



**CATÓLICA  
LISBON**  
BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

**Impact of Covid-19 on Process and Structure  
Organization, New Ways of Work, and Sustainable  
Measures Adopted – The Case of Siemens**

Maria de Mello Vieira Barreiras

153921011

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the International MSc in  
Applied Management at Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

March 2023

The dissertation is written under the supervision of Professor Ricardo Reis.

## **Abstract**

---

This dissertation is a case study of Siemens S.A.'s Global Business Services business in Portugal. The case seeks to answer the question, "How did the Covid-19 pandemic affect Siemens S.A., specifically the GBS department, in terms of organizational processes and sustainable measures adopted?". Five interviews were conducted at various levels of the hierarchy to answer this question, analyzing two distinct temporal moments: the beginning of the pandemic (March 2020) and the return to normalcy (mid-2022).

This study's pedagogical structure aims to provide a detailed understanding of how the company reorganized during the two chronological moments of the crisis. However, since the study is based on a real-life example, it is an illustrative case and is not intended to put the reader in a dilemma.

The result made us conclude that the company was structurally and operationally prepared to face the crisis. Being a technological organization made confronting this unknown reality much easier because it provided all employees with the necessary tools to avoid customer service interruptions. However, it was also clear that how the organization communicated its strategy regarding the hybrid model to be used impacted team management. As a result, a new theme emerged in the debate, generating noise and discord and requiring managers to manage their teams operationally and emotionally.

**Title** – Impact of Covid-19 on Process and Structure Organization, New Ways of Work, and Sustainable Measures Adopted – The Case of Siemens

**Author** – Maria de Mello Vieira Barreiras

**Key Words** – Crisis Management; Pandemic; Covid-19; Customer Relationship Management; Organizational Processes; Home Office; Digitalization; Innovation; Strategy; Leadership; Organizational Structure.

## **Resumo**

---

Esta dissertação é um caso de estudo sobre a área de negócio Global Business Services da Siemens S.A, em Portugal. O caso procura responder à questão “Como é que a pandemia Covid-19 afectou a Siemens S.A, mais especificamente o departamento GBS, em termos de processos organizacionais e medidas sustentáveis adoptadas?”. Para responder a esta questão foram conduzidas cinco entrevistas, entre vários níveis de hierarquia, onde se analisa dois momentos temporais distintos: início da pandemia (Março 2020) e regresso à normalidade (meados de 2022).

A estrutura pedagógica seguida por este estudo tem como principal objectivo proporcionar uma compreensão detalhada de como a empresa se reorganizou perante esta crise durante os dois momentos cronológicos. Uma vez que o estudo reflecte um exemplo da vida real, trata-se de um caso ilustrativo, não tendo como propósito colocar o leitor perante um dilema.

O resultado alcançado permitiu concluir que a empresa, em termos estruturais e de processos, estava preparada para enfrentar esta crise. O facto de ser uma empresa tecnológica facilitou bastante o confronto com esta realidade desconhecida, pois permitiu que todos os trabalhadores tivessem as ferramentas necessárias para evitar interrupções do serviço prestado ao cliente. Foi ainda possível constatar que a forma como a organização comunicou a sua estratégia em relação ao modelo híbrido a adoptar teve impacto na gestão das equipas. Assim, um novo tema surgiu em debate, gerando ruído e discórdia, exigindo aos managers não só a capacidade de gerir operacionalmente as suas equipas, como também a nível emocional.

**Título** – Impacto da Covid-19 nos Processos e Estrutura Organizacional, Novas Formas de Trabalho e Adopção de Medidas Sustentáveis – O Caso da Siemens

**Autor** – Maria de Mello Vieira Barreiras

**Palavras-Chave** – Gestão de Crises; Pandemia; Covid-19; Gestão da Relação com o Cliente; Processos Organizacionais, Teletrabalho; Digitalização; Inovação; Estratégia; Liderança; Estrutura Organizacional.

## **Acknowledgments**

---

Thankfulness was the most crucial emotion I felt while working on my thesis and after finishing my journey.

I am incredibly grateful to my supervisor, Professor Ricardo Reis, for all his support, not only for all the helpful input and feedback but also for his availability and understanding throughout this process.

Thank you to Universidade Católica Portuguesa for assisting during these trying times.

I would also like to thank Siemens S.A., particularly my interview partners: the Head of GBS, and the four Service Line Managers, for their time and assistance. These interviews gave me valuable and exciting insights into managing a team in complex and unknown circumstances.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my family and friends, who have always encouraged and supported me during this academic journey.

## Table of Contents

---

Abstract .....	2
Resumo .....	3
Acknowledgments .....	4
List of Abbreviations .....	6
List of Figures.....	7
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2. Literature Review and Research Note.....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Dynamic Capabilities.....	10
2.2 Business Models, Business Strategy, and Innovation.....	11
2.3 Home Office and Remote Work.....	12
2.4 Digital Transformation.....	14
2.5 Organizational Change, Structure, and Work .....	16
<b>3. Context of Siemens.....</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1 Siemens AG.....	18
3.2 Siemens in Portugal .....	20
3.3 Global Business Services .....	21
<b>4. Case Study.....</b>	<b>25</b>
4.1 Practical Applications: Real-Life Examples of Case Study.....	29
<b>5. Teaching Note.....</b>	<b>42</b>
5.1 Case Synopsis.....	42
5.2 Summary .....	42
5.3 Learning Objectives.....	43
5.4 Examples of Reflection Questions & Response Suggestions .....	43
<b>6. Conclusion &amp; Limitations.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>7. References.....</b>	<b>51</b>
7.1 Articles, Books, and Journals.....	51
7.2 Online References.....	53
Attachments.....	54
i. Interview Questions for Head of GBS.....	54
ii. Interview Questions for Practical Applications .....	56

## List of Abbreviations

<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
<i>AC1</i>	Accounting and Closing 1
<i>AC2</i>	Accounting and Closing 2
<i>CEO</i>	Chief Executive Officer
<i>CoC DISW</i>	Center of Competence Siemens Digital Industries Software
<i>CRM</i>	Customer relationship management
<i>DT</i>	Digital Transformation
<i>FFWP</i>	Family-friendly workplace practices
<i>GBS</i>	Global Business Services
<i>GBS P2P PT AP</i>	Global Business Services Record to Report Portugal Accounts Payable
<i>GBS R2R PT AC</i>	Global Business Services Record to Report Portugal Accounting and Closing
<i>GBS R2R PT TX</i>	Global Business Services Record to Report Portugal Tax
<i>H2R</i>	Hire to Retire
<i>HO</i>	Home Office
<i>HR</i>	Human Resources
<i>IT</i>	Information Technology
<i>KPI</i>	Key Performance Indicator
<i>O2C</i>	Opportunity to Cash
<i>P2P</i>	Purchase to Pay
<i>RBV</i>	Resource-Based View
<i>R2R</i>	Record to Report
<i>SLM</i>	Service Line Manager
<i>T&amp;C</i>	Tax and Customs
<i>WFH</i>	Work from Home

## **List of Figures**

---

Figure 1 - Primary delivery locations .....	22
Figure 2 – GBS Key Results of Fiscal Year 2021 .....	23
Figure 3 – References of GBS .....	23
Figure 4 – Organizational Chart of GBS Managers interviewed .....	30

## **1. Introduction**

---

The Covid-19 era has shown how companies reinvented and adapted their business models, strategies, and working methods worldwide. This situation has contributed to the acceleration of some measures already planned for the long term, but it was necessary to implement them more quickly. Examples of these measures include the application of remote working and implementing digital processes.

Thus, this crisis, as well as others in the past, was an excellent opportunity to make transformations and to have bolder and more disruptive ideas through a policy of continuous improvement of all processes. In addition, it will not be incorrect to say that covid had nothing to do with telecommuting, but it was just an excuse to do what had been planned for some time.

The new way of working remotely has forced companies to create conditions for their workers regarding IT infrastructure and provide the necessary equipment to guarantee service delivery. On the one hand, the IT teams and all the connections/servers had to be reinforced to ensure a safer, stronger, and faster network. Besides, bolstering the technical support team was necessary since all employees could only solve their IT difficulties remotely. However, on the other hand, it was also required to provide tools to the employees to avoid service interruptions. Namely, through personal laptops and vouchers from specialized stores, to create a space dedicated to work and ergonomically adequate at home, as happened at Siemens S.A.

The following case study will focus on the challenges faced by a specific department of Siemens S.A. throughout the pandemic and its consequent strategic adjustments. Also, it will provide insights into how a primary Portuguese subsidiary of a German company was affected by Covid-19 and planned by releasing a new strategy. The objective is to determine to what extent Siemens S.A. was affected by the corona crisis and identify major future threats and opportunities to sustain the global share services business.

To analyze the research question, "How did Siemens S.A., specifically the business area of Global Shared Services, adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of process organization and sustainable measures adopted?" this thesis will take a qualitative approach, with no quantitative dimensions or cost analysis as the study's goal. As an outcome, this study will focus exclusively on operational aspects, with no interest in investigating the fiscal and financial issues caused by the pandemic.

To accomplish the qualitative approach, five interviews were conducted with different managers. The interviews were assigned to varying levels of management to understand the main challenges in applying the strategies designed for the company. Thus, we wanted to know how the various teams reacted and adapted at the start of the pandemic and when they returned to the office using the testimonies collected.

However, it is essential to emphasize that the company's solutions are only illustrative, and there are other options in the decision process.

## 2. Literature Review and Research Note

---

### 2.1 Dynamic Capabilities

In recent years, the dynamic capabilities view has gotten much attention in the management literature because of the central question of “*how companies achieve and sustain competitive advantage*” (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997).

Barreto, I. (2010) defined dynamic capabilities as “*the firm’s potential to systematically solve problems, formed by its propensity to sense opportunities and threats, to make timely and market-oriented decisions, and to change its resource base.*”. This definition was based on other authors, such as Teece et al. (1997), who defined dynamic capabilities as “*the firm’s ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly changing environments.*”.

According to the author Barreto, I. (2010), for both managers and researchers, the “dynamic capacities” approach gives one essential response to this critical topic. The dynamic capabilities view has spawned an incredible flow of research since Teece et al. (1997)’s seminal work. Also, his research discloses that the average timeframe for enterprises to sustain competitive advantage has reduced over time, implying that achieving a long-term competitive advantage is more difficult in hypercompetitive or high-velocity contexts. Therefore, firms should be managed in such a way that they can develop successive transitory benefits by efficiently responding to successive external shocks.

To achieve this competitive advantage, it is essential to distinguish the following concepts: resources and capabilities. Conforming to the authors Amit & Schoemaker (1993), resources are “*stocks of available factors that are owned or controlled by the firm,*” whereas capabilities “*refer to a firm’s capacity to deploy resources, usually in combination, using organizational processes, to effect a desired end.*”

Firms' bundles of resources and capabilities provide a competitive advantage if they are valued and scarce. However, they must also be costly to replicate and non-substitutable to be sustainable over time (Barney, 1991). On the other hand, the resource-based view (RBV) is seen as static and thus unable to explain a firm’s competitive advantage in changing circumstances (Priem & Butler, 2001).

Teece and colleagues presented the dynamic capabilities framework to close the gap. Although they had previously attempted to introduce the concept of dynamic

capacities (Teece & Pisano, 1994), it was their 1997 work that garnered significant attention to the new concept in the management literature.

## 2.2 Business Models, Business Strategy, and Innovation

The traditional balance between customer and supplier has shifted due to global economic developments. According to the author Teece, D. J. (2010), customers now have more options, diverse customer needs can be expressed, and supply alternatives are more transparent, thanks to advances in communications and computing technology and the establishment of reasonably open global trading regimes. Businesses must therefore become more customer-centric, especially now that technology allows for the lower-cost provision of information and customer solutions. These developments, in turn, require companies in many sectors to re-evaluate the value propositions they present to customers, as the supply-side-driven logic of the industrial era is no longer viable.

To have a successful business, it is crucial to understand *“the significance of business models and to explore their connections to business strategy, innovation management, and economic theory”* (Teece, D. J. (2010)). His research also reflects that a business model articulates the logic and provides data and other evidence to show how a company creates and delivers value to customers. It also outlines the architecture of revenues, costs, and profits associated with the business enterprise that provides that value. *“In short, a business model defines how the enterprise creates and delivers value to customers and then converts payments received to profits.”* (Teece, D. J. (2010)). To profit from innovation, business pioneers must excel at product innovation and business model design, understanding business design possibilities, the customer wants, and technological trajectories.

In a broad sense, a business model represents a company's organizational and financial 'architecture.' Although a business model may become incorporated in a business strategy, income statements, and cash flow estimates, it is not a spreadsheet or computer model. Moreover, in line with Teece, D. J. (2010), *“to be a source of competitive advantage, a business model must be something more than just a good logical way of doing business.”*

Thus, a good business model design and implementation require evaluating internal and external aspects of consumers, suppliers, and the broader company

environment. Furthermore, and citing Sam Palmisano, CEO of IBM, remarks that *“innovation is about much more than new products. It is about reinventing business processes and building entirely new markets that meet untapped customer demand.”* (Teece, D. J. (2007)).

### 2.3 Home Office and Remote Work

Every area of social life has changed because of the revolution in communication and technology. The Internet has become the foundation of a new economy marked by the importance of globalization and information technology. The effects of the preceding developments can also be seen in the labor market, and the frequent adjustment of lifestyle and work habits impact it (Klopotek, Magdalena (2017)).

A growing number of professions demand the use of a phone and a computer with Internet connectivity, reducing the need for traditional offices. This trend raises the question of whether remote labor may eventually supplant conventional forms of employment (Klopotek, Magdalena (2017)).

Millions of workers have been forced to transition to remote work because of the COVID-19 crisis in 2020, calling the attention of CEO's and senior management to remote work regulations (Choudhury, P. et al. (2020)). However, according to the author Bloom, N. and colleagues (2015), *“Having employees work from home raises two major issues. First, is it a useful management practice for raising productivity and profitability? (...) The second issue relates to the concerns over deteriorating work-life balance and the potential of work from home (WFH) to help address this.”*.

Remote work was a phenomenon during the Covid-19 era. However, the debate about this topic was already on the company's agenda. The subject of how remote work impacts productivity has been at the forefront of managerial discussion even before the forced use of remote work during the COVID-19 crisis (Choudhury, P. et al. (2020)).

Working from home necessitates high motivation and self-discipline (Olson et al., 1995). Individual control over the pace of work (which typically emerges from the project-based structure of the assignment) and well-defined milestones are the main characteristics of remote work (Klopotek, Magdalena (2017)).

The initial research on remote work has focused chiefly on work-from-home (WFH) and postulated that WFH provides the worker with temporal freedom and

flexibility in selecting working settings (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). In addition, the WFH literature, most notably Bloom et al. (2015), cites productivity-enhancing mechanisms such as reduced commuting time, fewer work breaks, sick days, and the advantages of a quieter work environment.

The other benefits of working from home include avoidance of office politics, improved work/family balance, flexibility to relocate, improved morale, productivity, quality of life and work-life, increased autonomy, family and leisure time, job satisfaction, technical skills, and fewer distractions, spillover, lower stress level, more community ties, and cost savings on gas and parking (Klopotek, Magdalena (2017)).

On the other hand, it is relevant to list the disadvantages of working from home described in the literature.

This style of work discourages socializing. It also makes the employee less visible in their field. Equally crucial is one's social standing, which may be enhanced to some extent by possessing one's office. Remote work lowers one's feeling of social status. It should also be noted that one downside of working remotely from home is the difficulty in separating personal and professional responsibilities during the day. (Klopotek, Magdalena (2017)).

An intriguing phenomenon is that, in this day and age of social networking and comprehensive communication facilities, the risk of social isolation is another drawback of remote working for young remote employees, as Magdalena Klopotek (2017) concluded in her research. Also, the author mentioned above states that this phenomenon is rather remarkable. It may imply that, despite the abundance of technologies for remote communication, young people value face-to-face contact in the workplace and prefer collaborating with their coworkers.

Although working from home has advantages and disadvantages, the literature finds a positive relationship between worker productivity and family-friendly workplace practices. Family-friendly workplace practices (FFWP) do not directly impact the workplace but improve employees' capacity to balance work and personal life. *“FFWP have implications different from other strategic human resource management practices, as they affect employee well-being rather than firm financial performance.”* (Bloom, N. et al. (2011)). These incremental learning effects are likely a factor in the sluggish adoption of many modern management approaches, and we regard the results as being

comparable to the adoption process for product innovations, such as hybrid seed corn, as Griliches (1957) highlighted (Bloom, N. et al. (2015)).

Adopting workplace flexibility and work-life balance practices is the subject of the literature. However, it is mainly based on case studies and company-wide surveys. Furthermore, according to these studies, WFH adoption is associated with lower employee turnover, absenteeism, and improved productivity and profitability (Bloom N. et al. (2015)).

Another interesting and important topic is related to this kind of work. There is also a link to the literature on urban economics. As people move out to the suburbs, reducing the frequency of commuting will cut vehicle miles driven, lowering emissions but also reducing population centrality (Bento et al. (2005); Bloom, N. et al. (2015)).

## 2.4 Digital Transformation

Today it is increasingly essential for companies to incorporate digital transformation into their business base (Shahi C. et al. (2020)).

Despite this lack of clarity, a recurrent theme in the current discussion is the expansion of digital technologies - the combination and connectivity of numerous dispersed information, communication, and computing technologies (Hanelt A. et al. (2021)). There is a growing interest in how information technology (IT) transforms the nature of work in businesses, resulting in the reorganization of work practices. These new labor methods are known as "digital work." (Morton, J. et al. (2020)).

With the technological advances of recent times, companies will stay caught up in terms of competitiveness and progress if companies keep up. Technology is rapidly evolving, and businesses must adapt to remain relevant in this world of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, to take advantage of its great potential and stay relevant. Digital transformation is the way forward for all businesses (Shahi C. et al. (2020)).

Moreover, according to the literature, "*digital is the future.*" The rate of technological advancement has increased at an exponential rate. There is not a single industry that has not been affected. Therefore, it has enormous potential for the company to expand its income base and offer new prospects to the stakeholders (Shahi C. et al. (2020)).

Smaller firms are challenging the relevance of larger organizations in today's market with their creative offers, which challenge the big giants. As a result, it becomes imperative for established organizations to adapt and accept change. Digital transformation will enable them to maintain their position and develop new and superior business models. Also, it will assist in creating value for all stakeholders (Shahi C. et al. (2020)).

However, they must consider what it is to be digital. It is more than just employing digital tools and technologies. It is a strategic shift that requires organizational transformation (Shahi C. et al. (2020)). Some studies show that IT facilitates strategic interaction with various stakeholders, which feeds into strategy development. Strategists use digital work to adopt more inclusive (i.e., involving more people in the creation of strategy) and transparent (i.e., making strategic information more accessible and visible) strategizing techniques (Morton, J. et al. (2020)).

Nevertheless, not all digitization processes are accessible and affordable for all companies, and therefore complicated for some since not all solutions the market offers work for all market players (Shahi C. et al. (2020)). Thus, companies should consider that the goal of electronic customer relationship management is to acquire and keep consumers while also creating value. Customer relationship management (CRM) philosophy has two components, the first of which is customer mindset (perspective). This approach considers the four traditional marketing applications of the product: price, place (location), promotion, and the quality of customers' interactions with suppliers. In addition, customers prefer engagement channels since they are looking for suppliers who understand their needs and can respond to their requests (Rad H.S. et al. (2015)).

Thus, by incorporating information technology into organizations under the customer relationship management umbrella, organizations can become more innovative and more knowledge-oriented, lowering information-processing costs through CRM software and interacting with customers more quickly in less time, increasing their competitive power in today's dynamic environment. Furthermore, when properly and successfully implemented, customer relationship management causes all divisions and sectors in a firm or organization that directly interact with customers to change, ultimately leading to a fundamental evolution in the organization's or firm's future (Rad, H.S. et al. (2015)).

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted organizations to take action by raising awareness of the need to accelerate digital transformation (Hanelt A. et al. (2021)).

The digital transformation (DT) phenomenon also presents an opportunity (and obligation) to expand the existing corpus of knowledge regarding organizational change. Prior research investigates organizational change related to information technology (IT). However, recent studies define this phenomenon “*as computer-based technology for the storage, accessing, processing and communication of information, and created valuable and persistent knowledge (...)*”. Indeed, digital transformation appears to have a more elaborate and all-encompassing connection to the theme of organizational change, demanding a larger view of and comparison with the literature on organizational change and innovation. (Hanelt, A. et al. (2021)).

## 2.5 Organizational Change, Structure, and Work

At the pandemic’s beginning, many companies were forced to change their working methods abruptly. On the one hand, ensuring no interruptions in customer service was necessary. However, on the other hand, it called upon the enormous capacity for adaptation and reinvention, both in companies and employees.

Nevertheless, unfortunately, many enterprises ceased operations and laid-off workers, sending the economy into a new crisis with devastating socioeconomic consequences. It means the companies needed to be prepared for a crisis of this magnitude and the economic implications of the situation. As a result, in times of severe crises, economic actors and business processes must be thoroughly evaluated (Obrenovic B. et al. (2020)).

Since March 2020, the world has constantly been learning, allowing companies to experience constant and unexpected changes. The pandemic has also allowed enterprises to embrace technological solutions for knowledge sharing and communication. At the same time, the crisis has offered entrepreneurial opportunities and the potential to exploit cultural gaps (Carmin S. et al. (2021)). Also, an organization must enable information flow between all business divisions to survive the situation, resulting in a shared knowledge model allowing team cooperation. This may involve the interchange of skills, tacit knowledge, interpersonal trust, team planning, and inter-organizational decision-making supported by external resources such as information technology and various

communication platforms. During a crisis, a strong strategy supported by practical communication approaches increases shared mental models and performance even when catastrophic circumstances occur (Obrenovic, B. et al. (2020)).

To react faster to this crisis, networked governance worked collaboratively to create institutions enabling even more collaborative mindsets. Enterprises that adopt those measures will maintain and prosper after a situation because they will learn to change, evolve, increase flexibility, and promote creativity by using out-of-the-box thinking. Moreover, they will simultaneously collaborate, engage, accomplish divergent small-scale actions, and master the art of cross-unit leadership (Obrenovic B. et al. (2020)).

Furthermore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, digitalization, a sign of innovation adoption, acceptability, and diffusion, was a critical component for long-term corporate operations. As a result, we established and linked IT systems to enable smooth business operations. Furthermore, the interactive character of Intranet methods promoted company continuity and supported effective communication among the crisis management team, employees, suppliers, and consumers (Obrenovic, B. et al. (2020)).

According to the author mentioned above and colleagues, *“Organizations with a networked structure are more responsive, agile, and resilient in the face of adversity. When granted freedom, autonomous, self-organized, and autonomous business units rapidly adapt to emerging changes in the external environment and embrace challenges.”*. Enterprises with a more flexible and adaptable business model respond quickly to pressures and modify. Their diversity and agility distinguish them, and this adaptability enables them to reorganize their priorities and pursue new activities in the face of threats.

### **3. Context of Siemens**

---

#### **3.1 Siemens AG**

Siemens AG (Berlin and Munich) is a global technology giant that has, for more than 170 years, stood for engineering excellence, innovation, quality, reliability, and internationality.

The company, which has offices worldwide, focuses on intelligent infrastructure for buildings, distributed energy systems, and automation and digitalization in the process and manufacturing industries.

Siemens AG combines the digital and physical worlds to benefit customers and society. Siemens AG is helping to define the global market for passenger and freight services with Mobility, a leading provider of intelligent mobility solutions for rail and road transport. The company is also a world-leading supplier of medical technology and digital health services, thanks to its majority investment in Siemens Healthineers, a publicly-traded firm. Siemens AG also owns a minority position in Siemens Energy, a global leader in the transmission and generation of electricity that has been publicly traded since September 28, 2020.

As a focused technology firm, Siemens AG connects the real and digital worlds to assist customers in meeting today's significant challenges. Their enterprises and local organizations have the entrepreneurial freedom to serve their customers and markets as best they can. The structure aims to produce value for customers, build technology with purpose, and improve the lives of billions of people.

The purpose of Siemens AG is to develop technology to improve everyday life. Its portfolio offers the following Businesses and Service & Governance:

##### **3.1.1 Businesses**

**Digital Industries** - Digital Industries is a pioneer in automation and digitalization. Its purpose is to advise and support customers in the discrete and process sectors as they make their digital transition. The company's Digital Enterprise portfolio constantly expands to incorporate cutting-edge technologies and industry-specific end-to-end solutions for businesses of all sizes.

**Smart Infrastructure** - Intelligent infrastructure integrates energy systems, buildings, and industries to adapt and evolve how people live and work. Siemens AG collaborates with customers and partners to build an ecosystem that naturally responds to the needs and assists customers in better resource use. It promotes the success of our clients, the advancement of communities, the advancement of sustainable development, and the creation of caring surroundings.

**Mobility** - For more than 160 years, Mobility has been a leader in transportation solutions, consistently improving its portfolio in its core areas of intelligent traffic systems, rail automation, electrification, turnkey systems, and related services. Mobility digitalization enables mobility operators throughout the world to make infrastructure smarter, grow revenue sustainably over the entire lifecycle, improve passenger experience, and ensure availability.

**Siemens Advanta** - Siemens Advanta helps businesses unlock the digital future by providing end-to-end support throughout their digital transformation journey. The unrivaled combination of deep domain knowledge, the robust Siemens technology stack, and a powerful ecosystem of partners around the world is a fundamental differentiator of Siemens Advanta. With this business, Siemens AG can offer a better and deeper service through its Siemens Advanta Consulting, Solutions, and Development units to foster the strategy and operations consulting.

**Portfolio Companies** - Siemens operates several units consolidated under the Portfolio Companies banner starting April 1, 2019. These units work agilely and flexibly because of their decentralized structure, quick decision-making processes, and quick reaction times. These advantages enable Portfolio Companies to be more competitive in their respective industries and to focus more intently on their clients.

**Siemens Healthineers** - Siemens Healthineers AG is a prominent medical technology firm that offers revolutionary technologies and services in diagnostic and therapeutic imaging, molecular medicine, laboratory diagnostics, and digital health and enterprise services.

### **3.1.2 Service & Governance**

**Siemens Financial Services (SFS)** - offers financial services to businesses. Teams assist customer investments worldwide with leasing, equipment finance, and project and structured financing.

**Global Business Services (GBS)** - creates, designs, converts, and runs business services for Siemens units and external customers. With their expertise in business services, GBS makes a beneficial impact tailored to the needs of their customers. Its competitive service portfolio comprises digital expertise-driven services and end-to-end process solutions.

**Real Estate Services** - Siemens Real Estate is charged with managing Siemens' global real estate holdings and advising the company on market entry strategies worldwide.

**Next47** - is a global venture capital business dedicated to transforming today's impossible ideas into tomorrow's necessary industries. Its partnership with Siemens provides access to a worldwide customer base, international markets, and unparalleled technical expertise, all of which it leverages to accelerate the growth of its portfolio firms. It invests in big-thinking entrepreneurs and firms that they feel will revolutionize how the world lives and works. Next47 employs over 70 people across the globe, including offices in Beijing, Boston, London, Munich, Paris, Palo Alto, Stockholm, and Tel Aviv. The company has its headquarters in both Munich and Palo Alto.

## **3.2 Siemens in Portugal**

The Former Executive President of Siemens in Portugal, Pedro Pires de Miranda, states, *“As a technology company, Siemens operates in sectors that impact the lives of millions of people in a globalized world. In Portugal, it is in a unique position to support all its customers and partners to solve current and future challenges by combining digital technologies with the physical world, contributing to modernizing industrial systems, infrastructures, and transportation, making them more intelligent, connected, productive, and efficient in a sustainable way.”*

Siemens's global experience, together with the excellence of its employees, local competencies, and creative projects produced with national and international customers worldwide, have contributed to the company's beneficial evolution in Portugal. In a globalized market, Siemens's path is defined by electrification, automation, and digitalization.

For over 115 years in the country, the corporation has marked the development of infrastructures in energy, industry, mobility, and construction technologies, employing over 2,615 specialists. Siemens has also built many global competence centers in Portugal, including energy, infrastructure, information technology, shared services, and application laboratories, which export engineering and services made in Portugal to 47 countries.

Siemens's technical expertise, broad portfolio, and extensive experience all contribute to the prospect of defining a more sustainable future worldwide. Digitalization, industry, infrastructure, and energy are some focus areas demonstrating Siemens Portugal's success in providing innovative and efficient solutions.

**Digitalization** - Siemens already provides digital solutions for the economy, industry, and future urban infrastructure, to increase efficiency, sustainability, and safety.

**Intelligent Infrastructures** - The digitalization of infrastructure is propelling our cities forward, from building technology and integrated mobility to efficient energy distribution and smart grids.

**Cybersecurity** - Siemens assists its customers in taking advantage of technological advancement while attempting to reduce their exposure to cyber risk.

**Industry Future** - Using cutting-edge technology, Siemens helps industrial companies become more productive, efficient, and flexible.

**Economy of Sea** - With a 943-kilometer-long Atlantic coast on the continent, Siemens seeks to boost Portugal's growth through its spirit of innovation, entrepreneurship, and development.

**Sustainable, reliable, and affordable energy** – We hope the lights stay on. The technology ensures the availability and dependability of energy for millions of people worldwide.

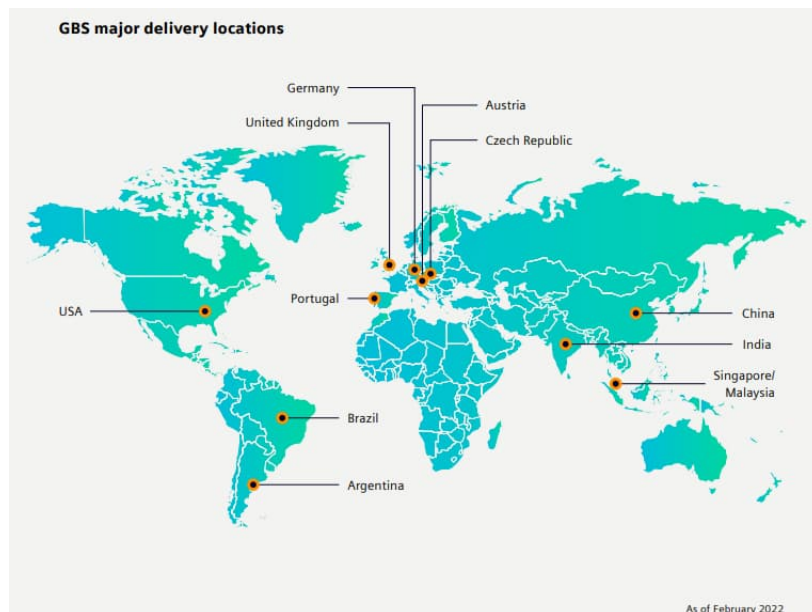
### 3.3 Global Business Services

The CEO of Siemens Global Business Services, Hannes Apitzsch, launches the motto by saying what is essential for GBS: *“The needs of our customers are constantly changing and growing. With our in-depth service and process know-how, we at*

*Global Business Services anticipate those needs and turn business challenges into opportunities.”.*

Siemens Global Business Services (GBS), with more than 20 years of experience delivering effective business services backed by the strength and ingenuity of the Siemens network. GBS creates, innovates, and manages business services for Siemens AG businesses worldwide as external customers. Its services include transactional and expertise-driven services in business administration, human resources, supply chain management, sales, marketing, and engineering, with a strong focus on digitalization. Furthermore, the service mindset of GBS is entirely customer-centric, offering competent workforces to fill critical positions and doing so as an integrated and seamless component of our client’s operations.

As shown in Figure 1, Siemens GBS employs around 11000 people in eleven primary delivery locations (Portugal, United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, USA, Brazil, Argentina, India, China, and Singapore/Malaysia) across the world to serve its clients. The headquarters of Siemens GBS is in Munich, Germany.



*Figure 1 - Primary delivery locations*

**Source** – <https://new.siemens.com/global/en/company/about/businesses/gbs.html>

In the fiscal year 2021, Siemens GBS provided business services worth €650 million for Siemens AG, Siemens Energy AG, and Siemens Healthineers AG. Aside from that, as illustrated in the two figures below, GBS bets on differentiated services tailored to the client's needs and values diversity and inclusion.

## Our key figures at a glance



Figure 2 – GBS Key Results of Fiscal Year 2021

Source – <https://new.siemens.com/global/en/company/about/businesses/gbs.html>

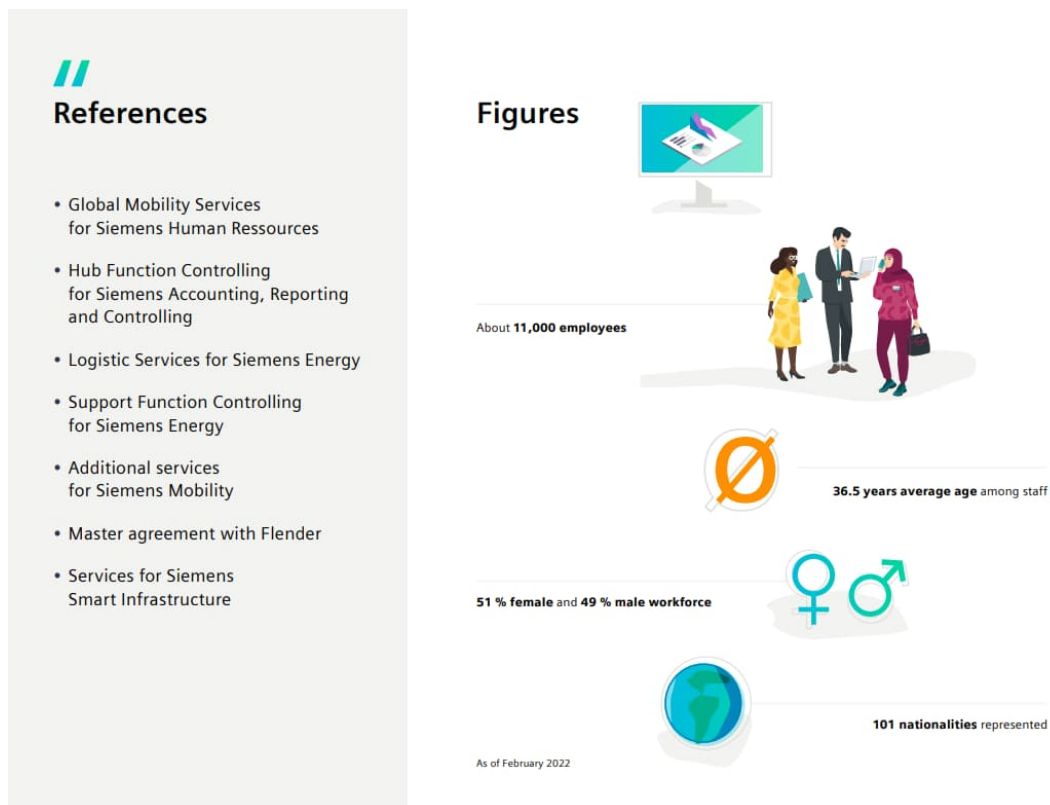


Figure 3 – References of GBS

Source – <https://new.siemens.com/global/en/company/about/businesses/gbs.html>

The focus of GBS is to help its customers succeed. The team assists clients in achieving their goals and ambitions by keeping their day-to-day operations operating smoothly. Customers who choose GBS select partners to help their company achieve new and seamless efficiencies. With an end-to-end approach, they can benefit from economies of scale while focusing on what is essential.

Thus, the end-to-end portfolio is composed of the following areas:

**Opportunity-to-Cash Services** - From lead generation to incoming payments, GBS offers the following services: sales support, order management, cash collection, accounts receivable, and sales support services.

**Purchase-to-Pay Services** - From purchasing to payment execution, P2P teams provide sourcing support, purchase processing, and tactical and accounts payable.

**Record-to-Report Services** - From finance records to closing reports, several services are provided by the teams, for example, master data, business administration/controlling, accounting and closing, and tax services.

**Hire-to-Retire Services** - The HR team can support the customer with travel & expenses, global mobility management, HR administration, payroll, compensation/equity services, and benefits from recruiting to retirement.

**Business Solutions & Services** – Marketing and sales services, technical translations, communication services, and logistics services are examples of the available portfolio.

**Operations** – The operations team provides service from planning to execution, beginning with project services and transformations and progressing to digital solutions and delivery management.

**Temporary Personnel** - Personnel Leasing, Recruiting Services, Payroll Services, and HR Outsourcing are provided by highly professional personnel services.

**Engineering Services** - The engineering team can cover all areas, from graphical system visualization to developing configuration and automation programs for equipment, systems programming, on-site and remote commissioning, and support services.

## 4. Case Study

---

This dissertation aims to answer the research question, "How did Siemens S.A., specifically the business area of Global Shared Services, adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of process organization and sustainable measures adopted?". Several interviews were conducted at various levels of hierarchy to this end. The questions posed to the interviewees are listed in the attachment section and divided into multiple areas of interest.

The first interview was with the Head of GBS, the Global Business Services and Lisbon Tech Hub Manager, where he shared his decisions and concerns.

How to save people was the Head of GBS's first reaction once a group had warned him about the various fears and threats ahead.

According to the Manager of Global Business Services, the decision process in March 2020 was relatively simple. Furthermore, considering that the number of cases in Portugal started at a low level allowed the decision process to be gradual.

Apart from that, because the pandemic had begun in China, the GBS in Portugal followed the same protocol as the GBS in China, which had already been under quarantine for several months. As a result, the employees were sent home for two days as a test. Considering everything was working, the final decision was to stay home since there was not enough time to align all the details.

In terms of the decision-making power uttered to the Head of GBS, he described that in this type of case, although the decision process is from top to bottom, the decision-making process is done locally. The headquarters in Germany could give some recommendations, but the final decision was based on local circumstances and decisions from Government and *Direcção Geral de Saúde*.

Furthermore, the Head of GBS claimed that the company was prepared to manage this circumstance, considering that the hybrid model was already a common practice. Employees already worked about two days a week from home. Although the homework environment could have been better (for example, the right chair or desk), he didn't have to improvise much since all employees had laptops compared with other Portuguese companies that spent money to make the first investment in this kind of equipment. Additionally, some infrastructures like networks or servers were not customized to

manage around 3000 people (for all Siemens S.A) working from home. However, a technological company, Siemens, could adapt and resolve these questions in a couple of weeks and create all conditions for employees to work smoothly from home.

Despite encountering a new issue two years after the pandemic began, he confirmed that employees' cooperation and collaboration were excellent, and there were no service interruptions.

Now the new challenge the Head of GBS faces is convincing employees to return to work in the office. He believes it is necessary to create intelligent and flexible ways to make sense to come back, for example, to foster people's contact personally as a team instead of only online meetings. A 100% home office solution could be an excellent way to work, but not for Siemens, which encourages the creation of a relationship.

The second part of the interview consisted of organizational structure and measures for supporting employees.

The first significant step taken by Siemens S.A. was to set up a crisis committee led by the former CEO in Portugal (Pedro Pires de Miranda), together with the Head of the Health, Safety, and Security team. In addition, several elements of the different groups were included.

The various teams met every two weeks to discuss the as-yet-unknown circumstances and to adjust their plans considering the pandemic development. Parallel to what was taking place in Portugal, other Global Business Services Centers worldwide were engaging in similar procedures. The Head of Global Business Services mentioned that he frequently met with the CEO, mainly if the Government guidelines were changed, in addition to the practices discussed above and developed internally.

Furthermore, all Ministry of Health recommendations were strictly followed so that no employee was jeopardized. Although a medical center was already on campus, it was exclusively directed during the pandemic to perform free tests for all employees. The company intended this measure to promote prevention rather than create a focus on contagion.

The facilities in *Alfragide*, on the other hand, remained operational. However, according to Government regulations, the facilities could only be used by people whose duties were critical and could only be performed on campus. It was a tiny percentage in

the case of GBS because all tasks could be completed remotely. Employees only went to the premises in exceptional circumstances, such as when new colleagues were hired and needed to come to the office to pick up their equipment.

Nonetheless, another interesting topic discussed during this interview was the expenses incurred by the company to keep the facilities open despite the absence of employees. Although no amounts are mentioned, it was possible to get an idea of the nature of the costs incurred during this period. The GBS building was closed, though the auditorium was available to receive employees who needed to use the facilities. For that reason, the electricity and water costs were down. Also, under these conditions, cleaning costs increased significantly because the company had a cleaning team that permanently cleaned all common areas. Finally, all expenses remained relatively constant due to the decrease in energy costs and the increase in cleaning costs.

New measures were implemented because of the unique circumstances encountered worldwide at the pandemic's start.

The first major initiative was to make the medical station exclusively available for free tests and follow-up (remotely for those with mild symptoms or through home visits for more severe cases). In addition, some burnout cases were identified at the pandemic's start. This prompted the company to strengthen the health area for emotional health and psychological support, putting a psychologist at the disposal of all employees. Furthermore, the emotional health and human resources management teams organized several online workshops to support employees during the pandemic's several months. At this time, all team leaders needed to communicate with their teams more frequently to understand the employee's conditions. Given the new way of working 100% remotely, it was critical to understand and identify the cases of those employees who might feel more excluded and isolated.

All employees from GBS and Lisbon Tech Hub received monetary assistance as well. In collaboration with Worten, all employees received a voucher for two hundred and fifty euros to spend on a previously defined catalog of essential products to create an ergonomically suitable workspace at home. Since then, all new hires have received this voucher on the spot to foster a positive working environment.

Siemens has also made every effort to assist families during this difficult time. Although they do not have computers for everyone, they have always tried to identify the

most critical situations and sell older computers for a symbolic price to families who could not afford each child.

The topic of meal allowance has been discussed. Before the pandemic, all employees worked from home two days a week, with a lunch allowance paid through the salary. The days spent in the office were not compensated because the campus has a free canteen for everyone.

With the pandemic outbreak, the company was forced to stick to the meal card, through which the monthly food allowance was paid.

Although the canteen had closed entirely at the start of the pandemic, it later reopened with limited services for employees who needed to go to the office. However, the company faces a significant challenge because employees oppose returning to the office. On the one hand, employees prefer to work from home and, as a result, continue to receive the lunch allowance via the meal card. On the other hand, the company has a social and contractual obligation to the company that manages the canteen. Therefore, it cannot simply close these facilities and terminate the contract with this company. As a result, the Head of GBS believes that the global impact of this decision must be considered, given that these installations represent a high expense for the company.

Another enhancement made by the company was the increased leverage in the entire IT structure.

On the one hand, and given that these measures would affect approximately 300,000 employees, there was a worldwide effort by several IT experts under the supervision of the headquarters. On the other hand, servers were unprepared for the high workload at the pandemic's start. However, after a few months of a collaborative effort by several teams, this difficulty was overcome, and better and more efficient server management is now being implemented worldwide. Furthermore, because of the fact that all work is now done online, the company has increased its concern with cybersecurity issues. Every effort has been made worldwide to constantly remind employees of the importance of staying alert and avoiding cyberattacks.

According to the interview mentioned above, we went to look into the effects of various decisions and measures imposed on specific teams.

## 4.1 Practical Applications: Real-Life Examples of Case Study

### **4.1.1 Overview**

In this chapter, we will compare the impact on organizational management in two scenarios: one with clear and objective guidelines and another with flexible guidelines.

Please note that we are referring to two distinct moments to frame decision-making. The first moment of decision refers to the appearance of Covid-19 and the organization's clear and objective decision that all employees go home immediately, with no room for exceptions. On the other hand, the second moment of decision refers to the post-pandemic period, when the organization chose a more flexible stance in making the final decision.

The Head of GBS (responsible for around 1300 people between GBS Portugal and Lisbon Tech Hub) made the first decision based on the information he had at his disposal, the example of GBS of China, and the restrictions imposed by the Portuguese government.

The second decision moment was proposed and encouraged by Headquarters, implying that the entire Siemens universe was pushing for a return to "normalcy," i.e., returning to the office between two and three times per week. This decision, however, was left open to local adaptation. Thus, the Manager of GBS Portugal did not impose a two-or three-day workweek, instead delegating this decision to each Service Line Manager, considering what is best for each team.

We will then present four practical applications of different Global Business Services Portugal teams dealing with the previously mentioned decision points.

Furthermore, the organizational chart below (figure 4) was created to help you understand the various levels of hierarchy interviewed. The teams considered for this study and the Head of the GBS were highlighted in blue.

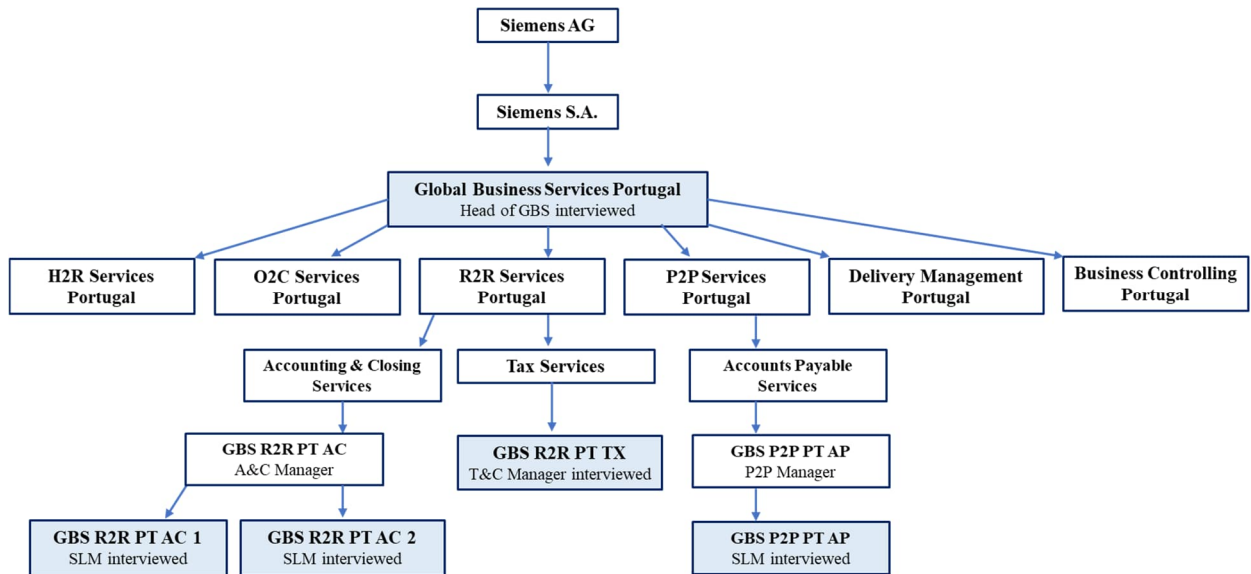


Figure 4 – Organizational Chart of GBS Managers interviewed

Source - Author

SLM from AC1 and AC2 teams report to the same Accounting and Closing Services area Manager. She, in turn, reports to the Manager of the Record to Report business area, who reports directly to the Head of GBS.

In the Tax Services area, we spoke with the Tax & Customs Services Manager, who reports directly to the Manager of the Record to Report business area.

Finally, we interviewed the SLM of the Accounts Payable team, who reports to the Purchase to Pay business area's Manager. He, in turn, reports directly to the GBS Head.

### **4.1.2 Practical Application 1**

**Team Organization Name** – GBS R2R PT AC 2 (Center of Competence DISW)

**Team Members** – 35 people

**CoC DISW** – When the Service Line Manager of CoC DISW received the message from the Head of GBS saying that they were all going home, she realized we were in a pandemic. Her main concern was the people because none of us had anticipated this scenario until then, and they did not know what confinement meant. There was little concern about operations because the team already did home office (twice a week and month-end closings).

#### **First Decision Process Go to Home**

- **Direct and objective decision** – Bold step from the Head of GBS Portugal; The Service Line Manager of CoC DISW didn't feel a lack of autonomy in decision-making; Centralized decision-making facilitated to manage of the team structure;
- **If she had made the decision, would she have done it differently?** – Having all the information available, the decision would have been the same;
- **Team's Reaction** – The team was surprised (perhaps due to a lack of awareness of the true magnitude of the issue) because they had not expected it to be taken in this manner, with no room for exceptions;
- **Pandemic and Confinement** – Unknown scenarios;
- **The main concern was people** – How to reach the teams after so many months at home, where team spirit is not fostered, and empathy is not created;
- **Concern about the workstation at home** – Siemens gave all employees a voucher from Worten (250.00 EUR) to improve an ergonomic workstation;
- **Operations were not questioned** – Since the team already did home office and people were more productive at home - people were motivated.

## **Second Decision Process Back to the Office**

- **Decentralized decision** – In this case, the organization was not as effective because decision-making was shared gradually and inconclusively. Later, Siemens only advised returning to the hybrid model, with two to three days per week in the office. After that, however, each team could decide what was best for them;
- **Internal Decision-Making** – As Service Line Manager was forced to make an internal decision that only affected her team. She specified that her team would visit the office every other week, twice a month. However, after leaving the headquarters guidance (2/3 times a week in the office) and attempting to meet it, she determined that her team should visit the office once a week;
- **Team's Reaction** – For employees, the new norm is to work at home and not in the office. In addition, people do not want to return to the office since many have changed their lives and moved away from the organization's facilities. The greater the arm struggling between the organization and its employees, the greater the employee dissatisfaction, leading to job search;
- **The primary concern** - Finding a fair balance between productive and motivated employees that provide excellent customer service and waging war with workers by requiring them to return to the office two or three times per week;
- **New way to manage a team** - Greater autonomy within each group and the ability to tailor it to the team's needs. For Service Line Manager, managing the team in this manner is more challenging, but it is also satisfying to do so without relying on an entire organization. There was much noise within the team due to the uncertainty in the decisions. So, the most challenging thing for her was emotionally managing the group and its anxieties to maintain stability;
- **The new challenge** - If Siemens says there is flexibility but suggests guidance, managers will find it even more difficult to impose a back-to-office rule - a tiresome and exhausting process for both parties. She tries to show the team the added value of coming to work in the office, promoting different actions, and not each person doing their job individually.

### **4.1.3 Practical Application 2**

**Team Organization Name** – GBS R2R PT AC 1

**Team Members** – 42 people

**GBS R2R PT AC 1** – The main concerns of the Service Line Manager of this team were not only to ensure that there was no interruption in the service provided to the customer but also to guarantee a close follow-up with all colleagues who were having difficulty finding a work-life balance.

#### **First Decision Process Go to Home**

- **Direct and objective decision** – The message from the Head of GBS was received naturally by Service Line Manager because it was evident and objective, facilitating communication with the team;
- **If he had made the decision, would he have done it differently?** – The Service Line Manager believes he would have made the same decision if he had had access to the same level of information;
- **Team's Reaction** – The team responded in a very natural way. Furthermore, in Siemens' quarterly global survey, employees from this team praised the way the teams were managed during the pandemic;
- **The main concern was people** – The Service Line Manager revealed that the team was anxious. That's why it was necessary to keep a closer eye on some colleagues and give them more leeway in dealing with the situation;
- **Operations were questioned** – The team already did home office during the month before the pandemic. However, the month-end closing tasks were performed in the office. For him, although he did not feel a lack of autonomy, the only worry was about the operations, and he was concerned about how they would be carried out from now on, especially during the month-end closing;
- **Concern about the workstation at home** – Given this new situation, all team leaders met and conducted a survey of the employees whose situation would be a priority to ensure that the activities could be carried out from home (access to virtual platforms for daily work and workstation).

## Second Decision Process Back to the Office

- **Decentralized decision** – The team assumes decentralization in the decision-making process while taking the organization's guidelines into account, but it makes an effort to identify the actions taken so as not to compete with the other teams;
- **Internal Decision-Making** – What was once a hectic time (month-end tasks) was completed from home, surprising the Service Line Manager. Apart from these weeks, the team planned to visit the office once a week;
- **Team's Reaction** – The team's reaction was not unanimous. On the one hand, the younger colleagues reacted positively, so much so that they planned to come for more days than initially scheduled. On the other hand, colleagues with more experience in the Siemens world did not react as well and were more resistant. They have, however, gradually adopted what has been proposed;
- **The primary concern** - Finding an appealing reason for employees to come to the office. For him, there are two advantages to returning: team spirit and face-to-face meetings, which speed up the resolution of questions that would take longer to resolve in a home office;
- **New way to manage a team** - The company has expressed the desire to return to the office. However, because the guidance was only suggested, Service Line Manager feels free to adapt and tailor the best possible strategy to his team;
- **The new challenge** – The Service Line Manager understands the headquarters' guidance, which is a more flexible decision. However, because it is unclear which rule should be followed, such a situation can foster doubt and confusion among employees. For one thing, forcing people to go to the office when they will all be wearing headsets and performing their tasks makes no sense. On the other hand, managing the comparison of adopted strategies by other teams is becoming increasingly difficult. Therefore, what began as a company benefit (flexibility) became one of the central themes within the groups.

### **4.1.4 Practical Application 3**

**Team Organization Name** – GBS P2P PT AP

**Team Members** – 80 people

**GBS P2P PT AP** – In these difficult and uncertain times, it was crucial to understand the other side and be empathetic to the situation that each person was going through, to maintain serenity within the team, as well as to ensure that all conditions were met so that the service provided would be fulfilled within the agreed upon deadlines.

#### **First Decision Process Go to Home**

- **Direct and objective decision** – The decision from the Head of GBS, according to the Service Line Manager, was a very clever and assertive choice that fit the tumultuous times;
- **If she had made the decision, would she have done it differently?** – She agreed that, given the information and knowledge available at the time, acting ahead of time and protecting people was the best decision that could have been made;
- **Team's Reaction** – Employees accepted the imposed decision positively because being sheltered at the time was the safest alternative in that time of uncertainty and anxiety;
- **The main concern was people** – According to the Service Line Manager, it was necessary to bring in colleagues who tended to isolate themselves more and to foster empathy for those who had to provide family assistance. In addition, it was essential to give specific training to Team Leaders to help them manage teams at a distance;
- **Operations were not questioned** – They were already doing home office twice a week, so it was not a drastic change in their working environment;
- **Concern about the workstation at home** – The early decision to leave allowed the team to secure all necessary access to the daily platforms, ensuring that the service was not disrupted. However, the system was not yet ready for many such users, but this was quickly resolved.

## **Second Decision Process Back to the Office**

- **Decentralized decision** – Since it was not a clear and assertive decision, it was not well understood by employees, causing some confusion;
- **Internal Decision-Making** – It was a decentralized decision because management's guidance was not clear and mandatory. As a result, in the Purchase to Pay (P2P) business line, the decision was centralized among the Team Leaders, and there was not one rule but several scenarios, depending on what worked best for each team. The more mature teams come to the office once a month for a monthly team meeting ensuring everyone is present and one gets together. On the other hand, younger teams come to the office three times a week to bond, facilitate the learning process, and become familiarized with the Siemens culture;
- **Team's Reaction** – At first, it was a difficult decision for the employees to understand, but as time has gone by, it has been more and more accepted;
- **The primary concern** - Since the Team Leaders have the most knowledge of the team, they try to give the employee some flexibility and work-life balance, attempting to schedule all events as early as possible;
- **New way to manage a team** – In this new reality, the Service Line Manager believes in finding a win-win situation for managers and employees, taking into account the current circumstances, and avoiding making large plans for the future because we never know what might change, is the most sensible way to manage a team in a hybrid regime;
- **The new challenge** – With management guidance being difficult to understand, the P2P Team Leads faced a new challenge: how to impose a rule on their teams when none was set by top management. However, as time passed, people understood that it was necessary to create a new dynamic, given the current circumstances and the fact that Siemens is not a completely remote company.

#### **4.1.5 Practical Application 4**

**Team Organization Name** – GBS R2R PT TX

**Team Members** – 35 people

**GBS R2R PT TX** – Given SLM's experience and the initial feeling of disorientation associated with this unknown phenomenon, this was the first time the theoretical exercise of Business Continuity Management had to be implemented, revealing the gravity of the situation.

##### **First Decision Process Go to Home**

- **Direct and objective decision** – According to SLM, in these extreme circumstances, someone must be able to make an immediate, effective, and all-encompassing decision, generating confidence in the decision made;
- **If she had made the decision, would she have done it differently?** – The SLM agrees that it would have acted similarly, emphasizing the importance of the same message reaching everyone at the same time, just as the Head of GBS did;
- **Team's Reaction** – The team reacted naturally to the directive from the GBS Head. The SLM added that it was a precaution for everyone's safety and that there was no indication of when they would be able to return to the office. This instilled confidence and provided some reassurance to the employees;
- **The main concern was people** – To avoid isolating colleagues, the SLM attempted to follow up more closely with her team through quick calls. Furthermore, it tried to provide as much flexibility as possible so that employees could balance work and family support as well as;
- **Operations were not questioned** – Since the team was already working on a hybrid model, operations were not compromised. The only concern was to flag situations where deadlines were delayed or missed because, in these cases, a different approach was required to keep the excellence of service;
- **Concern about the workstation at home** – There were no significant concerns in this field, as the team was already used to working two days from home.

## **Second Decision Process Back to the Office**

- **Decentralized decision** – SLM confirms the centralization of the guideline suggested by headquarters. However, she appreciated the flexibility that each manager was given to decide what was best for the team, taking into account the various circumstances and requirements;
- **Internal Decision-Making** – According to the Service Line Manager, the one-size-fits-all permission no longer applies, and as a result, she has decided that her team will visit the office once a week. However, it is a scenario that can be adapted in the case of the month closing weeks or one-time team events, and she felt no lack of autonomy in this decision process;
- **Team's Reaction** – The Service Line Manager attempted to have a frank, honest, and open discussion about the subject, trying to persuade the team that this was the best decision at the time. However, nothing is entirely watertight, so there is room for flexibility. As a result, the team reacted calmly, accepting and adhering to the decision;
- **The primary concern** – The Service Line Manager emphasized the difficulty of separating professional life from family dynamics in this new reality. The incapability to leave the workplace and go home promotes psychological destabilization, which has to be accompanied more actively;
- **New way to manage a team** – The manager's mentality had to adapt to these new circumstances as well. According to Service Line Manager, the managers cannot want to control everything anymore. As a result, until proven otherwise, it is necessary to build a network of trust in people because too much freedom is synonymous with too much responsibility;
- **The new challenge** – According to SLM, there must be a balance between top management guidelines that allow for flexibility and customer service commitment. As a result, it is becoming increasingly important for the Service Line Manager to maintain clear and open communication with the team, demystify issues, and build commitment among all stakeholders.

#### **4.1.6 Summary**

Thanks to the five interviews conducted, we understood the concerns and guidelines of top management and how the various departments implemented these.

This study was divided into two time periods. The first moment refers to the start of the Covid-19 pandemic (March 2020), while the second refers to the return to normalcy following the pandemic's peak (mid-2022).

The four teams interviewed followed the GBS Head's instructions regarding the first decision point. Despite the employee's surprise, the quick and early decision-making pleased them in a time of uncertainty and unknown. Furthermore, because all employees were already accustomed to the home office reality, there were no significant changes in their daily routines. Even though there were some initial technical challenges, all tasks were completed successfully, with no interruptions in customer service.

As we have also seen, the return to normalcy has been a recurring theme in all teams. Uncertainty, not knowing what will happen tomorrow, the impossibility of making long-term plans, isolation, managing family dynamics, or a lack of concrete and objective guidelines all led to people developing new routines and habits. However, management had to work extra hard in this situation. Employees no longer need to go to the office because all work can be done successfully from home. However, conversely, the guidance suggests returning to the office two to three times per week. This is the central issue that managers have been confronted with at the second decision moment (return to the office), which forces them to emotionally manage the team and all the noise created around this issue.

Therefore, we can conclude that the organization acted appropriately in the first moment of decision, leaving no room for doubt. As a result, the decision was accepted unanimously and promptly. On the other hand, the second decision process had a good intention (to give employees more flexibility), but it caused confusion and was poorly understood by the people. Moreover, because the company only suggested guidance, leaving it up to the managers to determine what worked best for each team, it had a negative rather than a positive impact. This became a recurring theme among the organization leaders.

As such, while humans enjoy flexibility and freedom, it is natural to follow the rules and set routines. This can be confirmed based on the two moments analyzed before.

After completing the various interviews, we noticed that employees collaborated and accepted it more when faced with a concrete and objective decision. In this case, the organization acted in advance of the unknown in an exemplary manner, with its primary concern being the safety of people and their families. Thus, given the circumstances, we can conclude that the organization acted appropriately, never forgetting to guarantee the services rendered and contracted with the clients.

However, in the second scenario studied, the organization's decision was less assertive and thus associated with confusion and discord.

Because humans are complex, no single decision is understood in the same way, much less pleases everyone in the same way. As a result, the guidance from headquarters to return to the office two to three times per week has become a controversial topic within teams.

The organization used a flexible guideline to appeal to people's common sense but needed to effectively translate its desire to have employees in the office again. Instead, employees interpreted this information as a window of opportunity to continue working from home. Hence, this became the most common theme in all teams. On the one hand, people wonder why they should return to the office when all their work can be done well from home. However, on the other hand, the organization must list benefits and develop strategies to incentivize people to return.

In conclusion, we could answer the research question posed by the sample collected in this study. The company was able to adapt positively to a completely unknown phenomenon, ensuring its employees' safety and operations' continuity.

Even though new challenges have arisen, specifically the impact on team operational management due to how the measures implemented in the two analyzed moments were communicated, the company demonstrated that it had the appropriate organizational processes and could adopt sustainable measures for catastrophic situations.

Consequently, this study increased our awareness of the importance of business adaptive strategies during a crisis. It is crucial to be willing to accept unknown scenarios because only then will we be capable of reacting in the best way possible, given the circumstances and information at our disposal.

Thus, it is increasingly important to develop the soft skills of today's managers and understand the company's operational characteristics broadly. In this way, today's leaders have gathered fundamental skills to act quickly and adequately in the face of adversity, keeping up with digitalization and adapting organizational strategy to the complexity and uncertainty of the world around us. All this is done to remain competitive by offering a business model that adds value to the customer.

## 5. Teaching Note

---

This tab provides examples of questions for students to reflect on in class. Thus, we appeal to the reflection and framing of concepts taught in the classroom through real-life experiences in a previously unknown context.

### 5.1 Case Synopsis

This case refers to two time periods. First, we focused on the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic (March 2020), an utterly unknown scenario with no scientific foundation. For many, it was a terrifying scenario, while others thought it was unimportant because they thought it was something created in a laboratory. It was, however, a disease that confined the entire world, resulting in many deaths.

Furthermore, after two years, when the entire population had become more natural with this new virus, all companies began to return to normalcy. However, because humanity had changed significantly, the concept of normalcy could only be applied to the scenario lived until March 2020.

Moreover, Top Management decisions have taken on different contours in these two other circumstances. On the one hand, the decision was clear and objective at the start of the pandemic. On the other hand, when it came time to return to the office, however, the decision was more flexible.

In this study, we will concentrate on the case of Siemens S.A. in Portugal, particularly its Global Business Services business area.

The Head of Global Business Services stated unequivocally that all employees would go home, with no exceptions. However, when it came time to return to the office, Headquarters provided guidance that suggested returning two or three days a week. Internally, the Head of GBS reinforced the advice Headquarters gave but left it up to each Service Line Manager to determine what was best for their team.

### 5.2 Summary

- Name of the Company: Siemens S.A.;
- Industry: Global Business Services;
- Country: Portugal;
- Period of the Case Study: 90min. → 30min. for reading the cases + 30min. for reflection + 30min. for discussion and conclusion;

- Details of the Protagonist: Service Line Managers;
- The Challenge Facing the Protagonists: The effects on organizational management in two scenarios;
- Supporting Material: Practical Applications are shared in this document's previous section.

### 5.3 Learning Objectives

After reading the practical applications, consider each Service Line Manager's various approaches during the two decision-making moments. Then you will take on the role of Service Line Manager, in charge of a team of thirty to fifty people aged twenty-five to fifty-five.

The main goal of this reflection is to describe your team's decision-making process in the two scenarios presented, ensuring no interruptions in the service provided to customers.

You must also be able to manage your team members, who will all have varying degrees of anxiety and resistance to change. Describe specific steps that will assist you in achieving emotional and operational balance within your team.

By the end of this exercise, you should have a more holistic perspective of what it means to be a manager. Also, theoretical concepts such as dynamic capabilities, business strategy, and organizational structure are critical for comprehending what it entails to contribute to managing a company whose primary goal is to generate profit. On the other hand, a manager's increasing adaptability should be valued when confronted with new circumstances, and challenges, such as managing and motivating a team virtually or accepting that reality has completely changed. People are reluctant to return to the office.

### 5.4 Examples of Reflection Questions & Response Suggestions

Answer the following questions using the theoretical concepts presented previously in the literature review.

**1. The ability of today's managers to use available resources and adapt them to existing organizational processes is becoming exceedingly challenging. Do you agree?**

- **Dynamic Capabilities** – A manager must thoroughly know the team's resources. This is the only way to develop organizational processes appropriate to the team's needs to anticipate hard times and respond quickly when faced with adversity. In other words, to achieve a sustained competitive advantage, a manager must understand how to manage resources according to the capacities available within the team.

In the practical applications, all SLM needed to decide what was best for their teams during the two decision points. Specifically related to the second moment analyzed, they all decided how many days would work better for each team. On the one hand, the managers of the teams GBS R2R PT AC 1 (Practical Application 2), GBS R2R PT AC 2 (Practical Application 1), and GBS R2R PT TX (Practical Application 4) decided to come back one day per week. On the other hand, team GBS P2P PT AP's (Practical Application 3) decision depended on the team's maturity and cohesion. Understanding how to be more open and accepting during the pandemic and adjust office visits to the new reality was essential to keep the team's balance.

Furthermore, as the SLM of the GBS R2R PT TX (Practical Application 4) team mentioned, ensuring the team possessed the necessary skills to provide customer service was critical. As a result, one of her concerns was identifying situations in which deadlines might be compromised. A different approach was required to maintain customer service excellence in these cases.

## **2. One of the organization's primary goals is to reinvent processes better to meet its customers' needs. Which business model should the company adopt?**

- **Business Models** – The key to a structural and successful relationship is the balance between supplier and customer. Therefore, it is critical to have a business model (for example, explore the business model canvas in the class) that allows us to present an accurate and objective value proposition to the customer. It is not just about offering a new service or launching a new product but also about how this will affect the client's business strategy. In summary, it does not simply present a value proposition based on costs and profits. It also considers a broader perspective regarding the process (essential resources and activities) and innovation (increasing digitalization and automation).

The KPI's are another fundamental aspect for both parties. These indicators are critical for determining whether the supplier is providing a service by the contracted metrics, creating value for the client, and assisting him in achieving the intended goals. As a result, a good business model must reinvent processes to become more responsive to customer needs.

Concerning our study, learning how to manage a team remotely was critical to ensure client service quality and maintaining team cohesion.

The SLM of the GBS P2P PT AP (Practical Application 3) team also mentioned the importance of training the Team Leaders. It was critical to empower them with instruments (mainly soft skills) that would enable them to face the "new normal" and manage a team from a distance.

The key to all this was communication between all parties (for example, through recurring service review meetings with the client to present the status of operations and open topics). As a result, they understood what the client required while also considering the new solutions that the company could provide long-term drive growth for both parties.

### **3. Do you recognize the new challenges the manager faces within this new reality?**

- **Home Office** – As we have seen in the literature, this new way of working has both advantages and disadvantages. Although the hybrid model was already in place in the cases presented before the pandemic, managing this new way of working has proven to be a significant challenge for today's managers.

People's new habits have also impacted their mobility and change of residence, making a more assiduous presence in the office impossible.

Additionally, adapting to this new reality was even more difficult for companies that did not have HO implemented pre-pandemic.

As a result, today's managers must develop new management tools, control operations, and motivate teams to ensure customer service quality and team consistency.

All the SLM mentioned that although the home office was already a reality, they shared how difficult it was to manage a team under these conditions, emphasizing the importance of maintaining even more direct contact with each member of their teams.

The SLM of GBS R2R PT AC 2 (Practical Application 1) expressed concern about how she would foster team spirit and virtually create empathy during this time.

The SLM of the GBS R2R PT AC 1 (Practical Application 2) team initially expressed concern about the month-end closing tasks because they were always completed in person at the office. However, this surprised him because the month-end closing is now done smoothly from home.

The GBS P2P PT AP (Practical Application 3) team agreed that it was critical to understand how to manage its teams' anxiety, stay close to those who tended to isolate themselves more and be more accommodating to the new family routines. It was also essential for the SLM of the GBS R2R PT TX (Practical Application 4) team to create tools that would allow for more personalized follow-up with her team. She explained that she tried to deal with the new reality by making quick phone calls with her team.

#### **4. How should a manager prepare to handle new digital approaches to work?**

- **Digital Transformation** – The motto is “*digital is the future*” (Shahi C. et al. (2020)). Digitalization must be one of the main pillars of a company's structural organization. This enables more inclusive and transparent organizational change across all areas, resulting in bolder business models and strategies. This adds value to the customer's experience, making the company more competitive and progressing. Digital transformation in businesses, on the other hand, is only possible if all parties involved are willing to embrace change in increasingly volatile, complex, and uncertain times.

Once more, KPI's are critical in fostering customer relationship management because they enable the company to learn more about customer needs, particularly the difficulties encountered during the pandemic. Consequently, today's managers must hone their analytical and critical thinking skills when confronted with various scenarios.

## **5. How should the manager communicate/manage the guidance imposed by headquarters and the team's resistance to return to the office?**

- **Organizational Change, Structure, and Work** – Embracing new ways of working is one way to foster change in the company's structure. This will better prepare the organization to deal with adversity because it will know how to prioritize its structural objectives or what is essential to operations. Consequently, maintaining effective communication and management will allow collaborative mindsets to emerge.

As we saw in the practical applications, how each decision was communicated significantly impacted how the message was received and, thus, how employees interpreted and accepted Top Management's decisions.

At the pandemic's start, more effective communication enabled the maintenance of customer services and employee acceptance and collaboration. Therefore, when everyone is more flexible and accepting of the unknown, there is a greater capacity for agility and resilience. However, when employees returned to the office, where communication was less objective, they resisted accepting the new reality, making it a stressful and central issue in the teams' daily lives.

According to the SLM of the GBS R2R PT AC 2 (Practical Application 1) and GBS P2P PT AP (Practical Application 3) teams, developing a new back-to-office routine based on non-mandatory headquarters guidance was challenging. They, therefore, tried to make different dynamics and appeal to the added value of returning to the office, always with the motto that Siemens is not a 100% remote company.

Furthermore, the SLM of the GBS R2R PT AC 1 (Practical Application 2) team pointed out that it did not make sense to force employees to return, each in their place, doing their job. It was a standard that demanded a balance between personal and professional life.

Considering the above and what the SLM of the GBS R2R PT TX (Practical Application 4) team shared, it became even more critical to maintain clear and open communication with the teams about all issues.

**6. Would you have acted differently if you had known what we know now (2023)?**

- The world now knows more about this virus. What was unknown two years ago is now something we take for granted. As a result, the organization would have pursued other options to deal with this reality: Perhaps there would have been no need to implement strict and restrictive measures and keep people locked up at home for months; perhaps the organization's action plan for extreme situations would not have been implemented; and perhaps the managers would not have had to face a new challenge of managing the entire team emotionally and remotely. Given what is known today, there are separation points for many other scenarios. Furthermore, concepts such as dynamic capabilities, the business models that the organization uses to re-evaluate the value proposition it delivers to the customer, the way it thinks in strategic terms, and how it faces new ways of working and subsequent team management could all have completely different approaches. As a result, Siemens may have thought differently, taken different approaches, and pursued different strategic paths considering what we know today.

## **6. Conclusion & Limitations**

---

The last two years have been fraught with upheaval and self-reflection, with a significant shift in habits and perspectives on life. As a result, what was once given normalcy has become a diverse concept with various points of view.

From a corporative perspective, the shift occurred at all levels. Leaders have had to change their mindsets and face new challenges due to how they have dealt with the unknown and their ability to react to adverse conditions. Also, the world has become far more complicated, uncertain, and dynamic. This requires the development of new leadership skills by new leaders. They are, specifically, able to respond more quickly in the face of adversity, not limited to knowing one part of the business but having broad visibility and strengthening their soft skills to better understand others and their needs.

The goal of this study was not to analyze the fiscal and financial dimensions but to understand the impact of the pandemic on the operational extent of the organization. More specifically, how the teams were organized during the two analyzed moments, constantly focusing on maintaining customer service and team cohesion. A critical aspect of this research is that how they communicate can affect the operability of the teams and their management.

This study provided an outstanding opportunity to recognize how critical an organization's processes are to be well-defined. Hence, the company will be better prepared to respond to the unknown, avoiding significant disruptions to the company's organizational structure. Furthermore, a company that is more adaptable to change and more likely to accept and incorporate innovation and digitalization will adopt more sustainable measures, becoming more competitive and adding value to the customer.

Furthermore, several limitations may have influenced the outcome of this case study data collection, analysis, and recommendation formulation. First, we only focus our investigation on a specific department of Siemens S.A.. Still, extending the study to other business areas in Portugal and other Global Business Services centers would be interesting. Second, the study focused exclusively on the operational dimension affected by the pandemic. Namely, how the teams kept operations running smoothly at the start of the pandemic and during the return to normalcy. It would be interesting to expand this study to the quantitative dimension and understand the fiscal and financial impact of the pandemic. Third, because the investigation is limited to the Siemens universe, it is impossible to compare the impact of this pandemic to that of other companies. Thus, it

would be interesting to investigate the operational effect of other companies in the same industry to understand better their ability to adapt to adversity.

Finally, based on experience, this is an illustrative case in which knowledge of the causes and available information could have been more practically nonexistent. However, now that we know more about Covid-19, another relevant study for the future would be to compare the decision-making process between 2020-2022 and 2023 by testing organizational processes and proposed measures.

## **7. References**

---

### **7.1 Articles, Books, and Journals**

Amit, R., & Schoemaker, P. J. (1993). Strategic assets and organizational rent. *Strategic management journal*, 14(1), 33-46. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.4250140105>

Barney, J. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management* 17(1), 99-120. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639101700108>

Barreto, I. (2010). Dynamic Capabilities: A Review of Past Research and an Agenda for the Future. *Journal of Management*, 36(1), 256–280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206309350776>

Bloom, N., Kretschmer, T., & Van Reenen, J. (2011). Are family-friendly workplace practices a valuable firm resource?. *Strategic Management Journal*, 32(4), 343-367. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.879>

Bloom, N., Liang, J., Roberts, J., & Ying, Z. J. (2015). Does working from home work? Evidence from a Chinese experiment. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 130(1), 165-218. <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qju032>

Carmine, S., Andriopoulos, C., Gotsi, M., Härtel, C. E. J., Krzeminska, A., Mafico, N., Pradies, C., Raza, H., Raza-Ullah, T., Schrage, S., Sharma, G., Slawinski, N., Stadtler, L., Tunarosa, A., Winther-Hansen, C., & Keller, J. (2021). A Paradox Approach to Organizational Tensions During the Pandemic Crisis. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 30(2), 138–153. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492620986863>

Choudhury, P., Foroughi, C., & Larson, B. (2021). Work-from-anywhere: The productivity effects of geographic flexibility. *Strategic Management Journal*, 42(4), 655-683. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.3251>

Gajendran, R. S., & Harrison, D. A. (2007). The good, the bad, and the unknown about telecommuting: Meta-analysis of psychological mediators and individual

consequences. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(6), 1524–1541  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.92.6.1524>

Hanelt, A., Bohnsack, R., Marz, D., & Antunes Marante, C. (2021). A systematic review of the literature on digital transformation: Insights and implications for strategy and organizational change. *Journal of Management Studies*, 58(5), 1159-1197.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12639>

Kłopotek, M. (2017). The advantages and disadvantages of remote working from the perspective of young employees. *Organizacja i Zarządzanie: kwartalnik naukowy*.

Leonard-Barton, D. (1992). Core capabilities and core rigidities: A paradox in managing new product development. *Strategic management journal*, 13(S1), 111-125.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.4250131009>

Morton, J., Wilson, A. D., & Cooke, L. (2020). The digital work of strategists: Using open strategy for organizational transformation. *The Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, 29(2), 101613. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsis.2020.101613>

Obrenovic, B., Du, J., Godinic, D., Tsoy, D., Khan, M. A. S., & Jakhongirov, I. (2020). Sustaining enterprise operations and productivity during the COVID-19 pandemic: “Enterprise Effectiveness and Sustainability Model”. *Sustainability*, 12(15), 5981. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12155981>

Olson, J. S., Olson, G. M., & Meader, D. K. (1995). What Mix of Video and Audio Is Useful for Remote Real-Time Work? In *Proceedings of the Conference of Human Factors in Computing* (pp. 33-45). Denver, CO: Academic Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1145/223904.223951>

Piccinini, E., Gregory, R. W., & Kolbe, L. M. (2015). Changes in the producer-consumer relationship towards digital transformation. <https://aisel.aisnet.org/wi2015/109>

Priem, R. L., & Butler, J. E. (2001). Is the resource-based “view” a useful perspective for strategic management research?. *Academy of management review*, 26(1), 22-40. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2001.4011928>

Rad, H. S., Ghorabi, M., Rafiee, M., & Rad, V. S. (2015). Electronic customer relationship management: Opportunities and challenges of digital world. *International Journal of Management, Accounting & Economics*, 2(6), 609-619.

Raj, A., Dwivedi, G., Sharma, A., de Sousa Jabbour, A. B. L., & Rajak, S. (2020). Barriers to the adoption of industry 4.0 technologies in the manufacturing sector: An inter-country comparative perspective. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 224, 107546. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpe.2019.107546>

Shahi, C., & Sinha, M. (2020). Digital transformation: challenges faced by organizations and their potential solutions. *International Journal of Innovation Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJIS-09-2020-0157>

Teece, D. J. (2007). Explicating dynamic capabilities: the nature and microfoundations of (sustainable) enterprise performance. *Strategic management journal*, 28(13), 1319-1350. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.640>

Teece, D. J. (2010). Business models, business strategy, and innovation. *Long range planning*, 43(2-3), 172-194. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2009.07.003>

Teece, D. J., Pisano, G., & Shuen, A. (1997). Dynamic capabilities and strategic management. *Strategic management journal*, 18(7), 509-533. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1097-0266\(199708\)18:7<509::AID-SMJ882>3.0.CO;2-Z](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-0266(199708)18:7<509::AID-SMJ882>3.0.CO;2-Z)

## 7.2 Online References

<https://new.siemens.com/global/en/company/about/businesses.html>

<https://new.siemens.com/pt/pt.html>

<https://www.siemens.com/global/en/products/services/gbs.html>

## Attachments

---

### i. Interview Questions for Head of GBS

#### 13.1.1 General Questions

- 1) What was your first reaction when you realized we were in a pandemic and everything would change?
- 2) Could you please describe the decision process in March 2020?
  - a. Who was involved?
  - b. What kind of measures did you have to take?
- 3) In terms of the power of decision uttered to you by Germany, how did you manage it? – (Considering that the decision process is top to bottom and *Direcção Geral de Saúde* requirement)
- 4) How much did you have to improvise regarding this new phase? Did you feel you had solutions for all the obstacles? Moreover, did you sense that you had all the tools to move to a 100% home office solution?
- 5) What cooperation/collaboration did you have with the employees? Did they accept the solutions that were taken?
- 6) Did the fact that we are a technology company help the transition to the entire home office?
- 7) How are you dealing with the resistance to returning to the office?

#### 13.1.2 Organizational Structure

- 1) What were the more relevant changes in organizational structure?
- 2) The facilities in Alfragide remained open during the pandemic?
- 3) New Initiatives:
  - a. **Health & Safety**
    - i. Upgrade of Medical Care Center
    - ii. Emotional Health Management – EHS and HR organized several workshops related to emotional health management to support employees during these challenging times.

- iii. Psychological Support – Siemens provided three free sessions with the external provider.

→ Had the above measures already been planned for the future? Moreover, covid has only accelerated their implementation? Or were they new plans after covid?

**b. Worten Voucher**

- i. 250€for each employee to improve its home office conditions → who was covered by this measure?
- ii. Did Siemens support family dynamics, for example, with computers for each kid? If so, how much did this measure cost?

**c. Meal Allowance**

- i. Siemens starts with Euroticket meal card → how many employees are covered by this measure?
- ii. Was the canteen open during the pandemic? Or did you decide to close it? → And the agreement with Itau was canceled? (Is there a social responsibility of this entity or not?)

**d. It Structure**

- i. The servers (URA) needed to be prepared to be used by everyone simultaneously. There was an improvement on this topic; the most significant concern was cybersecurity since many employees are using the network simultaneously. Could you please give me more details about this upgrade?
  - 1. Did the improvements made by the Portugal team help other countries?

## **ii. Interview Questions for Practical Applications**

### **13.2.1 First Decision Process - Go to Home**

- 1) What was your first reaction when you realized we were in a pandemic and everything would change?
- 2) How was the reception of the measures imposed by the Head of GBS?
- 3) Did you feel you need more autonomy in the decision-making process?
- 4) If you had made this decision yourself, would you have done it differently? How would you have done it?
- 5) What was the plan of action within the team? Was there a specific plan for each team?
- 6) Did you feel that there was a decentralization of decision-making? Or did all teams follow the same course?
- 7) Do you feel that these were actions appropriate to the circumstances? Would you have acted differently?
- 8) How was the transmission of the imposed measures to the team? Was there any preparation for that moment?
- 9) What was the team's reaction to the measures imposed?
- 10) Regarding psychological support, were many people using the three free consultations by Siemens?

### **13.2.2 Second Decision Process - Back to Office**

- 11) How is the decision process to return to the office? Centralized or decentralized?
  - a. Are there various plans for the different teams?
  - b. Do you feel you need more autonomy in this decision process?
  - c. Would you have followed another approach?
- 12) Describe the action plan within your team?
- 13) What was your team's reaction to this decision?