allowing them to stay at home? Or should he take a readaptation plan with new working relationships and reduced working hours to Raquel, the director responsible for the company's administration, who had already asked about new adaptations to working relationships?



TEACHING NOTES

Abstract

This case sought to describe the process of returning the work regime in the home office modality at UWL do Brazil to the face-to-face work regime, in accordance with the guidelines of the competent bodies in the 2020 Pandemic, in the foreign trade scenario, especially in the trade between Brazil and the USA. Its flag is the appreciation of people, and it faced difficulties in the face of impasses involving its employees when returning to face-to-face work. Students will be led to reflect on the dilemma that UWL managers faced: whether to remain with these employees who showed resistance to returning and in what terms both parties would deal with the outcome of these obstacles related to the return to the face-to-face modality of work in the organization.

Keywords: Conflict management. Team motivation. Engagement. Organizational culture. Home office.

Applicability of the Case

It is recommended that the case be applied in Administration courses (*lato and stricto sensu*), in People Management subjects. It is especially relevant for discussing courses focused on human development. The focus is not on listing the best home office practices and/or defending face-to-face work, but on analyzing the business, social and human context during the new coronavirus pandemic and getting students to reflect on the difficulties, from the point of view of organizations, related to dealing with people during this period, which has been so uncertain and so fearful for everyone. Topics such as home office arrangements, people engagement and organizational culture can be explored.

Source and collection of information

The primary sources were based on interviews, informal conversations and the company's email exchanges with the employees in question, which were used as inspiration for the characters. The case is presented, in its basic structure, under

the author's experience of the subject, especially Raquel, the protagonist of the case, who took part in all the decision-making processes involving the subject at the time. Some situations are fictitious in order to illustrate and emphasize specific themes in the case, as well as to detach information and characteristics from the company's characters.

Secondary data sources were taken from the company's website (<https://brazil.shipuwl.com/home>; retrieved on April 26, 2023) and the monitoring of UWL's social networks during the period of the case. In addition, sources such as websites and newspapers specializing in People Management and materials on the coronavirus were used, as well as theoretical and empirical research with the main keywords: home office, face-to-face, motivation, engagement and covid-19.

Learning objectives

The aim of this case study is to provide students with experiential reflections on a real situation experienced by almost the entire population regarding the change in working arrangements from face-to-face to home office and, consequently, its return. One of the objectives was also to understand the importance of analyzing this work model, which has been expanding in Brazil and around the world, and to make students think about new work perspectives and what this implies for the organizational culture of most companies.

Therefore, some skills and attitudes to be developed through the discussion relate to:

- A) Encouraging an understanding of the main characteristics (obstacles and potential) perceived in the two types of work;
- B) To discuss the main challenges regarding the feelings and positions of these employees in relation to the concerns of the company's executive body, but also UWL's perceptions of the case;
- C) Understand how the process of implementing the home office is unfolding in light of the regulations that were released in March 2020;



D) Be able to identify possible solutions to the dilemma, taking UWL's vision and values into account when making the decision.

Case analysis and discussion questions

With the UWL case, students can relate with the situation (as the whole world has felt the impact of the pandemic) and understand the challenges faced from the point of view of company management. In this way, they discuss how companies could prepare for health crises such as the one that paralyzed the entire world. This section discusses the theoretical aspects used to guide what will be explained with the case through the proposed questions. The teacher/mentor can use the suggested order of the questions to apply the following logic: (a) how the process of implementing the home office takes place on an emergency basis and then returning to the office; (b) identifying the benefits and challenges of the home office for the company's managers; (c) the most challenging aspects for UWL during the home office period; and finally, after discussing the theoretical aspects and analyzing UWL's practices, the students must reflect as managers and put themselves in the position of managing the company to make a decision about which decision to take based on the new government and organizational measures, as well as bringing to the surface other ways of dealing with the situation, allowing the student to see other perspectives, such as the possibility of a hybrid model. Below is the case's theoretical framework and the questions suggested for the classroom:

Theoretical Framework

With globalization and technological innovation, it is well known that teleworkers are experiencing new ways of organizing their work, implying other interests, and the home office is now a reality in Brazil. In the meantime, according to Maranhão (1966), a legal employment relationship is the result of an employment contract, and an employment relationship is when it is a subordinate employment contract. Work and employment relations have come under scrutiny during the pandemic, changing some panoramas within organizations.

Still in this context, it should be noted that in order for the employment relationship to be characterized, including that of teleworkers (in this case, home office employees), it is necessary for the work to be carried out on a permanent basis, even if it is discontinuous, for a short period of time or just a few days a week, and does not qualify as sporadic work. Thus, the home office regime does not prevent the existence of subordination and, consequently, a new version of employment relations emerges, which could be a way out for UWL when trying to resolve its impasse.

It is important to take into account the theories of time actually worked, which considers the working day to be only the time the employee is actually working; and time at the employer's disposal, which considers the working day to be all the time the employee is actually working, plus the time they are at the employer's disposal.

The case can also be seen through the lens of Organizational Culture Theory, absorbing the concept of Fleury (1987, p. 10), which states: "Culture, conceived as a set of values and beliefs shared by the members of an organization, must be consistent with other organizational variables such as structure, technology, leadership style". From this point, we can open up to an analysis of UWL's cultural values and how the perpetuation of the home office, which the company does not want, can interfere with this organizational culture. On the other hand, you can also analyze the organizational culture brought by the employees themselves, with their points of view, contrasting, or not, with Fleury's concept.

To add to the debate, there is the very well accepted view of Schein (1992), which follows: "[...] in fact, culture can be explored and understood from three strata: the level of behaviors, physical environment, structures and visible processes (artifacts); the level of values, norms and organizational philosophies (values); and the level of basic beliefs and assumptions (assumptions)". Based on this argument, it's possible to stimulate UWL's positions in the office in line with this sta-



tement, especially regarding what the company defends: the structure set up for employees and interactions in the physical environment.

In order to analyze the benefits and challenges of the working arrangements provided for in the case, the basis is the SWOT Analysis Theory (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities,

Threats), which was devised by Albert Humphrey between the 1960s and 1970s (Gürel; Tat, 2017), and is the most widely used in companies of different sizes in different countries, regardless of their level of development, to evaluate various situations by weighing up their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Figure 3
Conceptualization of the SWOT matrix

Positive Factors	Negative Factors
Internal Factors	
Strengths	Weaknesses
Situations or aspects that can be internally controlled and exert a positive influence on the execution of municipal activities. Examples: good infrastructure conditions, qualified personnel, accessible technology.	Situations or controllable aspects that cause operational disadvantage to the public authority. They represent the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of the process. Examples: lack of financial resources in management, lack of knowledge about operational and management problems.
External Factors	
Opportunities	Threats
Situations or uncontrollable aspects, but which may favor activities once they are known. Examples: demographic data, legal instruments, users, social participation, partnerships.	Situations or uncontrollable aspects that hinder strategic actions, but which can be avoided if foreseen. Examples: high economic indices, competition, operational capacity, costs.

Source: Oliveira (2014), Morais (2008), Rezende (2008), Chiavenato and Sapiro (2009).

QUESTIONS

1. With the return to face-to-face work, leaving the home office, what were the benefits and challenges faced by employees and also by UWL managers during this period?

For the teacher: for this question, it is suggested that the moderator encourage the stu-

dents to create charts showing the obstacles and potential of each type of work, from the perspective of the protagonists of the case. From this analysis, students can see the company’s position in relation to returning to the office, as well as the employee’s position.

Below are suggestions for models:

Table 1
Benefits and challenges of face-to-face work for employees

BENEFITS	CHALLENGES
- Physical and technological infrastructure set up	- Higher transportation costs and travel time
- Presence of leadership and sense of belonging to the company culture	- Greater absence from the family environment
- Greater possibility of integration and engagement	- Less autonomy in the control and execution of their tasks
- Higher productivity	- Increased exposure to the covid-19 virus
- More organized schedules	- Greater pressure to meet entry and exit times
- Established task routine	- Less flexible working hours

Source: authors, based on Haubrich and Froehlich (2020) and Hau (2016).

**Table 2***Benefits and challenges of the home office mode for employees*

BENEFITS	CHALLENGES
- Lower transportation and travel costs	- Problems with physical and technological infrastructure
- Less exposure to traffic	- Domestic demands
- Greater autonomy	- Organizational isolation
- Maior produtividade	- Dificuldade de concentração
- Greater possibility of concentration (fewer deviations)	- Differences in the relationship between the traditional worker and the home office and the company
- Presence in the upbringing and education of children	
- Creating new standardized ways of working	
- Reduced risk of contamination	

Source: authors, based on Haubrich and Froehlich (2020) and Hau (2016).

Table 3*Benefits and challenges of face-to-face working for the company*

BENEFITS	CHALLENGES
- Maintaining employee productivity	- Increased transportation and travel costs
- Easier retention and recruitment	- Reorganization of the office by dividing the tables
- Higher productivity	- Adoption of mass testing
- Decrease in turnover	- Organize the dynamics of the gradual return to the face-to-face system
- Greater perception of quality of life	- Managing the team's fear and insecurity
- Maintaining a sense of belonging	- Maintaining motivation and ensuring the team's mental well-being

Source: authors, based on Haubrich and Froehlich (2020) and Hau (2016).

Table 4*Benefits and challenges of working from home for the company*

BENEFITS	CHALLENGES
- Reduction of physical office maintenance costs	- Greater difficulty in coordination and availability of workers
- Increased employee morale and job satisfaction	- Difficulty in monitoring results
- Employee safety	- Increased communication costs
- Technological developments	- Loss of feeling of attachment to the professional group
- Fewer public transport charges	- Technological incompatibility
- Cost savings at scale	- Data vulnerability
- Reduced absenteeism	

Source: authors, based on Haubrich and Froehlich (2020) and Hau (2016).



2. The case describes a process of implementation and adaptation to the home office with a subsequent return to the face-to-face environment. Describe this process, evaluating it critically.

For the teacher: define, with the students, the steps for implementing the home office adopted by UWL, as well as the gradual phases for returning to face-to-face work. Then lead the discussion by encouraging the students to identify how UWL handled the situation.

The intention is for there to be reflection and discussion so that they can position themselves critically when analyzing the process of UWL do Brasil returning to face-to-face work. It is hoped that this first stage will be a reflective exercise and that the students will see themselves as being at the forefront of decision-making.

3. Among the challenges that permeate this context of face-to-face work vs. home office, what were the “cons” most highlighted by UWL when defending the return to face-to-face work? Could they be minimized in some way?

For the teacher: encourage the class to answer by listing the agendas defended by UWL, as an organization that defends the team in person. Encourage them to discuss the link between this position and the company’s vision. Move the class to create engagement and integration, from the point of view of the company’s managers.

The teacher could then lead a discussion to provoke reflections on what UWL could do to minimize these complaints with employees who did not want to return to the face-to-face modality.

Make use of the brainstorm, to encourage the class to come up with other solution proposals for the managers of UWL do Brasil.

For the student: to be able to list the points that UWL sees as negative in keeping the team in the home office, but which may not be negative given the new scenario and the new demands after the pandemic.

4. Once we’ve reflected on the process of returning to face-to-face, listing its benefits and challenges, if you were in the position of the managers, how would you deal with the dilemma? Would you maintain your position on bringing the team 100% back to face-to-face? Would you renounce the company’s vision to keep employees who didn’t agree with the return? What other possibilities do you envision?

This puts the students in perspective, having to take on the role of UWL managers. There are three options: (1) remain in home office; (2) return to the face-to-face system and (3) the hybrid model. The teacher could then divide the class into small groups, according to their position, and ask them to defend their choices. It would also be enriching and challenging if the teams had to defend the choice of modality they didn’t make, thus encouraging argumentation. A fourth aspect could be for a group to defend any other strategy that hasn’t been discussed in the case and which could be an alternative solution to the dilemma.

Class Plan and the Teaching Process

To conduct the case, it is suggested that the teacher follow three stages: planning, applying the debate and evaluation. The planning stage basically involves analyzing the case and identifying the possible themes to be dealt with in class, in the context that the case suggests. The teacher is free to include other perspectives they deem pertinent to the discussion. As the case is versatile and encompasses several possible views, it can be discussed in different ways. That said, we recommend: (1) individual reading prior to the lesson; (2) discussion in smaller groups; (3) discussion in the large group to finalize the conduction.

In order to increase engagement in the first part of the case discussion, it is suggested that the teacher poses a question about the first impression the students had, whether they know of any companies that have gone through this transition, and what it was like to return to face-to-face activities after the most critical pandemic period. This can be done in ten minutes and will serve as a warm-up.

In a second moment, taking advantage of the di-



visions between the groups as suggested above, the teacher can ask the class about the questions proposed in these teaching notes, using the four questions, or not, according to their understanding.

Next, the moderator/teacher can build a matrix on the board to feed it with the pros and cons of each modality and make it easier to visualize the points raised. First, each team lists the benefits and challenges of their chosen modality (face-to-face, home office or hybrid). If it is feasible within the time frame, there is still the possibility of changing positions and taking advantage of the exchange of perspectives between the groups.

In the third stage of the lesson, the teacher can ask the groups what they would do as UWL managers given the dilemma presented.

Below are a few points, supported by a theoretical framework, to help steer the debate. In these terms, the options below have been drawn up using Maslow's Pyramid as a reference, since UWL bases its decisions on the pyramid of needs as presented in the annexes.

1. Staying in home office: UWL managed to adapt its work to the new format in a short time, which shows its ability to adapt in times of crisis. Employees were given the structure to work from home and work plans were adapted. In this format, employees can spend more time with their families, as well as reducing transportation costs and commuting time. As the group in favor of the home office system comes up with the factors that support staying with this model, the teacher can highlight them on a board and ask the other group to present the justifications for the traditional face-to-face system.

2. Return to face-to-face: UWL has invested in physical space with organized meeting rooms, a pantry and the entire structure of

the business is underused. Difficulties such as: controlling employee productivity, leadership communication and team integration and engagement practices, although they do not cease to exist, cannot be compared to face-to-face contact. Despite the evolution of technology, relationships with people remain the key to business, especially from the company's point of view.

3. A third group could be formed, made up of students who present a third alternative: the hybrid work regime. This, in turn, has gained prominence for combining the advantages of the previous regimes: face-to-face and home office. Benjamim's study (2020) reveals that there are a number of virtual employees who prefer the hybrid model, i.e. part of their time in the company and part in the home office. A hybrid working model can be a great transition for companies considering remote working options or which, like UWL, face employee resistance to returning to face-to-face work.

Closing the Case

The case method does not necessarily provide concrete answers or a definition of right and wrong. In this UWL experience, the outcome of the management decision was to dismiss employees who were not productive while working from home. However, efforts continued to ensure that the team returned 100% to face-to-face work, in order to avoid any disruption or weakening of the company's organizational culture. The four employees in question returned to hybrid working, which has since become an option for employees, who can choose one or two days to work from home and the other days in the office. Suggested time: five minutes.

DRIVING STAGE	DRIVING TIME
Warm-up: first impressions of the case and the topic	10 minutes
Use the proposed questions to instigate the class	15 minutes
Build the matrix on the board and fill it in with the pros and cons of each type of work	15 minutes
Positioning in the view of managers	15 minutes
Closing the case	5 minutes



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