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**Effective Internal communication in Finnish companies
from the travel and tourism industry**

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Abstract

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The thesis studies the internal communication of Finnish companies in the travel and tourism industry. The thesis aims at providing the commissioning company Swissport Finland with suggestions on how to improve their internal communication.

In order to help the Swissport Finland in their project to develop their internal communication, a theoretical framework was put together to understand internal communication and effective internal communication. A qualitative research was also conducted to collect insights from seven professionals from companies from the travel and tourism industry, similar to Swissport.

The outcomes of the thesis include a better understanding of the opportunities brought by an effective internal communication, of the potential challenges companies can face and of the solutions available to solve these issues. Suggestions on how to improve Swissport Finland's internal communication were created from the knowledge brought by the theory and the insights and ideas collected during the interviews.

Keywords
Internal communication, effective communication, corporate communication

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1   Introduction

After leading two research projects during her studies in Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, the author gained a great interest in project management. After going through several challenging situations during projects, it became very clear that the key to a successful project was effective internal communication and that it would be the topic of her thesis.

Organisations are constantly undergoing changes in internal communication. While companies are growing, enlarging their teams, expanding to new locations, communication is changing with new communication tools developed every day and corporate communication growing alongside (Cowan 2014). The changes happen rapidly and there is therefore a need for an updated research on the topic.

In the travel and tourism industry, the constant aim at service excellence and the international aspect of the industry implies having staff working at night or closer to the customer, away from the main office. The communication with all workers is essential and has to be flawless, no matter their work location. These specificities are visible in all branches of the industry yet the focus was chosen to be on aviation.

The project was suggested to Swissport Finland that responded positively. The company was at the time undergoing changes in their internal communication policies and saw this research as a complementary asset in their project.

The thesis aims at finding out how effective internal communication, needed in all companies, can be achieved by Swissport Finland. What are the challenges companies from the Finnish travel and tourism industry face and how to overcome them? Interviews will be conducted to collect insights from Finnish companies from the travel and tourism on effective internal communication in 2017.

The objective of this thesis is to provide Swissport Finland with concrete solutions to internal communication challenges that they might face. The outcome of the thesis will be a clear roadmap for Swissport about how they can communicate efficiently. The suggestions will be made possible thanks to the interviews conducted.

The first chapter of this thesis is the introduction of the project. The second chapter will present the commissioning company, Swissport Finland and also present a survey the company did prior to this project. The second chapter will focus on internal communication and effective internal communication. The fourth chapter will present the methodology used for the research, the fifth will cover the research preparations and the sixth chapter will present the research results and be followed by a discussion chapter and the conclusion.

2 Background

2.1 The commissioner: Swissport Finland

This thesis is commissioned by Swissport Finland. Swissport International Ltd. is a Swiss company specialised in ground handing operating worldwide. It became an independent company in 1996 and has been growing ever since becoming the global leader in airport and aviation services. They offer, in addition to ground handling and passenger services, cargo, fuelling, maintenance and security services. Swissport is currently operating in 280 airports in 48 countries globally. They are working with some 835 customers, mostly airlines. As for today, Swissport employs around 61 000 employees worldwide. The Finnish office, based at Helsinki-Vantaa airport counts around 800 employees. (Swissport 2016)

As the airport is open all day and most of the night, the work is organised in shifts. Managers on duty circulate between the departments and are in charge of the quality control at work. The main office, hosting the management, is located further away from the terminal itself.

At the moment, there are no specific internal communication processes established between the departments. Every department holds weekly meetings to discuss the financial results and the weekly agenda. The outcomes of the meetings are eventually brought up to the management. But the company wants to improve the interdepartmental communication and the internal communication in general. The company therefore launched a project in February 2016.

The idea of having Swissport as a thesis commissioner came after the two internships the researcher had within the company. The teams, being truly global, and the company being such an important player in the aviation industry, Swissport seemed the ideal company to work with.

2.2 Swissport employee survey

During a short discussion, the commissioner explained that their company was starting a project to improve and modernise their internal communication. During summer 2016, they conducted an internal research to understand the communication habits and preferences of their employees.

The survey would help Swissport Finland identify what changes had to be made to improve internal communication, how all communication means could be used in the best way possible, define clear responsibilities and to create a clear communication plan covering all aspects of internal communication. The management also wanted to identify what the preferences of their employees were in terms of tools, organisation as well as their opinion on the system currently in place. The survey was sent by email to all 800 employees and 215 answers came back. The received answers came from all departments and from all age groups to a proportion that is representative of the team.

The survey results show that employees are generally satisfied by the internal communication and the information flow. They were also generally satisfied by the display of the results. All in all none of the questions asked in the employee survey showed particularly disappointing results. But the answers were not all positive, the survey also revealed great differences about how employees see and experience the internal communication in Swissport Finland.

The greatest differences could be found in the preferences the employees had as for the communication tools and means or channels. For instance, some employees were very keen on using social media for internal communication, some other had not heard about corporate social media such as Yammer. Also, the intranet came out as being one of the preferred communication channel but will not be used by the company after autumn 2016. The commissioner also mentioned during the discussion that they were to implement the use of Office 365 as a main internal communication platform. It would replace the current intranet.

Yet there are a few limitations to this survey. Indeed, Swissport collected responses from only 25% of its employees. The opinions collected were sometimes very general with comments such as only "good" or "ok" when asking an opinion on a certain aspect of internal communication. A fair number of questions did not encourage the employees to come up with their own idea, being multiple choice questions.

The survey by Swissport helped them identify the challenges and expectations their employees have when it comes to internal communication. The survey however does not go deeper into the causes of these challenges and focuses more on personal preferences. The research conducted in this thesis aims at providing Swissport Finland with suggestions on how an effective internal communication can be achieved. These solutions will unlike the survey, be based on the causes of the different challenges. The interviews conducted will allow the author to identify common internal challenges and what they are caused by. Understanding the causes of the challenges will help finding concrete and specific solutions.

This thesis is therefore an extra asset to Swissport in their project of improving their internal communication. This research will complete the survey they conducted in the summer 2016 as it will be a deeper analysis of the challenges and of their causes. The suggestions brought will also be based on the insights on professionals from the same industry.

Interviewing professionals outside of Swissport Finland will allow the author to collect fresh and innovative ideas on how to achieve effective internal communication. Also, finding similarities in the challenges faced by Swissport and the interviewed companies will help understanding the challenges and their cause better. Swissport Finland may also apply some of the solutions the interviewed companies found for the challenges they share.

3   Internal communication

In order to be able to provide Swissport Finland with suggestions that fit their need in terms of internal communication, it is important to understand what internal communication is in an organisation. This chapter will therefore cover shortly the topics of communication, corporate communication and external communication before presenting a deeper analysis of the different types of internal communication and of the role of language and environment on internal communication.

Communication skills are widely recognised in business and in the professional life. Communication skills are a trait expected from an employee by any employer (Betsy 2005). Business communication is a skill that can be trained, taught and developed. Therefore, it is relevant to understand what an effective professional communication is and its use in business

Burkart (2000) sees communication as "the exchange of meanings between living organisms" and stresses the social aspect of any communication (Burkart 2000 in Stoykov 2007). If Fiske (1990) doesn't contradict Burkart, he yet challenges the definition of communication in general and sets the question if the term "a subject of study" is applicable to something "as diverse and multi-faceted as human communication".

Stoykov (2007), views communication as a tool that may be used by any business. A company will use external communication to reach its clients and even influence their choices. It will also use internal communication tools to spread a message to the entire company, guide the employees' activities but also to receive and provide feedback for instance. (Stoykov 2007). Stoykov's view on corporate communication as a tool is rather similar to Van Riel's, that defines internal corporate communication as:

"an instrument of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communication are harmonised as effectively and efficiently as possible, so as to create a favourable basis for relationships with groups upn which the company is dependant."
(Van Riel 1995 in Welch and Jackson 2007)

If Stoykov (2007) and Van Riel (1995) consider business communication more as a tool from a managerial point of view, Lesikar (1988) sees business communication as an "activity or process allowing people to work together". Not to forget, Argenti (1996), who sees corporate

communciation more as "a development of strategic corporate public relations" related to different fields of a business. Stoykov also quotes Costley & Todd (1987) who believe business communication is above all a skill namely the skill to understand and to be understood.

Finally, the definition of Peter Drucker simply defines communication more as employees' "ability to organise themselves" and " express their ideas in a verbal and written form". This last point of view differs from Lesikar's as one of them views communciation from a managerial point of view and the other from an employee point of view (Stoykov 2007 ; Welch and Jackson 2007)

There are two components to corporate communication: internal communication and external communication. External communication is referred to when talking about communication occurring between an organisation and external stakeholders, either other organisations, an audience or even customers. (Johnson and Chang 2000 ; Cornelissen ; Lock and Gardner 2001)

The purposes of external communication are numerous. As for the marketing, it is essential for a company as it is a tool used to advertise the brand as well as a product. It will impact the internal communication of an organisation in term of what message is shared.

The idea of external factors' impact on internal communication was first brought up by Freeman in 1984 and developed further by Welsh & Jackson in 2007. They argue that micro and macro-environmental forces create the external environment of an individual. All these external elements (such as politics, customers and competitors) will affect the whole organisation, organisational structure, culture, relations management-employees relations and ultimately internal communication. (Welch and Jackson 2007; Cornelissen, et al. 2001)

Internal and external comunication are two topics closely bound together. Internal communication can and will affect external communication and vice-versa. Jackson (2007) gives the example of a CEO giving a public speech on the media that would reach both an external audience as well as the employees of the company. With this example, Jackson shows that some messages can be both internal and external at the same time (Jackson 2007).

The focus will yet be on internal communication in this thesis. Several definitions of it have been given through the years. Bove and Thill (2000) define internal communication as "the exchange of information or ideas within an organisation" (Kalla 2005). Going further into details,

Argenti (2007), believes that for the internal communication to go smoothly, it is important to create an atmosphere of respect for all employees within the organisation. He also sees the hierarchy in the organisation and therefore the vertical communication as an essential tool in internal communication (Kalla 2005).

Kalla (2005) has researched the "Integrated internal communications". She sees the internal communications as four separate components being business communication (related to the employees' skills), management communication (related to the management's skills to communicate), corporate communication (related to the more formal communication) and the organizational communication (related to more theoretical issues).

Berger (2017) does not design internal communications in as a plurality of forms as Kalla does (Berger 2017). He sees the concept as a singular organisational or employee communication. Welsh and Jackson (2007) split up internal communication in four distinct dimensions: internal line management communication, internal team peer communication, internal project peer communication and internal corporate communication.

This introduction helps us understand that for an organisation, communication is an important topic that affects several aspects of their business. Anyone can communicate, but in the context of an organisation, the corporate aspect and the environment in which the message is transmitted (internal or external to the company) makes it necessary to understand more deeply what internal communication is and how it can be achieved. This chapter will now present the different types of internal communication and the role of language and environment in internal communication.

3.1 Types of internal communication

The hierarchy in a company does have a significant impact on the internal communication of a company. The communication will be different depending on who produces the message and to who it is intended. Internal communication can be vertical or horizontal. (Smith 2005)

Vertical communication refers to communication between different levels on the hierarchical scale. As Downs and Adrian (2004) explains it, the rule for vertical communication is that work-related information has to travel bottom-up and top-down on the organisation's hierarchy. (Bartels, et al. 2009 ; Welch and Jackson 2007)

Top-down communication conveys a message from the management, at the top of the hierarchy to the employees. Welch and Jackson (2009) also views this type of communication as a tool for the management to, among others, inform employees of the company strategy, to improve trust of the employees in the management and to provide support to the teams. (Bartels, et al. 2009 ; Welch and Jackson 2007) In Swissport Finland, this can be seen in the messages or newsletters that are sent out to the whole company.

Bartels (2009) defines "bottom-up communication" as information sent from the workers to the management. That message can be feedback or a way for employees to take part in decision-making among other. A company will encourage bottom-up communication to strengthen the sense of belonging of their employees. (Bartels, et al. 2009) The survey that Swissport Finalnd sent out to collect insights and feedback is an example of bottom-up communication as it encourages the employees to communicate with their management.

As for horizontal communication, Bartels, et al. (2009) start by giving the definition from Postmes (2003): the latter identifies horizontal communication as both task oriented and informal. He also explains that this type of communication occurs between individuals from the same level of hierarchy. The messages conveyed by horizontal communication are task-oriented and aim at helping cooperation between colleagues or a work groups. Because the groups communicating horizontally are from the same level of hierarchy and therefore often work together on a daily basis, the communication tends to be more informal. (Postmes, 2003) (Bartels, ym. 2009) (Welch and Jackson 2007)

Ashforth and Mael go even further, arguing that research also shows that people from the same profession or from the same socio-professional category tend to aspire to the same values and share personal thoughts. Therefore, informal discussions are likely to also include talks about tasks or responsibilities which will lead to a greater sense of belonging and greater cohesion at work. (Ashforth and Mael 1989;Welch and Jackson 2007)

In an organisation, and in the commisioning company, this can be seen in interdepartmental communciation and in in-teams communication. These professionals communicate with colleages and teams on the same hierarchy level as them.

The matrix below, by Welsh & Jackson (2007) divides internal communication into four dimensions. Not only does it identify four dimensions, it also recognizes four levels (levels of hierarchy), four types of participants (position of the individual that communicates), directions (who communicates to who) and different contents or purposes of the message.

Table 1. Internal Communication Matrix (Welch & Jackson 2007)

Dimension	Level	Direction	Participants	Content
1. Internal line management communication	Line managers/ supervisors	Predominantly two-way	Line managers-employees	Employees' roles Personal impact, e.g. appraisal discussions, team briefings
2. Internal team peer communication	Team colleagues	Two-way	Employee-employee	Team information, e.g. team task discussions
3. Internal project peer communication	Project group colleagues	Two-way	Employee-employee	Project information, e.g. project issues
4. Internal corporate communication	Strategic managers/top management	Predominantly one-way	Strategic managers-all employees	Organisational/corporate issues, e.g. goals, objectives, new developments, activities and achievements

The table shows us that internal communication is a vast and complex subject that does decline into several dimension. Each dimension having its own specificities and use. It is important for anyone communicating to be aware of these dimensions in order to convey the right message to the right person in the best way possible without creating misunderstandings.

3.2 Internal communication channels and tools

In order to achieve a flawless communication and minimise the chances of a message being altered or not going through, it is essential to choose the right communication channel. The different communication channels will all affect the speed of the message, the understanding of the message and the nature of the message way. As this thesis is focusing on internal corporate communication, the choice was made to focus on three types of communication: emails, phones and face to face communications.

This section is particularly interesting when thinking of the Swissport Finland. Indeed, during the first discussion they mentioned their wish and plan to change the communication tools or

platforms they used. Also, their organisational structure makes internal communication more challenging as workers are based in different locations and work day and night.

To start with, the first and most common communication tools are emails. Opinions on the use of email for corporate communication are various. Some recognise emails as the most used and most efficient communication tool, other consider "emails are dead" and some other believe that emails are not dead but evolving. In February 2017, Craig Smith presented several statistics on email on the website (Smith 2017). In his article, Smith writes that the average American worker receives on average 121 emails per day. He also says that 269 billion emails are sent every day worldwide (Smith 2017). Not only do these statistics inform about the immense place of emails in the world, they are also a hint on all the limits of such a mass-used communication tool.

Authors have discussed the potential of emails as a management tool. According to Rudick and O'Flahavan (2001), emails can be used for instance, to praise employees, to create a community or even to brainstorm. In his article, Root does yet recognise some of the advantages of the use of email. He admits emails benefit from a speed, availability (increased by the growing number of smartphones) and a cost-efficiency (Root 2017). Very few articles praise emails as an internal communication tool. The articles that do, are often dated from the 90's or the early 00's. This might be the sign of a decline that started already a few years ago.

Scholars seem to agree and focus more on the negative aspects of emails. Rudick and O'Flahavan start lightly by admitting at the end of their article that emails might "get out of control soon" (Rudick and O'Flahavan 2001). In her article, Byron (2008) studied emails as a medium to communicate emotions. Her findings were that emails are not an ideal channel to communication as the emotions might be misunderstood. She believes email do not allow a receiver to understand the emotional state of the sender and therefore might interpret the tone or the purpose of the message wrong. Also, she believes immediate feedback is not possible with emails. This means the answer to a question or a clarification is delayed (Byron 2008). These ideas were shared by Root (2017).

The volume of emails is often criticised. In their research, Pignata et al. collected insights from respondents that qualified the volume of their email as "overwhelming", that it distracted them from their "real work". They also regretted emails were not considered as workload given the time and effort they take (Pignata, et al. 2015). This issue was also addressed by Jackson et

al. that went deeper into the nature of the emails. Their research concluded that 13% of emails received were irrelevant (Jackson 2006 ;Burgess and Edwards 2006). But what all authors agree on is the need of a training in order to master efficiency in email communication (Root 2017 ; Pignata, et al. 2015 ; Jackson 2006 ; Burgess and Edwards 2006)

The use of phones for corporate communication is as much loved as it is hated. The benefits of using phones to communicate are obvious. It is a quick way to deliver a message from one person to another. It also allows the sender or the speaker to add emotions or a certain tone of voice to the message and it will there help avoid misunderstandings. With phones, the chance is also higher to reach the person and get an immediate response (Howe 2015) (McCammon 2014). This is only emphasised by the increasing amount of the population that carries a phone at all times.

The millennials are entering the job market with a new communication style as to the use of phone. Indeed, it has been pointed out that the millennials value text messaging much more than phone calls. Critics of the phone as a communication tools include the invasive aspect of a phone call, the fear of disturbing someone (Lyons and Schweitzer 2012). Howe (2015) also theorises that one might want to avoid the handling of extra information such as feelings and would therefore prefer an email, more straight to the point. McCammon (2014) agrees as he encourages the use of phones for its empathic and honest aspects.

Face to face communication might be seen as the most obvious mean of communication. Fusion (2017) recognises the benefits of face to face communication as they facilitate negotiations with the possibility to read the body language and also help build stronger bound thanks to informal discussions (Fusion 2017). Chang (2015) agrees and adds it also help employee share a sense of shared mission". Both authors also insist on the need of having regular face to face interactions and/or meetings. If this is not possible, videoconferencing should be used (Fusion 2017; Chang 2015).

All of the above gives an idea of the variety of communication tools available for an organisation. It is important for a company to choose the right tool for the right purpose to assure the message being sent is received correctly and by the right person. This challenge is ever so important if part of the employees have limited access to some tools.

3.3 The role of language in internal communication

As companies grow internationally, so do the teams. And with globalization being today faster than ever, having an international team is slowly becoming the norm. International teams do not only regroup individuals with different backgrounds and cultures, it also regroups individuals with different mother tongues and different proficiency levels in languages (Thill 2014).

In work life, communication is mostly verbal or written thus a choice of what language to use has to be made. The local language put aside, English is the most commonly shared language. In internal communication, with internal teams, the use of English is very often recommended (Fischer 2013).

The proficiency level in English varies a lot depending on the individual but also according to the country. Indeed, if the Nordic countries are known for their high proficiency level, it tends to be more challenging in countries from southern Europe (Bonnet 2002). The results clearly show that the Northern countries have an excellent English level even at a young age when the students from Southern countries have a lower proficiency in English. (Bonnet 2002)

Language differences and difficulties can lead to several challenges in corporate communication. Firstly, it will essentially create a hierarchy between individuals. Workers with a high proficiency will be in a strong position compared to those with lower proficiency. Their understanding of the tasks or of the messages will be better and they will be able to express ideas and thoughts. (Harzing and Pudelko in Fischer 2013)

Fischer (2013) also suggests that the differences in the proficiency level can affect informal communication among the teams. Groups may be formed by individuals sharing the same language (local language for instance). The author thus points out the importance for company to have clear guidelines or policies about the language in use. (Fischer 2013 ; Cowan 2014 ; L. Smith 2005)

Language barriers are also a common topic in researches about communication. Already in 1969, Gould had marked the misunderstandings emanating from language. He of course noted the challenges associated with individuals not sharing the same language or at different proficiency levels but also the impacts on jargon. The term jargon refers to professional or technical vocabulary within a field or an industry. Individuals with a low proficiency level may

suffer from a lack of consistency, they may also be more reluctant to use this technical vocabulary (Gould 1969). Thus, language barriers affect mainly the understanding of a message.

Turaga (2016) adds a new dimension to the role of language by stating it also affects how comfortable an individual feels when communicating. An individual communicating in a language he/she is not comfortable with will be less likely to take part in discussions and share ideas. Turaga (2016) insists that an individual has to be confident enough with his language ang jargon to be able to share his ideas.

3.4 The role of environment in internal communication

Several elements exist, just as the language, which can affect the internal communication in an organisation. Generational gaps are often a cause for communication challenges. Society sees the workforce divided into four categories or groups: The Baby Boomers (includes individuals born between 1946 and 1964), the Generation X (includes individuals born between 1965 and 1977), the Generation Y or Millennials (includes individuals born between 1978 and 2000) and the Generation Z (includes individuals after 2000) that will enter the job market in a few years (Ng;Lyons ja Schweitzer 2012). These groups all have different work ethics because of their history but also different communication habits. Figure 2 below summarises all these differences into an infographic.
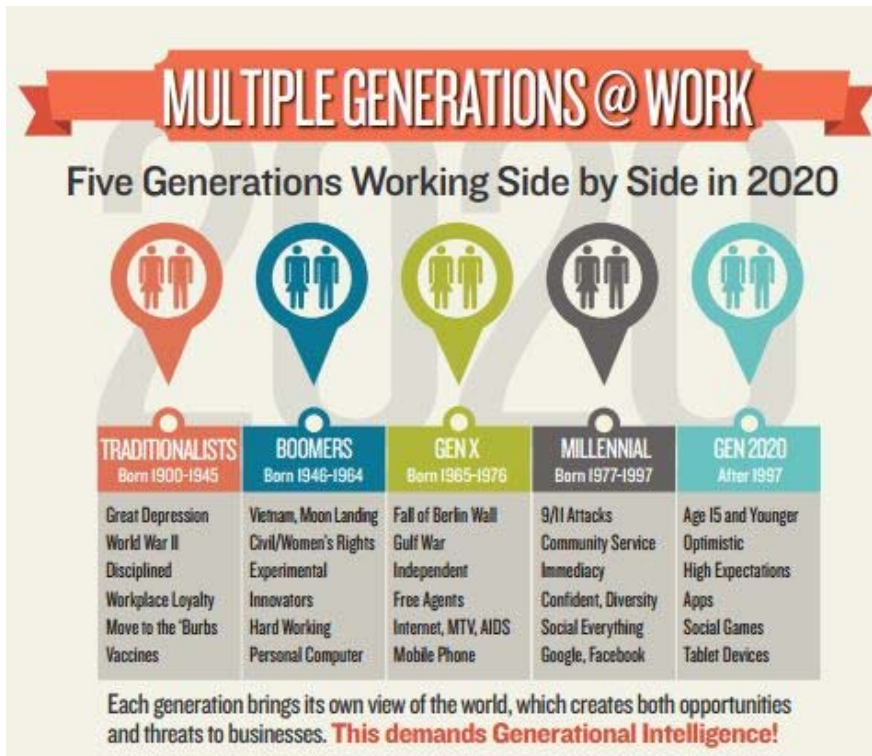
Figure 1. Differences between generational groups (FutureWorkplace 2012)

As seen on Figure 2 above, every generation has different communication styles. It is important to have a smooth and barrier-less journey for the message to be understood and for the internal communication to go smoothly. The two main elements in cause of generational communication barriers are the communication tools and the communication habits.

The important use for technologies, especially of smartphones has been widely researched and discussed (Pearson, et al. 2010). The authors suggest that millennials and students are more attracted to non-verbal communication such as messages rather than communication via the phone for instance. They also believe it is the remote and immediate connexions with others that is appealing to this young generation. (Pearson, et al. 2010)

Very little academic literature is available on generational barriers in communication. If the millennials are a hot topic at the moment, the relation between older generations and technology is very rarely studied. Yet some statistics and reflections from other online sources are available. Smartphones are a big part of contemporary communication. According to a research from March 2016, 88% of millennials in the US owned a smartphone which is almost twice as much as the "older boomers", of which only 46% own one. (Rainie and Perrin 2016) Differences in

the use of smartphone can greatly affect internal communication in a company if a part of the employees is not reached by the message. This would happen if the message is sent through a channel not everyone has access to (e.g smartphones).

If employees' motivation level can be affected by the trust they have in their organisation. If an employee feels trusted by their organisation and if he or she trusts their organisation, they will be more motivated. The trust is for a great part built through communication (Gray and Robertson 2005).

Distance and time barriers as well as the human element and language barriers were studied by Gould already in 1969 (Gould 1969). Shrivastava (2012) follows Gould's ideas. Both agree on for instance the role of time and distance in communciation. Time barriers imply context. To be understood, a message has to be delivered within a certain context. The information may not be misunderstood if delivered without enough context or previous explanations (Gould 1969).

As for the distance, Gould (1969) believes every step or stage the message has to go through before reaching the receiver is a potential break of the information. Shrivastava (2012) views distance as an opportunity. The absence of walls or closed offices would encourage face to face communication. Having physical barriers such as walls or even larger distances between the two communicators increases the chance of a distort message, because of for instance the little explanation that can be given (Shrivastava 2012). This is especially relevant when the distance between the individuals communicating is the norm, with remote workers especially. (Turaga 2016)

Cultural differences can also appear with distance and bring new challenges to communication. Indeed every country or culture has different communication habits. Cultural differences can be seen through the tools used: some cultures are keener on using the phone, other prefer emails. Some cultures value face to face communication and some cultures prefer the safety of written communication. How companies do business is also affected by culture, how negotiations take place for instance. (Byron 2008) It is important to be aware of these cultural differences to avoid barriers and misunderstandings when communicating.

The chapter above helps us to have a better understanding of what corporate internal communication is. Elements such as the language or the communication culture can affect internal

communication. Being aware of them is a first step toward the achievement of an effective internal communication. The following chapter will focus on how to achieve an effective internal communication, on what role employee commitment is important to achieve it and on how to build, maintain and measure effective internal communication.

4 Effective internal communication

Internal communication is a challenge for any company. Yet when effective, it is a powerful management and human resource management tool. The benefits of having an effective internal communication are multiple and are essential to any company's success. This chapter will therefore help us get a better understanding of what an effective internal communication is, of the role of internal communication in employee commitment, how to build, maintain and finally measure effective internal communication. Understanding these elements will help the author provide realistic suggestions to Swissport in a constructive way.

4.1 Employee commitment in effective internal communication

The matrix below (Figure 1), is the representation of internal corporate communication by Welch and Jackson (2007). Their hypothesis is that effective internal communication builds employee engagement and therefore productivity. They also identify four goals to internal communication: contribution to internal relationships, promotion to a sense of belonging, awareness of environmental change and the development of the need for organisational changes. (Welch and Jackson 2007)
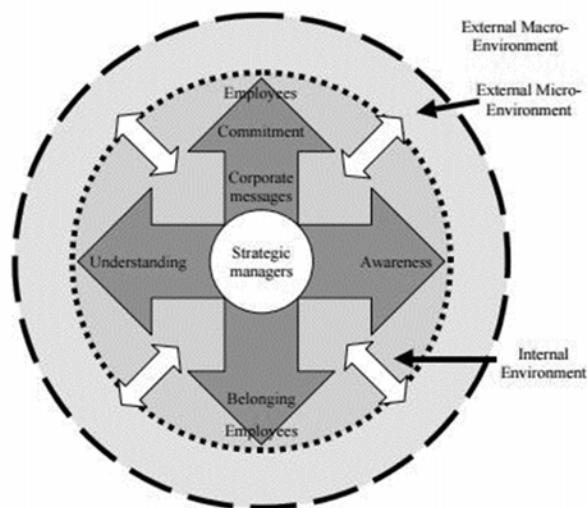

Figure 2. Internal Communication (Welch and Jackson 2007)

Figure 1 shows how internal communciation works in an organisation between the different stakeholders. The white arrows emanating from the center or "strategic management"

represent corporate messages. The wider grey arrows represent all four goals of internal communication. The inner dotted circle represents all employees in a company.

The first element brought up is employee commitment. Several scholars have researched the role of internal communication in employee commitment. Jackson (2004 in Welch and Jackson 2007) has for instance focused on commitment in a corporate environment. Meyer and Allen (1997 in Welch and Jackson 2007) identifiy three types of employee commitment. Affective commitment refers to an emotional attachment to the company, continuance commitment refers to employees being at work because of the costs of leaving the company and finally normative commitment refers to a feeling of obligation towards the organisation. (Meyer and Allen, 1997 in Welch & Jackson, 2007)

Going even further, De Ridder (2004) argues that quality task communication does impact commitment positively. According to him non-task communication, and therefore informal communication between colleagues, has the same value than internal corporate communciation in Welch and Jackson's matrix (Figure 1). (De Ridder 2004)

Further research has also been conducted on the role of internal communication in the sense of belonging of employees in an organisation. It has been suggested that all individuals are indeed strongly motivated by a need for to belong, including at work (Baumeister ja Leary 1995). Cornelissen (2004) goes even further suggesting that *"a 'we' feeling allow people to identify with their organisation"*.

The Bristol School of Social Psychologists has developed a theory about healthy internal communication. According to this theory individuals identify with ingroups, similar to themselves to gain self-esteem and will compare their group to ingroups that are less favourably perceived. TheBristol School of Social Psychologists conclude that thus, the individaul part of an ingoup will feel more integrated and consider him or herself as a team player in their company (Cornelissen, et al. 2004). Cheney (1983 in Welch and Jackson 2007) sees the natural need for belongingness of inividuals as an opportunity for strategic management. He argues that emphasising values and shared beliefs is a persuasive strategy for organisations to influence stakeholders' relationships.

To start with, as seen earlier, an effective communication will greatly improve employee motivation, sense of belonging and commitment to the organisation as well as eventually their

productivity. Yet the consequences of a flawed communication are just as numerous. An ineffective communication will impact employee perception of the management. The theory was brought up by Grey and Robertson (2005). They believe a flawed corporate communication will make the management appear less visible and therefore much less invested. They also suggest a lack of transparency may appear as dishonesty to the employees that feel they are not involved in the decision making process (Gray and Robertson 2005).

Going even further than the impacts on motivation only, scholars have also studied the importance of trust on motivation. The relation between communication and trust was studied by Swift and Littlechild (2015) and Putterman (2009) among other. Swift and Littlechild researched the importance of trust in communication in the financial industry and their result showed for instance that a flawed communication will have a great impact on the decision making processes. Putterman (2009) also confirmed this last theory by concluded his research by stating that the more (quality) communication there is, the better is the trust. All of this confirms that in case challenges occur in internal communication, they will most likely impact the trust workers have in their organisation. This could eventually lead to a loss of motivation. As seen earlier, trust in an organisation is built through the possibility to leave feedback and by employees feeling informed and listened to (Gray and Robertson 2005).

An effective internal communciation is thus necessary to have productive and motivated teams and will eventually lead to a higher productivity. Now that the needs for an effective internal communication are clear, the next section will focus on how to build an effective internal communication.

4.2   Building an effective internal communication

To help provide improvement suggestions to Swissport Finland, this section will cover how an effective internal communication is build and how to maintain it. This will allow the author to suggest solutions having in mind the process of implementation of these solutions.

Welsh & Jackson (2007) argue that for internal communication to be considered effective, there has to be a clear understanding of all employees of any ongoing changes in the company. The vertical communication is thus very important. (Welch and Jackson 2007). But the authors suggest that it is not sufficient for the employees to be informed of the changes. They argue that it is vital employees have a clear understanding of these changes and of all the opportunities and challenges resulting from it. If this second part is omitted, employees will feel left out of the

process. Not understanding the strategic direction of the actions will also lead employees to not develop commitment towards the organisation. (De Ridder 2004 ; Welch and Jackson 2007; Asif and Sargeant 2000)

However, for all internal communication policies, processes or investments to be beneficial to an organisation, it is important to understand what it takes to make internal communication effective. Here, effective internal communication will be referred to the communication of a message reaching the right receiver without being altered and understood completely.

Authors have defined effective internal communication as a communication not encountering difficulties of misunderstandings. They also believe the core nature of an effective internal communication is to be able deliver a correct message between a sender and a receiver (Richard Blundel 2008; L. Smith 2005). Servais & Servais (2009) are even more specific and want to emphasise the equal importance of the role of both the sender and the receiver of the message. They argue that it is as important for the sender to code the message in a way that is understandable by the receiver, than the receiver to have the skills and knowledge to understand the message (Servais and Servais 2009). For these two authors, this is the main criteria for internal communciation to be effective.

The previous chapter showed that elements such as languages, generation or cultual differences affected internal commucniation. Being aware of potential challenges is the first step forwards an effective internal communication. The figure below (Figure 3) sums up the communication barriers mentioned in this chapter. In this figure, Shrivastava (2012) represented the journey of a message. The sender encodes the message (using language, signs for instance). This message potentially has to go through communication barriers that can be of various type before being decoded by the receiver. The barriers may transform or alter the message. (Shrivastava 2012)
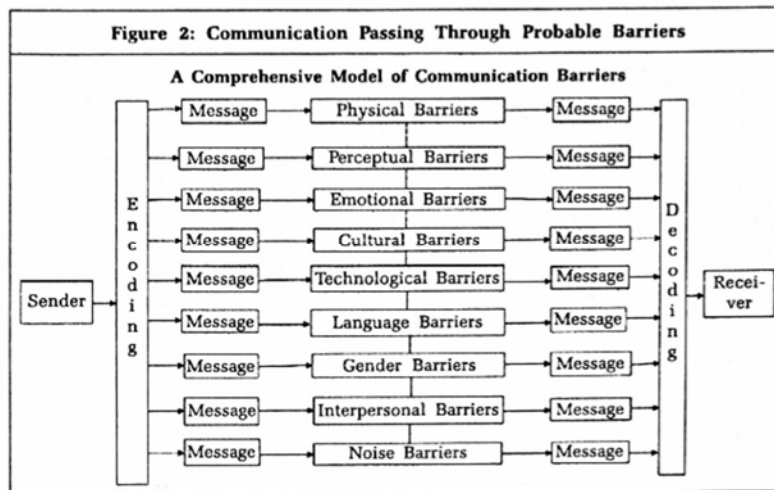
Figure 3. Barriers to Communication (Shrivastava 2012)

The main element of effective internal communication for a company is to make everything to assure the message goes smoothly through. This is done by trying to remove all barriers to communication as barriers are what will distort or alter a message. To plan set the right goals or simply monitor their internal communication, a company can measure the effectiveness of it. The next section will cover one of the most important step in the project of achieving effective internal communication: how to measure it?

4.3   Measuring the effectiveness of internal communication

Measuring the effectiveness of internal communication is ever so important as the notion of effectiveness is intangible. How can a company now their internal communication has reached their expectations or that the communication is efficient?

There are several reasons why an organisation should measure the effectiveness of their in-ternal communication. The first reason is of course the vital need of a working internal commu-nication in an organisation. As seen earlier, internal communication helps companies ensure a constant and high employee engagement but it also help keeping the entire staff aware of any news or change. Measuring and evaluating its internal communication is the most efficient way for an organisation to identify the challenges and potential improvements in the field (L. Smith 2005).

Also, important investments are done by organisations into internal communication, in terms of new tools, programmes or training. It is vital for a company to be aware of the Return on Investment (ROI) rate in order to plan future investments in the most efficient and profitable way.

Several measuring methods have been discussed and implemented in the past. Rubin & Martin (1994) in a first place, argued that it is essential to have a clear goal in terms of what to measure. They see this as the essential first step of any evaluation plan. (Rubin and Martin 1994). In their research, the latter evaluated interpersonal communication skills using a scale. The participants of this large scale research aiming at evaluating and assessing communication skills, meaning something non-tangible, had to rate how much they agree with different statements. This allowed the organisation behind the assessment to get a clearer image of the communication skills of their employees (Rubin and Martin 1994).

Smith (2005) suggests two different types of measurements: hard measure and soft measure. Hard measures are based on numbers. The measuring tools she associates with hard measures are surveys and engagement in general. More precisely, she quotes companies making statistics or averages from for instance the grades given by the employees about internal communication. She also writes that organisations can easily take hard measures of employment engagement in the internal communication and also of their interest in the internal communication of the company (L. Smith 2005).

The author suggests any management should keep track of the impression rate of any post or message. If something is posted on the company's intranet, a hard measure would be the number of employees that have read the post or interacted. Tools also exist to verify if an email has been opened for instance (Smith 2005)

The soft measures introduced by Smith (2005) do not relate to numbers or statistics but rather to insights and feelings. Soft measures assess if an individual feels informed, involved and engaged in the organisation's communication. An organisation might ask employees face to face about their opinion on the communication or judge by simply observing the situation. The author believes an ineffective internal communication will show and can be seen by anyone (Smith 2005). The use of hard and soft measure to assess internal communication was suggested by Edge already in 1979 (Edge 1979).

Assessing internal communication is full of opportunities for companies that can then make the right changes and/or investments in order to make the communication the most efficient way. Eventually, an efficient internal communication will encourage employees to speak up and among other, facilitate the two-way communication.

5 Methodology and research

This chapter will introduce the philosophical paradigms and explain researcher's choices. It will also introduce the concepts of research method as well as the choices for interview design. This chapter will also cover the data collection and analysis methods used for this thesis and the reliability and validity of the results.

5.1 Research paradigms

When planning a research, it is important to choose a philosophical paradigm (Creswell 2014), i.e. a "set of common beliefs and agreements shared between scientists about how problems should be understood and addressed" (Kuhn, 1962). Such a paradigm will guide the researcher by offering already established sets of research practises. Academic worlds tends to distinguish four paradigms: post positivism, constructivism, transformative paradigm and pragmatism. (Creswell 2014) Each of these paradigms is specific in its own way and will lead to certain types of research practices and positions.

Post positivism is a rather scientific paradigm that holds more for quantitative researches. The main assumption of post positivists is that a cause determines an effect or an outcome. Post positivism is therefore based on experiments and on scientific analysis. This paradigm is ideal for theory verification and empirical observation (Creswell 2014).

Constructivism is a paradigm focusing on social interactions between humans. Constructivists believe "that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (Creswell 2014). For constructivists, the aim of any research is to "rely as much as possible on the participants' views on the situation being studied". Therefore, interviews and more precisely open-ended questions are the ideal method in a constructivist research. Researchers also have to consider personal background and external factors that may influence the responses of the interviewees. Constructivism aims at creating a theory or a pattern from the research results rather than studying or proving an already existing theory (such as post positivists). (Creswell 2014)

The transformative paradigm emerged to address social inequalities and to give a political voice to minorities. (Creswell 2014) (Mertens, 2010). According to this paradigm, the purpose of a research is to study minorities in the society and to understand where the inequalities come from. By studying minority groups and by understanding by what means and strategies they

are oppressed, the researcher will give these social groups a voice and will link "social and political actions to these inequalities" (Mertens, 2010)

Finally, the pragmatic paradigm suggests using a plurality of methods (mixed research methods e.g. qualitative and quantitative research methods). (Creswell 2014). Unlike the other paradigms, the pragmatic one does not suggest any assumptions before starting the research. Researchers are expected to focus on the research problem and use all means possible to understand the problem (Rossman & Wilson 1985) and solve the problem despite possible concerns over the application of this or that methodology (Patton, 1990).

In the context of the above four paradigms, constructivism will suit this project best and therefore will be used when designing the research. Indeed, the aim of this research being to determine how companies should communicate efficiently and how to overcome internal communication challenges, the choice of collecting insights from within the company will help the researcher have a better understanding of the situation in the company and what the possible improvements are.

5.2 Qualitative and quantitative approaches

For the purpose of this study, being constructivist and aiming at creating a pattern of the best practices in internal communication and at identifying the solution to potential challenges, a qualitative approach is preferable. Indeed, such a method will allow the researcher to create a pattern based on employee insights, feelings and suggestions.

A qualitative research will also help generate ideas for improvements and maybe offer new innovative solutions to the raised issues. The data collected through the qualitative researched could eventually help shape a future quantitative research. The challenges will be better understood and a future research could help collect data on a very specific topic. (Creswell 2014; Gray 2009; Saunders 2016)

Quantitative research is essentially used to collect numerical data, making statistics. Unlike a qualitative research, a quantitative research focuses on facts rather than on meanings. The nature of the data is also different. A quantitative research collects data based upon numbers whereas a qualitative research collects data based upon text. Also, if a qualitative research aims at inducting theories, finding new perspectives, a quantitative research rather aims at confirming a theory. (Creswell 2014; Gray 2009; Saunders 2016)

The aim of the research is to get a better understanding at how Finnish companies from the travel and tourism industry can communicate efficiently. The qualitative method was chosen over the quantitative one as the research aims at understanding feelings and perceptions and collecting insights and opinions. A qualitative research is therefore preferable. Two types of qualitative researches can be identified: case studies and interviews. Case studies "involve the empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, using multiple sources of evidence" (Saunders 2016). However, interviews will be used in this research to collect the data. Indeed, it will allow the researcher to have a larger poll of interviewees and to collect insights not from one company but from many.

The interviews will be semi-structured. It will allow the researcher to adapt the questions throughout the interview and thus focus on certain points. This method will suit this research best as all the interviewees will be quite different and may not all bring insights on the same topics. Semi-structured also allow the researcher to clarify the research question during the interview, collect personal comments and adapt her questions as the interview goes on. (Creswell 2014; Rumsey 2008; Saunders 2016)

6   Research

This chapter will introduce the research process, its objectives, its implementation as well as the planning and organisation of the interviews.

6.1   Organisation of the research

As briefly previewed in the introduction, the idea of this research came after the commissioning company Swissport Finland shared about their ongoing project to improve their internal communication. The objective is to understand how companies from the Finnish travel and tourism industry communicate internally in 2017. After identifying the current situation and collecting insights from the interviewees on effective internal communication, the researcher will try to understand how companies can communicate internally in an efficient manner.

Four companies took part in the research, representing four different aspects of the travel and tourism industry: two cruising companies: Eckerö Line and Viking Line, an international hotel chain: Hilton Hotels and a Nordic travel agency Apollomatkat. The choice of these companies was made for several reasons. Firstly, because of the similarity of their organisational structure to the commissioning company. Then, as internal communication varies from country to country, because of cultural or business differences, it was essential the interviewed companies were comparable to one another. This was made possible because all the companies interviewed have at least one office in Finland and it is with a Finnish context in mind this research was conducted.

Also, the choice was made to focus on larger organisations. All the companies that were interviewed had over 200 employees. Internal communication processes can be studies from various angles. In smaller companies, with all employees working in the same space, the focus would be on interpersonal communications. But the chosen focus is also on inter-departmental communications. The interviewed companies share several organisational characteristics. As said, all companies have at least one Finnish office but do also have offices abroad, either in the Nordics or worldwide. Other common details are the shift-workers and the workers based remotely. All interviewed companies have workers officiating on the "field", away from the main offices and sometimes at night (shift-workers).

The focus of the research on the travel and tourism industry was made both for a matter of reliability and of interest. Out of reliability to ensure the collection of comparable data and for

greater relevance of the results to Swissport Finland. Also not to be forgotten are the multiple specificities of this particular industry. Effective internal communication has a real importance in the travel and tourism industry. This industry implies multi-locational work, sometimes abroad and in different times zones. It also means a lot of field and shift work. But more important it connotes excellence in customer service.

Internal communication is essential in this industry as teams have to communicate fast and efficiently at any time of the day of the night, from and to any location, in case of a crisis or simply to provide an excellent service to the travellers. The objective of this research was to clearly identify how Finnish companies from the travel and tourism industry communicate internally in 2017. The expectation when starting the research is to, by studying how these companies communicate internally and understand how an effective internal communication could be organised. Potential future improvements or solutions will then be identified to finally arrive to a clear understanding of the best practices in internal communication in Finnish companies from this industry.

6.2   Implementation of the interviews

The interviews were conducted between November 2016 and March 2017. The time frame had to be kept as flexible as possible because of the Christmas period approaching. Indeed, the end of the year being the busiest time of the year for companies in this industry, challenges arose as for the setting of a meeting during that period. In total, seven qualitative interviews were conducted with professionals from four different companies. The interviews were semi-structured and were mainly conducted face to face, one interview being conducted over the phone. As the interviews were in-depth interviews and organised as a discussion, face to face interviews allowed the researcher to collect not only spoken answers but also emotions and feelings on a given topic.

The summary of the interview schedule goes as follows:

Table 2. Research interviewees and interviews

Date of interview	Name of interviewee	Position in the company	Company name	Location of interview
17/11/2016	Stefan Nordlund	Sales Manager	Eckerö Line	Eckerö Line office, Helsinki
17/11/2016	Jarno Niskanen	Head of B2B Sales-Groups	Eckerö Line	Eckerö Line office, Helsinki
17/11/2016	Carina Forsberg	Yield Manager	Eckerö Line	Eckerö Line office, Helsinki
20/01/2017	Manu Pietinen	Hotel Manager	Hilton Hotels	Hilton Strand, Helsinki
03/03/2017	Eva Torra	Former CEO and Vice-President	Apollomatkat	Phone interview
07/03/2017	Jaakko Ahti	Route and Product Manager	Viking Line	Viking Line office ,Helsinki
13/03/2017	Tuomas Luukkonen	COO	Apollomatkat	Apollomatkat office, Helsinki

The choice, when possible, of several interviewees from the same company was made in a matter of reliability. Qualitative research and interviews being based on personal insights, experience and feelings, it is important to consider that one person's insight does not always represent objectively the entire organisation's opinion or situation.

The interview lasted 30 minutes each and covered four topics.
- Background of the company and organisational structure
- Organisation of internal communication, tools and processes in place
- Challenges encountered in internal communication
- Future of internal communication

The interviewees were free to develop on every topic. As the interviews were semi-structured, new questions may have come up during the interview. The information collected was stored into an Excel file to facilitate the future analysis and the comparison of the answers. The interviewee's answers were collected anonymously, no name or company name were linked to any of the answers. All interviewees agreed to their name and the name of their company to be shown in the published thesis.

6.3   Reliability and limitations

The research results are reliable thanks to the variety of sources used. The theoretical framework includes sources and ideas from several different authors, from different backgrounds and opinions. The interviews were made among professionals that had no personal connections or interests towards the thesis. Their responses can be considered objective as they were not influenced by the researcher during the interviews. No personal opinions from the researchers were included in this thesis.

A few limitations to this research have be considered. Indeed, the original aim was to collect insights from several employees of the same company that would have different hierarchical positions. But the time of the year when the interviews were held made it very challenging to find participants. Eventually seven participants were found but all of them occupied higher hierarchical position such as managers or directors.

This might be a limitation as the research evaluates internal communication processes that the interviewees have in some cases established themselves. Thus, the evaluation the interviewees make of the processes might not be perfectly objective. Also, several of the challenges concerned vertical communication. Interviewing only members of the managements will result in studying only top-bottom communication and not bottom-up communication, as suggested by a two-way communication.

Another limit is the nature of the research. It is indeed focusing on internal communication processes that might be considered a sensitive topic by the companies. If a company is aware of internal communication issues, they can be reluctant to share about them publicly even more so as the thesis will be published.

7   Results

This chapter will present some of the challenges and solutions the interviewees presented. It will also cover the some of the solutions that were found in order to solve these issues. The chapter will be divided into four sections: language and culture, distance in internal communication, communication tools and finally future of internal communication.

7.1   Language and culture

Several of the interviewees brought up challenges they had encountered with cultural differences even with teams in other Nordic countries. Two interviewees gave the exact same example of their video meetings with Sweden. These interviewees, from two different companies, both said that meetings with a Swedish team can be sometimes challenging because of the great amount of people involved in the decision making processes. One of them also mentioned how challenges are handled differently in Finland and in Sweden before adding that in Sweden the attention is not given as to who is responsible for the mistake, as it would be in Finland, but more to resolving the problem and moving on. The interviewees also said that sometimes, people from different cultures understood a message in a different way which causes misunderstandings.

The interviewees mentioned that the most important element to solve the cultural challenges is understanding. Being aware of the differences can help anyone adapt accordingly and accept these differences. Indeed, one of the interviewees said "Once you know how things work in that country, you just know you have to work in a certain way". Also, they said to believe that fewer misunderstandings appeared with face to face communication. Therefore the interviewees recommended the use of video conferencing and even suggested to travel to the destination to talk face to face but especially, as one interviewee suggested *"to meet your colleagues and know who you are dealing with. It's so much easier to continue the discussion after that".*

Misunderstanding may also be related to the language used, to the different levels of proficiency of the persons communicating or to cultural differences. Language did not seem to be an issue for the interviewees. Indeed most of the companies had little or no international staff in their Finnish office. Also when communicating with other Nordic offices, three of the four interviewed companies even had language requirements in Swedish for instance.

However, the interviewees mentioned a few solutions that helped them avoid challenges due to language. The interviewees for instance mentioned language requirements when hiring a new team member. For two of the companies, Swedish language was an absolute must as they would have to communicate with Swedish speaking teams from Sweden or the Åland islands. Also, one interviewee explained that in his company, policies existed that were guiding the employees to use the right language for the right purpose. For instance, when and with who to use English and when to use the local language.

With all new communication tools being introduced, the interviewees mentioned a new type of issues emerging: generational challenges. Indeed, they said that more experienced generations have had to move from phone based communication to mainly email based communication. The interviewees also mentioned the difficulties older generations encountered with the new tools that were being introduced. On the contrary, younger generations that have not been used to phone calls before have difficulties and feel uncomfortable using the phone when communicating.

To prevent these difficulties and internal communication challenges in general, the interviewees discussed the importance of training and rules. Trainings would assure the company every member is aware of what tools are available, how they function and learn and agree for what purpose they should be used. They also believe clear communication rules, will also help employees when communicating as to how communicate, with which tool and with whom. However none of the interviewed companies said to have a clear or strict communication policy.

7.2   Distance in internal communication

The distance between the sender and the receiver of the message causes that sometimes the message does not go through. The interviewees identified challenges that fall into two categories: messages that are never received by the receiver because the latter does not have access to it and messages that are not received but not read.

After discussions, one cause of these challenges is maybe simply that people do not have access to these messages. For instance, intranet and emails both need an internet connexion or Wi-Fi to be used. Field workers, on top of not having a constant access to a computer, sometimes don't have access to internet if abroad, on a ship or a plane. One of the companies tried to solve this issue by providing Wi-Fi to field workers and also as said earlier by installing computer with access to intranet in their break room.

Another company believes technology is simply maybe not the way to go. In this company, they believe if more meetings were held with the field workers, it would assure the message went through. They have also tried to, instead of expecting from field workers to read their emails and consult intranet, provide them with information on paper. For instance all newsletters are printed in a magazine that comes out regularly. This journal is said to have great success and to be appreciated, not only be the field workers but also by the whole company. Communication by paper is also appreciated because it replaces emails that are not always read and received by remote workers.

Also, one of the interviewees stressed that *"if someone cannot attend a meeting, he or she should still get the info. It is so important that all this info is available somewhere".* The interviewees agreed that communication also involves a transparent and clear reporting. It was mentioned that all departments have to report their activities and that these reports are shared internally within the organisation. The information is sometimes posted on the company's intranet or sometimes shared in a printed magazine. The idea is to avoid sending emails that can disappear in the mailbox, among all the other messages. With printed material, it is also easy to assure people will no access to a computer, get the information.
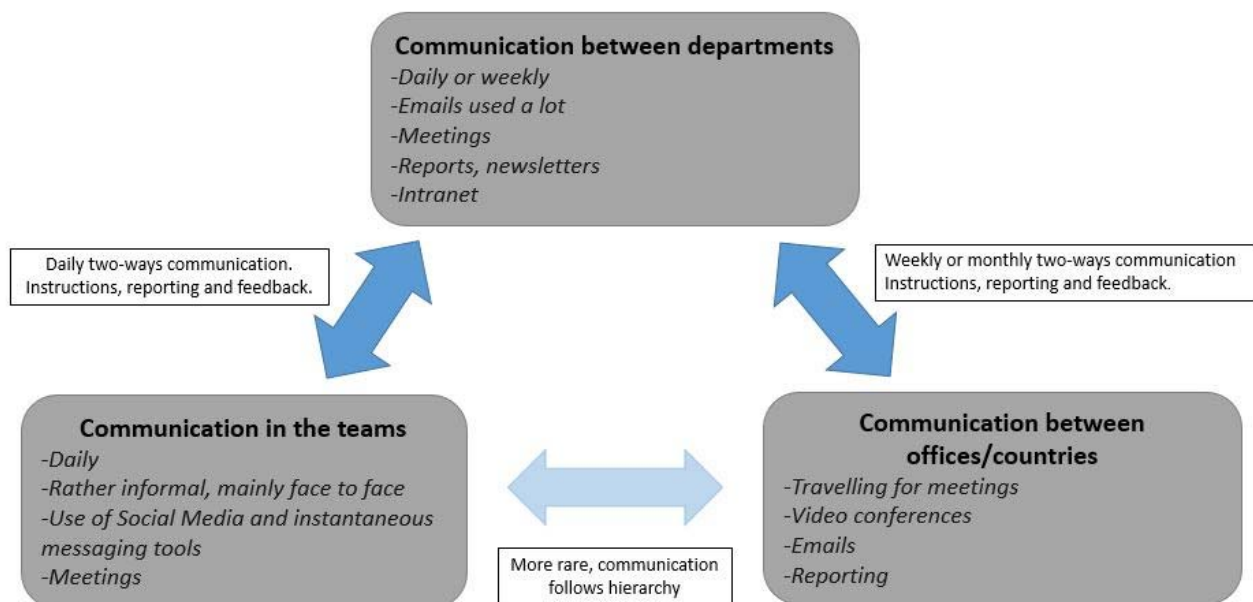

Figure 4. Organisation on internal communication in the organisations

The above figure (figure 4) shows how companies communicate internally between departments, offices and within the teams.

7.3   Communication tools

All the interviewed organisations seem to use rather the same tools for internal communication with only a few innovative ideas. One element that came up very early in the discussions, was that none of the organisations had a strict communication policy. The interviewees agreed that there were no rules as to what had to be communicated and how. Yet they also said that these rules were rather instinctive and had just come in place with time. Rules such as who is in charge of communicating the information seem to be quite clear. In some of the organisation, there was a specific person in charge (a team leader for instance) in charge of transmitting the information to his/her team, this works also for the remote workers.

Face to face communication seems to have a great place in the internal communication of the interviewed companies. The offices in Helsinki (the ones interviewed) were all rather small, which makes face to face easier. But according to the interviewees, it became more challenging when communicating with offices abroad, also because of the time difference. They also said it can be just as challenging to communicate face to face with night workers sometimes.

All interviewees recognised the benefits of face to face communication and shared some of the solutions they found to communicate face to face avoiding these challenges. Three of the interviewees encouraged anyone to not hesitate to travel to the destination to meet the colleagues. Also, six of the seven interviewees mentioned that they were using video conferences during their meetings. One of them said *"It's a real plus to use the video during the meetings! It helps a lot when you can see the body language or the gestures, it feels more natural and less stressful than just the phone".*

The interviewees also all mentioned meetings that are for them a great communication channel as it is very easy to share information with a larger group of people. The challenge faced is that not everyone takes part in the meetings. This means there is a risk of someone not being informed of the discussions. Also, the interviewees mentioned the difficulty to hold meetings with staff working remotely or at night.

To solve these issues, they suggested the use of newsletters. These newsletters, in most organisations important information such as company news, objectives, or latest acquisitions for

instance. In other companies, the newsletters were only a summary of the meetings. The letters were either sent out by email, available on the company's intranet page or even printed out and handed out in one case. Three of the interviewees also said that in their company, the meetings are organised by department. Meaning that for instance, the employees working at night will have compulsory meetings to attend, hosted by their shift manager. If not everyone attends the first meetings, they could organise a similar meeting at another time that the employees who couldn't attend the first meeting could join.

As for the emails, they are as expected used a lot but one of the interviewees said the saturation level is very close. Indeed, because of the amount of email everyone receives on a daily basis, there is a great risk to lose information. But it seems as it is still the preferred and most natural communication tool as all interviewees agreed that they use emails the most. Some interviewees would even use email in case of a crisis.

To avoid these challenges, the interviewees mentioned ready-made email lists to facilitate team and group communication and so that no one is left out of a conversation by email. The information shared by email seemed to be mostly everyday matters. Some of the reasons for using emails that were mentioned were the possibility to share files, the trace one can keep of a conversation as well as the ease of use. Indeed, emails are used by everyone and even outside of working hours. The interviewees also said that they would encourage the use of other channels depending on the matter. Two of the four companies interviewed also used a chat for their internal communication. They see the chat as a very efficient tool for instantaneous communication. It allows co-workers to ask simple questions and it can be used even when on the phone for instance.

Intranet was mentioned by all seven interviewees. The interviewees said that intranet was used mostly to share company news and information that was aimed at the whole company. All interviewees also mentioned the challenges they encountered with their intranet. The most recurrent issues concerned the impression rate of the posts. As each individual has to take the initiative to open and consult the intranet to get the message, a fair part of the employees simply forget to check the intranet and eventually are not aware of the updates. This issue is even more common with the employees that do not have a constant access to a computer or simply to internet. The interviewees also regret the "static" or "passive" style or the intranet and wished it was more "interactive". Indeed, some of the intranets used by these companies is only a channel to display information and does not give the possibility to comment on the posts or give

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feedback. This also makes it difficult for the company to know who has read the post and eventually, there is no "discussion" about the topics.

A few of the solutions found are the installation of computers with access to intranet in the break rooms or the installation when possible of WiFi areas. This last solutions does not show the best results as intranet is not the first page one consults when there is WiFi access. One interviewee said his company was posting attractive offers on the intranet to encourage people ti check it more regularly.

The interviewees were also asked if there were any business social networks in place in their company. Only one company used Yammer and admitted it was not the main internal communication tool they had. Two of the companies said the employees had themselves created Facebook groups that regrouping the members of a same team or department. The challenge ere seemed to be the very thin border between personal and professional life on Facebook. Some information regarding internal communication, such as company news, will become external communication if posted on social media. The solution suggested here was again installing policies on the use of these media.
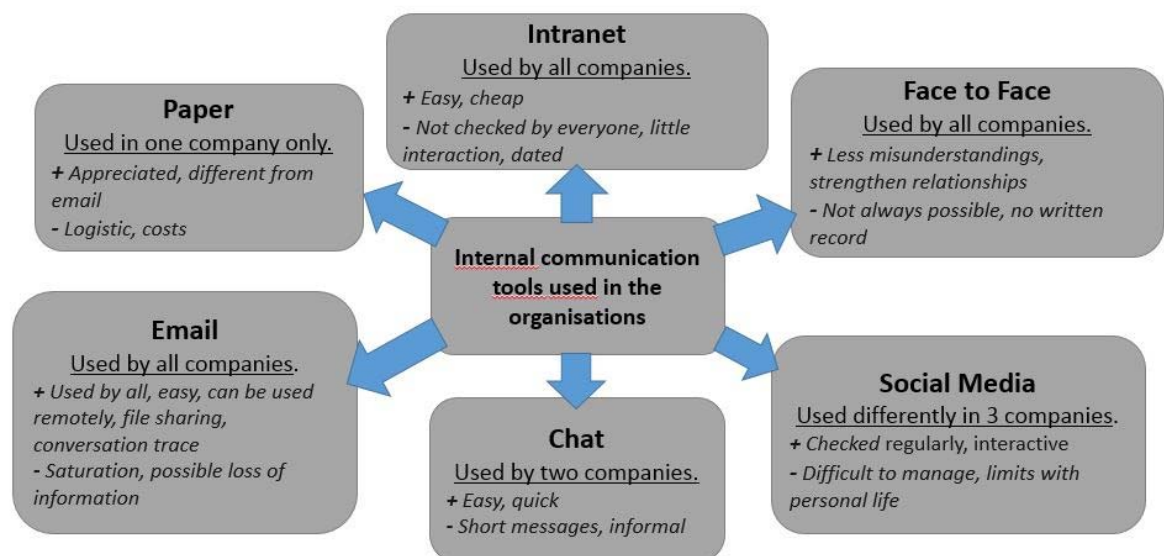

Figure 5. Benefits and challenges of the tools used in internal communication

The figure 5 above presents the tools used by the interviewed companies to communicate as well as their opinion on these tools.

While listing and describing the different communication tools in use in their company, the interviewees also mentioned the numerous challenges that were brought up with using these tools. The following part will focus closer on what these challenges are, their origin, the potential solution found by the companies to solve them as well as on how to identify internal communication challenges.

7.4   Future of communication

The last part of the interviews regarded the future. The interviewees were asked how they see internal communication changing in the future and what processes or tools they would like to try or implement within their organisation.

All interviewees foresaw the processes to becoming easier in the coming years. They believe everything will develop in a way that makes the work faster and clearer. For instance, they mentioned information should be made as clear as possible to avoid misunderstandings. Having data such as charts presented as an infographic will make it easy to understand. This could be especially useful during meetings or when sending charts by email without the possibility to give further explanations. Another idea was the use of colour codes in communication to for example specify the importance of a message.

Transparency was also mentioned. They discussed the increasing importance of having a clear and open communication, where the same information would be available for everyone. This could also include being open not only internally but maybe also to the public. One of the interviewee said that a transparent communication helps internal communication in many ways. People are encouraged to share more, there is a smaller chance someone is left out and finally it increases the trust in the organisation and thus motivation a lot.

Only three interviewees mentioned new technologies they would use in the future. One interviewee was considering implementing a chat system, two other believed there will be an increase in the use of video conferences as face to face communication gaining importance every day. The interviewees all agreed that in order to facilitate communication with remote workers, it was crucial to consider solutions to assure them access to a computer or to an internet connexions in general. They also have to be given the right communication tools. Also by using technology, companies should according to one interviewee, focus on analytics. It was said that it would be the best tool to help companies in their strategic planning.

The increase use of technology brings one challenge: the generational gap. Several interviewees agreed that challenges have emerged with younger generation being very comfortable with new technologies and older generation struggling to catch up. But thinking of the future, the interviewees also said being aware that with the older generation retiring, communication via technology might get easier. The importance of training was also mentioned by many. Training in the use of these new technologies should become mandatory in the future.

Finally the interviewees discussed how they see the organisation of the work change in the future. Two of the interviewees explained how they see the work become more flexible and free. Both believed working remotely, from home or from some other location will become more common and even encouraged. The interviewees also see the communication becoming faster, thanks to a looser hierarchy for instance. Finally, two of the interviewees believe in emails being more and more avoided in the future. Some said they believe phones will come back as one of the preferred communication tools in the corporate world.

This last theme concluded the interviews. The interviewees had several ideas as to how they see the work changing in the coming years. If some predict an increasing use of technology in the future, other believe organisation will go back to so-called "older" processes and thus aim at simplifying the communication.

Transparency
-Clear and open communication
-Information shared openly
-Will improve trust

Easier processes
-More flexible work (location)
-Looser hierarchy
-Emails will be avoided
-More face to face

Predicted evolutions in internal communication

Clarity
-More infographics
-Use of colour codes
-Make reporting and reading easier and faster

Technology
-Was not the main focus
-Increase of video conferencing
-Possible implementation of a chat
-Need to improve communication with remote workers
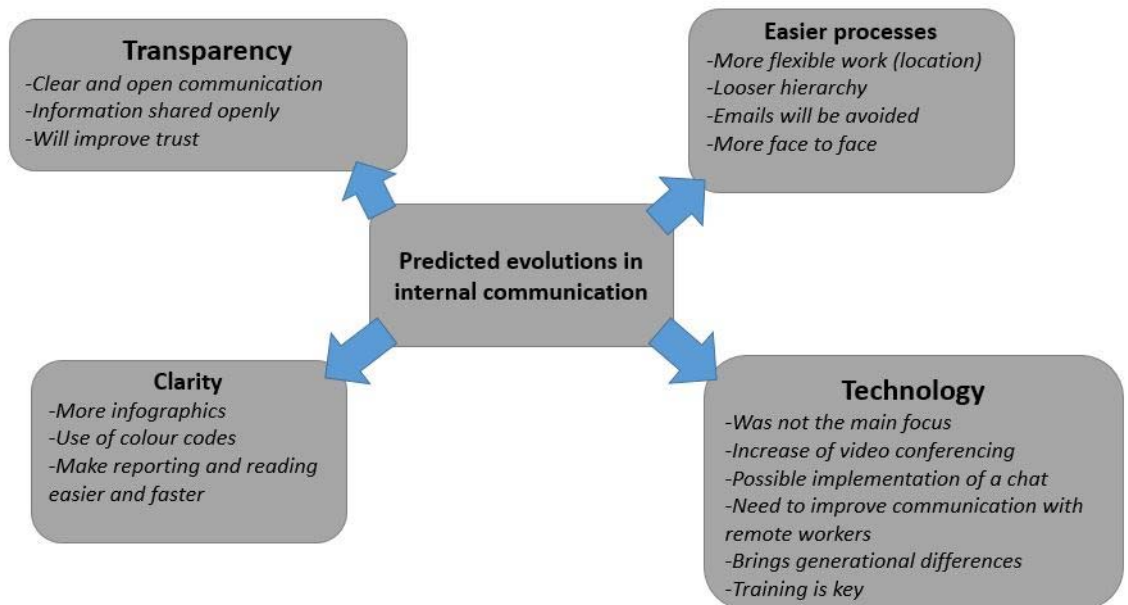-Brings generational differences
-Training is key

Figure 6. Predicted evolutions in internal communication

Figure 6 above summarises the predicted evolutions in internal communication the interviewees foresaw during the interviews.

To sum up this chapter, that challenges encountered by the interviewed companies and the solutions suggested, the following table (Table 3) was created.

Table 3. Challenges and solutions in internal communication

Challenges	Solutions
Misunderstandings (language, culture)	Easier with face to face or video conference, be aware of the differences, language requirements at recruitment.
Not aware of messages because no internet access	Install Wi-Fi points, install computer with access to intranet in break rooms, printed materials
Message is not received	Send it on a platform that can be checked (internet access), have ready email lists, clear rules (what to send to who)
Messages are not read	Publish on several platforms, encourage people to read with offers or discounts,
Generational challenges	Training, adapt to all ages (platform choice)
Confusion or doubts on processes	Clear processes, one person in charge of internal communication

8   Discussion

The theory and the research conducted clearly show that internal communication is a challenging topic. For Swissport it means that there is a real need to understand what the issues and the potential challenge are in order to avoid or solve them. This chapter will give Swissport a list of suggestions on how to work towards the achievement of an effective internal communication. The chapter will also cover some suggestions for the implementation of these solutions and will lastly be discussing the validity and the reliability of the solutions.

Identifying the challenges

For Swissport, the first step is to identify the potential challenges. This step will guide on the way of improving their internal communication. The challenges can be identified in two ways. First by observation, the interviewees of the research believed internal communication challenges are "quite obvious" and show immediately. To note, this suggests the challenges already exist in the company. Secondly, conducting an internal audit, what they did with the employee survey they sent out during the summer 2016.

Guidelines and policies

The research revealed that misunderstandings can be avoided if clear guidelines exist on how to communicate. They can help Swissport to create a pattern for their internal communication that will assure them that everyone communicates correctly, using the right channels.

These guidelines can also help the employees in case of doubt or if they are new to a certain communication channel. All in all, guidelines and policies help secure everyone communicates as the company wishes.

Responsibility

This step is closely linked to the previous point. The responsibility of internal communication has to be clearly defined. Who sets the rules and the policies of internal communication? This has to be clear to avoid contradictive guidelines. Also the interviews reminded the importance that hierarchy can have on internal communication. Swissport should, as any company, make sure that everyone knows who to report to. This will help avoiding messages getting lost or reaching the wrong person. Clear communication patterns or guidelines can help avoiding these issues but they have to be known by everyone to be effective.

Choice of tools

The research revealed that one of the major challenges for a company is to make sure all employees get the message they send out. For Swissport, this means choosing the right communication tool everyone has access to or communicating on several channels. For instance, for the employees working in the office, face to face (and meetings) can be a solution to the overwhelming quantity of emails received. For more urgent matters, a chat or the use of WhatsApp could also be a possibility. As for workers based remotely, the access to internet (emails and intranet) is the main challenge. The use of meetings when possible or of paper materials can help assure they also have access to the messages. If there is a need for all employees to connect to a specific channel online, the focus should be made on how to help provide access, by providing Wi-Fi, computers or phones. All in all, the main criteria when choosing a channel should be its accessibility.

Communication skills

It is not sufficient for someone to receive and send messages to communicate efficiently. There are skills needed as to how to write/code a message so it is understood by the receiver and as to how to use the communication channels correctly and efficiently. As the interviews suggested, trainings are a key element on the way to achieve effective internal communication. Swissport, as any company can benefit a lot from providing different sorts of training in communication. These trainings can be on the use of a new tool or on the implementation of a new policy.

Two-way communication

For internal communication to be successful, there is a need for a working two-ways communication. The management has to communicate enough for employees to feel informed and involved. This communicate about the successes about also about the difficulties. The employees should also be able to communicate with the management. Through feedback for instance (interviews or surveys as Swissport did) or simply by communicating with their manager and by having a word in the decision making processes. A company can also provide feedback forms or organise one to one discussions.

Feeling to belong and motivation

The research showed the importance of trust in internal communication. People feel safer and more to communicate and share in a safe environment. The more the management or the company shares with its employees, the more the employees will feel informed and considered.

They will feel involved in the company, which can raise their motivation. If employees do not trust their management or see a lack of transparency, they will have more difficulties to follow guidelines and may lose motivation. Therefore it is important to inform everyone about the current whereabouts, good or bad.

Measures

To assure an effective internal communication and solve the challenges, regular measurements can help evaluate the situation and adapt quickly. Measurements can be made in several ways but the simple fact to check if everyone has opened the email or attended the meeting can help Swissport or any organisation to monitor the effectiveness of their internal communication. Changes can then be made accordingly.

Implementation of changes

To implement the right changes in an organisation and in Swissport Finland, the context is important. The solutions above are thought with the context of Swissport in mind (the industry, the organisational structure, the current situation). The planning phase has to be done very carefully. When and how to implement the changes. The changes should be made by step. One step at the time as suggested above. Also, as said earlier, it is important to keep everyone informed about the changes and to give explanations about why and how the changes will be made but most importantly it has to be done before the changes happen.

These solutions have been suggested after the interviews of companies similar in size, in organisational structure and from the same industry as Swissport Finland. The suggestions are therefore realistic. Also, the solutions suggested during the interviews were solutions already in place or tried out in the companies.

9   Conclusion

Based on the theoretical knowledge and the insights collected during the interview, we can affirm that internal communication is an essential part of an organisation's operations. Yet it is also a complex field where several barriers exist that could interfere and cause misunderstandings and other challenges. Being aware of the potential challenges and of the solutions that exist to solve these issues will help an organisation improve their internal communication.

In order to help the commissioning company Swissport Finland in their project to develop their internal communication, a theoretical framework was made to understand internal communication and effective internal communication. A research was also made among similar companies from the travel and tourism industry. The thesis aimed at providing Swissport Finland with suggestions on how to communicate efficiently.

After the interviews, we can say that internal communication can be ineffective for two reasons mainly: because of misunderstandings and/or because the message is not received. Clear communication guidelines will help a company structure their internal communication. Also the communication channel has to be chosen wisely, keeping in mind the accessibility of all workers to the message.

For the communication to be successful, the message has to be coded to be understood by the receiver. The right language has to be chosen as well as the right level of language or jargon. Trainings in communication can help avoid these mistakes and strengthen the internal communication of an organisation.

The aim of the thesis was reached as the interviews successfully provided constructive insights on how the interviewed companies communicated internally, what challenges they were facing and how they solved these issues. These insights, added to the knowledge from the theory, allowed the author to collect and create a list of suggestions of improvements adapted to Swissport Finland.

The thesis process evolved with time. The initial scheduled deadline was in December 2016. But being employed from November to February helped the author sharpen her time and project management skills. The choice of this new deadline in June 2017 was made in a matter to

deliver quality results. The main challenge during the thesis process were the interviews. Indeed, it was difficult for professionals from this industry to give time in a period as busy as the end of the year. In future projects, the time of the year should be considered as a key factor in the planning process.

The fact that the author was able to develop her topic along the way was very beneficial to the end result. This was possible thanks to the plan, both strict enough to keep a structure but loose enough to be adapted as the topic got clearer. All modifications were done in agreement with the commissioning company.

The thesis process brought a lot to the author. Firstly, it allowed her to understand a very interesting topic and gain a knowledge about communication that will be a real asset in the future. It also helped her sharpen her project and time management skills especially when several unexpected events occurred along the way. Also, the thesis was a good occasion for the researcher to train her concentration skills during this long process. Lastly, the thesis was a great occasion to network with professionals from the tourism industry through the interviews.

For future research on the same topic, a sharper focus will be helpful. Indeed internal communication is such a broad topic, researched by countless of scholars throughout the years. Because the topic is so broad, focusing on one aspect on internal communication will allow a researcher to go deeper into its analysis. There is no shortage of literature on internal communication, yet there are fairly few researches conducted on contemporary internal communication trends.

For Swissport in the future, sharp and regular measurements will help them identify challenges early which will help them to solve them in time. Also, new communication tools are being developed that might be worth trying. Swissport Finland could also research more in depth one of the aspect of their internal communication such as in-team communication or communication between teams. Their survey and this research can be seen as a first step on the way to having a perfectly effective internal communication.

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