**Interview Transcript**

**Participant 10**

Interviewer: So, for the first question, do you just mind introducing yourself and telling me a little bit about who you are, where you're from, and what your educational and employment background is?

Participant: Okay, yeah. I am - I have been working as an insurance broker for the last almost 20 years and before that, I've been working as an insurance adjuster for 10 years. I grew up in Japan and I finished my bachelor's degree there. Afterwards, I came here and I have a master's degree, and after that I’ve been working in the insurance industry.

Interviewer: Okay yeah um, can you tell me a little bit more about your role at the insurance agency and what kind of agency it is, what kind of company and stuff?

Participant: We do handle commercial insurance. Sorry, so we don't handle like a personal order or personal homeowners, more like our clients are corporations. And then we are going to get the - we are the middleman and as a broker, we try to find the best-suited program for the corporation and negotiate with the various insurance companies and then present it to the client. So that's what we do, the risk management.

Interviewer: Got it. That makes sense. About how big is your company?

Participant: Very big. Yeah, worldwide broker company with yeah maybe several you know... I don't know how many people, 50,000 employees?

Interviewer: Wow that's a lot. Now, on any given day how many people do you usually see?

Participant: Well, that's a weird thing about COVID, that the last two years, you know, we kind of you know switched to the work at home. So, I’ve been working at home for you know, mainly for the last two years. Before that, we have team like, you know, less than ten people team. I interrupted with them often, and then by email and telephone with other colleagues in various locations, including Atlanta, Georgia.

Interviewer: Including Atlanta, got it. Oh, and where's your location right now?

Participant: Atlanta, Georgia.

Interviewer: You're in Atlanta, Georgia. Okay got it, and can you tell me like basically what your colleagues are like on your team, the people that you're interacting with the most?

Participant: Like a demographic wise or?

Interviewer: Yeah, demographic wise, and like what kind of people, what kind of relationships they are with you?

Participant: Again, it's changed during the COVID. It's kind of weird that you know, some people left during COVID, some people hired, and some people joined. So, right now we have like a few young, you know young colleagues, like twenties. And then others, we have you know fifties and sixties. Male female ratio about fifty-fifty.

Interviewer: Got it. Yeah um, how do you feel about your job? What do you like about it, what do you dislike, and if you could like rate your job satisfaction on a one to ten scale, what would you give your job?

Participant: I would say, eight. Very interesting job, interacting with people all the time, including clients and colleagues, insurance company. So there, excuse me. So many, it's a people, people job. But sometimes it's very stressful, we have to get to the very much details and sometimes we... hard to keep the due date, and you know sweat at nighttime. Did I miss that? That kind of feeling. So yes, very stressful but very rewarding work.

Interviewer: Got it. So, when you're interacting with clients like what are these... the representatives from corporations or? Yeah, okay. So, those are the people that you're interacting with the most maybe?

Participant: Mhmm, that's true, yes.

Interviewer: At work, do you feel like you can just be yourself, or do you sometimes feel like you have to act a certain way or put on a particular role?

Participant: Um yeah maybe, because you know, yes, I guess I do that you know. In a way, I'm kind of customer service plus sometimes salesperson to my client and then I have to negotiate with my insurance company side. I have to be sometimes tough negotiator, so you may change your tone a little bit you know, case by case. Yeah, that happens.

Interviewer: Sure. What about with your colleagues, do you feel like you can be yourself with them or when you interact with them?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah? Are you friends with any of your coworkers?

Participant: Yes, uh huh. One person I've been working with many years. So yes, I have to say she's my friend.

Interviewer: Oh good. Okay um and when you interact with your friends or other coworkers do you feel like you can talk about anything, or do you only talk about strictly business professional stuff?

Participant: Um it depends on what colleague. Obviously that I'm with the same company for twenty years, so I know some people already so I can talk about private but, you know if I don't know a person so well or... Maybe I tend to talk, I guess it's natural, you know female employees, we talk more private, but not to the male employees.

Interviewer: Sure, yeah, yeah. Um what's like the... I mean I guess with COVID this would be different, but before COVID what was like the social environment or the culture of the company? Like if you could describe the atmosphere of the workplace, what would it be?

Participant: I have to say it’s changed a lot. Again, those long years of employment very, very first time that they are not many Asian people in office. You know, I would say the majority Caucasian, and then there are African American people, and Asians maybe just a few. So, in a way, it was lonely and at that time. But things have changed nowadays. My corporation is really encouraging diversity and inclusion, so I think it’s a very good atmosphere.

Interviewer: And when, when did that shift start to happen?

Participant: Um you know, especially for the recent years, for the last several years, but the change is gradual because I see more and more ideal people in the office before COVID. Yeah, so maybe the last ten years I would say.

Interviewer: Okay yeah. What... If you had to guess what percentage of the company is Asian at this point in time?

Participant: I mean it's hard to say. In my office, well it's hard to say. It's hard to say, 10%?

Interviewer: Ten percent? In your office?

Participant: Yes, just a wild guess but...

Interviewer: Um and are there other people who are Japanese or what are their like ethnic backgrounds, do you know?

Participant: Japanese, Korean, Chinese. Oh, many like Indian people and like Middle Eastern type people, there are too nowadays.

Interviewer: Okay, okay. Inside or outside of the 10%?

Participant: Outside.

Interviewer: In addition to it? Okay, cool um do you ever feel like your race or your gender or your age impacts how you're viewed at work?

Participant: Yes, that's a fact I think. Yeah, I mean again that... I mean the corporate culture is great, but it's still there, you know I mean. Yeah, you are female and then you are Asian, I'm sure that it’s, well... so that's the reason I'm afraid this video going to be confidential.

Interviewer: I promise it will be confidential.

Participant: I think if you are Caucasian male, I think your promotion is faster. Yeah, that's why I still feel that way. Although I'm not complaining, I’m very happy that I was valued pretty well in my team so.

Interviewer: Yeah, sure. Um what about like do you ever feel like you experience any kind of discrimination or like racial comments or stereotyping at work?

Participant: No, not this company the previous company that was, again, a long time ago. The previous company I was the only Asian one time... that time I was... One time, I still remember that I was heating up the microwave dinner and it's nothing that oriental or Asian, it's just a tuna casserole. Then one colleague said: “it smells so bad”, so that really kind of you know... You know: “Oh sorry about that,” but it was kind of weird feeling.

Interviewer: Yeah, sure. How did that affect you emotionally or like how did that make you feel?

Participant: Well, well in you know those days... You've been here in Atlanta for all this time?

Interviewer: For a while, yeah.

Participant: Well, those days, you know people doesn't even know much about sushi. So, you know, kind of normal reaction, I can accept, but you know I'm the only one person again Asian person there, so you know I didn't like it, but what can I do?

Interviewer: Sure, true. Did you feel like you stood out or were singled out when you're the only person?

Participant: You know, at that time, maybe you're right. Again, this is a previous company. I tried to, you know again that I grew up in Japan, so I tried to learn the culture here too, so. My English was not great and yeah, I was um yeah kind of lonely feeling there, that's true.

Interviewer: Like lonely as in like people didn't converse with you as much or like did you ever feel like you were left out of conversations or anything like that?

Participant: Maybe left out. They’re not mean or anything, but I don't know the topic they're talking about so it's hard to join. So yeah, maybe kind of a little bit left out alone.

Interviewer: Sure, sure. What about in your current company, does anything like that ever feel?

Participant: No, gradually I learned more and more about the culture and language, and you know, after a certain point of who cares about that? I just speak up my feeling, you know honestly, very honest and then sometimes very freely, so no I don't think so at all.

Interviewer: So, about that, like since I'm interested in how people feel and express their emotions at work, it’d be helpful to know like what kind of person you are emotionally. So, would you consider yourself an emotional person?

Participant: Yes, I think I am an emotional person.

Interviewer: And do you usually like express and openly share what you're feeling, or do you tend to be more reserved or private about what you're feeling?

Participant: In business setting, I tried to reserve it as much as possible, yes.

Interviewer: Is that ever difficult?

Participant: Well, yes. Sometimes I'm frustrated in that time I call, you know I call my colleagues who may be very close to me, and we talk to each other, stuff like that. But yeah, for the business setting I try not to show emotion in my emails on my phone calls.

Interviewer: Sure, so um, and so what does that look like when you're...? What do you try to avoid and why would you say that you do that?

Participant: Oh, it's not professional, just you know, period. To me, that person who is shouting, nobody want to listen. You know so just preserve it, and then try to be logical, you know: “please do this by this date, any problems, please let me know” instead, you know “Hey why you didn't do it?” It doesn't solve any problems.

Interviewer: What about with your colleagues? Are there people who you work with who are more emotional in a business setting?

Participant: Again, this is a stereotype again, but then usually male colleagues doesn't show emotion much. There was a one female colleague show emotional a lot, which I do not like it.

Interviewer: Why didn't you like it?

Participant: Well it's up and down up and down, you know. Like a one day you come in and she's in a good mood, next day she is in bad mood. It's just tiring.

Interviewer: Got it. Did it seemed like there were any, you know, rules or anything in your office in terms of how you're supposed to feel at different times, or how you're supposed to act?

Participant: Oh yes, maybe code of conduct. You know we have to be professional to each other, no negative comments to each other. If you have any issues, you should talk to the HR.

Interviewer: Sure, can you think of any times, where you maybe felt particularly emotional at work?

Participant: When I'm stressed out.

Interviewer: When you’re stressed out. Can you give me an example?

Participant: Well if you say, if you have a due date and it's already past. You have a meeting next day, and you have not received the materials, I asked again and again, and that person was never responded to me, stuff like that. You know, get very frustrated, very stressed out and I guess I get very emotional.

Interviewer: So, what do you do in that situation?

Participant: Again, try not to show that, though. You know, try to be logical again. “Hey is there any problem? You cannot give it to me,” or you know, “can I help you” or something. Very, very um, I mean... Yeah, our company really emphasizing even colleague to colleague, when I talk to them, even the person who is maybe you know, working for me, we should be very, very polite, and that's my credo, too. Try to be nice to people. So, no, I'm not gonna, I try not to show emotion at office.

Interviewer: What do you think the repercussions would be if you were to show emotions in the office?

Participant: How much emotion? Also depend on how much emotion? If too much, it could be, it could be a complaint from the person.

Interviewer: Sure, sure. What about like positive emotions, do you ever feel like super excited or happy at work?

Participant: Oh yeah, definitely. Yeah, everything goes well, great presentation. I get very happy.

Interviewer: Does it seem okay to express that?

Participant: I agree. Yes, I do think so.

Interviewer: Okay, so it's just the negative emotions that you mostly try to...

Participant: You’re correct. Uh huh.

Interviewer: Yeah, um do you ever feel really anxious, or worried, or like nervous at work?

Participant: Nervous at work? Yes, you know again, due to I have lots and lots of due dates. You know, if it’s challenging, I get nervous.

Interviewer: That kind of relates to the stress that you were talking about when you have deadlines and whatnot? What do you do in those scenarios to cope with the stress or the nervousness?

Participant: I don't know. I need an answer for that. Try not to, I tried to shut down the computer at, you know, nighttime and then try not to think about that. Just like you know, movie ends and turns black so. But you know, it's easy to say but I'm still struggling for that.

Interviewer: Sure, can you think of anything else that you do to try to cope with it?

Participant: Watch TV, fun thing, or try to you know talk to my friends, maybe helps.

Interviewer: Talk to your friends, what about when you're frustrated? You mentioned that maybe there are some colleagues that you can talk to.

Participant: Oh yeah. You know I call her too, yeah.

Interviewer: Would you like talk to them about...?

Participant: About the problem I'm facing, to the colleague you know. To a friend or my husband, I don't talk to the details, but my colleague, she understands the details. So: “Oh yeah I know... blah blah blah.” That helps.

Interviewer: What about in the reverse, does she ever come to you when she has a problem?

Participant: You know what, she is more stable than me, I guess. She doesn’t come to me often.

Interviewer: So, it's mostly, yeah okay. Has anything changed, other than working remote, during the pandemic?

Participant: Has anything changed?

Interviewer: Yeah, during the pandemic has anything changed with like your work culture or work relationships or the dynamics?

Participant: I'm so get used to the work at home now so it's hard to think. At first in some moment, I missed the, you know, in person communication, face to face communication. But nowadays, no. I go to the office once in a while and I can see people so, no. What else changed? I don’t know, more dependency to the computer, technology.

Interviewer: Sure, um do you like to be... Do you prefer being in person, or do you prefer working from home?

Participant: Working from home.

Interviewer: Can you tell me why?

Participant: Skip the commute.

Interviewer: Oh, sure. In Atlanta, especially right? In the last few years, well in the last like two years, basically during the pandemic, there has been maybe a rise in anti-Asian violence in the news. Have you been watching or following that news at all, and does it affect you at all?

Participant: Yes, I did. I was surprised to see that. Um I guess fortunately we don't... I don't hear that recently, but one time, you know, it was very, very sad to see the news, you know the photo. Yeah, that was bad. That was bad.

Interviewer: Sure. Is there like any impact on you, or do you think about it, or have you changed anything because of that?

Participant: Fortunately, the people were surrounded by me are not like that, or at least doesn't show anything like that, so I was not afraid, but some of my friends told me that she's afraid to go out often like she used to, stuff like that happened. Again, I've been working here all the time that time, so I didn't have to go out, so I didn't have that kind of fear, but yeah.

Interviewer: Sure, yeah. Do you ever feel emotionally exhausted or experienced burnout at work?

Participant: Oh yes, same reason I mentioned.

Interviewer: Same reason, so like when deadlines are coming in, and you have a big project due?

Participant: Too much work, yeah. Maybe I may have make a mistake, I may have made a mistake in that kind of stuff.

Interviewer: Um, how do you know when you're feeling exhausted or burnout? Like what are the signs for you?

Participant: It’s a physical problem too. Again, this work is rewarding and I like it, but stress is definitely the concern. When that happens, I have, you know physical issues, a headache, irregular heartbeat, acid problems, those things develop.

Interviewer: Sure, sure. Um and in those scenarios like to cope, you were talking about earlier, how you shut the computer down, try to watch TV, is that the same thing for this?

Participant: Yes, yeah right.

Interviewer: Do you feel like there are any, any times, where it's maybe more difficult for you to, you know, get over your burnout or feel better because of the work situation?

Participant: Working at home that's the reason?

Interviewer: No, no, because of when you're experiencing a lot of deadlines, or when work is stressful, do you ever feel like it's more difficult at certain points to get over it, or?

Participant: Yeah it's always difficult, yeah. It is always difficult. And yes, you know watching TV and talking to friends, I tell you that it's not going to solve everything, anything. You know, that's gonna make me feel temporary good, maybe, but it’s still always there so until I tackle that issue and problem, it's not going to go away.

Interviewer: Sure sure. Um, let’s see. So back to the organization and the diversity in your organization, you mentioned that it's fairly diverse and it's like even for genders, what about for age? You said that young people and then older people, is it like a pretty even split there too?

Participant: Yeah, I would say so. I mean industry wise, you know our industry is kind of famous for the more and more older generation is prominent. So we, last five, six, seven years we try to recruit more young people into the industry. And that’s happening, so I think is even, you know balanced.

Interviewer: So, do you ever feel like your age matters with how you're viewed at work?

Participant: Age matters when?

Interviewer: With how you are viewed or treated at work?

Participant: I guess. Yeah, yes.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little more about that?

Participant: I’m sorry?

Interviewer: Can you expand on that a little?

Participant: I'm a senior now. I guess the view I'm getting older, and I was when I joined, I was so young, energetic and blah blah blah. But nowadays. I'm afraid to drive, you know, like at nighttime, you know stuff like that happening. And in you know, I mean the among of team I'm getting the more older in age, the senior member of the team, So, things are a little bit different nowadays.

Interviewer: Sure, um do you ever have to deal with like really difficult clients?

Participant: Once in a very while, yes.

Interviewer: Can you give me an example?

Participant: I don't want to be specific about this, but I guess the most difficult client is the person who doesn't trust us. So, they you know they have to have proof for everything we say, so it's very difficult without relationship.

Interviewer: Sure. Can you think of a specific scenario when that happened? Or is that something that happens somewhat regularly?

Participant: No, it's not. I mean fortunately really, our clients into very good, usually very good clients, but some clients just doesn't trust us. It's hard to say an example, I cannot think about any. Say we recommend something but they're not gonna listen, you know: “Oh that's okay, that's okay, we don't need it.” You know that's fine, but you need to know why you don't need it, but you know, “I don't want to talk, okay I understand, let's go to next topic.” I can tell that the person is interested, I mean interested and respects us and interested in our opinion and the person who thinks “I know everything already so just do your job” kind of attitude.

Interviewer: So, what do you do in those scenarios?

Participant: I just align with him, you know he is you know, whatever he likes. He is our client, you know, so make sure that he's happy. We have, I have to make sure he's happy, so just try to please him.

Interviewer: Yeah, sure. Is that ever difficult for you to like try to make sure that the client is happy especially when they're being difficult.

Participant: It is difficult, yes, but you know that's what I'm paid for, so I will try my best.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little more about your, because you said, this is a people job right? So, what sorts of skills and attributes, do you have that help with you performing this job?

Participant: Well, I don't know if I have a skill or not, but I think definitely this job is interacting with many aspects of, you know, the people. Again, client, colleague, and also the insurance companies, so I guess the listening skill is most important. I'm not saying I have one, but I think you listen what they want, or what they want me to do. I think, you know, listening skill is most important.

Interviewer: Sure, yeah. That makes sense. Is there anything that you would say you particularly excel at?

Participant: Again, I'm not a superstar so I'm just you know, trying to do my job that’s it. I try to listen and I try to maybe write down and try to remember what this person is like, what this person wants, try to organize, that's what I do.

Interviewer: Sure, what part of the job is the hardest for you personally.

Participant: I guess the staff is... I wish to have one more staff. So sometimes I need to do some project, maybe one or two projects going on and then I have clients send me email, that’s a very easy email, but it takes like a few hours to take care of. So “oh no, I can’t handle three things at one time,” so that the time.

Interviewer: In your office when you're there, or on zoom... Are you on zoom with your colleagues?

Participant: Yes, Teams.

Interviewer: Yes, Teams. Okay yeah, yeah. Would you consider the atmosphere or like the mood to be laid back and fun and casual or more formal professional serious?

Participant: Among the colleagues?

Interviewer: Yeah when you're at work. When you're literally in the office and when you're on zoom or teams and like kind of working with others.

Participant: About the same.

Interviewer: Which one is it? Is it more like fun laid back, or more like serious professional?

Participant: I mean, both are kind of same and no change... serious professional casual. Hmm I guess more casual side I like with my colleagues.

Interviewer: Sure. So, you would describe the culture of the organization to be pretty casual or pretty laid back?

Participant: I don't call that laid back, but it's not like a professional like you know. Very friendly. Friendly, yeah. Could be casual. Laid back, maybe a little bit different.

Interviewer: Is it ever competitive, or does it feel really hierarchical or fast?

Participant: No, it’s very cooperative. Very cooperative.

Interviewer: Got it, cool. Well, those are the majority of my questions. Is there anything else about your workplace that we haven't discussed that you would want to talk about?

Participant: No, I don't think so.

Interviewer: Well, if you think of something later, you can always email me well.

Participant: Okay, sure.

Interviewer: Yeah, I have just a couple of demographic questions if they haven't already come up in our conversation. So, you're in Atlanta, Georgia and you said you grew up in Japan um, can you tell me your age, do you mind?

Participant: I am... Can I say I’m late 50s?

Interviewer: Late 50s. You don't want to tell me your exact age?

Interviewer: No? Okay, that's fine and do you go by she/her pronouns.

Participant: No, I mean, yes, yes.

Interviewer: Yeah, okay. Got it, cool. Well, that's pretty much it, I don't know if you have anything else that you want to talk about? Nope? I'm going to stop the recording then.

Participant: Okay, great.