**Interview Questions for a Leader/Manager**

**Section 1: Background and Role**

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself and your current role in the company?

Pekka Helin

I’m commercial director at Froneri Finland; FMCG business, member of senior management team locally, direct reporting line to BEM (business executive manager) and indirectly to Froneri group head of commercial.

1. How long have you been in a leadership/management position?

25+ years

1. What are the key responsibilities of your role?

Region (Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway) net sales revenue, GP/GP%, MS and customer satisfaction among FMCG suppliers in Finland. Other Nordic managed by distributor partners collaboration.

**Section 2: Leadership and Management Approaches**

1. How would you define the difference between a leader and a manager?

Leader needs more strategic understanding and strong accountability cascading/communication to understand the entire organisation fluently. Strategy is delivered through people successfully. .

1. Which leadership and management style do you personally follow (e.g., transformational, transactional, situational, autocratic, democratic)?

Transactional

1. Have you adapted your leadership style over time? If so, why and how?

YES; and the journey continues. As I have a long career already; new generation requires a different leadership approach. We need to keep in mind that they are future managers and leaders. And we can learn from them instead of telling them. Long experience with higher responsibilities in addition to M&A transition has impacted the “way of working” based on group requirements for country organisations.

**Section 3: Impact on Decision-Making**

1. How do you approach decision-making in your organisation?

We have “weekly driven” culture with processes to support due to our business area. Therefore very present driven. Covid is past, however war, inflation, economical challenges requires strong leadership by “lead by example” - final decision is leaders key responsibility at the end. But that does not mean that you do not take into account your peers, nor other departments including our factory! One team integration.

1. Can you give an example of a difficult decision you had to make? How did your leadership style influence it?

Price increases is a very practical example since 2022 has been a “roller-coaster”; Cost of R&P, energy, unions (staff), ESG. And unfortunately it will not be over until the global (not just Ukraine) economic climate starts a sustainable growth path again.

1. Do you prefer centralised or decentralised decision-making? Why?

My experience is that you need both. Accountability reflects to every level of organisation.

1. How do you involve employees in decision-making processes?

Bottom-up - walk and talk. Organisation has more detailed knowledge, therefore valuable “deep dive” facts/views, and know how information is achieved to make quality decisions. At the same time you show respect, involve and listen to your managers/organisation.

**Section 4: Influence on Organisational Culture and Performance**

1. How does your leadership style impact company culture?

Serious Fun; business is serious as we need to deliver ebitda to shareholders/owners. People of an organisation need to feel that they are respected, be on their own (they feel being safe) and valuable assets for the company. A1 will not replace people 🙂

1. What strategies do you use to keep employees motivated and engaged?

Lead by example, demand nothing from people that I do not demand from myself, be available if your people need my support (my role is to prioritize; if workload is fully booked). Clear objectives, targets set. Make sure it is recognised if someone has contributed/performed well. Bonus remuneration does not replace ordinary daily relations among people.

1. How do you handle conflicts or challenges within teams?

This is the most challenging area of leaders/managers as people profiles are different. What works for one, does not mean the same to the other one. I’ve learned that it is better to react as soon as possible, instead of “I won’t care” or “it will eventually disappear”.

1. In what ways does leadership contribute to overall business performance?

Happy people contribute and perform with higher results and are highly satisfied. Clear job description of what is expected from employees, KPIs (key performance indicators). Build a common trust to the entire organisation. Strategy is clear to every organisation level. “Walk-and-talk” - be present!

1. Can you share an example of a leadership decision that had a significant impact on company performance?

New business agreements, Price increase ⇔ trade spend investments based on counterparts, organisation management/new roles/accountability. Investments to innovations => golive launch.

**Section 5: Best Practices and Advice**

1. What are the biggest challenges leaders face in today’s business environment?

Inflation, economical climate, consumers/shoppers behaviour on continuous transition - people are afraid of the future (not just business environment).

1. What advice would you give to aspiring leaders/managers?

Talk and listen to your organisation/team. You have only good and better people in your organisation. Build true trust culture.

1. Are there any leadership theories or methodologies that you find particularly useful?

From Good to Great book is still one of the best, Involve people, walk-and-talk, Be present & available.

1. How do you ensure continuous development and improvement in your leadership skills? Be curious how I will be a little better Tomorrow.

1. What do you think makes a great leader in a large organisation?

Human leader with great communication skills with quality business intelligence.