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CHALLENGES IN INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND
INFORMATION PROCESS IN CASE COMPANY

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SISÄISEN TIEDONKULUN JA VIESTINTÄPROSESSIN HAASTEET KOHDEYRITYKSESSÄ

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Tässä opinnäytetyössäni tutkin sisäisen viestinnän haasteita kohdeyrityksessä. Tavoitteeni oli selvittää kohdeyrityksen tämänhetkinen sisäisen viestinnän ja informaationkulun tilanne ja niiden mahdolliset haasteet sekä luoda toteutettavissa olevia ratkaisuja kommunikaation parantamiseksi. Tarkoituksena oli hankkia tarvittavat tiedot koko henkilökunnalta kyselylomakkeella. Kysely sisälsi sisäisen viestinnän lisäksi kysymyksiä myös koskien yrityksen yleistä tyytyväisyyttä ja ilmapiiriä. Perehdyin kohdeyrityksessä yleisimmin käytettyihin viestintäkanaviin ja niihin liittyviin haasteisiin, jotka mahdollisesti estivät viestin perillemenon.

Työ alkaa kohdeyrityksen taustatiedoilla ja etenee teoriaosuuteen. Teoria on hankittu kirjallisuudesta ja Internet lähteistä koskien viestinnän eri osa-alueita: viestintään vaikuttavat tekijät, onnistunut viestintä, viestinnän kanavat, esimiesviestintä ja organisaatiokulttuuri. Empiirinen osuus saatiin kyselylomakkeella ja toteuttaen seuranta metodia, koska olin ollut työntekijänä kohdeyrityksessä toista vuotta.

Kysely toteutettiin ajalla 28.9.2015 - 5.10.2015, ja oli sekä suomeksi että englanniksi. Kysely noudatti kokonaisotantaa, jolloin se lähetettiin koko henkilökunnalle, vastausprosentiksi tuli 58,3%. Tulosten perusteella kohdeyrityksen henkilökunnan mielipiteet olivat jakautuneet kahtia. Toinen puoli oli enemmän tai vähemmän tyytyväinen sen hetkiseen viestintä prosessiin, informaation kulkuun ja yleiseen ilmapiiriin kohde yrityksessä, mutta toinen puoli taas oli tyytymätön.

Työn lopussa on esitetty toteutettavissa olevia parannusehdotuksia sisäisen viestinnän kehittämiseksi kohdeyrityksessä. Yrityksen pitäisi määritellä kuka on vastuussa yrityksen sisäisestä viestinnästä ja mistä tietoa kuuluu mitäkin aihealuetta koskien etsiä. Lisäksi vastuu on myös jokaisella työntekijällä olla oma-aloitteinen ja etsiä tietoa sekä myös olla yhteistyökykyinen vastaanottamaan tietoa. Kyselyn tuloksena kohdeyrityksen henkilökunta oli toivonut enemmän virallista viestintää kasvotusten ja että koko yritystä koskevat asiat tavoittaisi jokaisen osaston tasapuolisesti.

CHALLENGES IN INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION PROCESS IN CASE COMPANY

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In this thesis I studied the challenges in internal communication at a case company. The objective was to discover the current state of internal communication and information flow and its obstacles in the case company and creating a feasible solution in order to have better communication. The intention was to gather the information with the usage of a survey for the whole personnel. The survey, in addition to questions concerning internal communication, also included questions concerning general satisfaction and atmosphere in the company. I studied the most commonly used channels used in internal communication and the obstacles related to them which are preventing the message to be successfully transmitted.

The study begins with background information of the case company and proceeds to the theoretical part. The theory has been gathered from literature of different areas of communications and matters influencing communication; successful communication, means of communication, leadership communication and organizational culture. The empirical data was gathered with a survey and by utilizing observation method, since I have been working at the case company for a fair year and a half.

The survey was carried out during 28.09.15 – 05.10.15 and was both in English and in Finnish. The survey utilized total sampling, in which it was sent for the whole personnel, the response rate was 58,3% . According to the results the personnel's opinions seems to be divided in half. Other half is quite satisfied with the current status of communication process and information flow and general atmosphere at the case company, however the other half seems not to be so satisfied.

In the later part of the study, it provides realizable solutions for improving the communication process at the case company. The company should specify who is responsible of the company's internal communication as well as what is the main source of information so personnel would know where to search it. However, the responsibility of receiving information is also for the employee to take initiative and look for information in the first place and be cooperative in receiving information. The personnel has requested more face-to-face communication and that information which concerns the whole company would reach all the departments equally.

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

The starting point of this study was to examine the fluency, comprehension and interpretation of communication and their functionality in the case company. The case company's operations are extended to sales offices located abroad which bring more complexity to the internal communication process. The company was founded in the fall of 2002 and the matter of internal information flow has risen on several occasions. This study will examine the communication flow both horizontally and vertically.

The study will be constructed from two parts; the theory of internal communication and the empirical research of its functionality at the case company. The theory part covers the very meaning of internal communication and thus explores the communication process, different means of communication and organizational culture. The empirical data is gathered by constructing a survey for the sellers' abroad and for different department employees in Rauma premises, to see from different perspectives how everyone sees the communication process. The survey is constructed of questions concerning the current situation of communication and information flow, general satisfaction and atmosphere in the whole organization.

This very same topic for thesis has been conducted in the case company for over ten years ago. At the time the case company employed 40 employees and everything was relatively new. The employees were still settling on what was everyone's job and position in the organization. The company was building its organizational culture. Much has evolved since then, however the question of internal communication still requires a little bit of improvement. Even though the practices of how to work have evolved, as an employee the author has taken notice that the practice concerning internal communication still does not work the way the employees of the case company would want it to.

Referring to the study made over ten years ago, it seems that the matter of internal communication has been in topic for over a decade already, the concrete outcome of this study aims to provide realizable solutions or recommendations of how to devel-

op the information flow more efficient and functional. The research methods that are being utilized in this study are qualitative and observation.

2 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Purpose

The case company is a successful company which is continuously making great turnover. However, during the author's employment in the case company, the author noticed that the topic of communication requires quite a bit improvement. The premises is basically one hallway where are all the different departments; accounting, production, quality assurance, logistics department and customer service (export secretaries). Despite the small premises and amount of employees, the information does not seem to reach everyone always. As there has been a similar thesis made over a decade ago, it can only be concluded that the matter on information flow in the case company has always been a ghost in the shadows.

The reason why this project is created is that it would provide a feasible solution or proposal for the case company, to improve their communication process' functionality. As a result of the study, the company would have a more efficient communication process and a more reliable method to ensure that the information reaches all the employees.

The author had been working in the case company since the beginning of March 2014, when the author began their second practical training. The author received encouragement from different departments concerning the topic.

There were occasions where information did not reach everyone, which naturally created tense and irritation and general speculation. The lack of information has not yet caused damage for the company's operations, but it is influencing on the atmosphere at the office. This is the reason why the author chose this topic; to make a difference for the better in the atmosphere, in order to prevent any misunderstandings to occur due to bad information flow.

2.2 Objectives

The object is to examine what the current communication and information flow process is and find out what are the possible problem areas. The author's intention is to find these problem areas and create a realizable solution for it.

With a quick glance, the internal communication seems like a matter which for organizations is commonly taken for granted and not wanting to waste resources. However when the internal communication is failing, it can be seen distinctly in the organization's operations and in the atmosphere among the personnel. It can also have an effect on the efficiency and commitment of the personnel.

In a small company such as the case company, communication is extremely vital and if it is dysfunctional it will influence the production, quality and profitability and not to mention the atmosphere around the office. In cases such as annual maintenance breaks; when the factory is not active and product available is limited, if this information does not reach the sales offices abroad, they do their job and keep on selling.

3 BOUNDARIES OF THE PROJECT

The author has set a few boundaries for this study in order for it to set the complete focus on what is relevant; the internal communication in the case company and factors influencing its functionality. Setting boundaries for this study was challenging since the topic was interesting for the author and especially the cultural factor would have been a fascinating topic to dive into.

This report will not be examining profoundly on how the cultural differences have an effect on the communication process or information flow. This would be an interesting aspect to examine this topic but it would then include studying five different cultures. However, later in this study, when the answers from the survey are being analyzed, the matter of cultural differences or geographical distances seems to be one factor behind differing opinions. In the case-company the factor of cross-cultural environment has been taken in consideration, as every time when something is informed for the whole company, the message is both in Finnish and in English.

Secondly, the study will not be focusing to the new owner. In case this study was to include the new owner, the topic would be extended into studying also change management and naturally then would focus more on the cultural factors influencing the communication and information flow.

4 IMPLEMENTATION

There are many factors influencing the analysis of the study and measuring the results. Basic requirements of a good study are its validity, reliability, objectivity, speed, present, relativity and usefulness. What demonstrates the trustworthiness of the research findings are reliability and validity.

4.1 Reliability and Validity

The idea behind reliability is that the results must be repeatable, meaning if someone else is to perform the exact same questions to the exact same target group, one should be able to receive the same results. The results should not be in any case random. This reinforces the reliability of the findings and ensures that wider community will accept the hypothesis. (Shuttleworth 2008)

Ensuring the reliability the questions should be self-explanatory and understandable. The results can only be used in the evaluation process if the researcher handles the study objectively and will not let own values or opinions have influence on the results. This is known as researcher (or observer) error, when the researcher allows their own judgment to have influence of research findings. (Website of Laerd Dissertation 2012)

Validity is an indicator of how sound the study is; it applies to the design and methods of the research. In data collection, validity means that the findings represent the phenomenon one is claiming to measure. The researcher should not be seeking certain specific results. (Website of Unite for Sight 2010)

4.2 Research Ethics

A research design should not subject those of whom one is researching to embarrassment, harm or any other material disadvantage. Ethics refers to the appropriateness of one's behavior in relation to the rights of those whom are the subject of one's

work. Research ethics relates to questions of how one forms and clarifies their research topic, design their research, collect and process the data, analyze and write research findings in a moral and responsible way. Thus, one must ensure that the way they design their research is both methodologically sound and morally defensible behavior. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 160 & 183-184)

In the reporting stage of the study, the ethical issues of confidentiality and anonymity come to the forefront. Allowing the participating case company to be identified by those whom are able to 'piece together' the characteristics may result in embarrassment. As discussed earlier in the study, that the respondents were to remain anonymous, once such promise had been made it was to be maintained. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 199)

Since the study will reveal organization's internal opinions, which can be considered as personal information which concerns only the personnel of the case company, it was agreed with the supervising teacher that the company will remain unknown and will only be referred as "case company" in the public version of the thesis. Furthermore, the background information will not appear in the public version, since the case company would be easily recognized from the characteristics.

4.3 Implementing method

The methods utilized in implementing this study were quantitative research and observation method. The observation method is utilized, since the author has been working at the case company for a fair year and a half. However, the author will not allow their own judgement to jeopardize the reliability of the results. The maintenance of one's objectivity is crucial during the analysis stage, ensuring one does not misrepresent the collected data. Lack of objectivity will clearly distort the conclusions and any associated recommendations. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 199)

The data collection for the quantitative research was gathered with a survey in appendix 3. The survey consists of open-ended questions and questions with answer options. Open-ended questions were only a few, since respondents sometimes tend to

leave them blank. The study utilized total sampling, in which the survey was distributed for the whole personnel of the case company. Total sampling is commonly recommended when the target group is less than a 100 people. The survey was sent in total to 48 employees and resulted with a total of 28 responses which provided a response rate of 58,3%. The survey was carried out electronically. The respondents were sent a cover letter (appendix 1 and 2) in an email which included the link to the survey. The advantages in a survey is that the researcher is not present which might disturb or influence on how the respondent responses. It was essential to send the survey for the whole personnel in order to be able to do comparison between different departments. (Rope 2000, 423-438)

When creating the survey, it faced somewhat of a transformation. The first draft of the survey included further questions concerning the background information on an employee. As it turned out, with that data, the results in some cases would have pointed on one exact employee, in which case it would not have fulfilled the criteria of the respondents to remain anonymous. Therefore, the background information questions were eliminated to only one question. Half of the respondents had replied to the first version of the survey which had more background data, however, I did not receive the results from those at any point. The further background questions were deleted from the second version of the survey.

The second challenge was that the survey was executed at first only in English. This created possibilities of employees to interpret the questions incorrectly and thus the study would not have fulfilled its reliability. The questions were then translated to Finnish and it was sent again to the respondents. The survey was carried out by utilizing an electronic form in the internet. The results were transferred to an excel-file, from where it was analyzed by using pie charts. The results were compared also across in order to find possible variations between different departments.

The survey was executed during 28.09.15 – 05.10.15. The link to the survey was closed and I was sent the results in excel-files.

5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
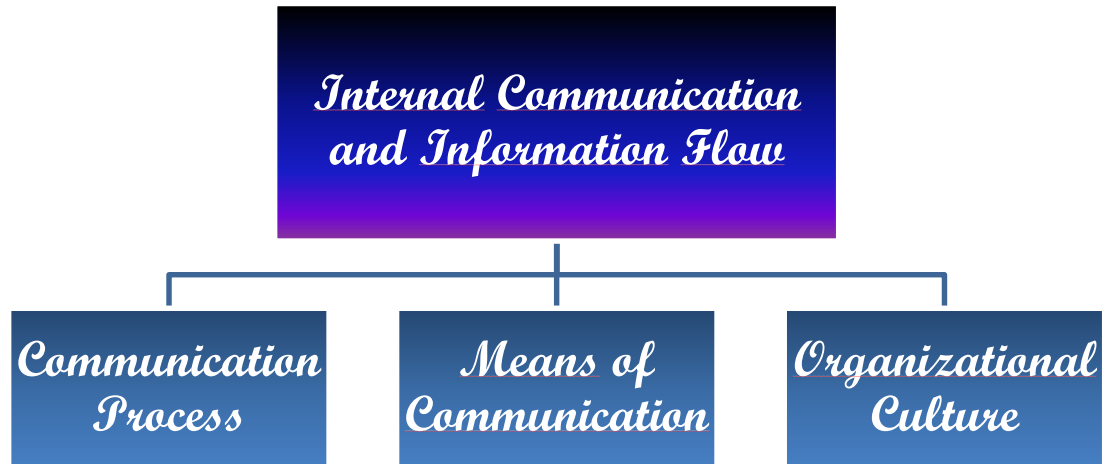
The framework presented above is created by the author. With the graph the author wanted to break into smaller pieces of what this thesis is examining. As can be drawn a conclusion from the graph, the main issue in this thesis was the information flow, and to gain the most out of it, is to focus on smaller parts; as in part 7 "Internal Communication", the thesis will be focusing on the theory of communication process, means of communication and organizational culture.

6 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

The term internal communication includes all communication taking place inside an organization. Internal communication in its simplicity could be an everyday matter concerning job related information. With internal communication one can share experiences, create organizational culture and the feeling of cohesion. Internal communication influences of the personnel's work motivation, the influence can be either positive or negative. Internal communication's duties include also informing the personnel of organization's economic situation, conditions of employment, changes in the organization and its values. Remembering, that the most important target group of internal communication is the organization's own personnel. (Juholin 2006, 33.)

Communication's duty is to support company's operations. By operations it is referring to organization's everyday situations in customer service, sales department, and marketing and also in management. The purpose is to keep not only the personnel up-to-date but also the external shareholders. By informing the personnel of upcoming events within the organization, it creates a certain control for the personnel. Functional communication creates and maintains a positive image for the recipients. (Rötkö 2005, 4.)

Communication is an important factor in the organization's internal communication, but at least as important is listening. The route the sender is transmitting his/her message; the sender must be cooperative when receiving the message. Gennard lists in his book three listening related skills, in addition to communication, which are to be remembered when discussing about successful communication. Firstly Gennard reminds that a discussed matter can only be heard once so one must listen carefully and respect the sender's message. Secondly, what Gennard emphasized was interpretation. Besides understanding what has been heard, the interpretation is also important in internal communication. The last skill he emphasized was that the human brain works faster than we are able to speak. By this he means that when discussing with someone, the one should only concentrate on the ongoing conversation and put all of their focus to that employee they are communicating with. (Gennard 1999, 242.)

The success of internal communication can depend on the structure of the communication. The structure embodies of which channels or sources people primarily seek which information (Åberg, SI-matrix). In other words; different channels form their own tasks when people are seeking information related to their work or working community. For example matters concerning own work are to be asked from their own superior and the whole working community's performance data are sought from the intranet or are fulfilled in own teams, future related information are expected to be informed by the management. (Juholin 2001, 123-124.)

The structure of communication is formed in each community to its own kind. Updated and professionally created intranet has risen in many working communities to the most important or at least second most important channel to seek for information. In other working communities face-to-face communication is experienced as most important channel. The structure can be modified according to organization's values. (Juholin 2001, 124.)

6.1 Communication Process

The communication process always consists of the same steps or parts through which messages are being sent from the sender to the receiver. The process begins when the sender wants to transmit their idea or opinion to the receiver and the receiver in turn offers feedback to the sender. As presented below, no matter which means to use for communication, each follow the same communication process which includes the sender, who needs to choose the best mean depending on whom the matter concerns, in order for the message to be transmitted most efficiently. The main components of communication process are sender, message, channel, receiver and feedback. (Website of Business Communication 2015)

Fig: Communication Process
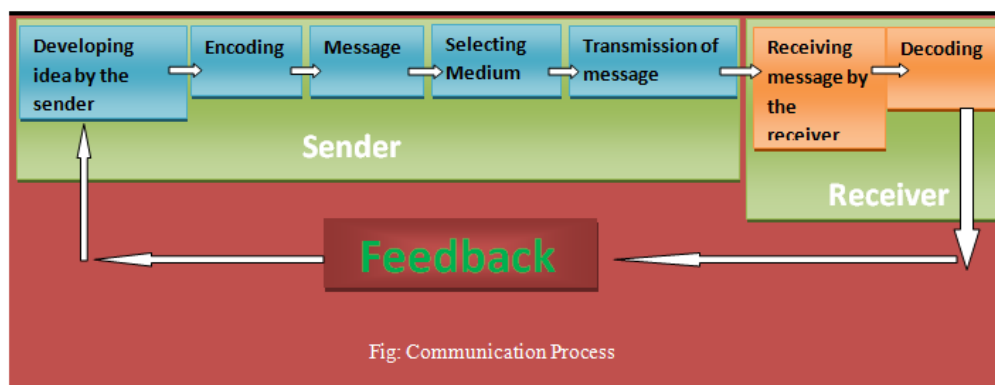
Communication Process (The Website of Business Communication 2015)

The steps through which communication takes place between the sender and the receiver is the communication process. It begins when the sender forms a concept or an idea and ends with the feedback from the receiver. Altogether, there are eight steps in the communication process, which are:

✓ **Sender:** The first step is when the sender has developed their idea. This step is also known as the planning stage, since the communicator plans the subject matter of communication.

✓ **Encoding:** The encoding step is converting or translating the idea into a comprehensive form that can be then transmitted to others.

✓ **Developing message:** When the message has been encoded the sender can then transmit it to the receiver. The message can be either oral, written, symbolic or nonverbal. When people talk, the speech is the message; when people laugh, the laughter is the message.

✓ **Selecting the channel:** The channel is the mean that one chooses to transmit the message to the receiver. Once the message has been encoded by the sender, the next step is to select the best medium for transmitting it. As pointed out in the previous step, the medium of communication can be writing, speaking, body gestures etc.

✓ **Message transmission:** The sender transmits the message through the channel they have chosen. In this part of the communication cycle, the sender's tasks end after the message has been transmitted.

✓ **Receiving the message:** This step is only about the reception of the message by the receiver.

✓ **Decoding:** Decoding is the most important step. It is the receiver's interpretation of the message the sender has transmitted. In this part the receiver converts the message and tried to analyze and understand it. The communication can only be successful if the sender and receiver assign the same meaning to the message.

✓ **Feedback:** This is the final step. The receiver's reaction to the sender's message. Feedback is receiver's response to the message they have just encoded. The feedback ensures that the receiver has in fact correctly understood the message. It is the essence of two-way communication. (Website of Business Communication 2015)

The successes of communication processes are often interfered by many different background factors which are commonly called as 'noise'. These factors are being discussed later in chapter 7.1.2 Obstacles in Internal Communication.

6.1.1 Leadership Communications

Leadership communications is management work in organizations, which emphasizes such as the interpretation of matters and producing the information which is being searched. It is management's duty to distribute the information for individuals and groups. The management is to supervise, organize and motivate subordinates and encourage interaction and the sense of community. (Åberg 2006, 93.)

For the communication to be successful in an organization the most important factor is the superior. The work effort of the superior influences directly to the personnel's comfort level and commitment to work. The superior should work closely to the subordinates, which would enable then to seek guidance from close range. (Juholin 2006, 164-165.)

Organizations' greatest source of power is usually communication. Therefore it is crucial to plan, control and supervise it, just as any other power sources. Communication supports from its own part for the working community to achieve their goals

and creating results, so it is important to maintain a functional communication system. (Åberg 2006, 164-165.)

The superiors stand in an important role when discussing of the successful communication process. Everything starts from the management. The superior's success in the internal communication is important concerning the fluency of working and the atmosphere around the office. The superior must have credibility in the eyes of workers and obtain the workers' respect by own actions as a leader. (Järvinen 2005, 33,69.)

6.1.2 Obstacles in internal communication

Internal communication will never be perfect; there will always be something that could use some improvement. What is problematic in internal communication is that it is often based on assumptions and then following new assumptions. The message to be successfully transmitted and received is often influenced by so called 'noise' which can be such as rush, when employees are simply too busy to be focused on the message and its content targeted for them. The number of communicators inside the organization and their location can also be included to the obstacles in getting the communication across. In addition to these, also communication channels can cause problems in the transmission of the message. The organization's problem might be that they do not have a single communication channel that would reach the entire organization at once. (Misteil 2002, 6.)

Commonly the internal communication fails when the message and its necessity are defined only by the management of the organization. Internal messages are usually sent from superior level, but the recipients are the subordinates whom are the ones who should decode and interpret the message and its content. What creates the problem in these cases is that the superiors do not feel as it would be necessary to discuss with whom the message involves. Thus the message will only remain as a peak of the iceberg of what the organization's management actually knows about the message. Taking subordinates into account in internal communication is crucial and examine if

there are issues or problems within the organization that should be interfered in order to improve the functionality of internal communication. (Misteil 2002, 6-11.)

Internal communication is important especially when an organization is experiencing changes. In case the personnel do not have enough information of the change, they also cannot adjust to the changes. The lack of internal communication can cause opposition in the personnel against changes. When informing of big decisions or changes, it is usually management's the responsibility to inform the personnel. In case the management lacks the commitment to pass on the information, the information does not move forward. It is not enough that the management is aware of upcoming changes; the awareness should be distributed to all levels of organization. In case management does not inform personnel actively, the personnel may feel as they are not valued nor cared for. (Juholin 2001)

Commonly the sender is the one facing the blame, but occasions the reason for bad information flow can also be in the receiver's end. If personnel is not committed enough to the organization and are not interested of internal matters, they might ignore the message and not read it in the first place. The message can also drown in the constant flow of emails or if it is hectic at work, and planning "to read it when I have time". (Juholin 2001)

6.1.3 Satisfaction of Communication

When discussing of internal communications, the evaluation of communication often wraps around the concept of communication satisfaction. By communication satisfaction it is referring to satisfaction on the information received. The possibilities of being heard and being able to make a difference in own working community is strongly connected to communication satisfaction. (Juholin 2001, 113.)

The main flaws in communication are commonly:
- The management does not know what the personnel is thinking. In other words; the personnel feels as the managements is not aware of what the organization is experiencing.

- The information reaches personnel as rumors.
- The management is not telling the personnel important and relevant matters.
- The information is not easily available.

(Juholin 2001, 117.)

In 1978 Osmo A. Wiio created an Organizational Communication Development (OCD), which is still used to measure the satisfaction of communication. In OCD he defined the dimensions of communication satisfaction to the satisfaction to 1) own work, 2) the content of message or received information, 3) improving the internal communication and 4) the effectiveness of channels used in internal communication. (Wiio 1994, 214-222.)

The essential matters in Wiio's method are channel deficit and knowledge deficit, and by analyzing these can be found paths to sources of communication satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The channel deficit measures the wanted and received information's differences of provided channels. Knowledge deficit states the difference of wanted and received information. The larger the channel deficits is the more information is wanted on that particular channel, and the larger the knowledge deficit is the more information is wanted on that particular topic in the organization. The largest knowledge deficits seems to be in the change communication, whether it is concerning of ways of working, organization and its changes, employment situation and recruitment or matters involving it. (Wiio 1994, 214-222.)

In the working atmosphere it is important to consider that the quantity of information does not necessarily increase the satisfaction at work. Too much communication can cause pressure for the employees and create tension. Thus it is important to keep in mind to whom the message is meant to send for and whom the message involves. Communication can create false expectations which can lead to let downs among the personnel in case the expectations are not met. Increasing the amount of communication alone does not fix the flaws in information and communication flow. (Fisher 1981, 282-283)

6.2 Means of communication

The communicator has three different ways to communicate: personal communication, printed communication and electrical communication. Electrical communication includes computer based and telephone communication. Communication in the internet has increased within the past few years to a very large extent in corporate communications; however personal communication has not lost its position as the most versatile communication channel. Printed communications are used when the personnel has no access to the internet. Printed communication is rarely used in the case company so it will not be discussed in the theory. (Juholin 2006, 116-119)

Communication does not concentrate only on getting the message delivered from person A to person B. It is important to select carefully the best means and channels, which has the highest probability of reaching the receiver. When transmitting the message, it is crucial to keep in mind what is the target group to whom you want to transmit the message. In case the message reaches the receiver, it doesn't mean that the message necessarily has been understood. As that being said, the information usually does reach the receiver, but it does not guarantee that the message will be interpreted in a correct way. This is a common element for example in electrical communication. (Juholin 2006, 16-18.)

When organizing the internal communication, it is worthwhile to keep in mind that also factors outside of the organization may have an influence on the internal communication, such as competitors, customers, subcontractors, and colleagues in other communities or even mass media. In case the internal communication in the working community is not working or is secretive, outside "publicists" may reach to an important role and the consequences are not always positive. This is why it should be specified on which route the wanted message will be transmitted. (Juholin 2006, 123))

The equipment and methods for internal communication evolve continuously, since in changing environment the real-time information sharing and controlling are organization's success' cornerstones. In internal communication the informing has shifted

from paper announcements to e-mails and from there on to utilization of intranet services. (Jussila & Leino 1999)

6.2.1 Personal communication

Personal communication is the most important channel of communication which holds the company together. It is one of the most important ways of increasing the efficiency and development. From the different channels, personal communication requires the most accuracy and the effort of understanding. (Österberg 2005, 106-107; Misteil 2002, 6)

Face-to-face communication

One of face-to-face communication's advantages is its speed. Once one has transmitted their message to their audience, there is no time lag between the transmission and the reception. The second advantage is the control it gives one as the speaker. One might use hours to writing an announcement when the recipient could just scan the document through without giving it much of thought or reading it at all. However, in face-to-face communication one has a certain control on the receiver's attention. Third advantage is the instantaneous feedback one will receive after transmitting the message. When speaking to one or more people, the speaker can respond to questions as soon as they arise. In case someone has not fully understood, the speaker can rephrase the sentence and ensure that the message has been interpreted correctly. (Adler & Elmhorst 2002, 24-25.)

According to a Forbes Insights (2009) survey, eight out of ten respondents preferred face-to-face meetings over technology enabled meetings. Face-to-face communication builds stronger and more meaningful business relationships. In face-to-face communication it is easier to read body language and facial expressions and there is a lower risk to be misunderstood. (Website of Smallbusiness 2010)

Word-of-mouth:

Usually when it is spoken of word-of-mouth in the field of communication and literature, it often involves a critical tone. It is considered as a threat for community's

functionality. However according to recent studies this might not be the case, but the information exchanging and interactions occurring in the network are essential for the point-of-view of organizations' functionality and personnel's motivation. (Juholin 1999, 144)

Informal and formal communication usually run side by side in organizations. Formal communication is related to work and supervision, when informal communication satisfies personnel's social and psychological needs. With word-of-mouth or, co-worker communication, the personnel evolve their interactions which is needed in formal communication. Informal communication also helps to adapt in groups. Personnel's informal communication topics are usually related to work, organization, management and colleagues. The information travels fast through conversations. Word-of-mouth is considered as an unreliable channel since it spreads unconfirmed information. If the information flow is inadequate in the community or it does not work, the information travels via informal channels. (Alajärvi, Herno, Koskinen & Yrttiaho 1999, 53)

6.2.2 Electrical communication

E-Mail

E-mail is an effective information and communication channel. In many organizations the usage of e-mail has gone to extremes and employees are receiving dozens of e-mails daily. As a solution to this problem, organizations have set some ground rules for e-mail usage. According to Juholin the rules could contain the following matters:

- ✓ The subject should be as informative as possible so that the recipient knows what the e-mail concerns. Subjects such as "urgent" and "new and events" are too general and doesn't reveal what the message is about.
- ✓ E-mail communication is usually connected to matters that are already known or matters that people are already oriented. The message is to be presented as simply as possible and without any preface.

✓ Sending attachments should be avoided since they overload the e-mail account. The message itself should be in the text unless the attachment is sent according to beforehand made agreement.

✓ In e-mail communication it is recommended to use standard language in case there are many recipients. In a dual email conversation the recipient might pass forward the e-mail, when the usage of speech language may cause misinterpretation.

✓ In most cases the sender is in doubt if their message was technically successfully transmitted. A good practice is to request a reply to a certain date.

✓ During vacations and absences it is good to leave a message when one will be reached next time.

✓ The security of e-mail is not always a matter which people agree on. In many organizations there are set ground rules on what kind of communication can be executed via e-mail.

(Juholin 1999, 156-157)

E-mail was one of the first acquaintances to the world of electrical communication and it is still defending its place in one of the most important means of communication among workplaces. E-mail is a very effective mean of communication. In a few seconds a message can be sent as a list to hundreds or even thousands of recipients. An e-mail can be sent to a colleague sitting on the other side of the wall or to colleagues who are physically distant. It is a convenient way of sending photos, documents, links, minutes and handle up to daily managerial communications. E-mail is a quick and easy way of communicate which is both an advantage and a disadvantage; because of being so easy and convenient, the amount of e-mails received per day can be too much and thus something important can easily drown in the middle of other e-mails. (Website of Organisaatioviestinta 2013)

Intranet

Intranet is an organization's internal network which utilizes the same technology as the Internet. The size of the network can vary from a few computers to thousands of computers and combining continental internal network, to where outsiders have no access. (Jussila & Leino 1999, 80)

Intranet and email have changed the organization's communication structure perhaps more than any other media and the intranet affects to the organization culture. More often written announcements, information board and publications are replaced with net versions partially or completely. Networking has changed the communication of the working community decisively, since the information is available to anyone who has access to the intranet, no matter what is their geographical location. Transmitting a message to a number of people at once and a high-speed information retrieval method are the greatest benefits of online communication. The negative aspect of network communication is that it decreases the amount of face-to-face communication in organizations. Juholin quotes in her book "Communicare! –Viestintä strategiasta käytäntöön (Communication from strategy to practice)" a researcher Kirsi Kallio (1998), according to whom the new type of dialogue made possible by the networks is the biggest novelty and most valuable outcome for communications. In return, the usage of the technology shapes the way people communicate in communities. Individual's different roles and their commitment to working community, individual backgrounds and situational factors can have an influence on the ways of using communication technology. Different personnel department's different starting points on the usage of technology must be taken into account. (Juholin 2001, 141)
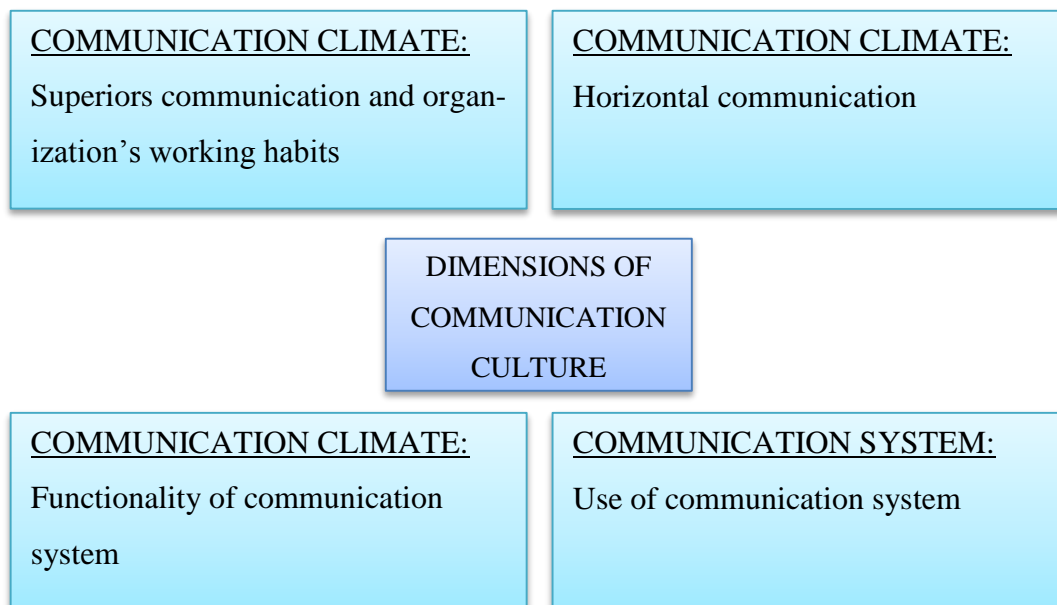
6.3 Organizational Culture

The culture is formed by the meanings people share together and consensus. The culture is a collection of values and symbols of which people may have different perceptions. Thus an organization can be a bunch of different sub-cultures instead of one united culture. Culture can be examined by what can be seen and what is under the surface. The visible part is technique, buildings, systems, ways of operating, organization charts and titles. Under the surface are values, prevailing perceptions, choises, unity of organization, unofficial cultures and word-of-mouth. (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi, Kuronen & Ollikainen 2009, 12-13.)

Organizations are just as individuals, they have their own personalities. Some like to welcome the environment by chaotic disorganization where is constant change; some again appreciate an organization where everything is organized and with clearly de-

fined jobs and products. Some consider the working environment as a one big family whereas others prefer to keep their working life and personal life separate. The culture of an organization plays a significant role; it can be either satisfying or disappointing. There are researches that prove that employees are more satisfied and committed to their jobs when their values match to those of their supervisors and the organization. (Adler & Elmhorst 2002, 63)

Communication culture

COMMUNICATION CLIMATE: Superiors communication and organization's working habits	COMMUNICATION CLIMATE: Horizontal communication
	DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNICATION CULTURE
COMMUNICATION CLIMATE: Functionality of communication system	COMMUNICATION SYSTEM: Use of communication system

Communication culture elements (Juholin 2006, 140-143)

In the graph above, the first three boxes; superior's communication and organization's working habits, horizontal communication and functionality of communication system, reflect the communicational climate in an organization. The last box, communication system, includes the channels of communication, contents of the information and objectives the organization has placed concerning communication. (Juholin 2006, 140-143) The communication system and the communication climate together express the organization's communication culture. Communication climate is personal experience for example the openness of the information flow and the possibility of being completely aware on different matters and having influence. (Juholin 2013, 176-177)

A conclusion based on multiple different researches states that a pleasant working atmosphere and positively experienced communication and announcements increase the general satisfaction level in the organization. Along with this it also increases the level of motivation and job performance. A positive atmosphere among colleagues in turn influences on the increase of communication and the way people accept the internal communication. Particularly crucial factor in the emergence of work and communication satisfaction is the way the superior presents the information and acts. (Juholin 2006, 140-143)

According to Tuuli Tukiainen the "organization is an entity of which communication culture is a part of". Communication covers a large share of organization culture which defines how and where a massage is being transmitted to the recipient. (Juholin 2013, 176)

The organizational culture consists of sharing common values, language and the vision of what is the organization's future. In a cross-cultural environment the language may become an obstacle. A common language has a strong influence on the atmosphere of working atmosphere. In case all employees cannot understand what is being discussed, they may feel as being left out and not appreciated. (Juholin 1999, 62-64)

7 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN THE CASE COMPANY

The information was gathered by using a survey which was sent to all the employees in the case company. The total amount of employees to whom the survey was sent was 48. The amount of responses that were received was 28, which provided a response rate of 58,3%.

The survey consisted of mainly different option answer questions and a few open-ended questions. In different option questions there were statements made concerning internal communication and the current situation at the case company. The personnel could place their opinions on a scale from 1 to 5, in which 1= completely disagree, 2= slightly disagree, 3= not disagree nor agree, 4= somewhat agree and 5= agree.

7.1 Background information on employees

The only background information that the survey revealed of an employee was the department on which the respondent is working, since it was one crucial factor needed in the evaluation. As discussed earlier in the study, if there would have been more background factors (sex, age, duration of employment), the survey would no longer have fulfilled the anonymous criteria, given the fact that there might only be two employees in one department.
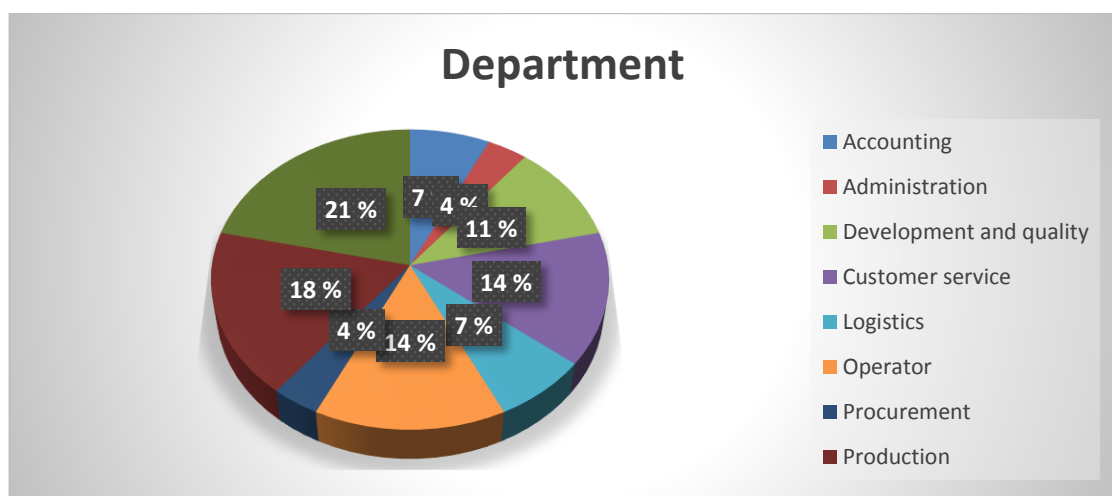

Chart 1   Department

As seen in Chart 1, the responses concerning the background were good, since the replies came from all the different departments, providing thus more accurate results in the later part of this thesis. Given that so many department are involved in the study it will provide an overall result from the whole company and not just concentrating on one or two different departments. The percentage of respondents however does not tell the complete truth, since different departments have different amount of employees. Even though the percentage would show "4%" –it could still present the whole amount of employees in that department, and same with other way around, the percentage of "18%" –it still may not include all the employees on that department, that particular department may just have more personnel than another one. The main aspect is that there are replies from every department. (Chart 1)

7.2 Interpretation and perception on internal communication

The intention was to first make sure the personnel is well aware of what is meant by internal communication and then according to their own judgement evaluate whether it is working at the case company or not. As presented below in Chart 2, it can be stated that the personnel is familiar with the term internal communication, since none of the employees replied "completely disagree" nor "slightly disagree" to the statement that they would not know what is meant by internal communication. The question of knowing what is meant by internal communication was to ensure the reliability of this study that the target group has in fact understood the question and know how to respond in accordance.
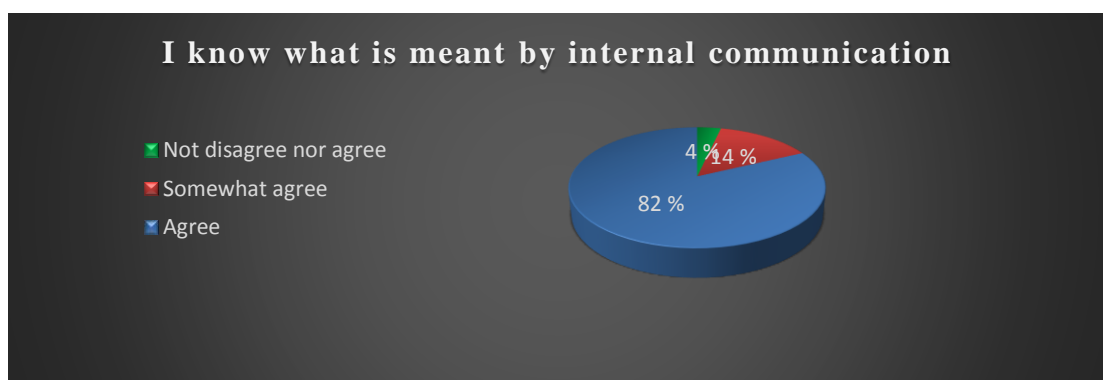

Chart 2   Interpretation of internal communication

From 28 respondents 23 replied that they are fully aware of what is meant by internal communication. Four respondents felt as they were quite aware of the definition and only one replied that they would not be fully aware of what is meant by internal communication. (Chart 2)
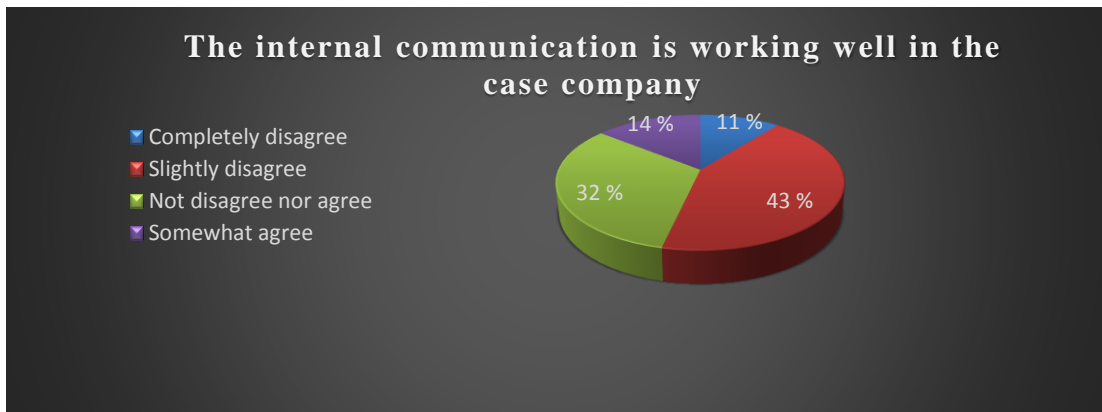

Chart 3   The internal communication is working well in the case company

According to their own interpretation on internal communication and its functionality, none of the respondents felt like the "agree", that there is nothing wrong in the internal communication at the case company. The results show that a fair half of the personnel is unsatisfied or somewhat unsatisfied with the current internal communication; 15 (54%) of the respondents felt that the current level is not good or fairly close to it. From the respondents nine (32%) felt as they did not agree nor agree that the communication would be working well, and three of the respondents replied that the internal communication is working well. (Chart 3)

The outcome that a fair half of personnel feels as the internal communication does not work, nine of the respondent's fall somewhere in between and three out of 28 feel as the internal communication is working indicates that there is room for improvement. (Chart 3)

7.3 Development ideas

In chart 4 the intention was to find out if there would be any flaws in the internal communication according to employee's opinions and whether they feel if company

is making any effort on repairing possible flaws or not. Chart 5 focuses on development ideas; are they easy to present and are well taken into account.

The flaws in internal communication are aimed to be repaired

- 3 %
- 28 %
- 29 %
- 29 %
- 11 %

Legend:
- ■ Completely disagree
- ■ Slightly disagree
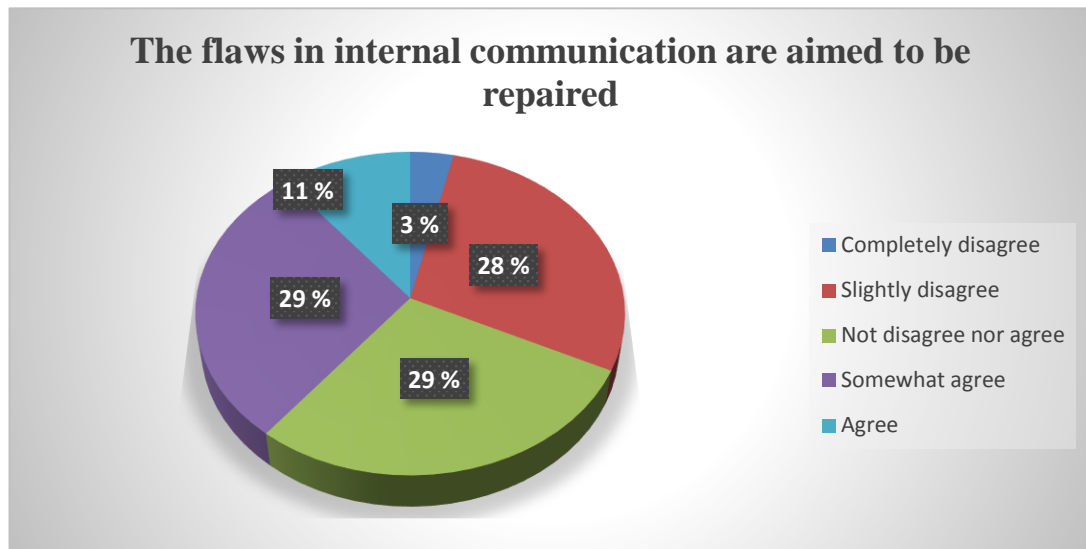- ■ Not disagree nor agree
- ■ Somewhat agree
- ■ Agree

Chart 4   The flaws in internal communication are aimed to be repaired

As seen in chart 4 above, the result is quite divided. Eight of the respondents fall in between of not disagreeing nor agreeing on the statement. Also eight has replied that they feel as flaws are somewhat being repaired, and three respondents completely agrees. Then again eight had replied that they somewhat disagree and one completely disagreed that flaws would be repaired. In case the in between are not taken into account, the result is almost tie; 11 replies that the flaws in internal communication are aimed to be repaired and nine replies that they are not.

In comparison with different departments, all the three replies on agreeing that the flaws are aimed to be repaired came from sales offices department. (Charts 1 and 4) A reason behind this result may be because the sales office personnel are located abroad and thus are not exposed so easily to possible flaws in internal communication that may be at the main office. The results revealed again also differing opinions within one department; in customer service and development and quality departments the opinions were both somewhat agreeing and slightly disagreeing that the company is making an effort on repairing possible flaws in internal communication. (Chart 4)

Development ideas are well taken into account

4 %
18 %
14 %
64 %

- Slightly disagree
- Not disagree nor agree
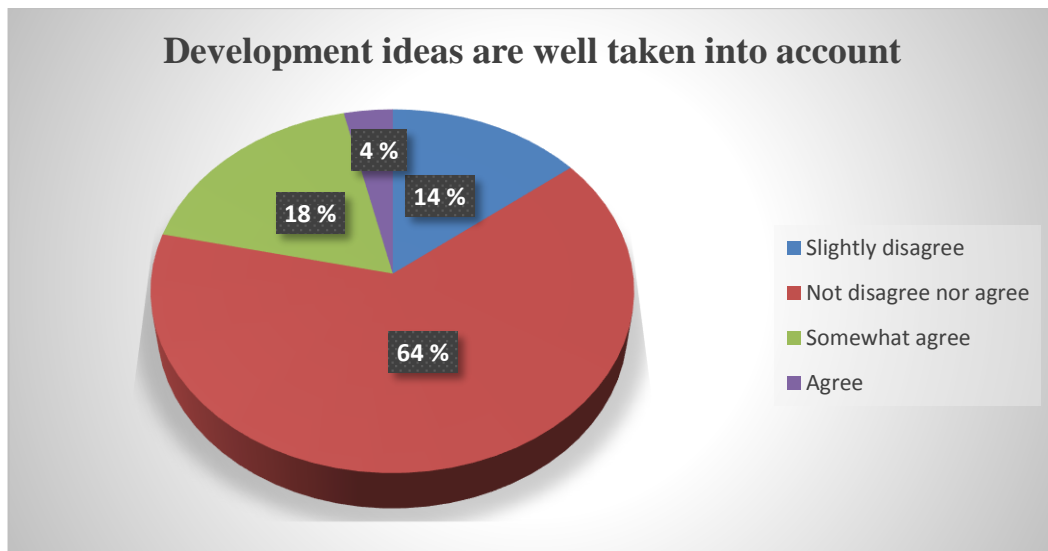- Somewhat agree
- Agree

Chart 5   Development ideas are well taken into account

In chart 5 one can see clearly that majority of the respondents have the same opinion of not agreeing nor disagreeing on the statement whether development ideas would be well taken into account or not. Four respondents (14%) replied that according to their opinion they slightly disagree that development ideas would be taken into account. Almost the same amount of respondents however, five (18%), replied that they feel the opposite. One respondent had a strong faith and had replied that they completely agreed that development ideas are well taken into account, this may for example reflect from a firsthand experience.

7.4 Information flow

The charts 6 to 9 explore how the communication flow works holistically in the whole company. Information flow should be working in all different levels effortlessly. The questions below focuses on how information reaches different departments, are employees being informed in time, if supervisor is keeping their subordinates up to date and is the personnel informed of any possible changes.
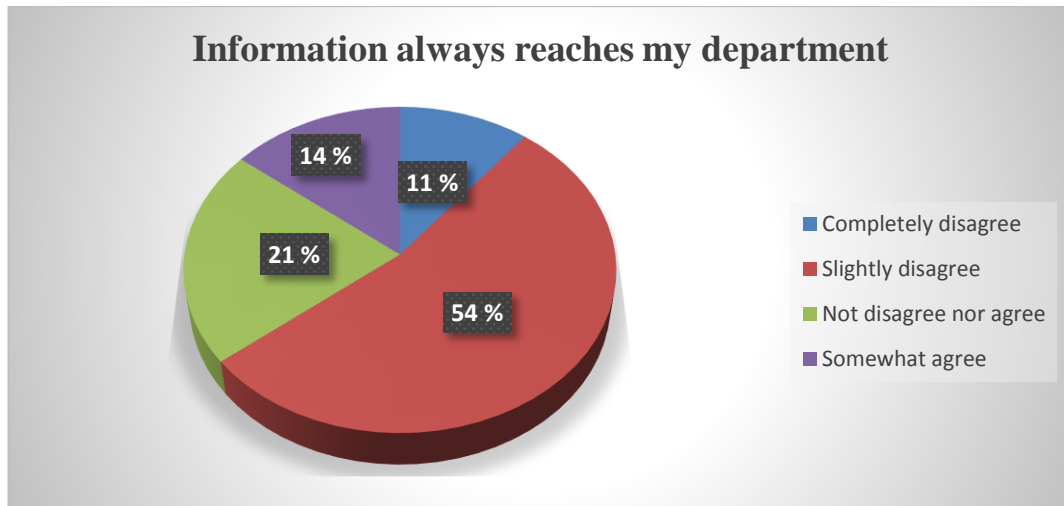
Chart 6 Information always reaches my department

The results seen in chart 6 are clear; it indicates that more than half of the respondents do not feel as information would always reach their department. 15 (56%) of the respondents slightly disagreed on information reaching their departments, three (11%) respondents completely disagreed. six respondents (22%) fell again somewhere in between of not disagreeing nor agreeing and only four out of 28 respondents (15%) somewhat agreed that information would in fact reach their department.

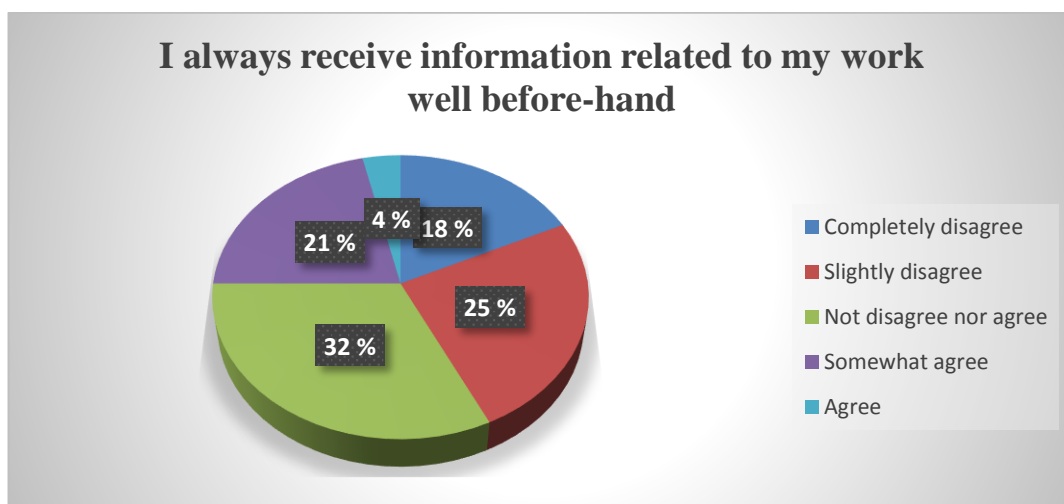Chart 7 I always receive information related to my work well before-hand

In chart 7 the study provides results on whether employees are informed well beforehand in matters related to their work. Results are divided quite evenly, except only one (4%) respondent felt as they do receive information well advance. Six respondents (21%) somewhat agreed, nine (32%) replied in between, seven (25%) respond-

ents slightly disagreed and five (18%) completely disagreed on receiving work related information well beforehand. (Chart 7)

A closer look in comparison with the departments showed that there are similarities in the answers; from operators, production and development and quality departments for example the replies were both completely disagree and slightly disagree of information reaching them well before-hand. Sales offices seemed to have very different opinions, the results showed from completely disagreeing to agreeing that they receive work related information well in advance. The reason behind this may again lie in the geographical distances or cultural differences. (Charts 1 and 7)

The opinions in customer service department were also divergent; completely disagree, not disagreeing nor agreeing and somewhat agreeing that information would reach them well before-hand. Logistics department was in consensus that they feel as they somewhat are informed in time any work related information. A greater deviation in opinions is more likely to occur if the department has more employees. The divided opinions also demonstrates how differently the employees may see the internal communication. Everyone has their own perception according to which they base their own judgement. (Charts 1 and 7)
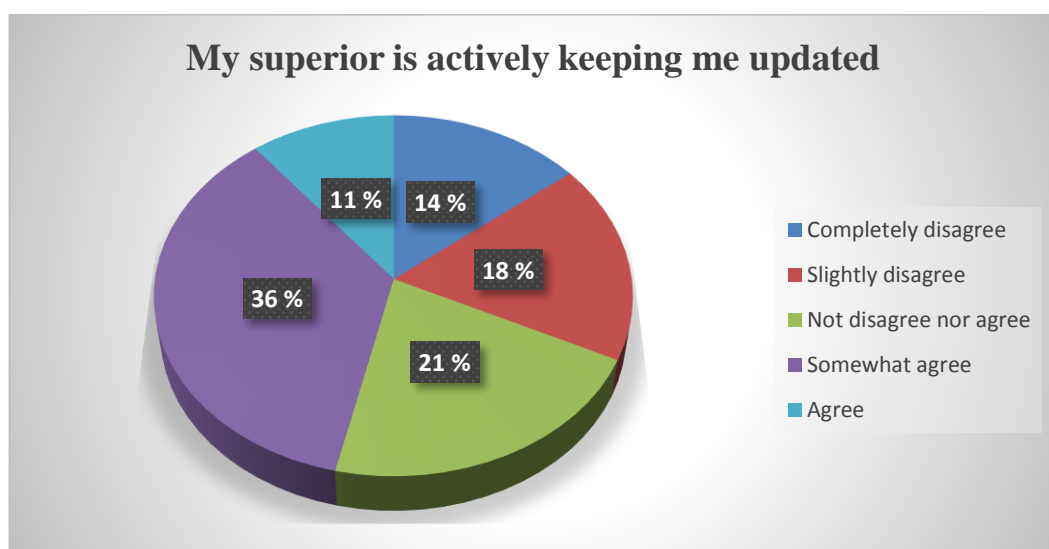

Chart 8   Superior is actively keeping updated

Chart 8 presents the opinions on how the case company's employees feel that their supervisor is keeping them updated. The opinion of 'somewhat agree' was the most common (36%), which is of course a very positive outcome. In addition, three (11%) of the respondents had replied 'agree'. The rest of the results were six (21%) of not disagreeing nor agreeing, five (18%) slightly disagreed and four (14%) completely disagreed that their supervisor would keep them updated. (Chart 8)
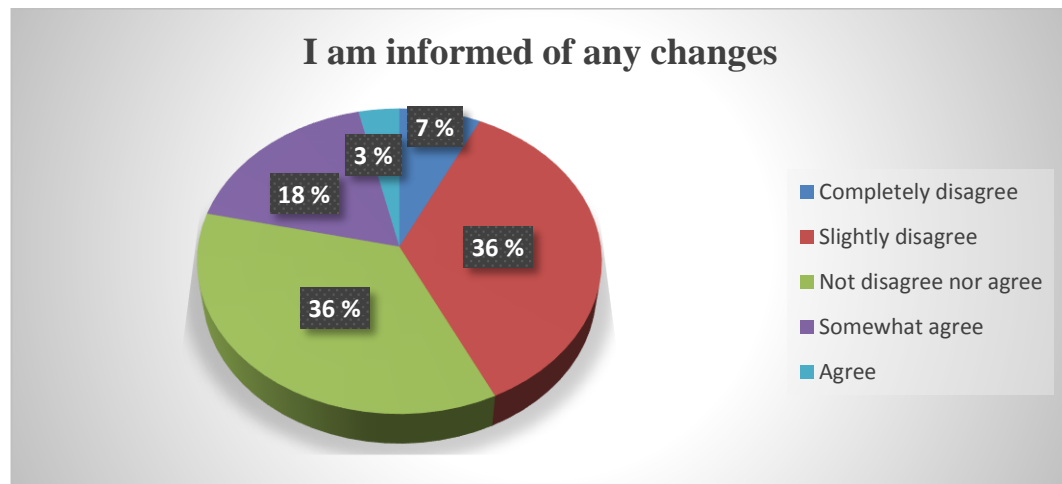
Chart 9   I am informed of any changes

The results in chart 9 indicates that quite a few employees feel as they are not always kept in the loop. 10 (36%) of the respondents have replied 'not disagreeing not agreeing', same amount of respondents have replied that they slightly disagree on them being informed of changes and two have replied they completely disagree. Five (18%) somewhat agreed and one agreed that they feel as they are always informed.

7.5 Information retrieval

In charts 10 to 12, the study aims to reveal whether the employees of the case company are actively searching information, if they know where to look for it and do they share it with their colleagues.

I know where to look for information

- 7 %
- 14 %
- 14 %
- 22 %
- 43 %

Legend:
- Completely disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Not disagree nor agree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
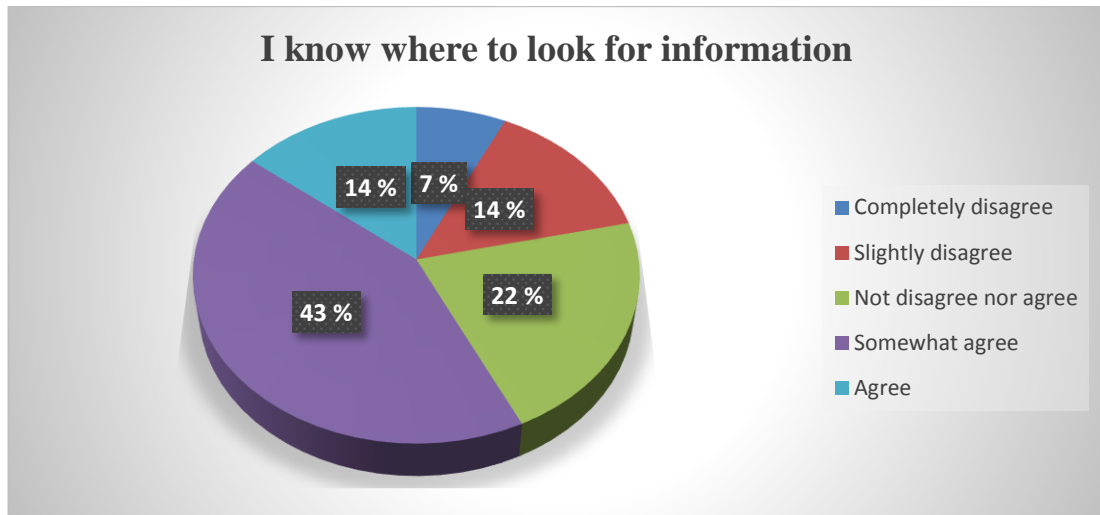
Chart 10   I know where to look for information

The results from chart 10 are rather clear and positive. Knowing where to find the information one needs speeds up ones work significantly. From the 28 respondents, four (14%) replied 'agree' and 12 (43%) replied somewhat agree that they know where to search for information they need. Six respondents have replied 'not disagreeing nor agreeing', in which they do not quite have an opinion. Four (14%) had replied they slightly disagreed and two (7%) that they completely disagreed of knowing where to look for information. (Chart 10)

I actively search for information

- 4 %
- 7 %
- 37 %
- 30 %
- 22 %

Legend:
- Completely disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Not disagree nor agree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree

Chart 11   I actively search for information

According to the results a positive outcome is that eight (30%) of the respondents replied 'agree' and six (22%) replied 'somewhat agree'. This result indicates that more than half of the respondents take initiative in information seeking. 10 (37%) of

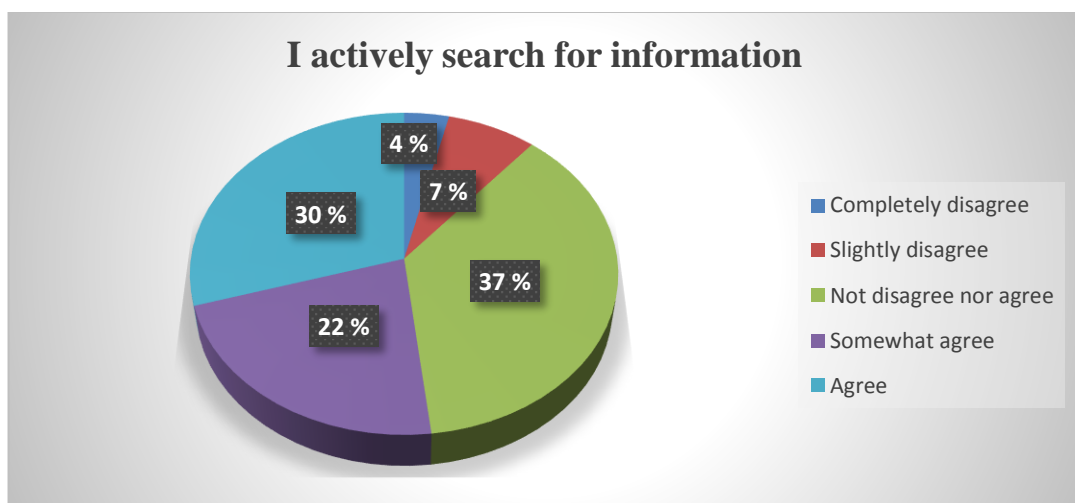the respondents replied 'not disagreeing or agreeing' whether they actively search information or not. Only two (7%) had replied 'slightly disagree' and one (4%) had replied 'completely disagree' that they do not actively search for information. Half of the personnel is fairly actively searching for information, and only three felt as they do not actively search for information. (Chart 11)
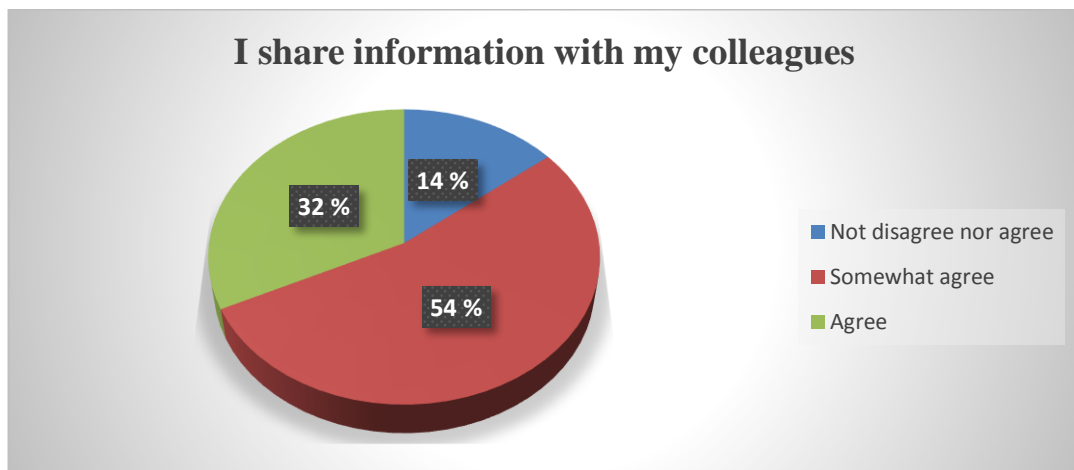
Chart 12 I share information with my colleagues

The chart 12 shows very positive results, that 24 8(6%) of the respondents replied that they share information with their colleagues, at least to some extent. None of the respondents had replied 'slightly disagree' or 'completely disagree'. This result and the result from chart 6 seem to have very different outcomes, according to this result the information travels through colleagues but not between departments. This suggests that the information travels horizontally as word-of-mouth but not as well vertically in which the information should come from the management to different departments. (Chart 12)

7.6 Factors effecting to atmosphere and general satisfaction

Charts 13 to 16 examine the overall satisfaction concerning atmosphere and current communication process at the case company. Charts 13 and 14 focus more on the working atmosphere and whether it would have any influence on the information flow according to employees' opinion. Chart 15 aims to find out to what extent there is unconfirmed information around the office, or so called 'gossip'. In the final an-

swer option chart, chart 16, the purpose is to find out the employees' level of satisfaction towards current communication process at the case company.
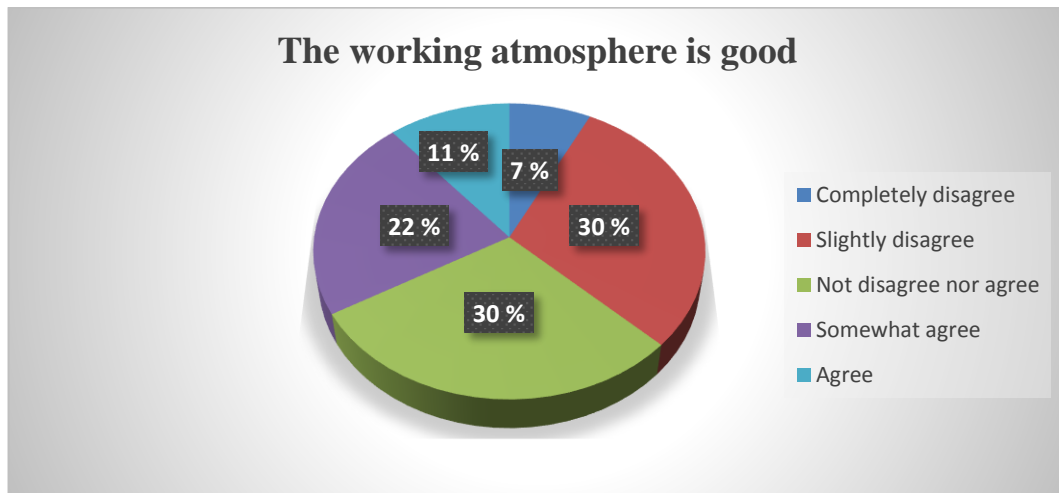
Chart 13   The working atmosphere is good

The results concerning working atmosphere were not the best possible. Eight (30%) of the respondents fell in the middle, not having much of an opinion at all. Six (22%) responded that they 'somewhat agree' and three (11%) replied they 'agreed' on the statement of working atmosphere being good. However, eight (30%) replied 'slightly disagree' and two (7%) replied 'completely disagree. (Chart 13)
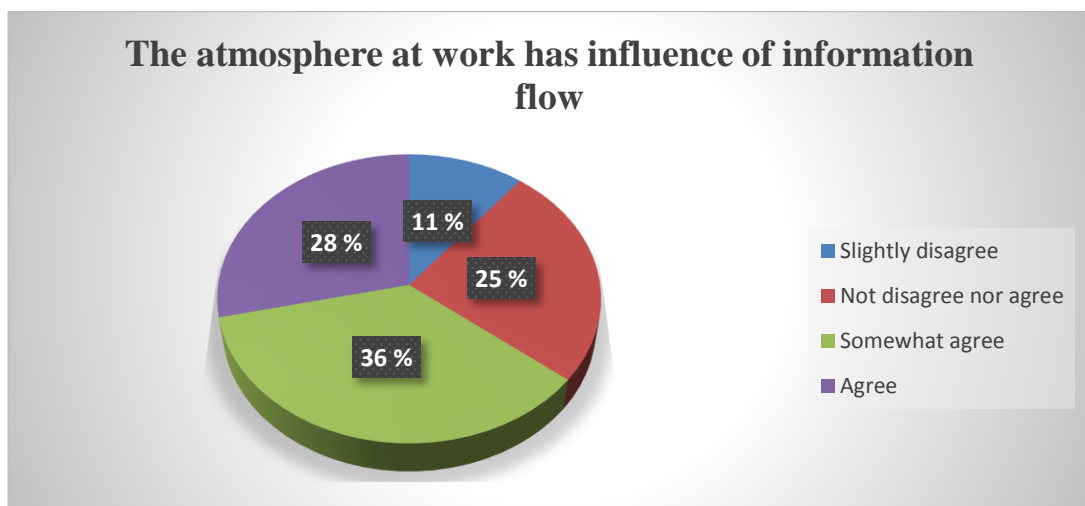
Chart 14   The atmosphere at work has influence of information flow

In chart 14, the result was quite divided; eight (28%) replied they 'agree' on the statement that atmosphere would have influence on the information flow. 10 (36%) of the respondents replied they 'somewhat agree', seven (25%) responded 'not disagree nor agree' and three (11%) responded 'slightly disagree'. From the results it can be concluded that majority of the respondents felt as the atmosphere would have an influence on information flow. (Chart 14)
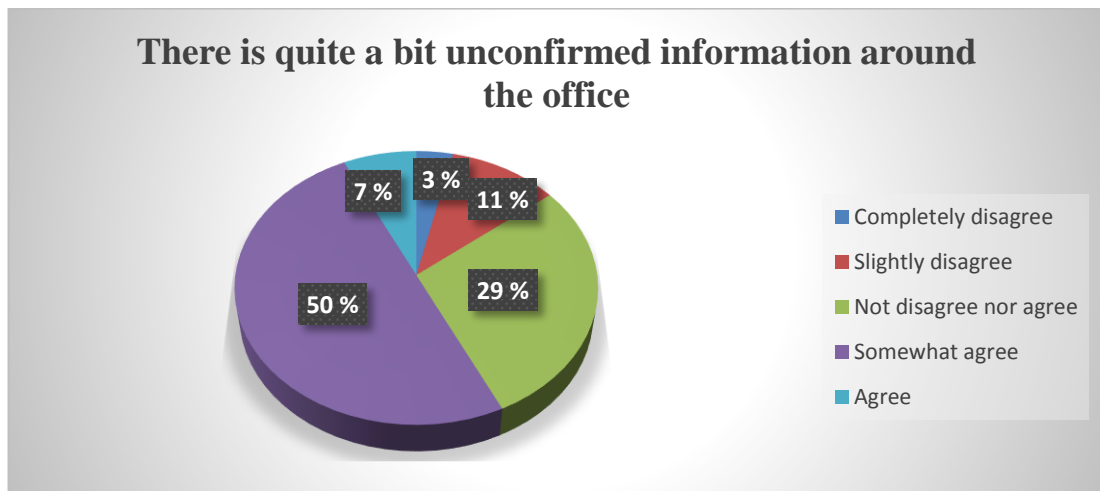
Chart 15   There is quite a bit unconfirmed information around the office

Chart 15 shows that half of the respondents replied that they agreed to a certain extent that there would be unconfirmed information around the office. In addition, two (7%) completely agreed. Eight (29%) replied 'not disagree nor agree', three (11%) responded 'slightly disagree' and one (3%) responded 'completely disagree'. 16 (57%) of 28 respondents thought more or less that there would be unconfirmed information around the office, eight (29%) did not have much of an opinion and four (14%) disagreed that there would be unconfirmed information. (Chart 15)

A reason behind the variations in responses can be same as before, that not all the employees join to the coffee breaks, where work related matter are being discussed.

I am satisfied with the current communication process

Completely disagree — 11 %
Slightly disagree — 50 %
Not disagree nor agree — 18 %
Somewhat agree — 21 %
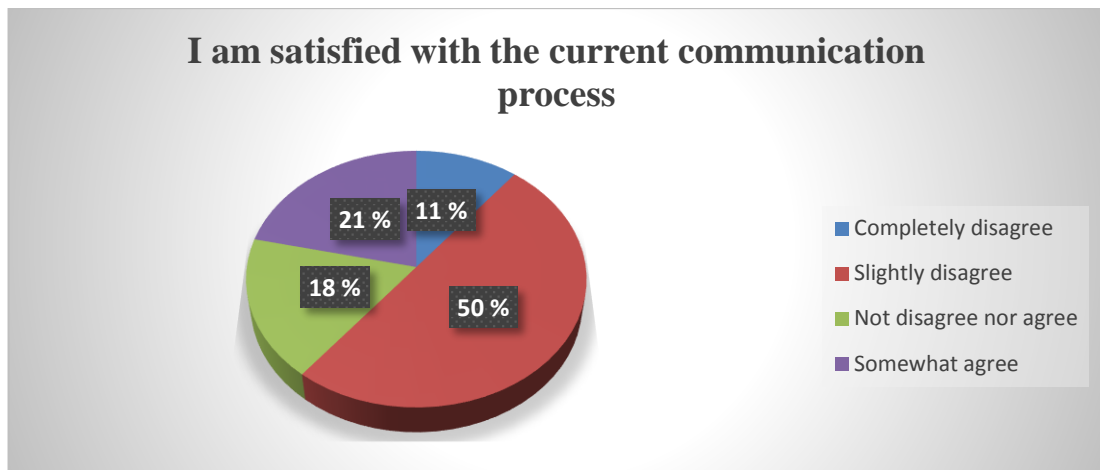
Chart 16   I am satisfied with the current communication process.

The result from chart 16 was too rather clear; 14 (50%) responded that they 'slightly disagree' to the statement of being satisfied with the current communication process in the case company. Three (11%) responded 'completely disagree', five (18%) responded 'not disagree nor agree and six (21%) responded they 'somewhat agreed' that they would more or less be satisfied with the current communication process.

As majority (61%) has responded they are not satisfied with the current communication process it is a clear implication that something needs to be done in order to improve the current status. (Chart 16)

7.7 How would you develop the information flow between departments?

The last three questions in the survey were open-ended questions. The responses on how the personnel would develop the information flow between departments were various and good suggestions. The answers were as following:

- Quicker responses between departments
- More personal communication/discussion and less e-mail
- Weekly or monthly information sessions / meetings
- Each department's managers provide weekly or monthly report of any updates
- Enhancing the intranet – Create more intranet communication

- Each department having their own separate information channel as well as the whole company

There were many similar responses that each department or department's manager should provide a weekly or monthly report to inform others of any possible updates. Many of the respondents also wished more personal communication and perhaps weekly or monthly meetings and discussions of general matters.

7.8   What internal communication mean do you prefer to use when searching for information (e-mail, intranet, personal communication)?

When asked what mean of communication the personnel prefer, all above (intranet, e-mail, personal communication) received votes. E-mail was suggested since there is a guarantee that the message is as least technically successfully transmitted. Personal communication received much encouragement as well, especially if one has something specific they are looking for they can approach that particular person in charge and discuss about the matter directly. The discussions during coffee breaks seemed to be also a communication channel and a source of information. A common opinion was also the usage of intranet, now that it is being developed, as a communication channel and a source of information, as long as everyone is familiar with it and knows how to use it.

7.9   What is your opinion on the case company's internal communication flow? (Positive/negative feedback, develop ideas)

The opinions on the case company's internal communication were both positive and negative feedback. A very constructive feedback was that responses to questions would be quicker, or at least providing a quick notice to letting the person asking the question to know that his or her question is being looked at and it has even been noted in the first place. Another matter that was pointed out was the fact that the sales offices are remote and separate from the main office and factory and communication could be improved in both ways for example with the usage of intranet. Intranet as a channel of communication and as a source of information would be excellent, but

everyone would have to know exactly how it works and the example of course should start from the management. This could have a positive influence on the general atmosphere and decrease the speculations and the amount of unconfirmed information and.

A suggestion of a personnel meetings for example four times a year, once per quarter, would be a constructive development on how the whole personnel would have at least some level of awareness of what is going on in each department and inside the whole company. Another important fact that was revealed that not all information concern everyone. However, a problem in this is that in some occasions the information is not defined of whom the information concerns and whom not. Some are aware of different matters and some are not; a clear guideline of which channel is the correct channel to use is missing and so is the specific person in charge of communication. The result showed also a request of an information monitor to the main lobby which would provide information such as if there are visitors arriving to the facilities, who are they and whom are they coming to visit.

8 RESULTS

In analyzing the results this study will utilize the theory discussed earlier in this study and the results from the survey and also observation method, since the author of this thesis has been an employee of the case company for a fair year and a half. Below the analysis is executed by connecting the results received from the survey with the theory discussed in the beginning of this study.

8.1 Communication Process in the case company

As discussed in 7.1 'Communication Process' that whatever channel is being used, the communication process always follows the same steps where there is someone who comes up with an idea, encodes it into a message and transmits it to the recipient to decode and for them to provide a response or feedback in return. The obstacles related to communication processes include a noise which may prevent the message to be successfully transmitted. In the case company the noise or possible obstacles according to the result is that information does not travel via formal channels, this can be seen in the outcome of unconfirmed information around the office.

Based on the results from the survey, a fair half of the respondents felt unsatisfied or somewhat unsatisfied with the current state of internal communication. This could suggest that there is not a particular communication process at the case company or it is not simply fulfilling its purpose properly.

What was also revealed from the results, is that the opinions were also differing inside one department. The employees whom felt as the internal communication is working in the case company were employees from procurement, sales office and production. Employees whom did not disagree nor agree were from departments of: sales office, customer service, logistics, operator and administration. Replies of slightly disagree came from departments: customer service, operator, production, accounting, development and quality, sales office and logistics. Completely disagree results came from customer service, operator and development and quality. This raises a question that why are there so differing opinions within one department. In one

department there were results that showed both somewhat agree and slightly disagree on the functionality of internal communication. This could also imply to the communication flow inside one department.

8.1.1 Leadership communication in the case company

As discussed in part 7.1.1 'Leadership Communication', according to Juholin that in order for the communication to be successful in an organization the most important factor is the superior. All communication should begin from above from the management and for subordinates then to follow the example. What resulted from the survey, was that the personnel wishes for their superiors to provide them a weekly or monthly report on any updates or a personal meeting for example once per quarter, in every three months, to discuss on different same matters related to the company's ongoing operations.

According to Åberg, leadership communication is management's work; it is management's responsibility to distribute the information. Communication is organization's greatest source of power and it is management's job to plan, control and supervise communication's functionality. According to the results it could be concluded that the management work could use a bit improvement in aspect of distribution of information. The results from the survey showed that a fair half (67%) of the respondents replied that information would not always reach their department, which suggests that information would not have been distributed as expected. Comparing the results with the departments, the results showed dissenting opinions within departments, which suggests that the information would not only reach always all the departments, but the information would not seem to move inside the departments neither.

8.1.2 Obstacles in case company's Internal Communication

All communication processes have the so called 'noise' which is preventing the message to be successfully transmitted. As discussed in 7.1.2 'Obstacles in Internal Communication' of challenges in communication influencing internal communica-

tion and information flow, such as assumptions, rush, management not keeping their personnel updated on matters, not being cooperative in receiving information, the number and location of communicators in the working community, some of these same challenges seem to taunt also in the case company.

According to the results from the survey there were similar challenges and also recommendations on how the grievances could be improved. For example in chapter 8.9 there was feedback that the case company does not have anyone in particular who would be responsible for internal communication.

As Mistel stated in chapter 7.1.2 'Obstacles in Internal Communication' that one obstacle in internal communication can be the number of communicators inside the organization and their location. This same matter resulted from the survey that the sales offices are remote and distant from the main facilities in Rauma and feel as the communication should be developed in both ways.

According to Juholin, knowing where to find the information one is looking for is connected to communication satisfaction. This can be applied to the question when asked in the survey whether the respondents knew from where to search for information the results were mainly positive that they know where to seek information, but results were also slightly in contradict with each other. The reason behind the differing opinions could be the intranet which has had quite a transformation. Some may feel as they cannot find the information they are looking for anymore since it has been moved elsewhere. As the intranet has gone through its transformation, it is managements work to properly introduce to the personnel how all the tools and programs work that they are supposed to work with.

8.1.3 Communication Satisfaction in case company

In 7.1.3 'Satisfaction of Communication', according to Juholin, the level of satisfaction can be influenced directly by factors such as the possibility of being hear and being able to make a difference. Juholin listed matters that have an effect to communication satisfaction which some of them were relatable to the case company. One

factor Juholin listed was that information reaches personnel as rumors, or uncon-firmed information which was discussed earlier.

According to the survey, when asked from the respondents in 8.6 'Factors effecting to atmosphere' if the personnel feels as whether they believe that atmosphere at work have influence on the information flow at work, 64% agreed to some extent with the statement. When asked whether the atmosphere at work is good, 33% of the respond-ents replied in favor of the statement and 37% responses were opposite. According to one of Juholin's examples of effecting to communication satisfaction was that if managements does not keep their personnel informed, these results imply that the personnel is not provided enough information and it is affecting to the working at-mosphere and communication satisfaction.

When asked from the respondents in 8.3 'Development ideas' whether they feel that development ideas would be taken well into account can be reflected to Juholin's statement of being able to make a difference. Majority (64%) of the respondents had replied they did not agree nor disagree that development ideas would be well taken into account. A reason behind the result of a fair half responding "not agreeing nor disagreeing", may be as simple as they do not have any experience on this matter.

From the rest of the results it could be drawn a conclusion that they as a matter a fact have had experience on developing a new idea, and have responded according to their own experience. However, not all developing ideas come through. Even though the company would take it into account there is still no guarantee that the idea would be carried out into practice, but this still counts as taking into account.

The result concerning satisfaction to current communication process was 61% of the respondents were more or less unsatisfied with the current process. They either do not have a particular communication process or all the steps which are necessary in the process are not working in the case company. Is it that the case company's organ-izational culture defines the communication process as unstructured or should the management supervise and control it more efficiently as Åberg states earlier in the study?

According to Juholin, another factor influencing on the level of satisfaction is whether one's supervisor is keeping them updated or work related matters or not. When asked in the survey if the personnel felt as their supervisor is keeping them well updated, the results were quite positive; nearly half of the respondents replied that their supervisor would more or less keep them updated.

Departments that either completely disagreed or slightly disagreed with the statement of supervisor keeping them updated were: production, customer service, development and quality, accounting, operator, sales office and administration. In between of not disagreeing or agreeing were departments: operator, production, development and quality, accounting and sales offices. Departments that felt somewhat satisfied or completely were: customer service, production, logistics, sales office, operator and procurement. Again it was seen that opinions inside one department can vary from one extreme to another. The reason could be cultures inside one department and also that the results presented in each departments were so minor that it cannot be drawn a plausible conclusion.

Overall 13 (47%) of the respondents felt satisfied with their supervisor keeping them updated on matters. This outcome is crucial as according Järvinen stated in chapter 7.1.3 that superior must have credibility in the eyes of workers and obtain the workers' respect by own actions as a leader.

8.2 Case company's means of communication

In chapter 7.2 'Means of Communication', according to Juholin, there are three different ways of communication: personal communication, printed communication and electrical communication. However, as Jussila & Leino stated already in 1999 that as equipment and methods in internal communication evolve continuously the communication has shifted from paper announcements to utilization of e-mails and intranet services. This shift has also happened in the case company. Thus the author of this study decided to neglect the 'printed communication'. The internal communication in this study involves only personal communication and electrical communication since the printed communication is rather rare at the case company.

8.2.1 Personal communication

Although the internal communication has evolved so that it has been shifted mainly to electronical form, as Österberg and Mistel both stated earlier in the study that personal communication is still organization's most important channel of communication. This remains accurate also in the case company, the electrical communication is utilized in daily basis, but according to the results from the survey, the personnel would like to have more personal communication. When asked in the survey which channel of communication do the personnel of the case company prefer, many responded that they would like to have more face-to-face communication.

As Alajärvi, Herno, Koskinen and Yrttiaho pointed out earlier, that word-of-mouth communication, although being informal, it fulfills the personnel's social and psychological needs. This was seen in the results in open-ended questions there were answers regarding the "coffee-break" conversations and those being one source of information.

The results from the survey repeated one request repeatedly that the company would organize weekly or monthly meetings where personnel can discuss matters concerning the company or just every day matters. Adler and Elmhorst emphasized the control of which one has as a speaker in personal communication. In case the case company is to take these meetings into action, it would provide opportunity for questions and receiving answers in return with no time lag between.

8.2.2 Electrical communication

E-mail

In chapter 7.1.2 'Obstacles of Internal Communication' was discussed that since the amount of e-mails everyone receives during one working day is so high, it would not be a surprise if an e-mail or two might get lost among all other e-mails. However, many of the respondents shared the common opinion that e-mail is a convenient way on communicating and by using e-mail one has at least some level of certainty that the message has been received by the receiver.

The respondents were asked which mean of communication they prefer, e-mail as a channel received much encouragement, as it is has somewhat of a guarantee that the message is successfully transmitted, the responsibility is then for the recipient to interpret it. E-mail as a communication channel in the case company is very effective since everyone has their own account and there is a reassurance that everyone has thus received the message, however there are nevertheless flaws in this mean. Although the message has been technically successfully sent, there is no guarantee that the recipient has acknowledged the message. A good way to reassure that one's message has in fact been noted, it is good to request a "read receipt" where one signals to the sender that they have indeed read and understood the message.

Intranet

The case company has improved their intranet. It is the case company's tool for all the different departments. The intranet at the case company is constantly developed and planned to match the users' needs. The Information Technology department at the case company is aiming to structure the intranet so that all the departments would have easy access to finding the information they are seeking for or the file they are looking for. Intranet for the personnel of the case company is a convenient place where all employees can store their files and share with others. The files are safe and can be accessed anywhere since they are in the Internet.

According to Juholin, email and intranet has changed the organization's communication structure more than any other media. The results from the survey showed encouragement towards the intranet, that it has a good potential for a communication channel as long as everyone has been properly taught how to use it. According to the author's own observations, in the future the information and files and general discussions of everyday matters would be transferred to the intranet.

The opinions of its functionality according to the survey were a wide range from positive to negative reactions. From the survey, there were many replies concerning intranet as a source to finding information. It received encouragement as long as eve-

ryone has been taught properly how to use it and everyone would be open-minded to start using it more as a tool and gain the best advantage out of it.

8.3 Organizational culture

In chapter 7.3 'Organizational Culture', based on Adler and Elmhorst, the culture of an organization plays a significant role in the well-being of the personnel. In every organization they have their own ways of operating and their own 'personality' with certain specific values. When organization's values match to the employees' values the employees are proven to be more satisfied.

The outcome from the survey in the statement 'The working atmosphere is good' resulted that 10 (37%) respondents out of 28 felt more or less that the working atmosphere is not good, was a bit unsettling. From 28 respondents more than 1/3 shared the same opinion. From personal belief the author believes that this number can change significantly with a more functional communication process.

The responses of 'completely disagree' were from departments of sales office and customer service. However, as well as in the other questions, the opinions were divergent. From customer service department there were also responses of 'slightly disagree, 'not disagree nor agree' and 'somewhat agree'. Same with sales office department, there were responses of 'not disagreeing nor agreeing', 'somewhat agreed' and even in 'agree', in which case the opinions were again from one extent to another. These results raises again question of how come there are exact opposite opinions inside one department.

Differing opinions in sales offices could again be explained by the geographical distances and cultural differences on different expectations. One reason behind customer service department's diverging opinions could be from personal experience that not all from that particular department join in every day coffee breaks, which naturally involve discussion concerning work and may lead to the feeling as being left out.

9 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to find out what internal communication is and how vital it is in organizations. The study focused on matters influencing directly to internal communication such as communication process, means of communication, organizational culture and leadership communication. The study conducted an empirical research on the case company with the usage of a survey for the whole personnel with the aim to reveal its current status of communication and information flow.

The response rate was 58,3%. The outcome quite clearly showed the status of current situation and develop ideas from the personnel of how the communication could be improved. Based on the survey the opinions were somewhat divided in half. Some of the results showed that the respondents are somewhat satisfied with their superiors keeping them updated, but another question revealed less satisfied results of information reaching their departments. The positive outcome from the results was that the personnel seems to be actively searching for information and they are more or less satisfied with the level of how their superiors are keeping them updated.

All the respondents seemed to be familiar with the term 'internal communication'. The opinions on its functionality were partially differing. Some of the respondents felt as the communication process could use some improvement but some were somewhat satisfied also with the current situation. The survey resulted that 2/3 of the respondents replied that the present communication is not satisfying which could be due to the reason that there is not one specific person in charge of communication nor a specific channel to use. This could be easily fixed by setting someone in charge or by informing different departments. However, what also stood out from the results was that not everyone is supposed to know about everything.

The lack of information flow has a direct impact of the atmosphere at work place, which was unfortunately revealed from the results. This result is no doubt possible to turn around with small changes in the communication process, such as setting strict guidelines of what procedure to follow, what information involves whom and target

the information only to whom it concerns and make sure that information that involves the company as a whole, actually reaches everyone.

Even though the communication nowadays has shifted mainly to electrical, and the e-mail and intranet received encouragement as channels of communicating according to the survey, the outcome form the survey also revealed that the personnel would prefer more personal communication. Personal communication is still highly valued and it is the most efficient channel to ensure that a message has been correctly interpreted. More specifically the personnel requested that the company would have weekly, monthly or quarterly reports or meetings where they could discuss about any possible updates. As the intranet is going through a change at the moment and it is aimed to be built more social, the responses from the survey also recommended that Intranet could be used more. However, the company will only gain the best advantages of it if all the employees are completely aware how to use it.

It requires time to develop and improve the internal communication and it must be thought carefully in which way a certain message would be the most convenient way to transmit. The trickier the matter is or the more attention value it requires, the more reason to present the matter through personal communication. This way it is possible to discuss about it and ensure that the message has indeed reached its recipient.

9.1 Recommendations

Various different channels are being used simultaneously in order to have good information flow. In addition to electrical channels of communication, personal communication is also needed. The best way to make it work is if the company has a regular practice of having meetings, which also enables a forum for discussion of present matters. Simultaneously it offers a chance to reciprocity, expressing their own opinion on received information and asking questions. When an information is handled in this manner it stands a better chance to remain in the memory and creates a feeling of being able to make a difference.

What was revealed from the survey, was that the personnel wished for the company to organize weekly or monthly meetings. The case company has had weekly meetings in the past but it was discontinued, since some of the employees felt as not much happened in during one week. The practice of keeping the meetings could come back in use, but maybe be changed into monthly meetings, where each department would explain the highlights of the past month. This would create more general awareness of the whole company and for the personnel to communicate personally, expressing feelings and opinions.

The company should also assign someone particular to be in charge of all communication. The nature of the information should be specifically defined of whom or what department it concerns and the person in charge of communication should make sure the information would reach all the employees in that department. Likewise, if information concerns the company as a whole, it is to be informed for the whole personnel via e-mail or intranet, in order to avoid useless speculation. Not all information needs to be forwarder but neither pawned from employees of whom it concerns.

Furthermore, all employees should take responsibility of taking the initiative to actively search information they need and ask in case they do not know. Everyone is responsible to share their knowledge with their colleagues.

9.2 Evaluation

The implementing methods utilized in this study were quantitative research with a survey and observation method. These particular methods were suitable for this study since the author was an employee in the case company. The recommendations are based on the results from the quantitative survey, observations by the author and the theory in the conceptual framework.

The study faced a few changes during its process. The original idea was to study horizontal communication in a multicultural organization. However the author decided to leave out the cultural aspect, as explained in the boundaries of the project, that in

case this study would have included studying the different cultures also it would have included five different cultures. Furthermore, as the study proceeded, the theoretical sources emphasized the importance of leadership communication and that communication always begins from the management, thus the study was expanded to the whole company both horizontally and vertically.

The survey for gathering the empirical data was distributed for the whole personnel of the case company in order to gain the most accurate results. The survey itself went through a transformation as well and many of the background information questions about the employees were deleted in order for the respondents to remain anonymous. In addition the survey was sent again with translations also in Finnish.

As discussed in the beginning of setting boundaries for the study, that the author left out the different cultures aspect due to its wide concept of including five different cultures. In addition to the cultural differences, the matter of new ownership was not included in this study. However, both of these topics would be very interesting topics for someone else to study

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APPENDIX 1

Hanna Talvio
Satakunta University of Applied Sciences
International Business and Marketing Logistics

Dear employee,

I am conducting my final thesis for Satakunta University of Applied Sciences on internal communication. Enclosed a survey which focuses on examining the case company's current situation on internal communication and to receive feedback from employees.

Below you will find the link to the survey which will take approximately 5-10 minutes of your time. When you have finished the survey, please click the "Tallenna" –button.

This survey utilizes total sampling, in which the survey is sent for all the employees in the case company. **All the answers will be treated anonymously and with confidence.** The results will be presented as overall results so none individual results will be revealed.

If you have any questions concerning the survey, please do not hesitate to contact me either via cell phone +358 50 432 6925 or via email hanna@talvio.com. The survey will be open until Monday the 5th of October.

Your answers will be highly appreciated and I thank you in advance for your co-operation.

With kind regards,

Hanna Talvio

Link to the survey:

https://elomake.samk.fi/lomakkeet/4632/lomake.html

APPENDIX 2

Hanna Talvio

Satakunnan Ammattikorkeakoulu

Liiketalous   28.09.2015

Hyvä työntekijä,

Toteutan opinnäytetyöni Satakunnan Ammattikorkeakouluun koskien sisäistä informaationkulkua. Ohessa kysely, joka keskittyy kohdeyrityksen nykyiseen tiedonkulun tilanteeseen ja saamaan palautetta henkilökunnalta.

Alla linkki kyselyyn, joka vie aikaasi noin 5-10 minuuttia. Kyselyssä pyritään noudattamaan kokonaistutkimusta, eli kysely on lähetetty jokaiselle kohdeyrityksen työntekijälle.

Kaikki vastaukset käsitellään anonyymisti. Tulokset esitetään yhteisenä tuloksena, joten kenenkään yksittäisiä vastauksia ei julkaista.

Mikäli sinulla on kysymyksiä koskien kyselyä, älä epäröi ottaa yhteyttä minuun joko puhelimitse +358 50 432 6925 tai sähköpostitse hanna@talvio.com. Linkki kyselyyn on auki tämän viikon loppuun saakka, joten täytäthän kyselyn tämän viikon perjantaihin 2.10 mennessä.

Kiitos jo etukäteen vastauksistanne.

Ystävällisin terveisin,

Hanna Talvio

Linkki kyselylomakkeeseen:

https://elomake.samk.fi/lomakkeet/4632/lomake.html

Internal Communiaction in case company

I am conducting my final thesis for Satakunta University of Applied Sciences on case company's internal communication.

This survey utilizes total sampling in which the survey is sent for all the employees of the case company. All the answers will be treated anonymously and with confidence. The results will be presented as overall results so none individual results will be revealed.

1. Department

  ☐ Accounting

  ☐ Administration

  ☐ Development and Quality

  ☐ Customer Service

  ☐ Logistics

  ☐ Management

  ☐ Operator

  ☐ Procurement

  ☐ Production

  ☐ Sales office

2. On 1 to 5 scale (1= completely disagree, 2= slightly disagree, 3= not disagree nor agree, 4= somewhat agree, 5=agree), estimate your opinions on the statements made below concerning internal communication.

                1 2 3 4 5

1. I know what is meant by internal communication / Tiedän mitä tarkoitetaan sisäisellä viestinnällä ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

2. The internal communication is working well in the company / sisäinen viestintä yrityksessä toimii hyvin ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

3. The flaws in internal communication are aimed to be

repaired / Sisäisen viestinnän puutteita pyritään korjaamaan □ □ □ □ □

4. Develop ideas are well taken into account / Kehitysideat

   otetaan hyvin vastaan □ □ □ □ □

5. Information always reaches my department / Tieto

   saavuttaa aina osastoni □ □ □ □ □

6. I always receive information related to my work well

   before-hand / Saan aina hyvissä ajoin työtäni koskevan

   tiedon. □ □ □ □ □

7. My superior is actively keeping me updated / Esimieheni

   pitää minut aina ajan tasalla □ □ □ □ □

8. I am informed of any changes / Minua informoidaan

   aina mahdollisista muutoksista □ □ □ □ □

9. I know where to look for information / Tiedän mistä

   etsiä informaatiota □ □ □ □ □

10. I actively search for information / Etsin aktiivisesti

    informaatiota □ □ □ □ □

11. I share information with my colleagues / Jaan tietoa

    kollegojeni kanssa □ □ □ □ □

12. The working atmosphere is good / Työilmapiiri on hyvä □ □ □ □ □

13. The atmosphere at work has influence on internal

    information flow / Työilmapiiri vaikuttaa sisäiseen

    informaationkulkuun □ □ □ □ □

14. There is quite a bit unconfirmed information around

    the office / Toimistossa liikkuu jonkun verran

    vahvistamatonta informaatiota □ □ □ □ □

15. I am satisfied with the current communication process

    | Olen tyytyväinen tämänhetkiseen

    tiedonkulkuun □ □ □ □ □

3. How would you develop the information flow between departments? | Miten

   kehittäisit sisäistä tiedonkulkua eri osastojen välillä?

4. What internal communication mean do you prefer to use when searching for information (e-mail, intranet, personal communication)? | Mitä kanavaa suosit, kun etsit informaatiota (sähköposti, intranet, keskustelu kasvotusten)

5. What is your opinion on the company's internal communication flow? (Positive/negative feedback, develop ideas) | Mitä mieltä olet yrityksen sisäisestä tiedonkulusta? (Positiiviset/negatiiviset palautteet, kehitysideat)