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Developing Organizational Communication

Improving Internal and Organizational Communication

Paavo Konttinen

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JAMK University of Applied Sciences

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Abstract <p>In a modern-day business organization, both organizational and internal communication are vital components of the business operations. For an organization to have successful business operations, a coherent and functioning internal communication process is needed so that it spans the whole organization. Because of the multiple communication channels available due to the digitalization of every industry, there is a great need to identify any well-functioning communication process and method available.</p> <p>The concept of this research was created by the author, and it was then offered to the assigning case company as a method to improve their internal and organizational communication procedures. The case company's representative saw the need within the organization and felt that there was room for potential improvement within the organization. The case company was a multi-national technology organization specialized in healthcare and wellness products. The assigning organization is not mentioned by name in this paper due to their request.</p> <p>For the research, a wide and comprehensive literature review was conducted. The theory that was collected provided a comprehensive and strong knowledge base about organizations, communication, information and different communication channels, methods and limitations. This theory base was then utilized to create and conduct a quantitative survey for the Central Finland office of the case company. Based on the collected data, the author tried to provide viable findings and conclusions for the case organization to utilize in their internal communication process. The study reached its main objective of providing valuable insights about the organization's current state of internal communication and ways of how to improve it.</p>		
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<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Modernissa organisaatiossa koko organisaation sisäinen kommunikaatioprosessi on elintärkeä osa yrityksen liiketoiminnallisten operaatioiden toteutuksessa. Ollakseen menestyvä, yrityksen sisäisen kommunikaation täytyy olla kokonaisvaltaista sekä toimivaa, kattaa koko organisaation. Koska nykypäivänä kommunikaatiokanavia on niin monia, on tärkeää löytää niistä kaikkein toimivimmat prosessit ja tavat kommunikoida.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen konseptin ja idean on kehittänyt tutkija itse. Tutkimuksen aihe esiteltiin organisaatiolle, jossa tutkimus toteutettiin keinona parantaa heidän omaa sisäistä kommunikaatioprosessiaan. Toimeksiantajan edustaja näki tarpeen tällaiselle selvitykselle heidän organisaatiossaan. Toimeksiantaja on kansainvälinen teknologiayritys, joka erikoistuu terveydenhuollon sekä hyvinvoinnin tuotteisiin. Toimeksiantajaa ei mainita nimeltä tutkimuksessa heidän omasta pyynnöstään.</p> <p>Tutkimusta varten tutkija toteutti laajan kirjallisuustutkimuksen, joka edelsi muuta tutkimustyötä. Tämän teoriapohjan tarkoitus oli tarjota kattava tietämys organisaatioista, kommunikaatiosta, informaatiosta sekä erilaisista kommunikaatiokanavista, keinoista sekä niiden rajoitteista. Tätä teoriapohjaa hyödynnettiin sen jälkeen kvantitatiivisen tutkimuksen toteutuksessa, jolla kerättiin dataa toimeksiantajan Keski-Suomen toimiston henkilöstöltä. Tästä tutkimusdatasta tutkija etsi hyödynnettäviä löydöksiä, joita toimeksiantaja voisi hyödyntää omassa sisäisen kommunikaation parantamisessa. Tutkija löysi merkittäviä kehityskohteita ja ehdotuksia toimeksiantajalle hyödynnettäväksi.</p>		

Avainsanat ([asiasanat](#))

Organisaatio, kommunikaatio, sisäinen kommunikaatio

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

The aim of this thesis was to gain a deep insight of the case company's methods of internal communication and to identify and analyse how the company's internal organizational communication could be improved. This was done by conducting a survey with the organization's employees and by analysing the data derived from the survey. From this data set, the author intended to identify the development points within the organization's ways of communication. This was done by carefully analysing the data received from the survey and by presenting conclusions and improvement proposals to the case company.

The interest in this type of work had been developing with the author for a few years, and the interest in the topic increased after having worked in multiple different multinational corporations, where, at least in the author's mind, there was a need for some serious improvements regarding leadership-to-employee, and even employee-to-employee communication. The author acknowledged his previous views on different types of organizational communication, and ascertained that these views were not reflected in this thesis, which could have led to skewing the results of the whole study.

Internal communication within an organization is a key component for companies to have successful business operations. If the employees within a company cannot communicate their meaning from one to another without problems, it is a significant handicap for the whole organization.

1.2 Theoretical framework

This thesis consists of two different parts, first of which is the theoretical framework that the study relies on. This theoretical data was derived from a literature review, such as books, articles and other publications about the concepts of communication, internal communication, organizational communication, organizational culture, and

organizations in general. This material was derived mainly from online sources, such as e-books and online articles, but also from published literature, such as books and articles from magazines related to the industry.

In addition to the literary data, primary data was also collected from the employees of the case company. This data was collected by the author, and it was done by conducting a semi-structured survey with open ended questions with a total number of 60 respondents. From this survey, the researcher analysed and interpreted the data so that meaningful development ideas and problem points could be identified for the case company to utilize.

1.3 The structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured so that it begins with the basic introduction of the thesis concept. This is followed by information about the research topic and what the theoretical frameworks and limitations are. After this, the objectives of the research are presented as well as the research questions that were utilized to gain viable and relevant data for the thesis.

After the research objectives and questions part, there is an extensive literature review. This literature review considers the concepts of communication on a very comprehensive level. It tries to explain the concept of communication, information and the different models of communication. Moreover, it discusses the difference between communication and internal communication from an organizational point of view and defines the term organization, and more deeply, the concept of organizational communication, which this whole thesis relies on.

1.4 Limitations

This thesis work has some limitations, and they must be presented before the data collection and analysis are presented. This study was conducted within an organization that has international operations and a multinational employee structure. However, the survey conducted for the study was limited to a single region to the company's Central Finland office. Even though the work of this office concerns

multiple locations around the world, there is still the geographical limitation that the results gained in this office may not apply to other regions.

Another limitation identified is the data limitation because the employee base within this organization is about 60 employees. If the response rate in the study is 50%, that would mean a total of 30 respondents to a survey with quantitative results. This might create a data limitation for the study, but this must be more closely examined after the collection and analysis of the data to see whether the findings are applicable and usable.

1.5 Case Company presentation

As per the request of the case company, no identifying information about them will be revealed in this thesis. Due to this restriction, the case company's presentation is being kept to a very general level, so that no identification of the case company or its employees can be made even with efforts to do so. For this thesis, the case company's name and other information fortunately is not crucial.

The case company, as it will be referred to also later in this text, is a Finnish organization started in 2002, and it employs over 100 persons. The Central-Finland office, that was the source of the questionnaire data of this thesis, employs about 60+ people. The demographic data, such as age, gender and work experience with the organization can be found later in this text.

The organization engages in multi-discipline research and analysis to create technologies that can be utilized in both consumer and business scenarios for health, fitness and well-being.

2. Communication and internal communication

This chapter defines the meaning of both communication as a concept, and the concept of internal communication. Communication is the means of conveying a message from one person to another using some sort of medium, whether it is verbal, written, non-verbal or some other form of communication.

Internal communication is a process of communication, but from the perspective of the communication process within an organization, and in this thesis, within a company operating in Finland. The process of internal communication differs from the normal process of communication to some extent, and these differences are explained in this part of the literature review in-depth.

2.1 Defining communication

To define communication, we first must consider the fact of why individuals communicate. It has been said that we communicate with at least some purpose to satisfy personal or social needs because these needs are a driving force behind the human behaviour (Steinberg 2007). In terms of communication between individuals of the same organization, these needs are their personal needs to achieve something in their own jobs by communicating with others. In the Maslow's hierarchy table, this type of communication between two employees of an organization can be recognized to be at the Self-actualization bracket of achieving one's full potential in this case in their working environment.

When thinking about a single definition for communication, different people have different perceptions. One person can think about communication as a verbal one-to-one discussion between two people, whereas another person can view communication as being online between multiple persons in a group chat. Therefore, there is no one and only definition for communication, but instead, there is a proliferation of definitions for the same study of communication. Definitions are different depending on the person's views about communication. (Steinberg 2007.)

These are all very broad definitions for the term communication, and they do not offer a single answer to the question "What is communication?" In its simplest form, Williams (2016) defines communication as follows: "I mean by communication the process of transmission and reception". In other words, communication is the process of one individual sending a message to another person by some form of transmission, whether it is speech, voice-messaging, text messages, e-mail or any other type of communication. The intended party of reception receives the transmission and decodes it so that they can understand what the sender of the

message has meant. There are multiple factors that affect the decoding of this message, which means that the message is not always interpreted in the way that the sender intended the message to be understood. These factors affecting communication are discussed more closely later in this chapter.

To go deeper into the process of transmission and reception, West, R., Turner, L. (2008), define that there are three critical components in the definition of communication, process, message exchange and shared meaning. By process, they mean that communication is an ever-ongoing activity that is constantly changing. The element of message exchange means the transaction of verbal and non-verbal messages being sent between people. The third component, meaning, is the part that creates purpose for the message itself. Meaning is what the receivers of the message exchange obtain from the message that is being sent to them. (West & Turner 2008.) The process of exchanging messages is only a part of the communication flow, and the meaning of those messages is the final part that gives the whole communication process its reason of existence.

2.2 The Communication Process

As the term communication describes the process of sharing meaning by transmission of messages through different sorts of media, (Deresky 2011) we can establish that this is the basis for the whole communication process. The communication process then again comes from taking that shared meaning, and disseminating that information between a sender and a receiver. However, during this process, there are multiple stages where the meaning can be distorted, and anything that serves to undermine the process of communication is called “noise”. (ibid.) The concept of noise is reviewed later in this chapter.

As communication is a complex process of linking up or sharing the perceptual fields of the sender and receiver, there is a continuous flow of information between the sender and receiver. First, the sender encodes the message to be delivered, (Deresky 2011) after which the receiver decodes it, encodes a response and conveys it back to the original sender, thus switching the roles and making the communication process a circular process. Since there are multiple models that are utilized to portray this

model, they are reviewed later in this chapter to clarify what is meant by a circular process of communication.

It must also be noted that the communication process is rapidly changing because of technical advancements (Deresky 2011.) This is one of the main reasons why the author became interested in the whole internal communication process as a research topic in the first place. Since the world of communication has changed so drastically in the recent years, it is fair to ask what the obstacles are that corporations are facing in their day-to-day communications because of this. It is certain that global business is being pushed forward at a phenomenal rate due to the growth of data flow and information technology, but the costs to the companies can be great.

2.3 Information

Now this paper has defined what communication is, and, therefore, the next task is to define what it is that people convey when they communicate to one another. As stated earlier, the most basic need is satisfying personal needs, but people also communicate to convey information to one another. That is the essence of communication: to share information that one knows with another person.

Now we are in a situation where we must understand what this information is, then. Information comes in many forms, and there are multiple different meanings for the word "information". It can be associated with various explanations, dependent on the perspective adopted and the requirements and desires that one has in mind. (Floridi 2010.) As is seen from this definition, information is not a simplified concept of a person knowing something. Instead, it is a complex concept defined by multiple variables, since information can be affected by the context, the attitudes and the desired outcome of both the receiver and the sender. Even to this day, not one clear definition of and consensus on what information is has been reached, but for the purposes of this paper, this definition serves the best purpose for the remainder of this text.

Even though this simplified definition is quite clear on what information is, this chapter also states that there are factors that affect the simplicity of communication, so that instead of removing uncertainty, poor communication creates more

confusion and uncertainty than what it removes. There are also some aspects of information that are widely recognized but may not be at all true in the first place. These are referred to “Myths about information” in the book “Organizational Communication: Empowerment in a Technological Society” by Andrews and Herschel (1996). The first of these myths is that information is a commodity. Yes, it can be traded for some currency, but the fact that after the transfer of information both parties know the information, the concept of possession is more complex (Andrews & Herschel 1996). The whole concept of information as a commodity can lead into misleading, secrecy and mismanagement on a corporate level.

Another myth is that information would be power. From a business point of view, this is detrimental. Obviously, there is a difference between keeping corporate secrets and holding on to information as a tool of power. (Andrews & Herschel 1996.) If a person within an organisation holds on to information as some sort of power to him or her, this can be harmful for the operations of the company. Instead, information should be correctly disseminated to everyone involved, so that people can utilize the information for the good of the corporation. (ibid.)

The third myth is the notion that more information is somehow better. (Andrews & Herschel 1996.) It is good to have extensive amounts of knowledge, but if a single person within an organisation collects too much information for him or herself, it can become a burden, since too much information can lead to chaos in terms of managing and distributing that knowledge. Instead, information should be widely shared and not just held by one person so that they are the sole owner of that knowledge.

The final myth is connected to the previous one: not all information is knowledge. Instead, it is items of data and facts that have been divided into categories. This means that information does not always lead to understanding. (Andrews & Herschel 1996.) Instead, information can also create more confusion than it solves, and it is the knowledge within that information that further refines the facts and connections that the receiver already has about the piece of information that is distributed to them.

Now we have defined what it is that people communicate with, and next, the focus is on the different models of communication. Later on, this chapter looks into the factors that affect the notion of information sharing and what can make understanding more difficult for the receiver of the information.

2.4 Models of Communication

As there are multiple definitions for the process of communication itself, there are bound to be multiple different definitions and models for the process of communication. This part of the communication chapter portrays a few of the most widely used models of communication. Both models are from the 20th century, but they are still quite as relevant in the modern world. With the definition of communication channels in a modern organization, the intention is to fill the gaps left in the communication process by these two models.

Communication models are visual representations of the complex communication process (West & Turner 2008). These visual representations are made, so that it is easier for people to understand the flow of communication from the start to finish and what the factors are that affect the whole communication process.

The first model is the Linear Model of Communication, which is the older of the two models portrayed here. The second model is called the transactional model, introduced to the world by Wenburg and Wilmot in 1982. Both models are still being utilized in the definition of communication models in the modern world, and therefore they were deemed relevant for this thesis work, too.

2.5 Linear Model

The linear model of communication approaches the communication process as a one-way process of sending the message to its destination. The linear model is comprised of several different components that are discussed in this chapter and can be seen in Figure 1 below.

First, the conveying of information starts from the information source, which is then relayed through the sender or transmitter as a message to the receiver. This message

can be anything from spoken or written to even something unspoken. The receiver is the intended target of the message, and through this person, the message reaches its destination. After this, it either stays with them or goes through another communication process to another person or perhaps to a database or other intended place of storage. All this communication takes its place in a channel, which is the pathway of the communication itself. These paths can be visual, tactile or auditory paths of communication. (West & Turner 2008). In this simplest model of communication, we can see that the information is intended to be conveyed from the sender to the receiver through a channel of communication. These channels are discussed more deeply later, as we define what the different types of communication channels are that an organization might use in their daily communications. However, as we can see, even with the most simplistic model of communication there are multiple factors that need to be considered when communicating information, and there are multiple factors that can only make the whole process cause more uncertainty.

As we can see in Figure 1 below, a factor that effects the whole communication process is referred to as "Noise". In this definition, noise is anything that can interfere with the message from the sender to the intended receiver. (West & Turner 2008.)

There are multiple reasons for noise interfering with the message. There is physical noise, which is simply any external factor that makes the message difficult to understand, whether it is actual audible noise coming from outside or perhaps some visual obstruction on the screen of a computer, or any other physical form of obstruction to the message. (Andrews & Herschel 1996.) In the modern office world, there are many different types of physical noise that can interfere with communication. These can vary from a loud office space to faulty equipment or corrupt files of information.

Physiological noise can be a person's impaired or compromised hearing ability, articulation problems of the sender of the message or compromised visual abilities of the receiver of the message. (West & Turner 2008.) Such simple things can affect the message. For example, if a person from a different part of the country or world

conveys a message to the receiver, there might be articulation issues that make it difficult for the receiver to understand the words.

Psychological noise refers to the biases, prejudices and feelings of the communicator towards a person or the message itself. This psychological noise means a person's opinions on race, gender, age, cultural contingencies or ethnicity that create noise between the sender and the receiver. (West & Turner 2008.) For example, persons within an organization might feel that due to their seniority, people much younger than them cannot simply convey useful information to them, let alone give them advice or orders. This might lead to the message that is sent to them being affected by psychological noise, which then again will render the whole message useless or skew the meaning in a way that it will not help the organization in any way.

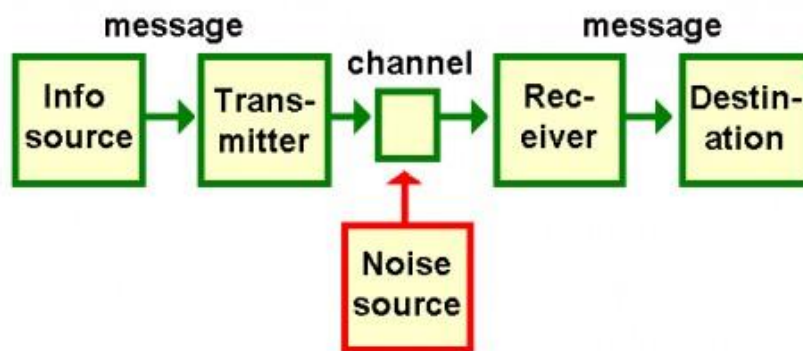


Figure 1: Linear model of communication (communicationstudies.com n.d.)

As we can see from the definitions, even though the linear model is much more than 50 years old already, there are still multiple connection points to the modern world of communication. The basis of communication is still the same: a sender transmits a message through a channel to the intended receiver and its destination, and multiple forms of noise can affect the encoded message through the communication process.

Where this model differs from the modern day is the sheer amount of information available today. In this era of technological breakthroughs, so much information is conveyed daily at a workplace, that it is certain that some of it becomes so much affected by some sort of noise, so that it is no longer relevant or usable in terms of organizational use. This is what this thesis aims to consider: What are the main sources of noise that affect the organizational communication? What are the channels of communication and how do they affect the whole communication

process? and What could be done in terms of encoding and sending the message so that an organization could maximize its communications process?

As the linear model is quite a simplistic one, the theoretical framework of the thesis needs some other models of communication that might suit the modern world somewhat better. Therefore, the next chapter introduces the Transactional Model of Communication.

2.6 Transactional Model

Another model of communication, a more contemporary one compared to the linear model is the transactional model of communication, which varies greatly in definition from the linear model. The key stakeholders are the same, but the transactional model does not make any sharp distinction between the sender and receiver roles, since one person plays both, and often at the same time in this model. Wenburg and Wilmot (1973) describe it as follows; "All persons are engaged in sending and receiving messages simultaneously. Each person is constantly sharing in the encoding in the encoding and decoding process and each person is affecting the other". (Andrews & Herschel 1996.) To summarize, in this model there is no flow of sender encoding and transmitting the message, after which the receiver receives and decodes the message, making it a back-and-forth conversation, but instead the flow of communication is constant to both ways, and is a two-way message exchange.

For this model, feedback, both verbal and nonverbal, are in a key role. In addition to this, the model focuses on how meaning in a communication process is constructed. In other words, as people get acquainted with working together over time for example, they share experiences that will play a role in the meaning that is given to the communication process. (Andrews & Herschel 1996.) By having shared meaning, experiences and information over time, the flow of communication becomes more streamlined, being less prone to noise for example. These exchanges construct the effects and social meanings between the participants in the process.

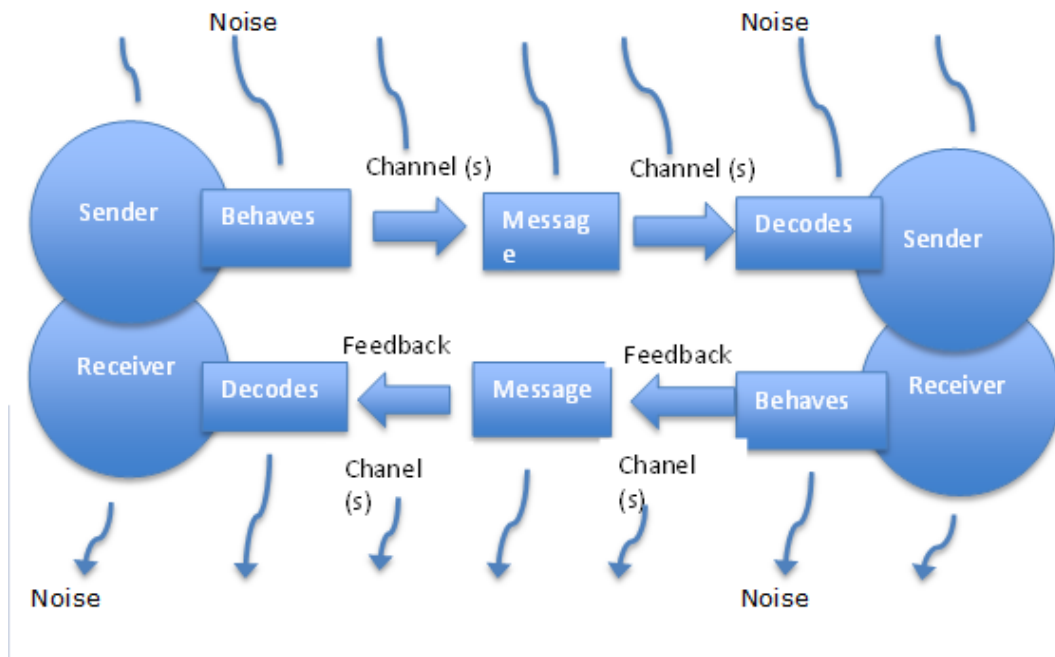


Figure 2 Transactional model of communication (businessstopia.net, n.d.)

As the process of communication is identified as simultaneous messaging in this model, instead of the linear model's way of thinking, the sender and receiver terms are changed into simply communicator. It also adds the term environment, which considers both the physical location, but also the personal experiences and cultural background of the participants. (Communication Studies, n.d.) This model, considering that the communication between participants and the environmental factors, may even seem a bit chaotic at times. But this is the sole reason why this model is brought up in this text; the author feels like that in the modern world of communication, the communication might be a bit unorganized, and affected by a person's personal views, cultural background, even their physical state of being, whether it be tired, anxious or excited, and the physical space of the communication.

For example, a person talking to another in a situation where they are tired, the setting for the conversation is noisy, where their cultural beliefs clash with the other communicator, who also constantly interrupts your message by talking on top of you. This situation is most likely far from ideal. If you compare this to a situation where, the conversation is taking place in a quiet meeting space, with enthusiastic and refreshed people from the same culture that have worked together for years and have the common respect to let the other person finish their message before stating their own.

The author hoped to identify if there are any notions of this model that could have been found in this research work; does the environment, mutual communication process, or some other aspect of this model hinder, or maybe even improve, the organizational communication of the case company?

2.7 Variables in the communication process

There have been some mentions about different variables affecting the communication process earlier in this text, but this chapter was written, so that there can be a better understanding on what these variables are, and how they can affect the communication process. Since a lot of these variables have cultural background to some extent, from here on cultural variables, cultural and intercultural communications will be referred to as variables and communication respectively.

As we have discussed earlier, there is a great deal of noise within the communication process, which is the sole disruptor of a communication process. Not all of it is cultural, but there must be an acknowledgement that cultural variables between the sender and the receiver, referred to as cultural noise, will hinder the flow of information due to the participants' different views based on their cultural background. (Deresky 2011.) This cultural difference can come from living in different parts of the country, working in different types of organizations, and from personal life variables, such as how the person was raised, what is their societal background right now, age, gender and almost anything else that defines a character of an individual.

Even though this work was not written from an intercultural point of view, it has been established that whenever there is communication flow between two individuals from different cultures, for example different countries, there are some intercultural barriers that come into play. This means that whenever a sender conveys a message to a receiver, there is a chance that if there are intercultural variables affecting the process, the receiver will purposefully or not decode the message completely wrong. This means that the individual's culture becomes a major factor in the meaning of the message. (Deresky 2011.) These kinds of intercultural issues can even lead to conflict, if a person potentially insults the

receiver by saying something that would be deemed disrespectful in their culture. Also factors such as timeframe, societal position and even gender can distort greatly a message that is conveyed to a member of another culture.

The notion of intercultural communication was brought up solely because one can rarely miss intercultural communication in a modern-day corporation. The author notifies this fact, since he has himself worked in a big Finnish corporation, but has had to work with people from different cultures, both domestic and foreign, daily.

In the following pages, the author reviewed some of the cultural variables presented in a book called “International Management – Managing Across Cultures and Borders.” (Deresky 2011.) These statements are something the author feels are very viable and detailed descriptions of cultural variables affecting communication and therefore these are introduced from the book to this work also.

2.8 Attitudes

Attitudes are something that underline the way we all behave in our day-to-day actions and the way we communicate with other people. These attitudes are a source for noise in communication, and especially ethnocentric attitudes can create noise in cross-cultural communication. (Deresky 2011.) A person’s attitude can steer a conversation, information flow and the overall attitude towards a change for example for better or for worse, and are something that can be a great factor in the whole communication process, if not identified and dealt with properly.

2.9 Social Organization

A major influencer in our view of the world are social organisations; they affect how we see the world through values, and approach or priorities that we give to different social organisations. These organizations can be based on, but not limited to, nation, tribe, religion, or can consist of members of a profession. (Deresky 2011.) In this research case, we could identify that members of different professional teams could be influenced by their social organisation in terms of communicating within the organisation, but to people in other teams for example.

2.10 Thought Patterns

The logical progression of reasoning can vary greatly around the world, and can greatly affect the communication process. (Deresky 2011.) Organisations that employ a multi-cultural workforce, should always recognize the fact that their employees might not have the thought procedures that is relevant to the country of operations, but can in fact have a completely different logical thought process that is customary to their own cultural heritage.

2.11 Roles

From a managerial point of view, much of the difference in attributions to who should make the decisions and who has responsibility for what is attributed to the societal framework for what is a person's role. (Deresky 2011.) Being a manager might not be perceived the same way by an employee from the US, when comparing to an employee who is a Finnish native.

2.12 Communication channels

Since this thesis was written from the perspective of organizational communication, the researcher will introduce theories and concepts mainly relevant to communicating within an organization – these concepts mainly apply to all aspects of life also, but very well so on organizational communication.

Within an organization, there are usually two types of communication that is happening throughout the organization. The first one is called formal communication, whereas the second one is called informal communication.

Next, we must establish what are these different channels of communication that personnel within an organization can utilize for both their formal and informal ways of communication.

2.13 Informal and Formal communication channels

All forms of communication in an organizational setting are always either informal or formal; whether it be a formal meeting held by a unit manager with predetermined

agenda and invited personnel, or a person answering a phone call, or an instant message during lunch hours. In this example, the formal setting would be the meeting, whereas a phone call or an IM that has not been set up in advance can be defined as an informal way of communicating.

Formal communication means communicating through a somehow formalized organizational network, such as previously mentioned meetings, or memos sent by one person to another, or any other official message. (Vos & Schoemaker 2011.) Any formalized message exchange is a part of formal communication, but it does not constitute for most the communication within an organization. It is a part of the internal communication, that supports the organizational structure and the authority of top management over employees; a memo from an executive is something the employees usually must adhere to at some specific level. Due to this, one can argue that the most important message exchanges are not done through this medium, since formalized channels require quite formalized messages, where things such as emotion are not conveyed through properly.

Informal communication is a more spontaneous way of communicating, that arises when people are in social contact with each other. During these contacts people discuss issues more freely, ranging from work related issues all the way to issues within the organization. They do, however, discuss information received via formal channels, and by this the two channels are intertwined. (Vos & Schoemaker 2011.) Whereas informal communication is the most used method, and it includes most of the modern-day communication tools, such as instant messaging, text messaging, non-formalized meetings etc., they are subject to falsified information. As we know, noise, prejudices and context are factors that can skew the mediated message either by the sender, or the receiver.

Between the two channels, there should always be a balance. Formal channels should be used to convey important messages for the organization in a timely manner (Vos & Schoemaker 2011.) Whereas informal channels are important ways of employees conveying their feelings, emotions and issues to one another, and to their superiors, since the formalized ways do not offer a proper medium for them to do so.

2.14 Internal Communication

Having established a foundation for communication as a theory through models, and have defined communication as a theory, the author must focus on the organizational part of communication. Hence, whenever there is communication within an organization, it is referred to as internal communication. Internal communication is not equal to organizational communication, although both concepts do share a lot of the same ideals due to discussing the notion of communication within an organization, internally.

The clearest definition for internal communication can be taken from the BBC (British Broadcast Company), who see internal communication simply as the act of communicating internally within the organization, whereas internal communications is the function that delivers the internal communication message through different media. (Smith & Mounter 2008.) In the act of internal communication then, we simply take the notion of communication between two or more different parties, and take their exchange of messages through different channels and implement it into an organizational scenario.

Due to the definition of internal communication being a way of delivering internal messages within the organization, one could assume that there would be full departments dedicated to internal communications within an organization. However, this seems not to be the case, but instead many internal communicators, such as internal communication directors, fall into the same category as corporate communicators. This means that most internal communicators are grouped together with external communicators (Smith & Mounter 2008.) This verifies the research point of this thesis; if there is no actual internal affairs department or anything similar in place, how does the internal communication within an organization work, if they are grouped together with the outbound communications, going outside the organization?

A lot could be said about internal communication, but here are some key points that will summarize the concept so that later in this text, it can be referred to; “1) internal communication has moved from events and people to sharing corporate goals, 2) internal communication needs to be championed at the very top, 3) organizations

need the workforce to understand what is expected of them – internal communication will help them deliver this, 4) internal communication is still a new discipline and 5) internal communication is the responsibility of everyone”. (Smith & Mounter 2008.) So as said here, internal communication is the method of collectively sharing corporate goals from top to bottom, peer-to-peer and it is something that everyone needs to understand for the organizations internal communication to be effective. As internal communication is still a new discipline, the researcher feels that this study can draw on something interesting in terms of how people communicate within an organization.

Ideally, internal communication is about sharing information and building understanding, and a way of trying to create excitement and commitment between employees for the organization to gain a desired result. A widely used academic definition is “The planned use of communication actions to systematically influence the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of current employees”. (Fitzpatrick & Valskov 2014.) In this definition, the key aspect is the word “planned” – internal communication should be planned on a company-wide level, so that everyone has a clear image of what to communicate and to who, so that the company can reach its maximum potential. And as can be seen from the definition, it is not simply about sharing information, it is about influencing people in the workplace. Mainly influence the level of knowledge, or sharing of information, but its job is also to excite, and affect the attitudes towards goals, tasks etc. and to have a positive impact on employee behaviour within the workplace.

Some main strategies have been identified in previous studies in terms of what is needed for successful internal communication. These strategies are listed as follows; 1) information openness, 2) the supportive climate and 3) performance-based communication. These strategies were found by Marc Wright for his 2014 work “Gower Handbook of Internal Communication”.

Internal openness is about clarifying the information around the organisation. This however, tends to be a rather centrist approach; a few tell the many what they deem important (Wright 2014.) Information openness then is a good approach, but it’s fundamental issue is still the same as in the start; the communication is more of a one-way street where the top management decides what is communicated to

everyone in the organization. This fights against the principle that internal communication should be more of a conversation.

The supportive climate of conversation is the way of deciding how the information is communicated. If the person communicating has set the climate of the conversation to be hostile, down-beat or non-supportive, it is rather clear that the climate of the whole organization around that information receiving will be the same. This can also be affected by managers by advocating different ways of working and communicating within an organization; for example, if a team gathers together to celebrate co-workers' individual achievements, the manager advocates peer recognition of each other's work in their own teams (Wright 2014.) By creating a supportive climate, an organization can achieve higher potential reach out of their employees by maximizing the efforts they put into internal communication.

Performance-based communication puts most of the emphasis on concentrating on the elements of communication that are the most effective. By this model, it is far more better to succeed in one small part of communication, than to fail throughout the board. To understand what is performing successfully and what is not, there is a need for measurement systems that monitor the performance of different communication methods. (Wright 2014.) This model then excludes all the non-working components of communication, focusing only on the successful communication channels and methods within the organization. This, however can scale down the methods of communication from multiple to just a few that work.

The main point that must be acknowledged when talking about internal communication is that it is planned and systematic, so that is not an accidental process, and that it applies some sort of discipline to itself. So, nothing haphazard about internal communication. It is also about influence, in other words persuasion of employees and between personnel. It is not just about telling, but it is also about affecting attitudes and feelings within the organization. Lastly, it is multi-disciplinary, so that it is not just limited to one field or organizational part, but indeed touches everyone within the organization. (FitzPatrick & Valskov 2014.) All in all, internal communication is something that is organized and has a concrete function within an organization, it is about messaging internal affairs, attitudes and change on a corporate wide level from management to employees. There is nothing random

about internal communication, as it usually has its own department within the organization, or at least a part of the HR organization, that plans and executes the communication. It is driven through official internal communication channels, so no unofficial lunch discussions count as internal communication. What it counts as, is something we will delve into next.

2.15 Organizational Communication

This chapter is going to be the final theoretical framework chapter of this thesis, and its mission is to define to us, what the whole concept of organizational communication is. The whole theory base has been building up to this chapter, and this is where we take all this previous knowledge from the theory and connect it with the main theme of this thesis.

The idea for this chapter is also to differentiate organizational communication from the internal communication of the previous chapter. This is a crucial differentiation, that defines much of this thesis' justification and survey questions.

To understand organizational communication, there must be an understanding on what its mission is within the organization. The following has been said about organizational communication for its justification; "because organizations are constituted through communication, the study of organizational communication provides a basis for understanding virtually every human process that occurs in organizations". (Papa, Daniels & Spiker 2007.) By this definition, we must focus on the part of the phrase that states that it is about understanding every human process. Whereas internal communication was more about the organizations communication methods from top to bottom with emphasis on the structure and methods chosen by the organization, the organizational communication model gives more emphasis on what are the human interactions between individuals and groups in the organization.

Organizational communication is not a way of creating products, services or something else that is related directly to the operations of the organization, but more on the human interactions between employees, and the structure, content and the process that takes place between individuals. (Papa et al. 2007.) The concept is

more about understanding the way people communicate within the organization on a personal level. This definition is again helped by previous definitions of communication models, and the process of relaying and receiving messages and how they are affected by things such as religion, cultural background, personal beliefs, age, gender and other interfering concepts of communication.

To summarize organizational communication, it can be said that it looks at how individuals in organizations give meaning to various messages, verbal and nonverbal communication, communication skills and the effectiveness of communication within an organisation (Hargie & Tourish 2004.) From this statement we can see, that much of the previous definitions can be ranged up into this one definition of organizational communication. It is this concept, that takes all the knowledge from the previous pages and sums them up into this one concept, that the researcher will base his research on.

3. Research objectives, questions and methodology

The research problem, identified to be the main concept of this thesis, is as follows: **What are the limitations and inefficiencies of the internal communication process as perceived by the individual employees within the organization?** To elaborate, the problem that this thesis focused on was to find what the most preferred and non-preferred ways of communicating were from an employee's perspective. Moreover, the aim was to determine the issues that the employees thought the organization had with its internal and organizational communication structure.

This research problem was identified with specific research questions that aim to identify the employees' views on the corporation's communication. Moreover, the focus was also on the way in which the organization handles communication with different mediums of communication. Based on these specified questions, it was possible to try to find a solution to the research problem.

The objective of this study was to develop tangible and useful improvement ideas for the organization to implement in their ways of communication.

The research questions are as follows:

1. How effective is the organizational communication from the employee's perspective?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the communication process?
3. What are the potential improvements for the communication process within the organization?

Based on these questions, the author could analyse how the communication process could be improved within the organization. The most important aspect, of course, was the employees' views on communication, since they are the ones who communicate within the organization daily.

By identifying the communication process and the tools of communication, and comparing those to the views of the employees, we can try to derive potential improvements if any are to be found. The theoretical framework of this thesis lays a foundation for different communication models as well as gives insight on different communication channels and issues that might affect the employee's perspectives on communication, whether they come from the management or their peers. The objective of this research was to identify the most effective methods of internal communication and to provide tangible improvement methods for the higher management of the organization to utilize so that their employees would feel that the flow of information is more reliable.

3.1 Methodology

Before defining the methods used in the study, this paper must define the validity of the research itself. This means defining the factors that make the research reliable, applicable and valid for not only the case company, but also so that it can be reviewed as an academic paper.

The definition of validity in its simplest form means that the truth value of the research outcome is more reliable and applicable when both the data and the design of the study are valid (Newman & Benz 1998). To have a valid quantitative study, the survey used must be structured and based on the research questions provided in the paper and rely on the theoretical framework provided by the author. (Newman &

Benz 1998). These factors were addressed by using a standardised survey tool. In addition, this paper provides a comprehensive theoretical base for the study before the survey.

External validity defines whether the research is applicable outside, for example, of the case organization in this study (Newman & Benz 1998). As stated in the limitations, there is a risk of this validity requirement might be affected by the slightly smaller response rate. However, this is something that the research must adhere to after the research is completed. Internal validity, the concept of having reliable internal methods for a quantitative survey (Newman & Benz 1998), was taken into consideration by consulting the thesis supervisor about the structured survey questions for their validity and reliability and by using a survey instrument that was legitimized and intended to be used in this type of a study.

3.2 Quantitative research method

This study used quantitative research methods to obtain the required data set. A quantitative research method focuses on separate issues: it conceptualises reality in terms of variables, it measures these variables and studies the relationship between these variables (Punch 2013.) In this study, the variables were the questions introduced in the structured survey. By studying the relationship between these variables, the author tried to obtain valid and reliable data that could be used then to identify the issues introduced in the research problem.

A quantitative research design tends to lean towards the structured end of the spectrum in terms of research designs (Punch 2013.) Due to this, the author chose to utilize a structured survey as his data collection method. Gaining valid, quantitative data was important for the success of this research, and due to the high respondent rate in the case company, a structured survey was deemed as the best option. From a structured survey, the author could also derive comparable data that could then be utilized to draw conclusions for this thesis.

The differentiation between quantitative and qualitative methods also reflects the research objective, and it is not solely about quantification (Ghauri & Gronhaug 2005.) The research objective, problem and questions were derived for this thesis so

that they would steer the research more towards quantifiable research data even though that was not the main distinction between choosing quantitative over qualitative methods. The biggest factor was the response rate and the need to conduct a structured survey with quantified variables.

3.3 Survey Design

The choice of the survey design was justified for this research, since it could provide quantitative or numerical description trends, attitudes and opinions from the study sample (Creswell 2013.) This was the best possible method of collecting data for this research, since the author wished to gain as much data as possible from as large a sample size as was viable from the case company and to identify the trends related to, attitudes towards and opinions on their internal communication procedures.

The reason for conducting an online survey was that the distribution of an electronic or online questionnaire or survey was easy and fast (Sekaran & Bougie 2016.)

Conducting the study online made the timeframe more viable for the author as well as easier to conduct. Having a standardized online form for the survey was a way of assuring that the data gained from the work was valid and reliable.

3.4 Data Analysis

After the data had been collected, the author took it from the structured survey and subjected it to a thorough analysis. By performing percentage calculations and an analysis of the division of respondents' answers, the author aimed to find deviating trends from the norm. Based on this deviation, the author to identify the potential problem areas as well as where the internal communication worked well from the employees' perspective.

This data analysis was supported with graphs and percentage calculations, and it was then compared with the respondents in terms of validity and reliability. Once again, the notion that the respondent rate might be rather low was something that had to be considered in the final analysis and in drawing the conclusions.

4. Results and Analysis

In this chapter, this paper will go through the results gained from the questionnaire conducted on the employees of the case company, and analyze the data received in a meaningful, comprehensive manner so that understandable and usable analysis of the results can be derived from the data set.

Before going through the results received from the survey, a few words must be said on how the questionnaire was built, and how it was conducted. The survey was done online, via Webropol online survey tool, and was sent as an email link for the correspondent at the case company. The case company correspondent distributed the questionnaire link via a company-wide email to the employees, accompanied by the author's own introduction letter, which can be found in the appendices of this paper. In this letter, the author gave a quick insight on who he is, what he is doing and what the survey is trying to achieve as the results. A disclaimer was also made in the letter, that the questionnaire would be completely anonymous apart from three demographic questions, that were only used to gain insight on the demographic division of the company's employee base, and no effort to recognize a single respondent would not be made by the author. This was done to ensure the validity and reliability of the data set, and to ensure the truthfulness of the respondents' answers.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts; the three demographic questions, structured questions that gave numerical values from 1 to 5 to 12 different answer options, and three questions that had had multiple choice answer options to predetermined answers about various subjects. In addition to these multiple-choice answers, the researcher also added an option to give "something else, what" –open ended answers on these questions. Even though these kinds of question options do not provide quantitative data, but more qualitative, the researcher felt that adding the open-ended answer option to these three questions would provide much more insightful data that could be utilized in the final analysis. And as it has been said in the theoretical part earlier, the differentiation between qualitative and quantitative data is not always about numerical values, but more about what the final product is trying to achieve. Per this definition, it is justified to have added these answer

options, since they are solely trying to give more meaning to the other quantitative data received from this paper.

4.1 The survey questions and structure

This part will not cover all 18 questions and their answer options one by one, since they can all be found in the appendices section of this paper. Moreover, this section's meaning is to give a glance on what the questions were trying to obtain in terms of data.

The demographic questions that were asked in the questionnaire were age, gender and work experience at current employer. These questions were chosen, since not even by combining multiple answers can we identify a single respondent out of the 42 responses given. The age question was structured into 5 segments; under 20, between 20-29, between 30-39, between 40-49 and over 50. This gave a broad image about the age division of employees within the organization.

The second question about the demographics was simply gender, with options male, female and other. The third question about the working time with your current employer was implemented to identify, how the division between long-time employees and newer workers pans out. This question had three answer options; below 2 years, between 2-6 years, and over 6 years.

By combining these three demographic questions and comparing them with given questionnaire analysis, we can draw meaningful data about which demographic group feels what way about the internal communication procedures. For instance, is there a differentiation between preferred meeting method between males between the ages of 20-29 against females that are over 50.

The next 12 questions were all structured with answer options rated from 1 to 5, where 1 was strongly disagree, and 5 was strongly agree. The numerical value 3 held the answer option value of neutral, just for the sake of people maybe refusing to answer, or potentially not having an opinion on the said question. These 12 questions, that can be found in the appendices, all started with the statement "I feel..." and after that the question part. These questions were mostly about the communication process within their daily working groups, outside their daily working

groups, company-wide communications, feedback processes and information sharing.

The last three questions, that had the pre-determined answer options with the ability to give an open-ended answer with the multiple-choice questions tried to find out the employees' preferred way of communication, their preferred method of communication for company-wide information, and finally what they feel are the issues affecting the internal communication procedures of the organization. Particularly this last question, with its open-ended option gave some viable and interesting insights about the communication process, and what it lacks.

4.2 Results

The overall respondent number for the questionnaire (n.) is 42 respondents. This is a statistically viable number of respondents out of the pool of about 60 employees within the office. First, we must go through the demographic questions' results. The ages of under 20, between 40-49, and over 50 were all represented with only one respondent (7,2% of total respondents). Therefore, these answer options will not be considered individually, since the author wants to ensure that no one is identified from a response they have given. The answer option of between 20-29 holds a respondent value of 26 people (61,9%), whereas the option between 30-39 has a value of 13 respondents (30,9%). Out of the respondents, 23 (54,8%) were male, and 19 (45,2%) were female.

The work experience divided as follows; 21 respondents (50%) had worked there for less than 2 years, 13 (30,9%) had work experience of between 2-6 years, and 8 respondents (19%) had been with the company for over 6 years.

Later in this part, these demographic questions will be compared against the actual questionnaire questions, to identify if there is a correlation between a certain demographic and a trend in the answers given.

Out of the 15 questionnaire questions that were aimed towards identifying the employees' feelings towards various claims, most of them had a positive overall response rate for them. However, out of these 15 questions, a few had an overall negative response rate, with the emphasis on answers with the response value of

“disagree” or even “strongly disagree”. Overall four questions out of the total 15 had distinctively negative response rates, whereas the remaining 11 had noticeably positive response rates. The questions with the more negative answers will be given a deeper look at, in terms of how the answers of the respondents were distributed in percentages and answer amounts, but also the researcher will try to identify if there are any patterns between the negative answer and the respondents’ age, gender or time worked at the organization.

The four questions that will be given a deeper look at are “5. I feel that the communication between different departments flows well”, “8. I feel I receive enough feedback from my supervisor”, “9. I feel that news regarding the whole organization is messaged to me efficiently”, and “12. I feel that I can easily communicate my ideas to higher management”. All the questions, and the answers given to them can be found in the appendix section of this research, for closer examination of all the questions and the distribution of responses between them.

The question number 5, I feel that the communication between different departments flows well had the same response rate that every other question also had, which was 42 respondents. Out of these responses, the response option “Disagree” had the most given responses, a total of 15, or 36% of all the given responses. From total respondents 2 answered “Strongly disagree”, which is about 5% of the total response rate. In total, 17 respondents, or 41% gave a negative answer to question number 5. In comparison, the “Neutral” answer was given the second highest number, 13 times, or 31% of the answers. Positive answers of “Agree” and “Strongly agree” were given a total of 12 times, where 1 answer was option “Strongly agree”. This is 28% total respondents.

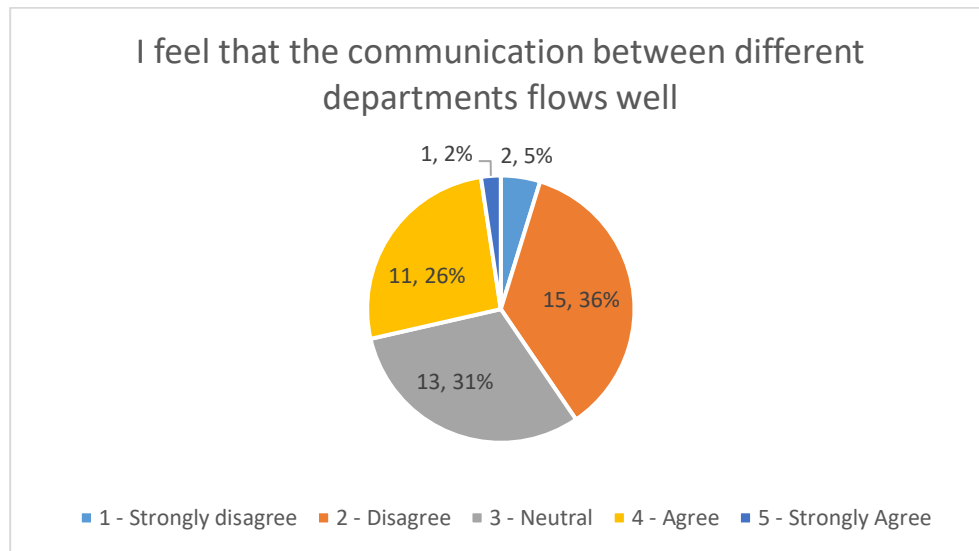


Figure 3 I feel that the communication between different departments flows well

For comparison, in the question number 4, “I feel that it is easy for me to communicate with the team I work in daily, a total of 33 respondents answered either “Agree” or “Strongly agree”, which is a total of 79% of all respondents. So, from the total respondent group we can already identify, that whereas the daily communication within the employees’ own team flows well, there seems to be some issues to communicate with other teams of the organization. From this we can clearly then identify, that there might some issues with either the communication channels, methods or simply attitudes towards communicating with other teams that affect the internal communications process.

One factor that is curious to inspect with this matter is, that the most negative answers seem to come from personnel who have worked at the company the longest; both groups that have worked at the company between 2-6 years, or over 6 years, gave generally more negative values on this question. Out of the total N of 42 respondents, 21, or 50%, have worked at the company for less than 2 years. Out of these 21, a total of 24%, or 5 employees, gave a negative value of “Disagree”. Neutral was given by 7 respondents (33%), and “Agree” or “Strongly agree” was given by 9 people, a total of 43%. On the other hand, the remaining 50% have worked at the company for over 2 years, and 8 employees (38%) have worked at the organization for over 6 years. From these 21 employees, a total of 12, or 57% answered either “Strongly disagree” or “Disagree”, and 3 people, or 14 answered “Agree”. Rest of them gave the value “Neutral”. From this we can draw the conclusion, that the more

time an employee seems to be with the company, the more they seem to be dissatisfied with the communication process to other teams.

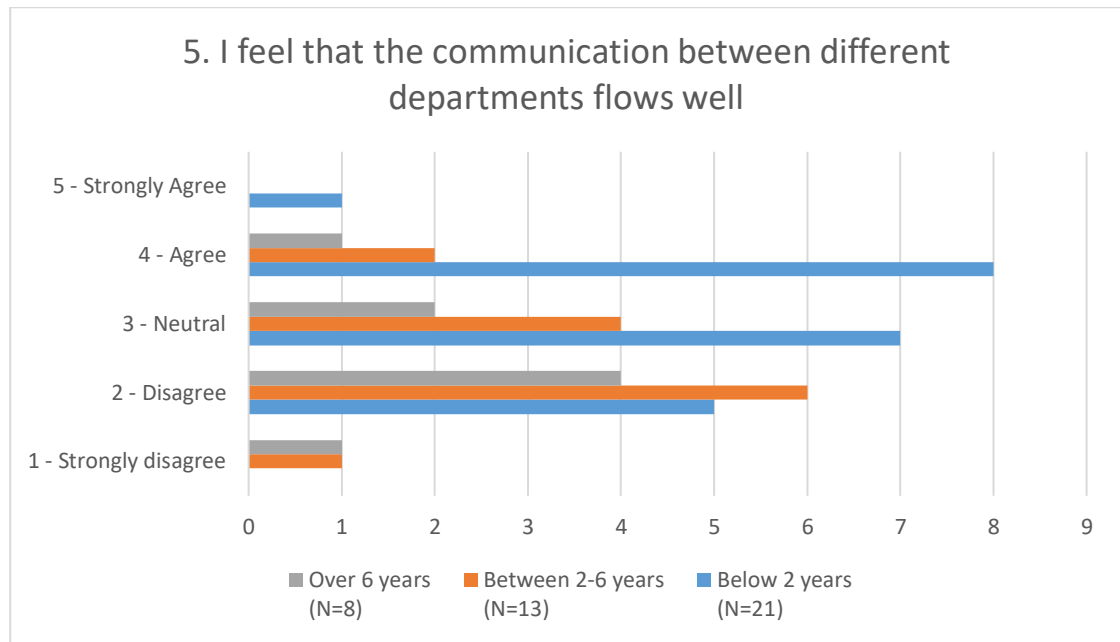


Figure 4 I feel that the communication between different departments flows well – Answers by Work Experience

Next, we will focus on question number 8, which was labeled “I feel that I receive enough feedback from my supervisor”. The first notable issue with this question is, that 13 people out of the 42 respondents (31%) gave an answer value of “Neutral”. This may point out that either they do not have an opinion this matter, or that not enough feedback is being communicated so that they would have formed an opinion. It must be noted that 7 out of these 13 respondents have worked at the organization for less than 2 years, indicating that their rather limited time at the company might affect the value of this answer. Out of the remaining respondents, 11 people, or 26 percent gave a positive value of “Agree” or “Strongly agree”.

A total of 7 people answered, “Strongly disagree”, 11 employees gave an answer of “Disagree”, and these 18 combine for a total of 43% of respondents giving a negative value to this question. What’s notable about this is, that both the employees that have spent either less than 2 years at the organization, or over 6 years with the company, they were keener to give a positive review on this question. On the other hand, people who have worked at the organization for 2-6 years, seemed to give

evenly negative or neutral reviews, with only one employee from this group giving a positive answer.

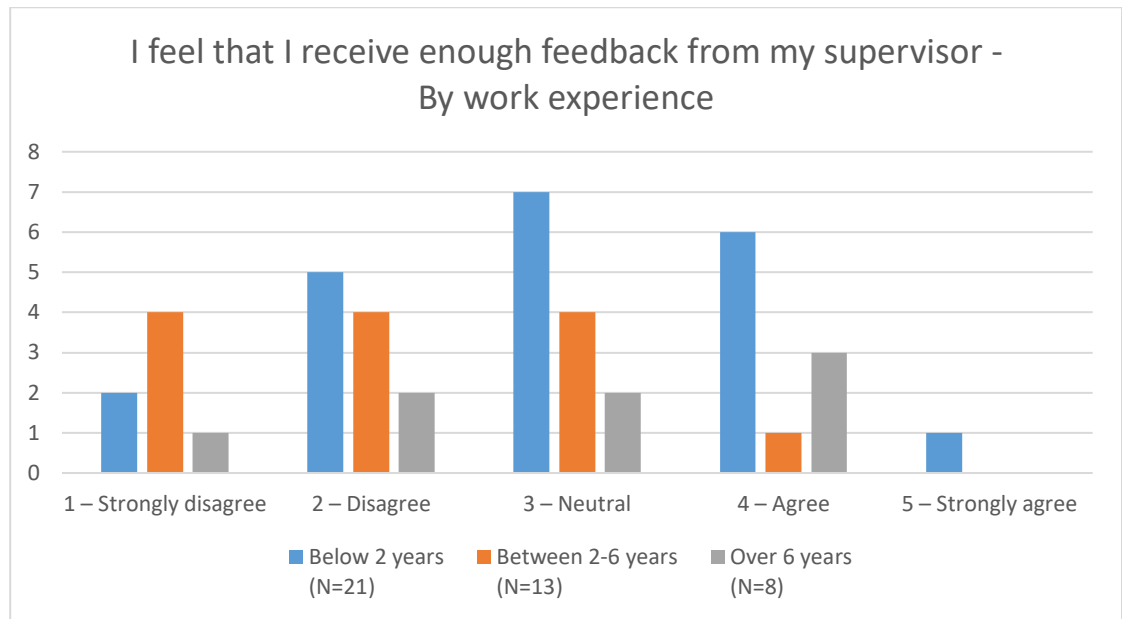


Figure 5 I feel that I receive enough feedback from my supervisor – By work experience

In terms of genders, there seems to be a clear trend of men wanting to not give an answer, since 11 out of the 23 men who answered gave a neutral value. Women gave more negative feedback on this question, with 13 out of the 19 female respondents (68%) gave a negative value for this question.

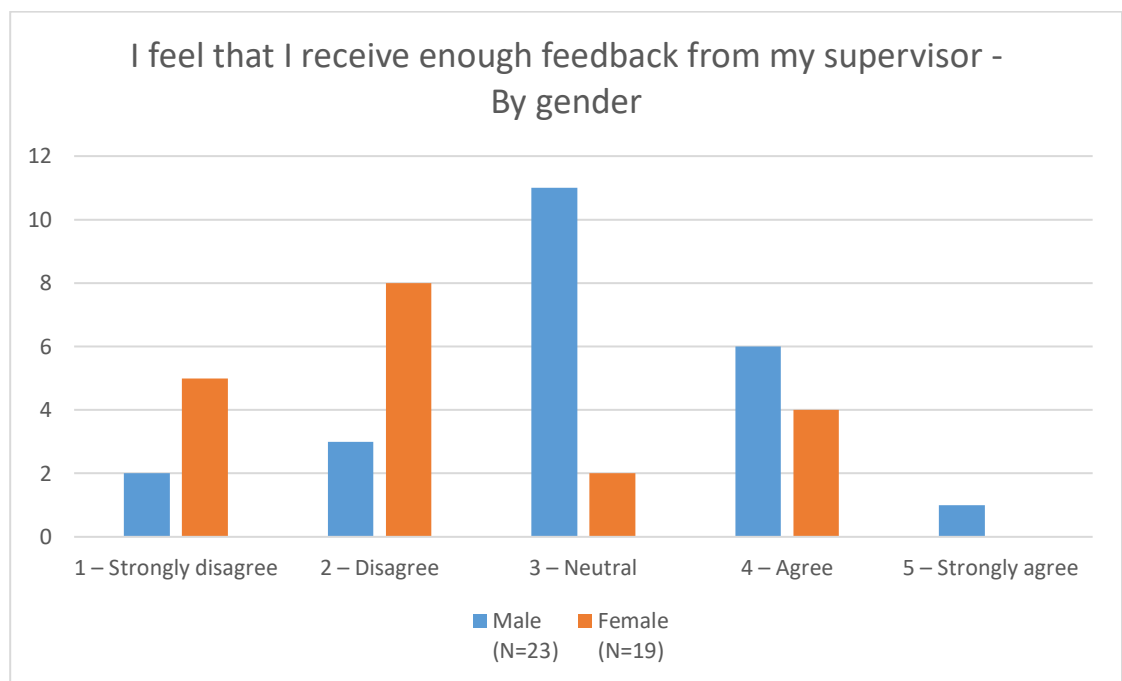


Figure 6 I feel that I receive enough feedback from my supervisor – By gender

Question number 9 was labeled as follows; “I feel that news regarding the whole organization is messaged to me efficiently”. This question received a generally positive answer rate, but there were also some negative values given, and therefore the researcher acknowledges that this might be one of the potential improvement areas from this thesis.

Out of the 42 respondents, a total of 24 people gave a positive review. In other words, a total of 57% gave a positive value on their answer, stating that the organizational news reach them efficiently. From these 24 people, 7 (17%) gave a value of “Strongly agree”, and 17 (40%) gave a value of “Agree”. A “Neutral” value was also given by 7 employees.

A total of 11 respondents gave a negative value, or a total of 26%. One of these answers was with a value of “Strongly disagree”, others with the value of “Disagree”. All in all, the positives outweigh the negatives by a vast margin on this question, but it is to be noted that still 1 out of 4 employees’ who answered this question felt that they do not receive company-wide information or news efficiently. When we look at the values given by the respondents’ time with the organization, no trend arises from the data set. It is notable that most of the “Agree” values are given by employees with less than 2 years at the organization, and that employees with 2-6 years of working time at the organization gave mostly either negative or neutral values on their answers.

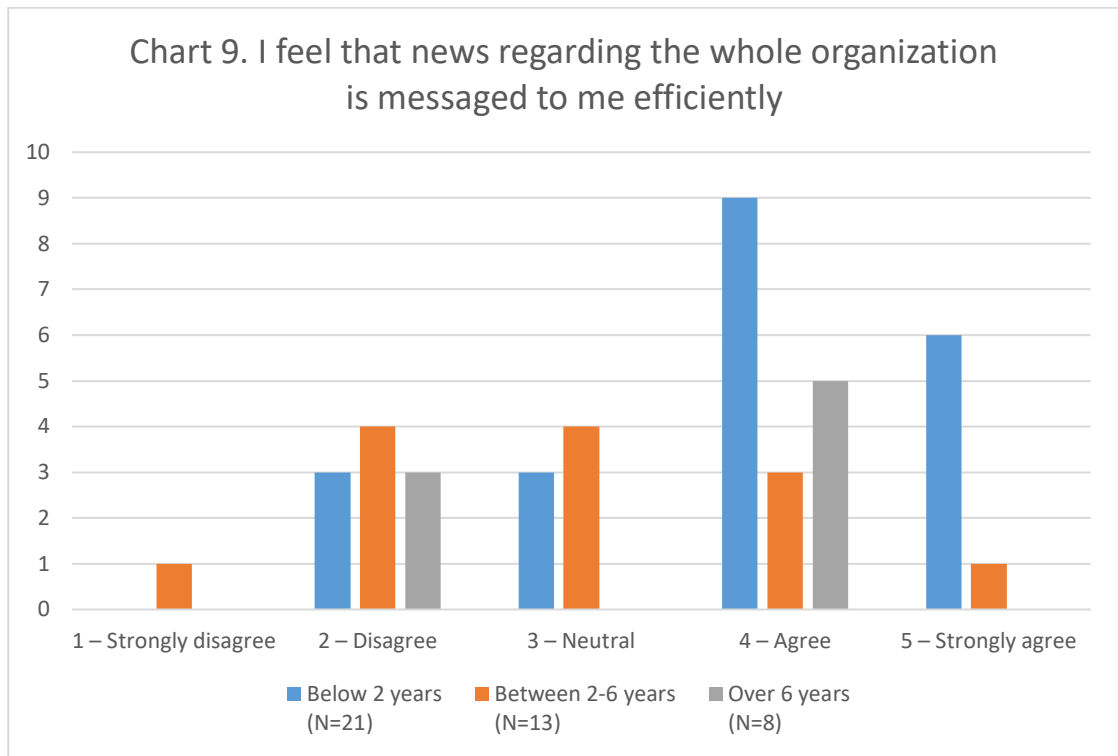


Figure 7 I feel that news regarding the whole organization is messaged to me efficiently – By work experience

When we look at division of values given by gender, we can see that out of the 11 employees responding with negative values, 3 of them are men, and the remaining 8 are women.

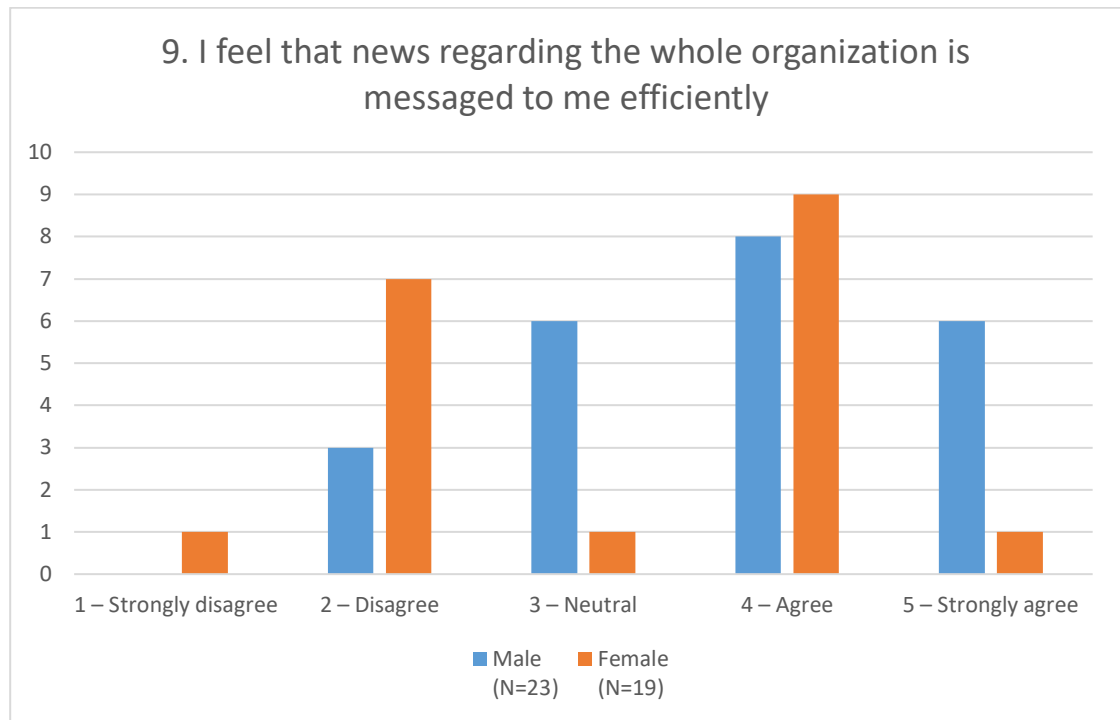


Figure 8 I feel that news regarding the whole organization is messed to me efficiently – By gender

The last question that had a significantly notable number of negative values was the question number 12; “I feel that I can easily communicate my ideas to higher management”. Although this question did have many respondents agreeing with the given statement, there were still quite a few employees with the values “Disagree” and “Strongly disagree”. In total, 1 respondent answered, “Strongly disagree”, and 9 responded with “Disagree”. In total, 10 (24%) out of the total of 42 respondents gave a negative value, and 5 employees (12%) gave a neutral value. That still leaves 64% of all respondents satisfied with the way they can communicate with the higher management, which is a good result. No trend in terms of age, gender or work experience can be identified when examining the negative values given on this question. The responses given by each demographic section were in line with the number of respondents that gave out the answers overall.

One notion that the researcher made, that did not have particularly negative or positive aspects, was that question number 14; “I feel that the staff meetings are relevant at enabling me to perform more efficiently” had many “Neutral” values given; 11 out of the 42 responses, or 26% of respondents gave a neutral value on this question. Out of these eleven, 7 were employees that have worked with the

company for less than 2 years. This can mark many different issues, or can simply give a notion that not a lot of the newer employees attend any staff meetings, or if they do, they do not have any specific feeling towards them.

As said earlier, 4 out of the 15 questions charting the employees' feelings towards subjects had negative values that stood out from the responses. The remaining 11 questions had mostly positive responses – the researcher feels that covering all these 11 responses and their percentages of positive answers would not be an efficient way to use time and space. However, there were a few questions that had exceptionally positive answer values, that should be brought up in these results. The remaining questions and their answers can be found in the appendices of this paper.

Question number 4, I feel that it is easy for me to communicate with the team I work in daily, a clear majority of respondents seemed to agree, or even strongly agree with this statement. Out of the 42 responses, 18 were with the value "Agree", and 15 with the value "Strongly agree". These combined, there were 33 responses, or 79% of total answers that were on the positive side. In addition to this, question number 10; "I feel that the company has provided me with sufficient tools to communicate efficiently" had 28 responses, or 67%, that had a positive value of "Agree" or "Strongly agree". The remaining statements had also at least 50% or more positive answers, and notably less negative answers.

In terms of validity for the improvements and conclusions for this thesis, the researcher feels that there is enough valid data to interpret from the negatively valued answers, and from the clearly positive ones, so that we can derive some tangible development ideas in terms of internal communication.

4.3 Multiple choice questions and open-ended answers

After the quantitative questions that tried to identify respondents' feelings towards certain statements about organizational communication, the researcher included three questions that had pre-determined answer values, and in addition a "Something else, what" –field, that gave the participants the option to give an open-ended answer. Although this is not a quantitative question-type by nature, the researcher felt that by adding this option on top of the pre-determined answer

options, there was a possibility to find much more insightful comments by the employees of the organization. In these questions, the respondents had the chance to answer to more questions than one, as a multiple choice –answer.

The first question was “My favorite way of communicating is” with a set of previously determined answer values, which were as follows; email, instant messaging, calling (Skype and phone, formal meetings (such as staff meetings, other organized meetings), informal meetings (such as lunch, hallway discussion) and then Something else, what. The answer rate to each option can be seen in the graph below.

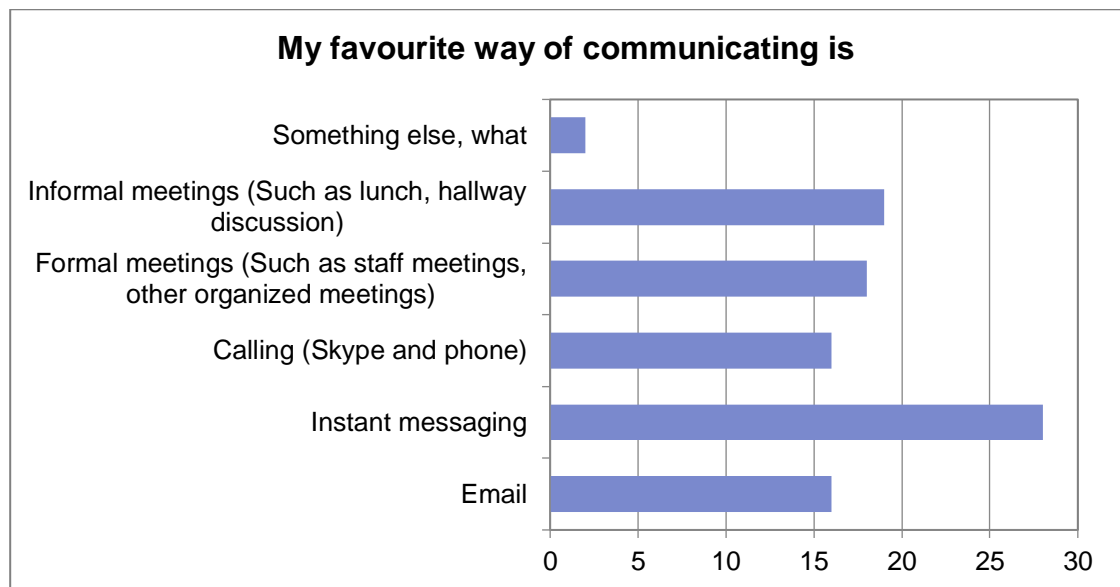


Figure 9 My favourite way of communicating is

As can be seen from the above table, there is a wide range of answers given to all the different answer options. This is obviously partly because the respondents had the chance to give out more than one answer per question, but from this we can also see that there is no single preferred method of communication within the organization, or even by a single person. Instant messaging (or IM) is a communication channel that does have the most responses, with 28 people identifying it as one of their main channels of communication. After IM, there is a large gap to the next best option, and there is no meaningful gap between different options, but instead different meetings, email and calling all have almost the same number of preferred choices. In total, the 42 respondents gave 99 different answers to this question, which means that on average, a single person chose 2,4 different answer options. This goes to show, that every single employee prefers more than one method of communication.

In addition to these options, the something else, what option had two responses, that emphasized “live engagements” and “going to my coworker’s office to see him/her”. The researcher would categorize these two answers given also into the formal or informal meeting –category, depending on the circumstances.

The second question with the multiple-choice answer options was “17. What would be the best way for higher management to communicate information regarding the whole organization (changes, events. Etc.)”. One trend arose in this question out of the answer options that were given. The given options were; through my immediate supervisor, through a company intranet/other internal information site, through a companywide e-mail, a companywide meeting, and something else, what. The one answer option that stood out more than the others was “Through a companywide e-mail”, which received a total of 27 answers from the 42 respondents. A total of 73 different answers were given in the multiple-choice answers, so in total 37% of all the responses were given to companywide e-mails being the best way to communicate organizational information. Answer option something else, what, did not receive any answers in this question. The remaining options all received relatively the same amount of answers from the respondents, and in total 1,74 options per respondent were chosen for this category. This category can easily be summarized then, with no further analysis needed; e-mail is perceived as the easiest way to receive companywide information, with meetings, information distributed by supervisor and the use of company intranet being all relatively tied for the second place. No other needs for this type of information delivery arose in the questionnaire.

The final multiple choice question, and the final question of the whole survey, received a total of 64 responses from 42 respondents, so a grand total of 1,5 options chosen per respondent. This final question was labelled as “18. The factors affecting the internal communication most within the organization are”, followed by the answer options. This question was deliberately set as the final one, with the emphasis to identify whether these predetermined answer options, or the open-ended ones, would point out a correlation between the quantitative answers that were given earlier in the survey. In addition to this, this question was a good way to

map the final feelings of the respondents, when they had already pondered on these issues and questions throughout the survey.

The answer option that received the most responses in this question was the option labeled as “Lack of understanding of the matter at hand between the people I work with and myself”, with a total of 18 responses, or 43% of total the total respondents’ number, which was 42. This category seemed to be the largest issue for people between 21 and 29 years of age, with a total of 54% of respondents from that age group choosing this option as at least one of their concerns in terms of organizational communications’ pitfalls within the organization. Interestingly, the people who had this issue the most, in terms of time with the organization were the personnel who had been there from 2 to 6 years. These employees were a total of 13 respondents, and 9 of them chose this answer option. whereas people with over 6 years of experience within the organization did not stand out in this category at all. People with less than 2 years of experience within the organization also stood out from this answer type, but not as much as the group mentioned before.

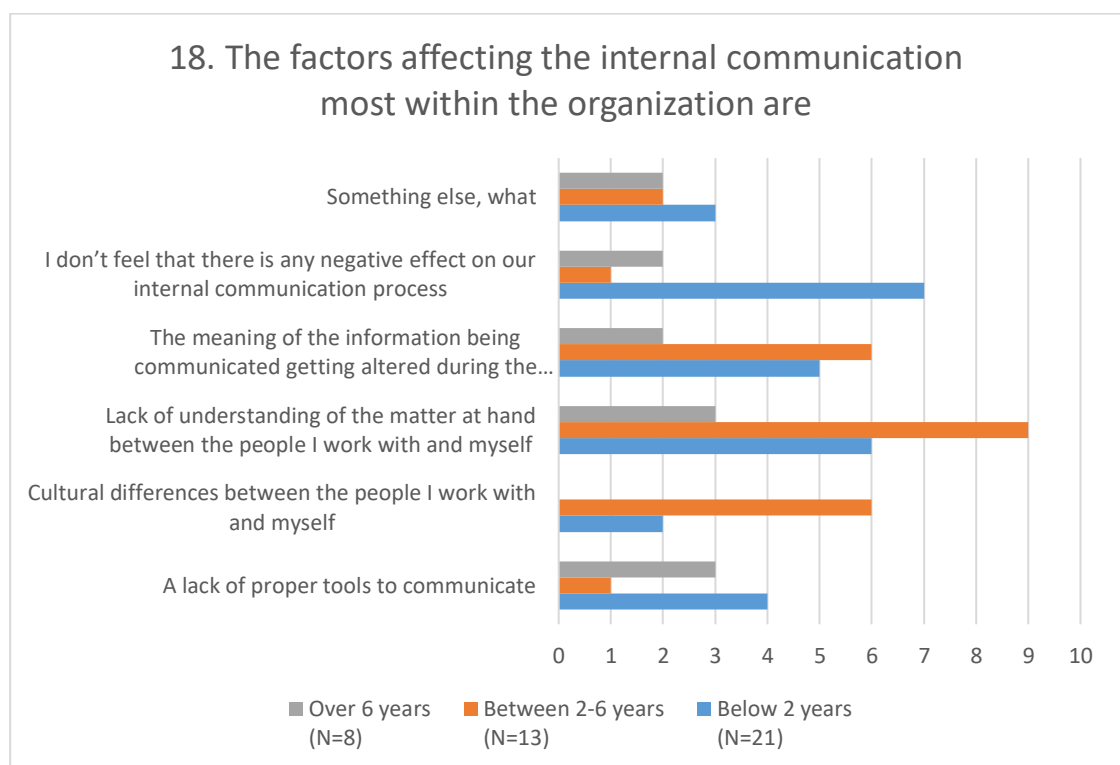


Figure 10 The factors affecting the internal communication most within the organization are (Answers by work experience)

The option with the second highest answer rate was the one labeled “The meaning of information being communicated getting altered during the information exchange process”, with a total of 13 responses, or 31% from all the respondents that answered. It must be stated here, that this, or any other option after the previously mentioned one, did not stand out as significantly as the highest answers receiving one, which could be expected because of the ability to choose multiple options.

In terms of demographical information, no trend seems to stand out in this question type; all the answers given to this question seem to be in line with the number of respondents from each demographical section of the employees of the organization.

The answer option “Cultural differences between the people I work with and myself” received 8 responses from the 42 respondents, which is a rather low number in itself. What needs to be recognized from this, however, is the fact that there are people within the organization that seem to see cultural differences as an issue within the internal communication process. These responses all came from personnel at the organization who have been there for 6 years or less, with personnel of over 6 years of experience did not seem to have an issue with this topic.

The same amount of responses, 8 from 42, or 19%, received the option “A lack of proper tools to communicate”. This category is rather self-explanatory, and can be directly compared to the employees’ preferred tools of communication to see, if there are any tools that seem to stand out that the organization does not provide for the employees. In terms of age, it seems that employees between 21 and 29 years of age only had this problem, with older people not seeming to face this problem in terms of communication tools.

The answer option of “I don’t feel that there is any negative effect on our internal communication process” received a total of 10 responses, or 24% from all the respondents, which is a pleasingly high number. In terms of demographics, this option seemed to be chosen most by men, who have worked at the organization for less than 2 years. This may implicate that they might not have enough experience to directly identify any issues, or that since they are rather new employees, they have due to some sort of employee orientation and a fresh mindset a more positive view on internal communication.

To summarize this final answer option, we must review the “something else, what” open-ended answers. To the researcher’s surprise, this option received 7 individual open-ended comments from the respondents, ranging from employees not using the proper tools, to more in-depth problems arising from the internal communication procedure. These answers can be found in their original format in the appendices of this paper, and in this section, they will only be quoted and not referred to word for word. It must also be noted, that since the answers handle some sensitive opinions about the organization and the communication process, no demographic data of the respondents will be provided for this section.

One respondent simply stated that personnel don’t utilize the companywide communication channel, called Yammer. A couple of the answers given touched more on the management side of the problem, with one stating that “management does not seem to appreciate communication and it is not equal to all people in the company. There just simply is not culture for communication”, and another one who only said, “poor leadership skills”. A third respondent answered; “Information about a change not being distributed beyond a small circle enacting the change”.

These three answers seem to all fall within the same category of management and leadership either withholding information relevant to the organization, or not feeling that internal and organizational communication is something that should be considered as an integral part of the organizations’ operations. The answer talking about leadership skills might be an isolated approach to a single employee’s supervisor, and might not portray a company-wide problem with leadership.

Two of the respondents seemed to have a problem with how information is received within the organization. One respondent has a feeling of not getting heard, and the other was on a similar track by saying “people don’t pay attention to the information provided”. This is something that could potentially be vital information, since people left getting unheard will most likely not advocate open internal communication, and might start to withhold information themselves in the future, creating more internal communication issues.

One respondent feels that since people have different skillsets also in communication tools utilized, there can be a varied process of communication that

varies from person to person. This person feels, that communication processes should be implemented companywide, and information should be always in the same format. This notion is directly linked to the theoretical part of this text, where it is mentioned that the communication process should be enacted from the management down. This process should also reflect the employees' preferred methods of communication, and take into consideration the answers that were given to this survey.

This questionnaire gathered a rather vast amount of data, and it has been presented in this section of the thesis in rather minute detail. This more detailed analysis will be compressed into a more wholesome conclusion and recommendations section, that will follow next.

5. Discussions and conclusion

The first larger issue that we can identify from the dataset that was received from the questionnaire is, that there seems to be a larger issue regarding the communication mentality between teams and departments of the organization, and not so much within teams themselves. As the data received from question number 5 identified, many respondents identified that the communication flow from one team to another was lacking something, and the fact that most of the respondents giving this value have spent with the organization for over 2 years gives some validity to this claim.

As mentioned earlier in the theory base for this text, internal communication is something that should be shared by every employee of the organization for it to work, and if there is no clear top-to-bottom internal communication strategy implemented, these kinds of pitfalls of communication might occur. The theory base of this text does state that even though internal communication is a rather simple concept, if there is no clear internal communication strategy and channels implemented, there can be no culture for communication.

This kind of silo mentality is not unheard of within organizations, but it can be rather harmful for the company if not identified and dealt with in a proper manner. Silo mentality, or silos, can tell a great deal about the dysfunctionality of an organization,

and that these silos create both personal and departmental ambitions that might be profitable for the team, at least in their own minds, but is most likely very detrimental to the organization. (Florence 2004.) This kind of mindset can be that, if a team acts as an information holder, this information can become as a leveraging tool for them, that can then be held over some other team for bargaining power, as has been gone through in the theory part of this text. The other reason for this kind of behavior can be, because there are not functioning communication channels within the organization; even though a team might communicate effortlessly via instant messaging, emails, phone calls etc., it does not mean the whole organization shares this notion of easiness.

The open-ended answers did give some insight into this problem too, as one answer mentioned that people simply do not utilize the company wide communication channel called Yammer. This is a very straight forward, practical answer to the problem, and could give some insight on how to improve organizational communication. However, there was another open-ended answer which could show that there is a much broader issue of communication, as the answer stated that “there simply is no culture for communication”.

As mentioned also in the theory part, attitudes towards something can either be highly profitable or detrimental towards a cause when talking about communication. If the attitudes towards communicating outwards from a team are already rather low due to poor communication culture, it most likely will not help the cause of silo mentality being taken down within the organization. Influencing employees’ attitudes about inter-departmental communication is as vital as changing the communication culture within the organization.

The data from this questionnaire cannot unfortunately properly identify what are the reasons behind this type of negative feedback on inter-departmental communication, but the suggestion is that issue should be addressed swiftly from the top management of the organization.

As was the case with all the other questions that tried to identify the employees’ feelings towards the internal communication process, there seemed to be the same issue arising from those remaining three questions with significantly negative values

given, that the internal communication itself is lacking some sort of top-down implementation of a procedure that everyone can understand and get behind, or that the existing procedure and culture of communication are lacking something.

As was the second negative question, it too seemed to show that the feedback culture, from supervisor to employee seems to be lacking in terms of content and quantity. As the question asked if the employees feel that they receive enough feedback, quite a large number answered either negatively or with a neutral value. This might go to show, that either they receive too little feedback, but the researcher assumes that this also might portray some issues with the culture of communication, from the angle of people not realizing feedback is something that is a part of their everyday life within the organization. This notion comes from the high number of neutral values given, as if employees don't have an opinion on feedback conversations with their supervisors.

The final two negative valued answer options both also are a sign for the top management to take into consideration the organizational communication procedure and the culture that the company has for that, since both the questions asking about news regarding the whole organization, and the ability to communicate to higher management were the final two negatively valued questions. The issue of organizational news can be fixed rather easily in the researcher's opinion, as it seems that the organizational communication channel called Yammer has already been implemented and is facing some struggle of not being used enough by the employees. Simply creating a culture of communication via this tool can easily help the organization to message the organizational news more efficiently to every single employee within the organization.

The ability to communicate to the higher management is once again tied to the organizational culture of communication; if the top management is not easily approachable by any medium of communication, there might easily be the feeling of communicating to the management being rather difficult. Roles are something that were mentioned earlier in this text, and it must be noted that the role of a top manager is much different from the normal employee, and it might be hard or even intimidating for an employee to approach the higher management with their own ideas due to these organizational roles being in the way. If the top management

creates a culture of easy communication to them, via some centralized medium, or perhaps companywide meetings with the sole purpose of discussion between employees and management, this issue could be fixed rather easily.

Finally what should be noted from the more negative feedback received from the questionnaire is that the people with the more negative thoughts have been generally longer with the company – spending more time within the organization may create negative attitudes towards the organizational communication due to personal issues with either other employees or teams, but it must be noted that since these people have spent so much time in the organization, they do have an “insider” insight into what the communication procedure really is like, and should have the opportunity to voice out their concerns about the organizations internal communication. This could be the first step towards a better communication culture.

What is integral to remember about this research is, that even though these questions that had some negative values given to them, there was still a larger number of positive feedback on every one of the question options. This should be considered, that not everyone shares the negative thoughts about the company’s communication policies, but instead has a positive view on all the aspects asked in this survey. Many of the organizations employees are still relatively new to the company, and now would be a great time to start to implement a new culture for communication, so that the new, younger generation of workers could work as the loud majority of advocates for this culture.

As said, there was a lot of positive feedback given in this survey also, and that should not be forgotten. Almost everyone felt that they receive specific and timely information in a manner that they can utilize in their everyday work, and that the organization has provided them with sufficient tools to work with in everyday working life. These kinds of positive insights are as vital to be taken into consideration as the negative ones; the company should hold on to these positive aspects and via leverage them in the implementation of a new communication culture.

By viewing how the different teams communicate internally, whether it be how they utilize the communication tools, how they distribute information and feedback, and

simply where and when they communicate, the organization can figure out multiple improvement points – think it like scaling a business model; find out what works in the small scale, and then scale it up so that it fits the whole market, or in this case, the organizations communication culture.

5.1 Conclusion

To briefly conclude this organizations communication model, the researcher could say that there are a lot of employees who have spent so little time in the organization that they do not see any negative aspects in the communication, but instead the employees with more work experience are the ones who are vocal about the faults in the communication process. The management of the organization should then listen to what the long-time employees must say, come up with a new communication plan that spans the whole organization, and implement it so that every employee becomes an advocate for this culture.

A lot is being done right in this organization, but there is still a long way to go to reach a functioning communication culture.

5.2 Final Recommendations

For the Case Company to maximize the potential improvement possibilities from this thesis, there should be a thorough examination of both the data analysis and discussion section, but also it would be recommended to take into consideration the whole data set that is attached to the appendices section; is there something that in context with the organizations' internal knowledge could be applied for a better communication process?

In terms of what would be the logical next steps; the researcher would recommend for the company's Human Resources department and even top management to take into consideration who were the most vocal about the negative parts of the organization's communication process, and conduct more deeper interviews with them to gain insightful knowledge on what could be done for improvement in terms of the communication process. This focus group seems to be the employees with some years of experience already within the organization; listening to them on what

could be done to improve the communication process is a key step in starting to improve the communication process.

In addition, the silo-mentality of teams and their communication is something that should be addressed swiftly, by interviewing different teams on their views on how they see communication improving between them and other teams within the organization. The interviews could potentially try to identify how individuals within different teams communicate with each other, and then implement those methods into company-wide communication models. It must be said, that this silo-mentality can be very detrimental for the organization's business actions, and can potentially cost them a lot of resources.

To summarize; individual interviews for the people who were vocal and have first-hand knowledge about the issues within the organization's communication process should be heard, for they are the key into resolving the issues that this company faces.

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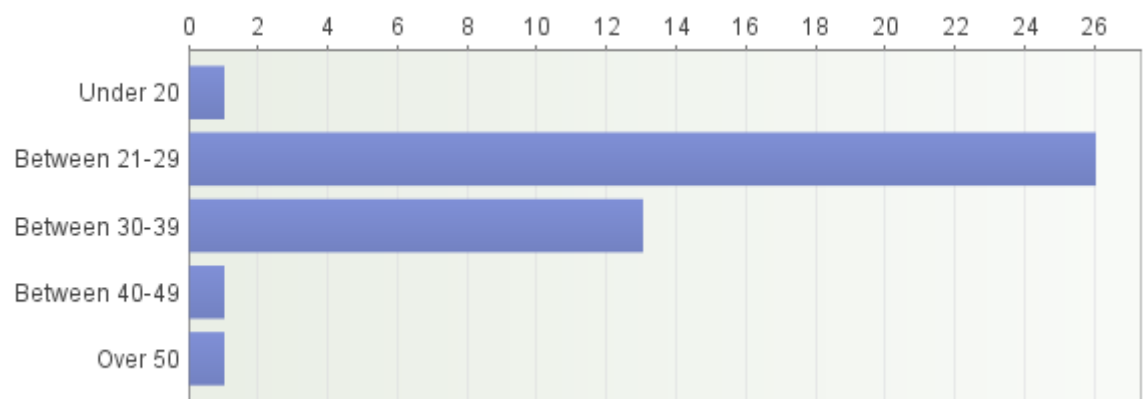
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Appendices

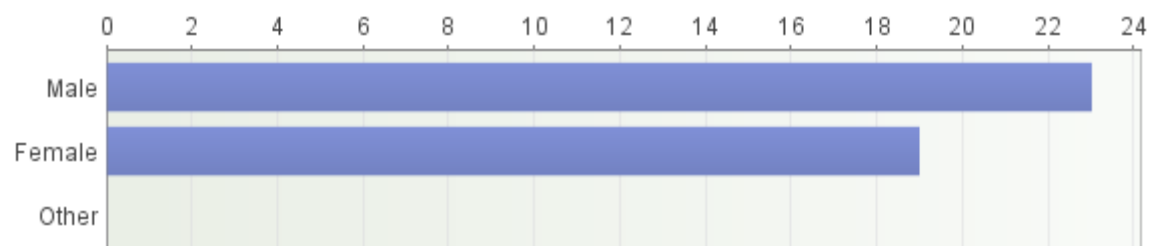
1. Age

Vastaajien määrä: 42



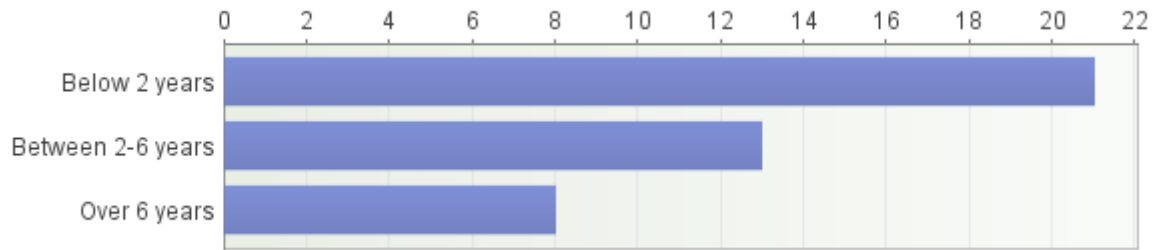
2. Gender

Vastaajien määrä: 42



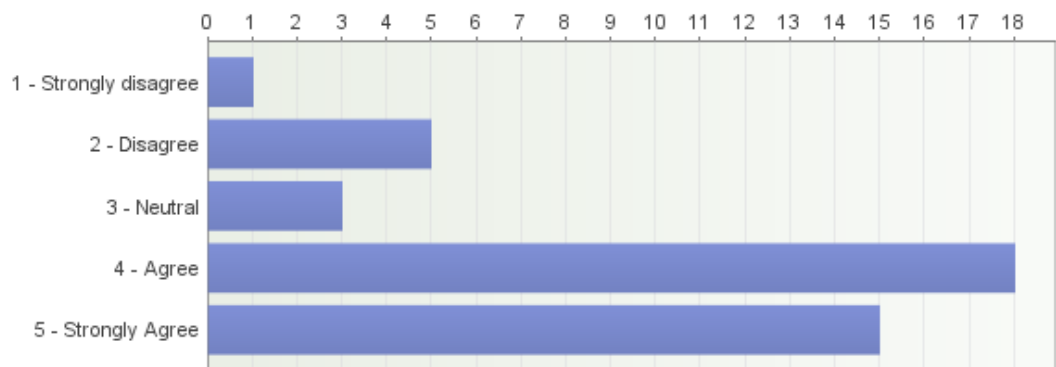
3. Work experience at your current employer

Vastaajien määrä: 42



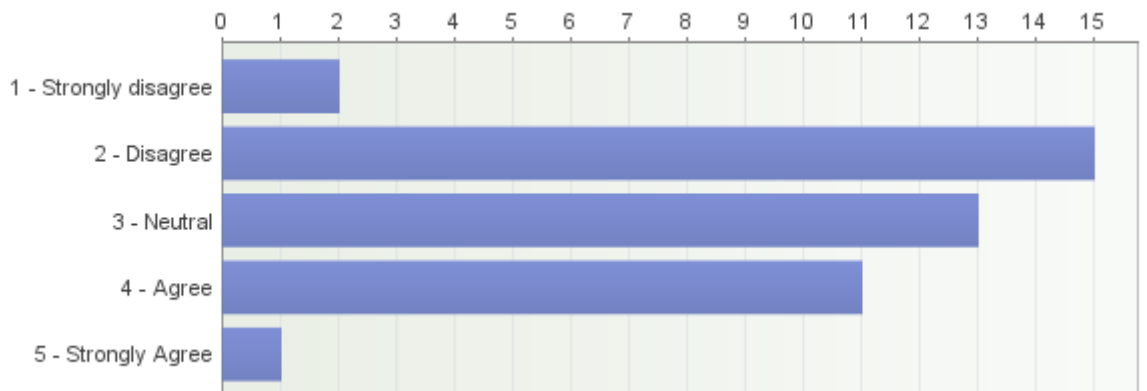
4. I feel that it is easy for me to communicate with the team I work in daily

Vastaajien määrä: 42



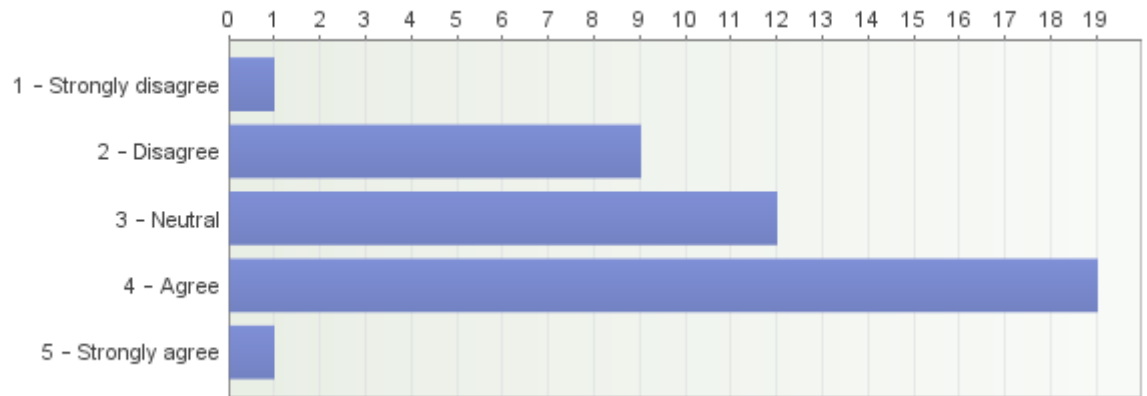
5. I feel that the communication between different departments flows well

Vastaajien määrä: 42



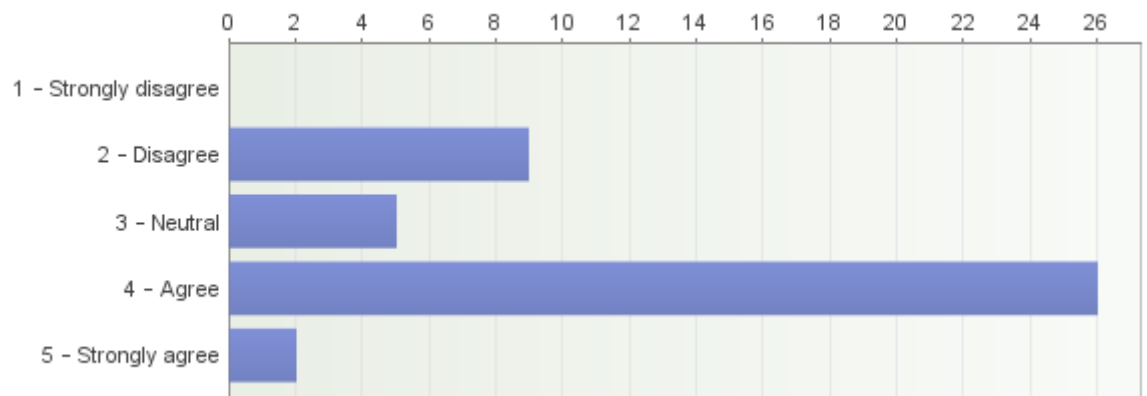
6. I feel that it is made easy for me to receive feedback

Vastaajien määrä: 42



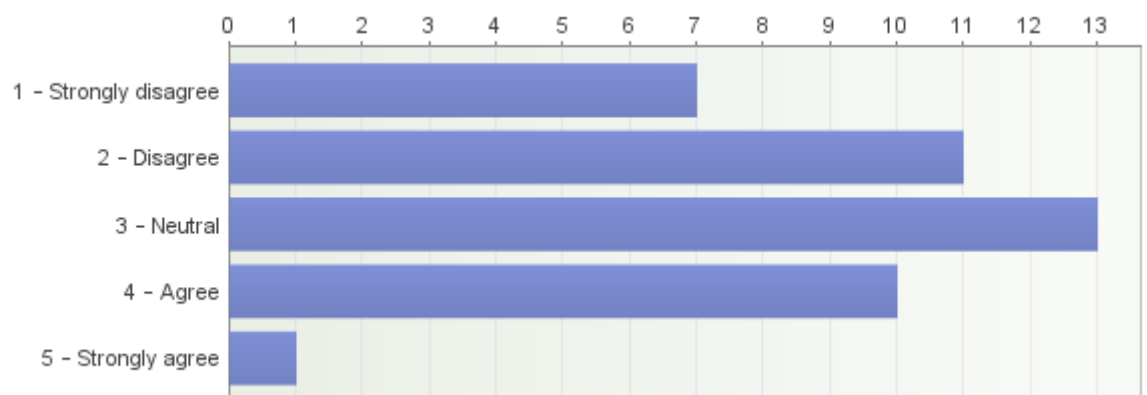
7. I feel that it is made easy for me to give feedback

Vastaajien määrä: 42



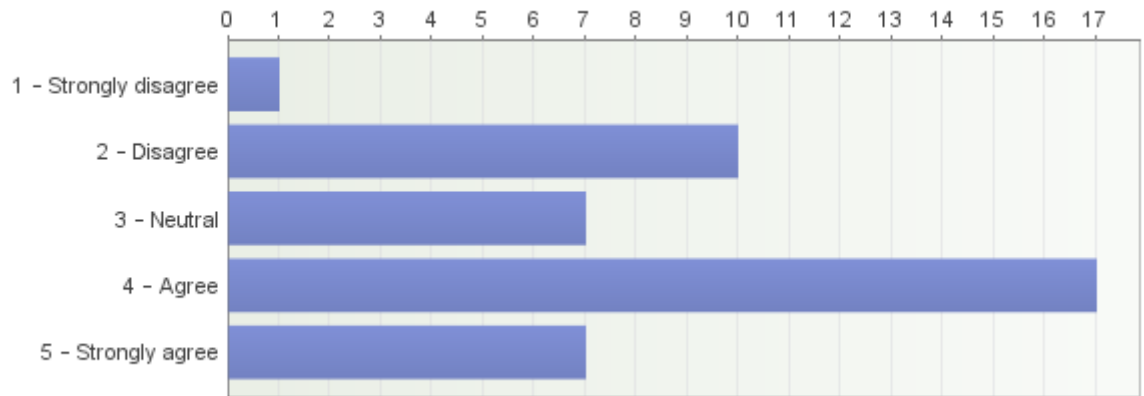
8. I feel that I receive enough feedback from my supervisor

Vastaajien määrä: 42



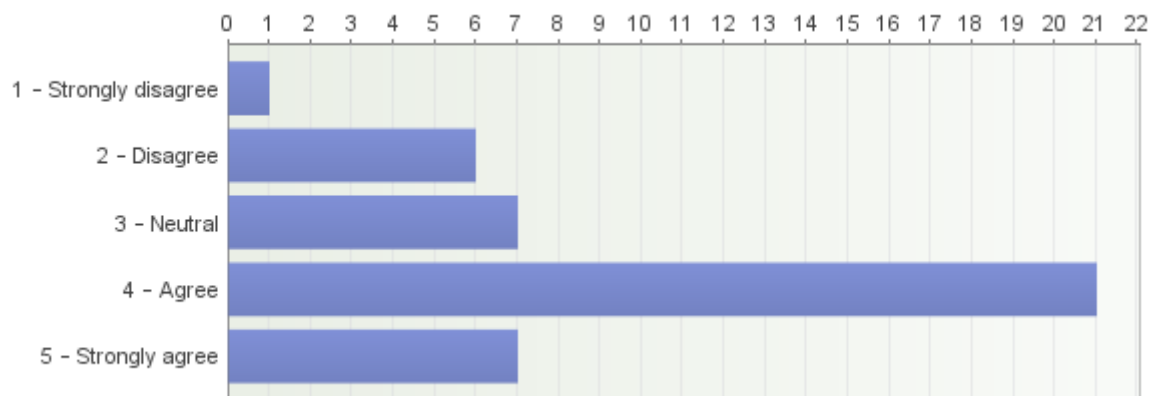
9. I feel that news regarding the whole organization is messaged to me efficiently

Vastaajien määrä: 42



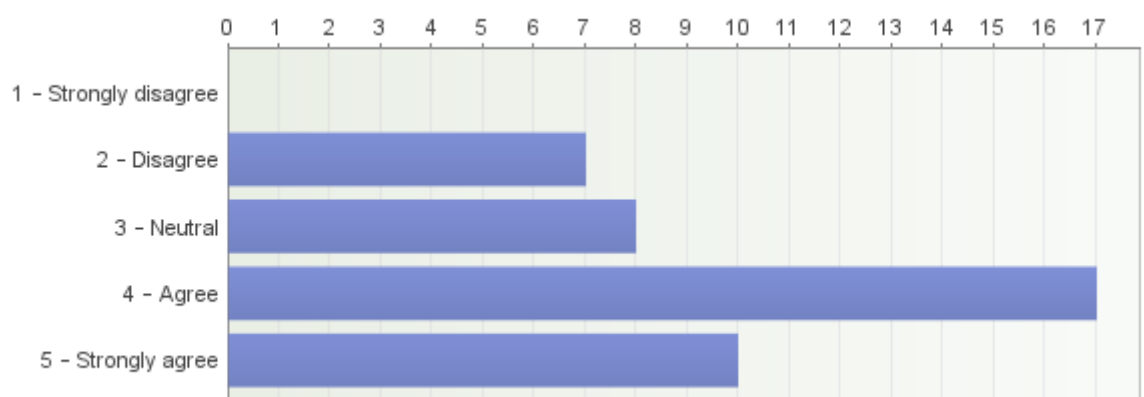
10. I feel that the company has provided me with sufficient tools to communicate efficiently

Vastaajien määrä: 42



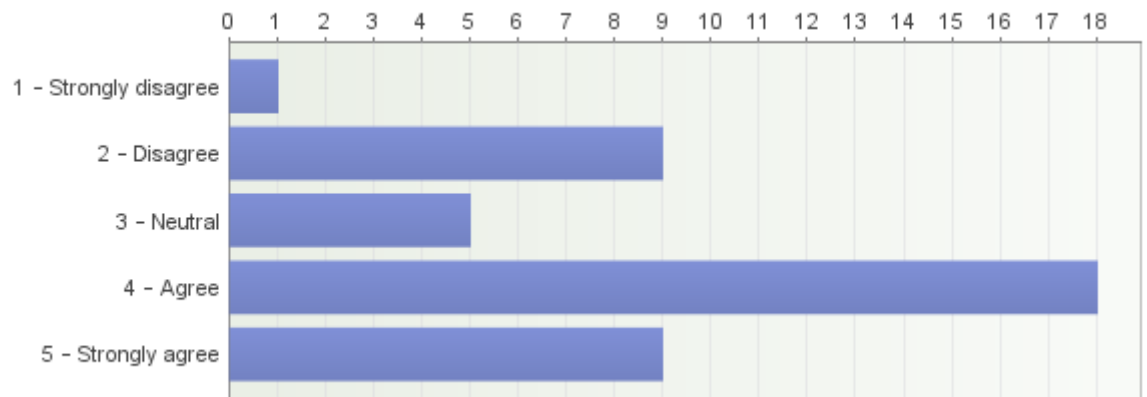
11. I feel that my closest supervisor does not withhold relevant information from me

Vastaajien määrä: 42



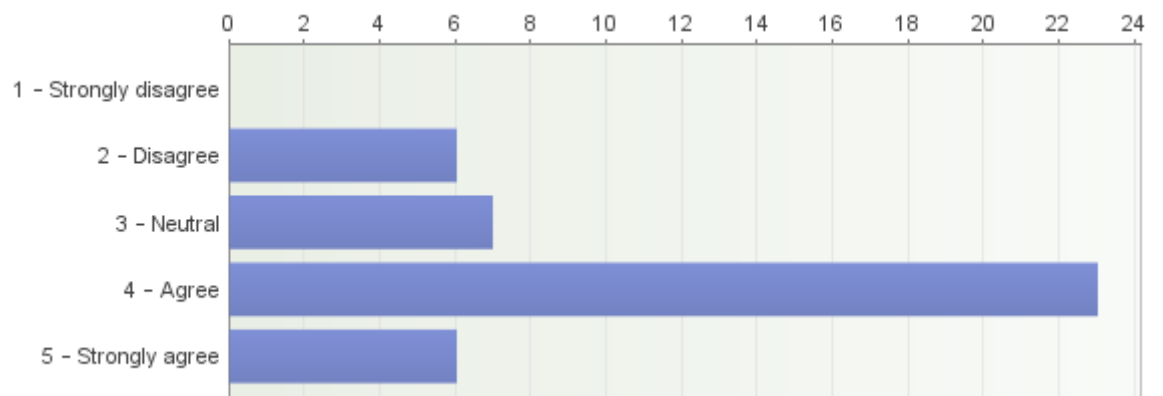
12. I feel that I can easily communicate my ideas to higher management

Vastaajien määrä: 42



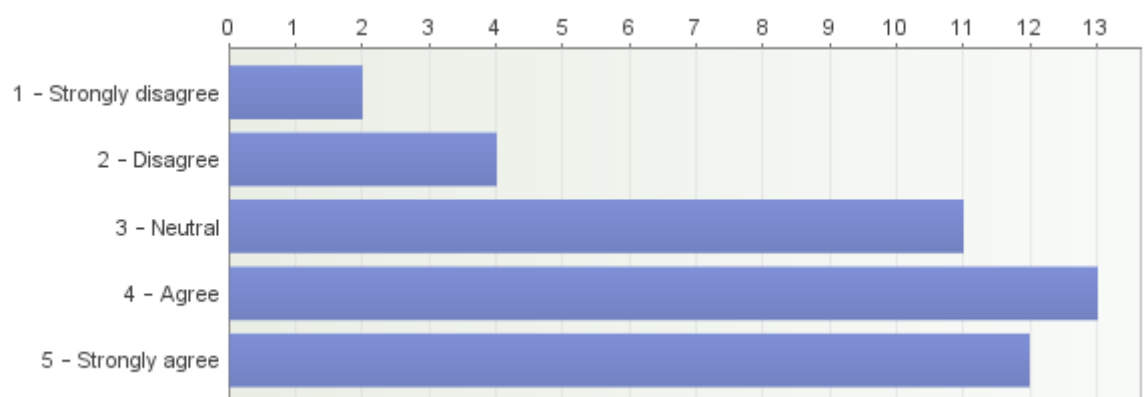
13. I feel that I receive the necessary information needed to perform at my job successfully

Vastaajien määrä: 42



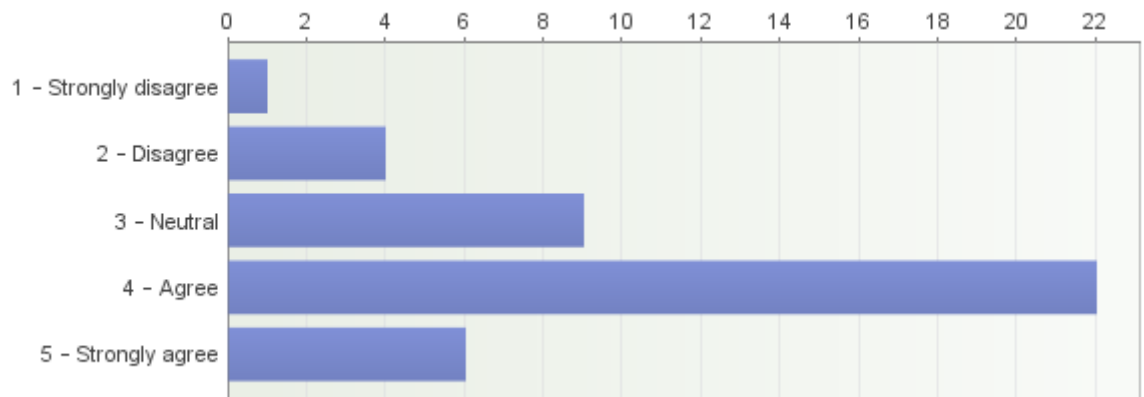
14. I feel that the staff meetings are relevant enabling me to perform more efficiently

Vastaajien määrä: 42



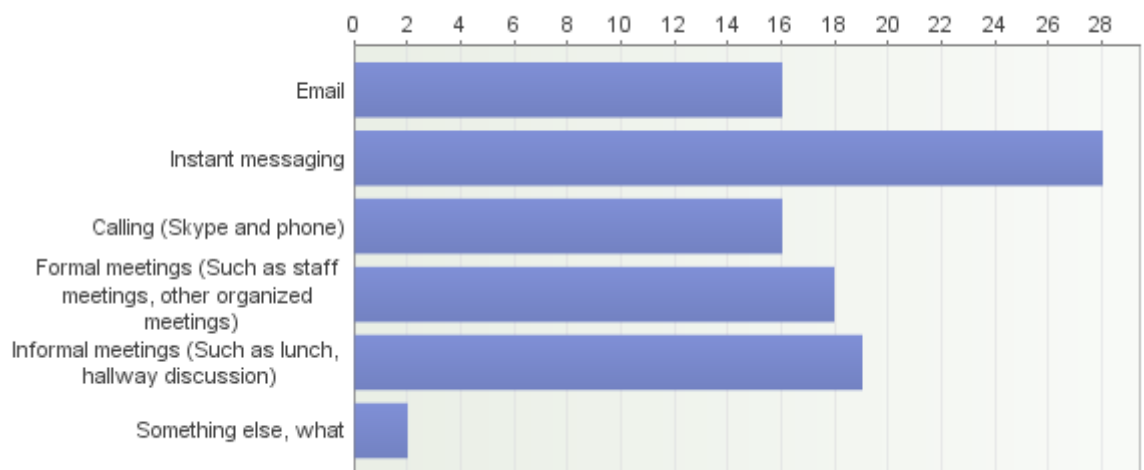
15. I feel that the information I receive is specific and accurate

Vastaajien määrä: 42



16. My favourite way of communicating is

Vastaajien määrä: 42

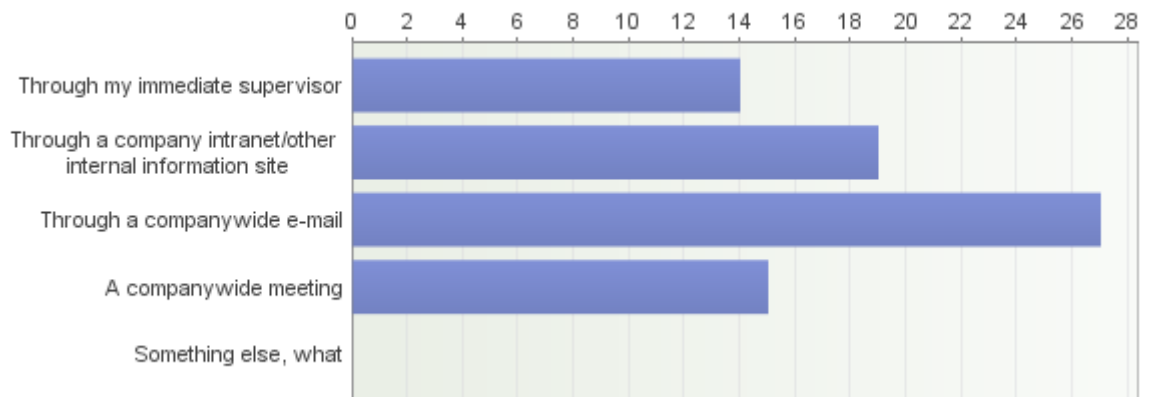


Avoimet vastaukset: Something else, what

- live engagements
- Going to my coworker's office to see him/her

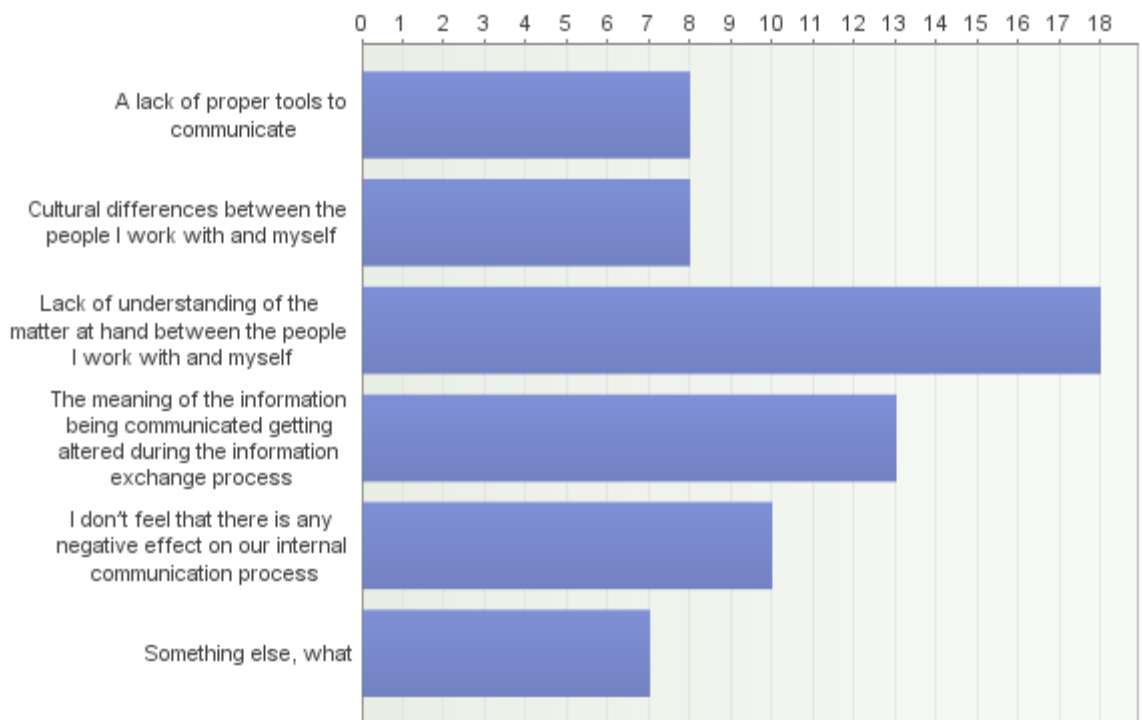
17. What would be the best way for higher management to communicate information regarding the whole organization (changes, events, etc.)

Vastaajien määrä: 42



18. The factors affecting the internal communication most within the organization are

Vastaajien määrä: 42



Avoimet vastaukset: Something else, what

- people don't read the companywide communication channel, Yammer
- feeling of not getting heard
- management does not seem to appreciate communication and it is not equal to all people in the company. There just simply is not culture for communication.
- Information about a change not being distributed beyond a small circle enacting the change
- people have different skillsets of different communication tools, which can lead to differentiation in communication. some communicate more efficiently via mail, some with speaking etc. communication processes should be implemented companywide, information should be always "in the same format" etc. imo. cheers.

- people don't pay attention to the information provided
- Poor leadership skills