

The Disruption of Corporate Culture in the Hybrid Working World and the Risk of Zoombification

Risk Governance

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Tobias M. Scholz

Chair for Human Resource Management and
Organizational Behaviour
University of Siegen

What If Working From Home Goes on ... Forever?

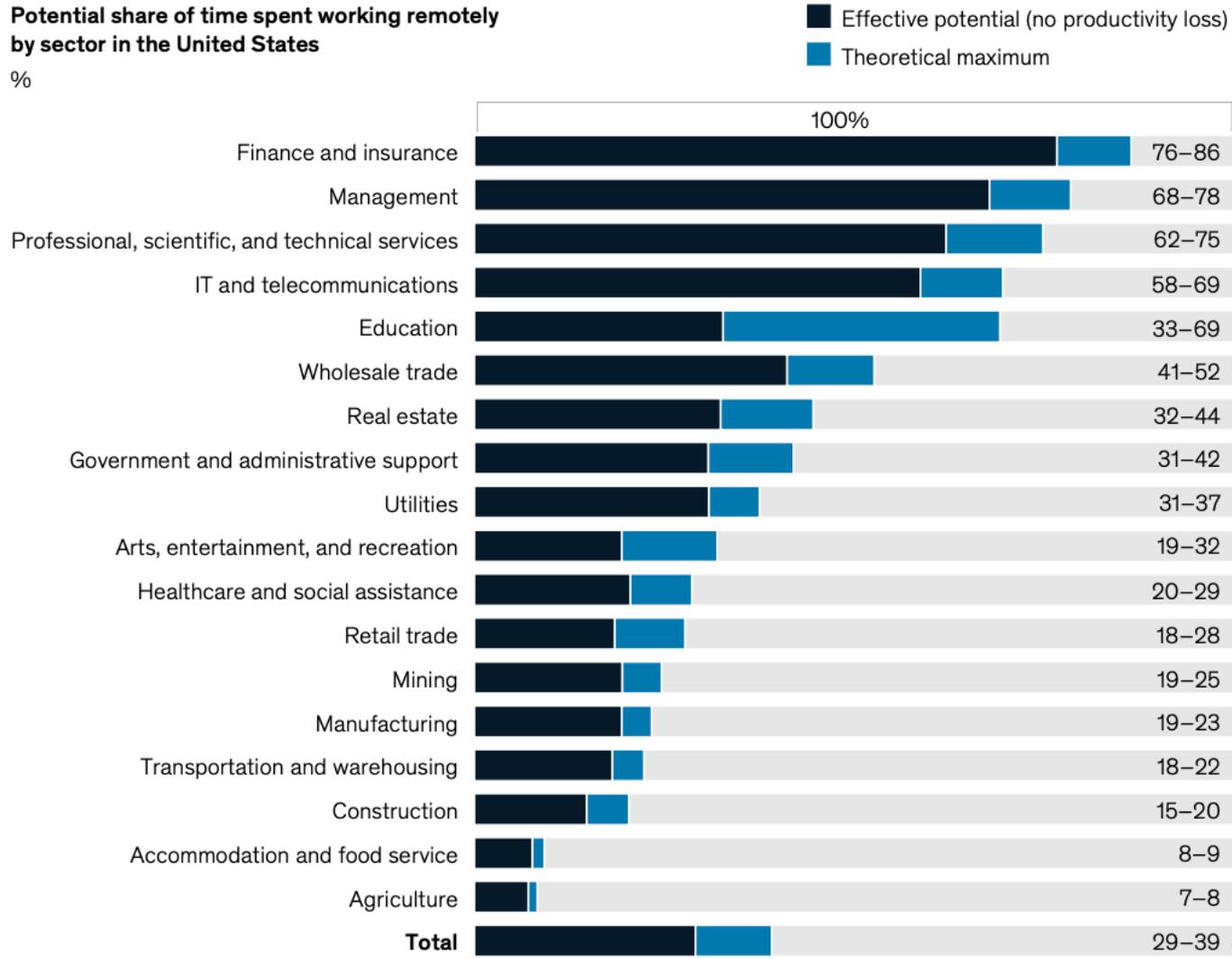
Miserable as it can often be, remote work is surprisingly productive — leading many employers to wonder if they'll ever go back to the office.

By Clive Thompson
June 9, 2020



Potential share of time spent working remotely by sector in the United States

%



Corporate cultures are the **signs** and **symbols**, shared practices and underlying assumptions (*Meyerson/Martin, 1987*)

Buildings are the embodiment of corporate culture (*van Marrewijk, 2009*)

While in the past organizations were simply theorizing about new forms of work, the crisis of COVID-19 has **forced** them into taking actions, such as actually **shifting** to completely new ways of working, and even **re-imagining** new forms of work as required by the new pandemic circumstances. (*de Lucas Ancillo et al. 2020: 2302*)

Source: TechTalent

Vox

recode

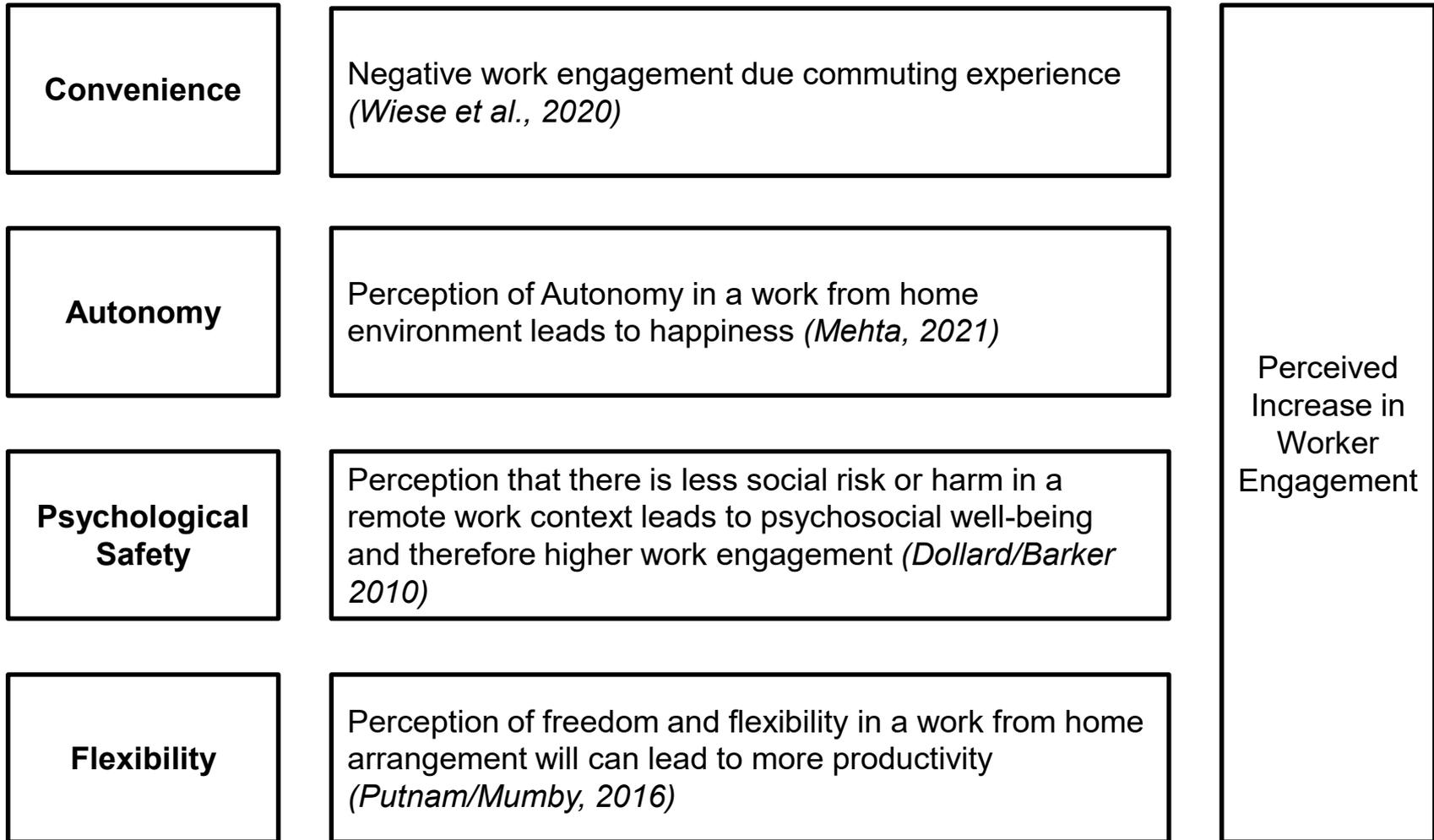


Apple's resistance to full-time remote work has sparked an unprecedented battle with employees. | Sam Hall/Bloomberg via Getty Images

The real stakes of Apple's battle over remote work

Inside the unexpected fight that's dividing the most valuable company in the world.

By [Shirin Ghaffary](#) and [Rani Molla](#) | Sep 24, 2021, 8:00am EDT



Innovation

Opportunities to interact with co-workers informally increases the potential for innovation (*Kwon et al. 2020*)

Control

Perception of lack of control (by the leadership and colleagues) in a work from home environment lead to a perception of less productivity (*van der Lippe/Lippényi, 2020*)

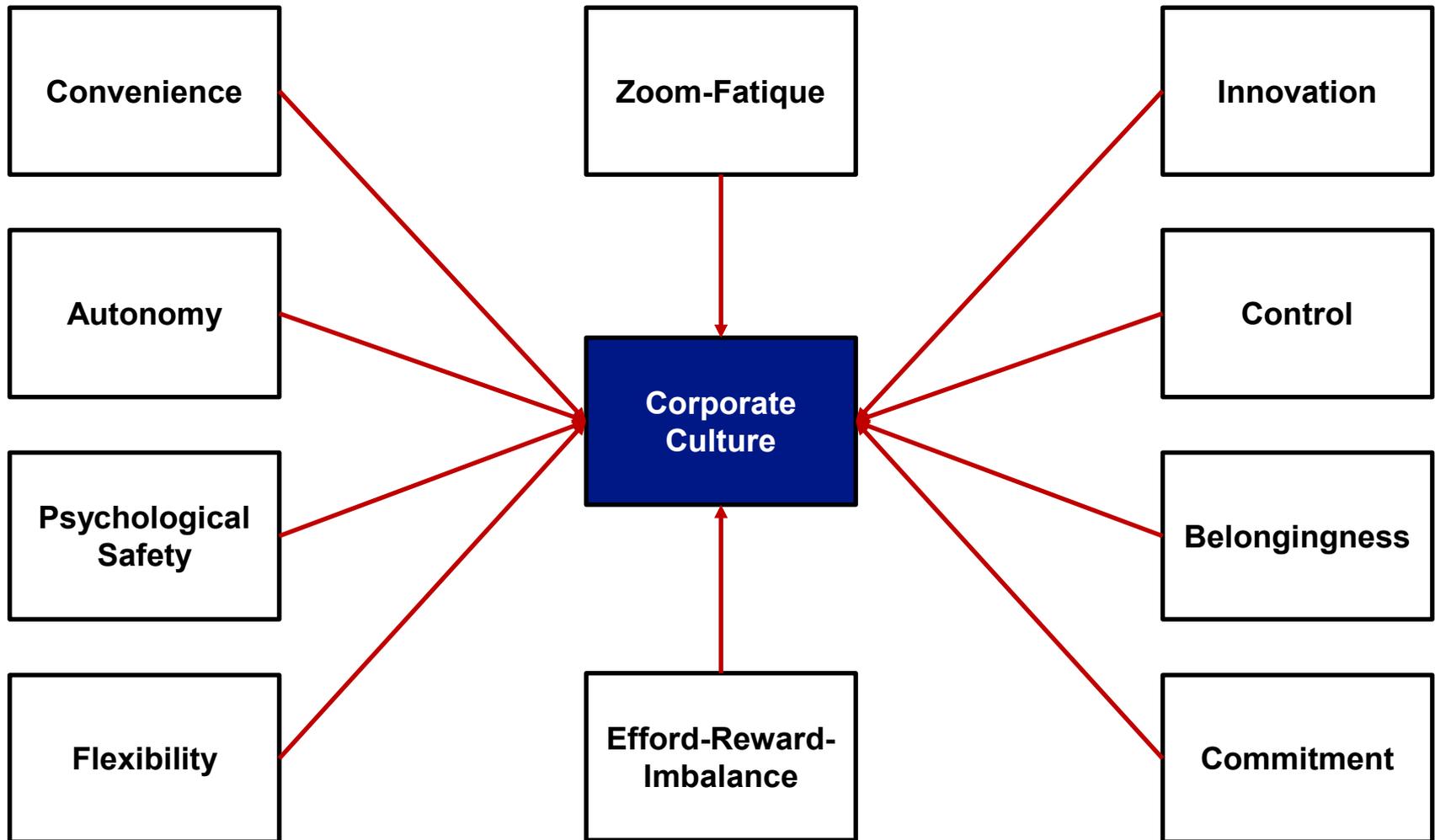
Belongingness

Work from home can lead to a form of isolation and invisibility, thereby, a feeling of exile that lead to a decrease in productivity (*Hafermalz, 2021*)

Commitment

Employees in WFH stay because of their employability (continuance), but not because of emotional connection (affective) or obligation (normative) (*Wang et al., 2020*)

Perceived
increase in
worker
productivity



- „Can you transport a culture out of a physical space such as an office and into the **immaterial** world of virtual working?
- Does the move online lead to a rise or decline of much of the **empty** symbolic rituals of corporate life?
- When people are physically separated from each other, how is it possible to build up and **maintain** a collective culture?“ (*Spicer 2020: 1739*)

Zoombie

Someone who suffers from **exhaustion** and other trance like symptoms after attending multiple **Zoom** meetings in a **compressed** span of time.

*I tried to talk to **Claire** but I realized she was a Zoombie, after going to ten **Zoom meetings** in just one day.*



Remote work also lead to a **zoombification** of the corporate culture

The corporate culture suffers from trance like symptoms

Urban Dictionary (2021)

„Moreover, firms with a **strong culture** are more likely to support their community, embrace digital transformation, and develop new products, and are no more likely to cut costs than their peers without a strong culture.“
(Li et al., in press)

	COMMUNITY_ENGAGEMENT			COST_CUTTING			DIGITAL_TRANSFORMATION			NEW_PRODUCT_DEVELOPMENT		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
STRONG_CULTURE	0.394*** (0.148)	0.417*** (0.147)		-0.068 (0.104)	-0.003 (0.098)		1.800*** (0.326)	1.834*** (0.325)		0.548** (0.213)	0.609*** (0.209)	
OVERALL_EXPOSURE		0.021*** (0.004)	0.017*** (0.004)		0.059*** (0.003)	0.059*** (0.003)		0.031*** (0.008)	0.018** (0.008)		0.056*** (0.006)	0.051*** (0.006)
OVERALL_EXPOSURE × STRONG_CULTURE			0.017*** (0.005)			0.002 (0.004)			0.056*** (0.011)			0.018** (0.007)
CONTROLS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
INDUSTRY_FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
No. of obs.	2,394	2,394	2,394	2,394	2,394	2,394	2,394	2,394	2,394	2,394	2,394	2,394
Adjusted R ²	0.039	0.046	0.047	0.052	0.161	0.161	0.111	0.116	0.111	0.081	0.112	0.111

Design of risk models

- Covid led to an environmental and social jolt that enforced drastically shifts in corporations (*Spicer, 2020*)
- Existing risk models no longer fit and require a design that incorporates the lack of physical borders and the risk of hybridity in the working place
- The concept of commitment and retention requires more relevance

Determination of model risks

- Employees are in isolation and may experience an increase in **work stress** (*Yu et al., 2021*)
- Employees are in a **freedom trap** (*Cook, 2020*)
- These risks are not “novel” but have a **higher** impact in a hybrid work environment

(based on Stein/Wiedemann 2016)

Shift in risk issues

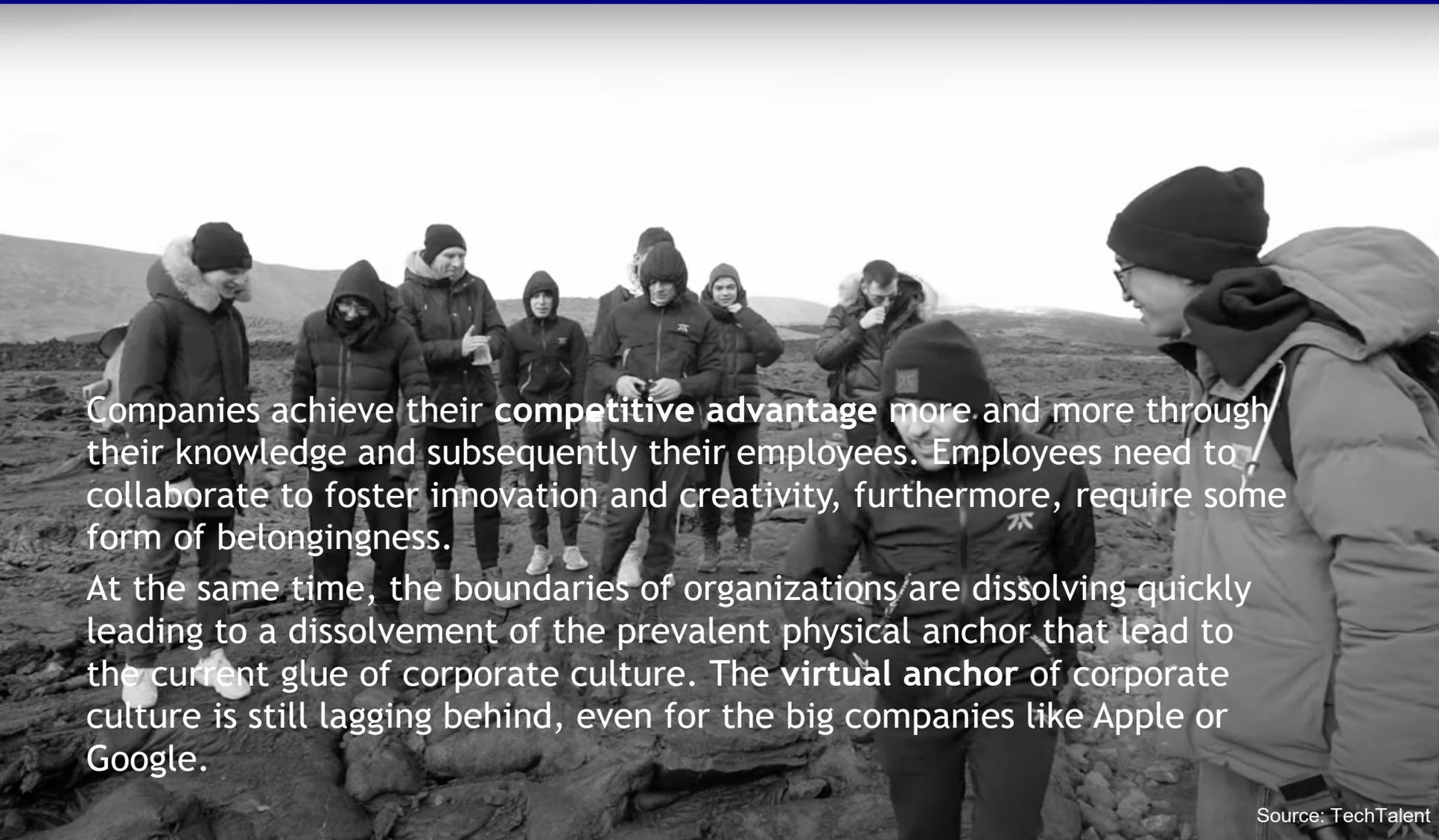
- Corporate culture focusing on symbols are **prone** to zoomification
- People-oriented cultures will increase loyalty, commitment (*Ortega-Parra/Ángel Sastre-Castillo, 2013*)
- “With the support for current employees during this difficult time, they will be more loyal and committed to the organization” (*Su et al., 2021: 11*)

Risk consultancy for top management

- Employee and top management “don’t see eye to eye” (*IBM, 2020: 4*)
- Shift in leadership will require new forms of trust-building (*Ahern/Loh, 2020*)
- Creating a “hybrid” working world means substantial change and requires the top management (*Brammer et al., 2020, pwc, 2020*)

(based on Stein/Wiedemann 2016)

- Corporate culture is changing in the hybrid working world. Remote work leads to a **decrease** in traditional corporate culture
- How can organizations convince people to **stay** with the company and stay motivated (even big companies like Apple and Google struggle)
- “**Stress drives** corporate strategy” (*IBM, 2020: 5*) and many corporations are only managing the risks that lead to more stress
- Everybody can work for everybody means more access to talents, but an increase in competition. Recruiting and retaining will become more **difficult**, a strong culture will lower the potential risks
- Find the right **balance** and learn from digital industries like esports



Companies achieve their **competitive advantage** more and more through their knowledge and subsequently their employees. Employees need to collaborate to foster innovation and creativity, furthermore, require some form of belongingness.

At the same time, the boundaries of organizations are dissolving quickly leading to a dissolution of the prevalent physical anchor that lead to the current glue of corporate culture. The **virtual anchor** of corporate culture is still lagging behind, even for the big companies like Apple or Google.

Source: TechTalent

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