



# CASE STUDY

---

## Multinational Auto Manufacturer Implements a More Flexible Work Culture



## CASE STUDY

# Automotive Manufacturer Confidently Moves to a More Flexible Work Culture

## The Background

Like many companies around the world, COVID-10 impacted a European-based multinational automotive manufacturer causing them to abruptly close their offices, show-rooms, and manufacturing facilities in order to ensure the safety of their employees. Rather than cease all operations, the company decided to accelerate their plans to shift to a more flexible work culture by implementing new long-term remote work policies. The new policy seeks to create a flexible environment that allows employees to utilize the office when needed while primarily working remotely in order to create a more agile workplace while giving employees the freedom to choose in what environment they can be more productive. This is a drastic change for the company, which has had a strong in-office work culture that typically stopped after employees left the workplace.

## The Challenge

Even though leadership believed that a shift to more flexible workdays would benefit the organization and its ability to stay agile and innovative in the long-term, they were concerned about the immediate effects of an abrupt shift on the wellbeing of their people and their ability to work effectively. They also understood that if not managed correctly, their long-term productivity and efficiency could be impacted.

While employees were mostly positive about the change in a company wide survey, they still expressed concerns around their ability to stay connected to colleagues, have a good sense of broader organizational initiatives, and potential increase to their workday length due to the inevitable blending of their personal and work lives. These concerns accompany European regulations around taking work “home.” In general, managing work-life balance in a primarily remote setting poses a significant risk.

Due to these concerns, the company wanted to ensure their employees felt supported through the transition. Beyond their more subjective measurements like employee surveys, which only show a small snap-shot in time, and business KPI's, which can only show impact months after a policy is implemented, they sought out a solution to help them foresee any potential problems in a quicker and less disruptive manner. The Humanyze Organizational Health Score™, the only workplace analytics solution powered by informed metrics and algorithms that are rooted in years of academic research and customer work analyzing over 6 billion workplace interactions, helps companies not only measure their own teams' effectiveness but also benchmark with best practices and industry averages. Their unparalleled insights provide the most comprehensive view of the workday by integrating data from all the leading collaboration tools allowing the manufacturing company to confidently and objectively measure if they were on track to create an engaging and innovative work environment.

## The Approach

Through their partnership with Humanyze, the company was able to measure the initial impact of remote work on their organizational effectiveness, with a particular focus on employee well being and effective collaboration. Using one department as their initial test case, they collected anonymized email and calendar data for nine months. By looking at data from January 2020 through September 2020, the company was able to understand the pre-transition and post-transition impacts of their initiatives.

Through Humanyze's Organizational Health Score, the company was able to understand the trends in their engagement, productivity, and adaptability metrics. The indicators and metrics they placed particular focus on were:

### Category: Engagement



#### Work-Life:

*Measures "workday length" and "weekend work" to understand burnout risk and work-life balance*



#### Exploration:

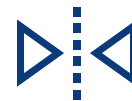
*Measures "weak connections" to understand if employees are maintaining contact with colleagues*

### Category: Productivity



#### Efficiency:

*Measures "teamwork concentration" to see if employees are able to work closely with their core teams and have "focus time" to do their work*



#### Alignment:

*Measures "extended network" and "cross-level bridging" to understand if employees maintain connections across teams and hierarchies*

### Category: Adaptability



#### Organizational Flatness:

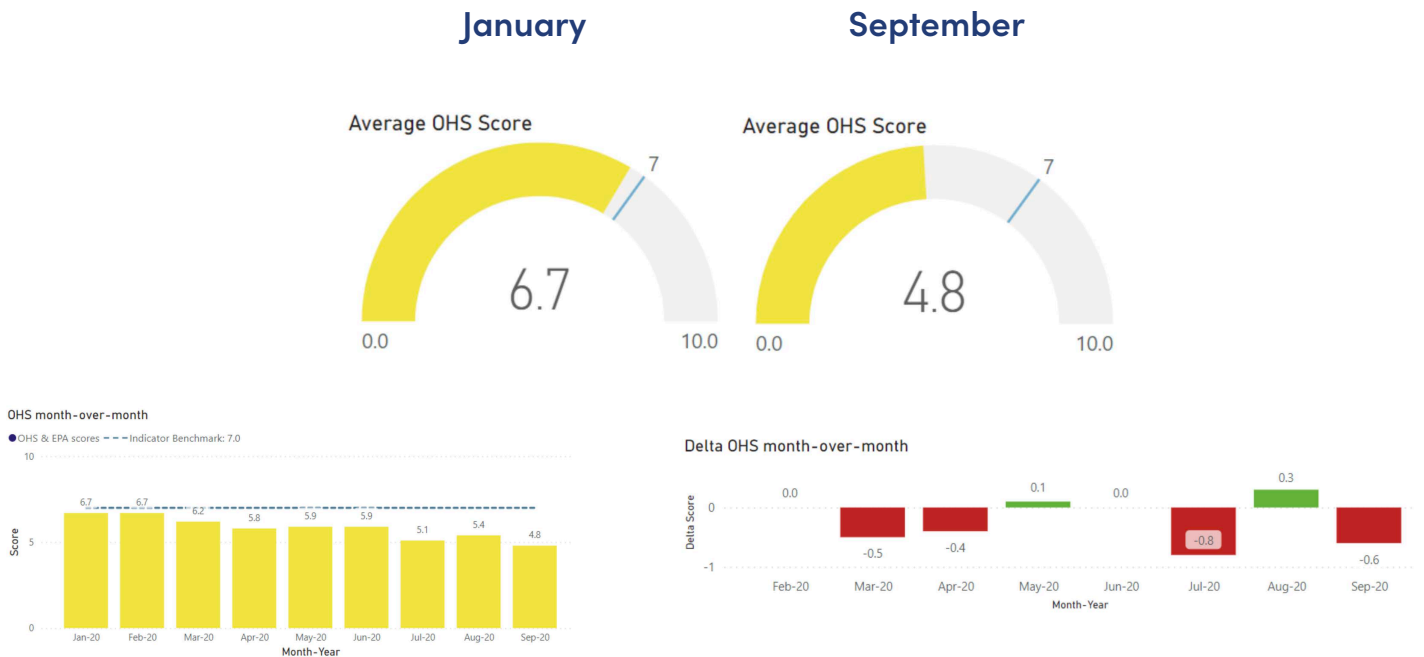
*Related to how quickly or easily information can travel across an organization despite remote work*

# The Findings

Overall, employees did not initially experience drastic changes in their behavior, however as time progressed and the organization returned to more normal workloads in July and August, they began to see dramatic drops in most of their target metrics, which were Work-Life, Alignment, and Efficiency. Overall, the findings pointed to a shift in collaboration, time employees had previously spent interacting face-to-face with their core teams and managers was getting replaced with less rich forms of interaction, such as email and large group meetings. Additionally, employees were struggling to balance finding time for meaningful interactions while also focusing on getting their work done within an 8-hour work day.

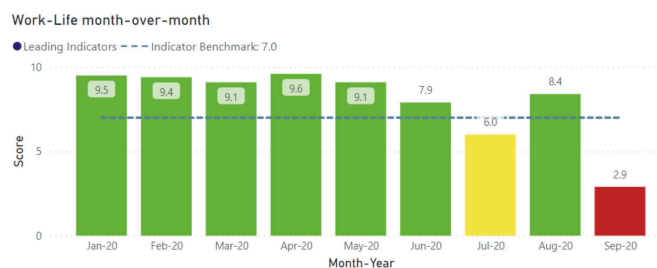
## Overall Organizational Health:

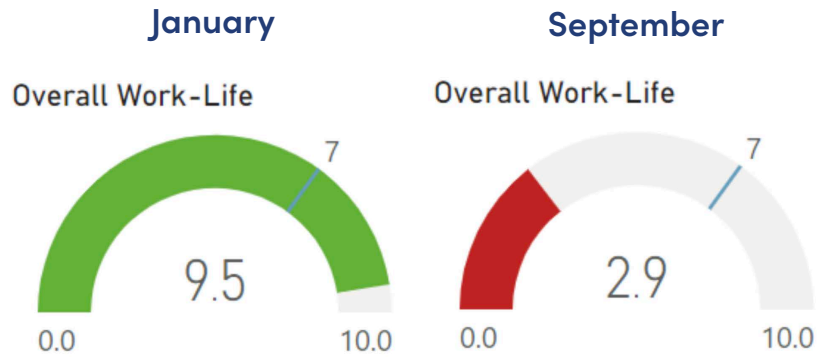
Overall, Organizational Health dropped from January to September mainly due to the dramatic negative changes in Work-Life, Efficiency, and Alignment.



## Engagement

The Work-Life indicator, composed of the metrics called workday span and weekend work, decreased significantly across all teams. The data showed that by the end of the 9-month period, employees were working on average 3 more hours per day and 12 minutes per weekend. Prior to this new initiative, it was rare for employees to work longer than 10-hour spans, but by the end of September **55% were working more than 10-hour days on average.**

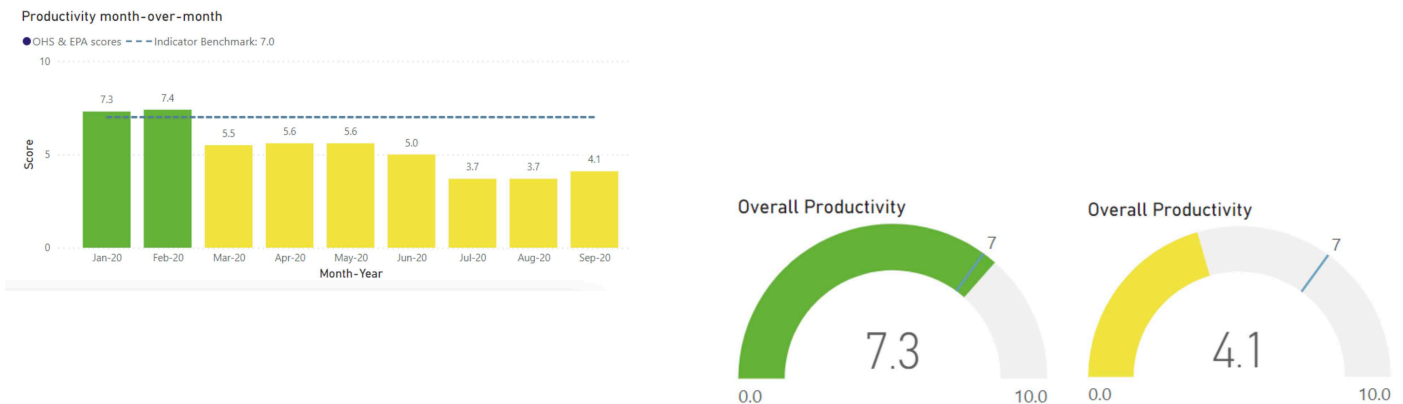




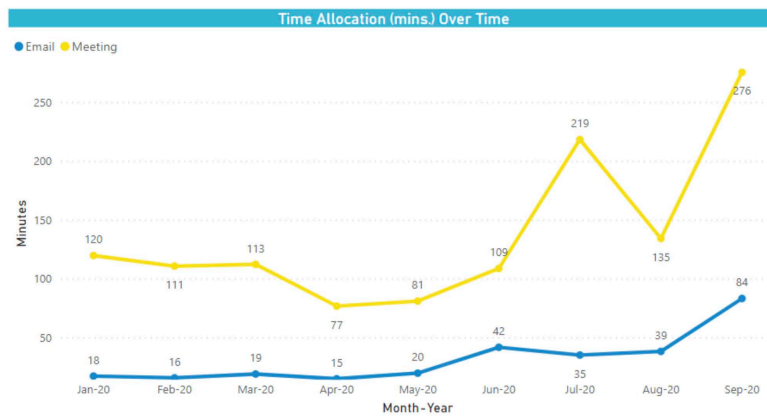
Additionally, the customer saw a decrease in the **Core Connections** and **Management Access** metrics under the **Support Network** indicator. These metrics represent employees' closer social relationships and support within and outside their core team, and a reduction in this indicator can mean that employees' sense of shared trust, understanding, and personal connection with their core teams are suffering. On a positive note, the company saw an increase in the **Weak-Ties** metric which measures the number of average peripheral contacts each person has, by 20 contacts on average- significantly surpassing the Humanyze benchmark and indicating that, though loosely, they were staying connected with colleagues in other departments, despite their physical distance.

## Productivity

After the disruption, the productivity indicators and metrics had a downward trend going as far as dropping below the Humanyze benchmark in March and continuing to decline by over 3 points in the following months. This decline was due to negative changes in the Efficiency and Alignment indicators, due to drops in the Focus Time Availability metric and the weakening of so-cial connections with close peers (Teamwork Concentration metric) and management (Cross-Level Bridging metric), which contribute to employees' ability to gather the context they need in order to meet deadlines and ensure they focus on the right work.



Though initially employees were able to set aside a healthy amount of time for focused work, over time the increase in meetings and time emailing took a toll on the Focus Time Availability metric. In January, employees averaged 2 hours in meetings and 18 minutes per day emailing, by September, the average employee was spending ~4.5 hours in meetings per day and nearly 1.5 hours emailing.



The increase in emailing, combined with decreases in the Teamwork Concentration, Secondary Connections, and Cross-Level Bridging metrics also implies that employees had not yet found an adequate replacement for the face-to-face interaction that they used to get while working together in an office. Instead of interacting in-person, they compensated with emails, which are less effective for developing social connections and communicating complex ideas.

## Adaptability

Despite some of the worsening trends in the metrics and indicators under engagement and productivity, the shift to remote working started to gradually open up new pathways of information within and between teams in the organization (increasing the Organizational Flatness indicator), which signifies a slow movement toward more visibility across the organization to support agile ways of working.

## The Takeaways

Despite some of the worsening trends in the metrics and indicators under engagement and productivity, the shift to remote working started to gradually open up new pathways of information within and between teams in the organization (increasing the Organizational Flatness indicator), which signifies a slow movement toward more visibility across the organization to support agile ways of working.

Though the transition to remote work clearly impacted employees, by immediately measuring its impact and isolating the specific areas for attention and intervention, the organization was better equipped to proactively intervene in order to ensure their new culture of working primarily remotely is a success. Large-scale change initiatives rarely work for all people immediately and require adjustments, training, and shifts in attitude along the way. Armed with objective data about how employees are reacting and what they might need, leadership can make subtle tweaks to policy, technology, and cultural norms to better support them. With this data in mind, companies can encourage more one-on-ones with managers instead of group meetings, institute a day of no meetings to support more focused work, invest in more real-time collaboration tools like slack or Microsoft Teams to replace email, and ensure management sets an example by turning off work after hours and on weekends to discourage employees of working after hours.



To learn more about Humanyze's solutions, visit [www.humanyze.com/solutions](https://www.humanyze.com/solutions) or [book a demo today](#).