

# **Way of everyday communication between office and field sales - case Michelin Nordic**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This thesis was commissioned by Michelin Nordic, concentrating on sales in four Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. Aim was to examine current state of communication, develop more efficient and understandable everyday communication between sales personnel working on the field, and marketing and training department personnel working at the office. The objectives of thesis were to examine importance of information concerning different stakeholders, finding common preferred channel for everyday communication and information storing and applying model of communication.

Theoretical part handled different communication models, components of information communication, internal communication, and internal public. Primary research was conducted by quantitative survey with some qualitative inputs, sent to stakeholders in March 2021.

The outcome of the survey pointed some development items like importance of information needed by stakeholders, and common channel for everyday communication and data storing. Some more points were received from the answers to open questions on the survey, for example difficulties finding information and structuring it. Based on the analysis of the survey results, recommendations on everyday communications were given, communication model which should be taken account in everyday communication was pointed.

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Keywords: internal communication, everyday communication, communication survey

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Research topic

Unfortunately, clear, and understandable two-way communication is sometimes quite hard. Very often some members of certain teams have not received important message, they have missed an e-mail, or another reminder, and an important task has not been accomplished. This problem occurs sometimes at the thesis works company between field sales teams and head office personnel, often between marketing and different product lines field sales in different countries. Sometimes different messages are hard to find after hand, because messages may have been sent via different channels, for example e-mails, WhatsApp, MS Teams, text message or simply in a phone call to certain persons. Very often a reminder for accomplishing different tasks is missing too. One factor in this challenge is that company language, English, is nobody's native language. Because of this, misunderstandings are also present, however this point can't be researched in this Thesis.

Objective is to find way of communication and apply a communication model, way of communication, which enables effective everyday information sharing between office-based marketing and training departments, and field sales based on different Nordic countries. Way of should include common communication channel. Objective is also to find a way, where different stake holders and information can be divided to different groups, and which helps communicator to understand which groups need which kind of information.

This thesis' objective is also to find a way to communicate so that all persons are reached and informed. Equal communication needs to reach all stakeholders, and everybody needs to understand correctly what is communicated. Communicator needs to understand what he/she is communicating and who are the main stakeholders. Communication overflow needs to be avoided, so communicator needs to understand what subject are prior to different stakeholders. Different ways to communicate suits for different persons. Priority communication channel

needs to be determined and all stake holders educated to use the channel efficiently.

## **1.2 Research questions**

Goal is to find way of communication, which takes to account different stake holders, different types of information shared and determines a prior communication channel.

Root causes of communication problems needs to be researched and analysed. Different stakeholders' opinions about communication problems and preferred communication channels needs to be taken to account and examined for example by questionnaires.

Thesis will answer following questions:

- What kind of communication model needs to be applied to secure equal and understandable communication to all stake holders?
- What information is important to which stake holders?
- What communication channel will be used for communication and storing all important messages?

## **2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Literature review; Different types of models of communication**

#### **2.1.1 Shannon-Weaver model**

Feicheng Ma presents five different communication models on his book *Information communication* (2015, 23-26). Most known communication model is a model, which was presented in 1949 by Claude Elwood Shannon and Warren Weaver in their book *A Mathematical theory of communication*, nowadays called a Shannon-Weaver model of communication (Shannon & Weaver 1998). Their communication model was originally developed for signal transmission between different machines.

Shannon-Weaver model sees communication as a five-step process. The source of information is in charge of sending the information to the encoder for transmitting it in a signal format. Information arrives to the decoder, which transmits the information to the destination. In information process between the encoder and the decoder, may occur different kind of interferences, which is called noise. Information may be distorted by the noise. Important issues in communication are to find ways how to reduce interferences and control distortion effectively (Ma 2015, 23.).

#### **2.1.2 Laswell's 5W model**

Harold Dwight Laswell's 5W model was published in 1948 on his article "The structure and function of communication in society". Laswell's 5W model is made for analysing communication in human society. In 5W model, the communication is described by five questions: Who? Says what? In which channel? To whom? With what effect? When compared to Shannon-Weavers model, on top of the sender, the receiver, and the channel, 5W model emphasizes the content of information and the impact of communication. Laswell's model is effective when analysing political communication and propaganda (Ma 2015, 24.).

### 2.1.3 Scramm's models

In 1955, Wilbur Schramm, the American scholar on mass communication, wrote an article "How communication works", where he introduced three communication models. His first model corresponds Shannon-Weaver's model. Scramm's second communication model shows that a shared experience is needed for two parties of communication, so all signals can be understood by sender and a receiver. So, if sender and receiver have same experience, for example on tyre sales, signals are understandable by both parties. Scramm's third model focuses more on communication process than the effect of communication. Third model is also known as "Scramm's feedback loop". It is applicable to interpersonal communication, especially to face to face communication but not to mass communication. Larger process of communication is repeated feedback loop. Both sides in communication are needed for encoding the purpose they want to express into signals, transmit the signals and decode those from the other side, and interpret the decoded information for creating the purpose (Ma 2015, 24-26.).

Scramm has developed a model for mass communication as well. Mass media and its audience are recognized as two sides of communication (Ma 2015, 24-26). Mass media is an agent of transmission and audience is the target of communication. Mass media receives input from information sources, which is outputted to a mass-produced identical message towards the audience. The audience consist of several individuals and each individual belongs to social groups. Communication happens among different individuals, between individuals and groups. Members of the audience makes decisions based on communicated messages together with information from other sources. Audience acts based on their decisions, which creates feedback.

In reality, communication is often two-way interaction. Earlier models are usually one way transmission, just from sender to receiver. Scramm's model is a better projection of real-life human communications, because it introduces communication as a feedback loop between sender and receiver (Ma 2015, 24-26.).

### **2.1.4 Vickery's S-C-R-Model**

In Vickery's model of communication, communication is presented as a process, where information leaves the source, after it passes through media or channels, which are acting as a intermediary, and finally arrives to the recipient. Model is also called the source-channel-recipient model and was presented by Brian Campbell Vickery and Alina Vickery. Vickery's model differs from Shannon's model of communication so, that it emphasizes communications in human society instead of communication between machines. Shannon's model's destination is replaced by recipient in Vickery's model (Ma 2015, 26.).

Society influences to all three elements of the model. Model's research of communication needs to take account the social context, which includes factors like social status, and effect of knowledge about reception of information by the individual. Vickery thought that communication is interactive and mutual naturally, which means that all connections between the elements of the model are movements to two directions (Ma 2015, 26.).

## **2.2 Components of information communication**

Feicheng Ma listed six different elements and conditions, which are needed to get information communication as a social process realized (2015). First element is sender. Sender is the source of information, which may be called as transmitter or producer of information. Sender is also the first link on the chain of information transmission. Intermediaries, like information agencies, libraries etc. are not usually called sender. Second element is receiver, which receives or utilizes the information finally (Ma 2015, 20-21.).

Communication channel is the third element (Ma 2015, 20-21). It means the channels which through the information is delivered to the receiver. Basic channels can just be the human's sense organs, their abilities to hear, see and feel. Other channels and technologies just expand or transform these senses

Fourth element is the symbol system, which carries information during communication (Ma 2015, 20-21). Symbol system contains speech, writing, facial expressions and for example gestures. Symbol system consists methods and rules which are used arrange and organize the symbol elements.

Knowledge base is mentioned as the fifth element (Ma 2015, 20-21). Knowledge base is the source and destination of communication and it includes knowledge and information of the human mind.

Sixth elements, or rather conditions, are supporting conditions (Ma 2015, 20-21). It means the conditions, which make sure that communication realizes. Conditions include natural conditions, technological conditions, and social conditions.

### **2.3 Information variance**

Because of several factor's influence and interference when transmitting the information, the information will be changed. Accurate transmission of information from sender to receiver is almost impossible, no matter how exquisite the channels and tools are (Ma 2015, 47.).

#### **2.3.1 Information distortions**

In communication, distortions are unavoidable. Distortion can be measured by researching the similarity between the received information by receiver and information sent by sender. Distortions are general in all social communication. Feicheng Ma listed three types of information distortions (2015).

First type of distortions are physical distortions (Ma 2015, 47-49). Physical distortions mean loss of fidelity, which are caused by material systems during transmission. Another type of distortions are semantic changes, which occur in all transmissions of the information. Loss of information is inevitably caused by semantic transformations performed by individuals based on their mental spaces. Each person has an individual mental space, which furthers semantic changes.

Third type of information distortions are pragmatic changes (Ma 2015, 47-49). When looking value of information just from receiver's point of view, only information which is worth of transmitting, is the information which receiver needs. Receivers demanded information is influenced by the law of diminishing marginal utility, which means that when receiver is already satisfied about the information received, value of new piece of information's pragmatic value is smaller because of earlier information received. Information value is also time sensitive. Certain information, like economical information and technological innovations, are only valuable on specific period of time. When transmission is repeated often, the pragmatic value of same part of information will decrease.

There are several factors, which cause information distortion. Technical problems are one cause of information distortion. For example, issues on communication channels like interruption of signal or just machine malfunctions are quite usual.

Information distortion may be caused by flowing through too many information warehouses, which means for example that if information goes through too many persons, it changes. Or that ancient writings have been copied, translated, and translated again several times.

Social factors are one cause of information distortions. Information may be controlled due to social factors. There are several examples in history, where ruling class has controlled, strengthened, or restricted, the information to serve their own needs (Ma 2015, 47-49.).

Distortion can be caused by natural factors. Since communications are blend of natural and social processes, several natural factors may lead to distortions or interrupt the communications. Natural factors are for example deterioration of disks, earthquake, or fire (Ma 2015, 47-49.).

### **2.3.2 Information additions**

Receiver measures information additions, which happen during transmission. This differs information additions from information distortions. Additional

information is created by several different factors during communication. Different factors in the communication are for example information warehouses (like books), technologies of communication and symbol conversions, which are transmitted together with information from sender. During all communications, additional information generates and transmits. As an additional information can be counted for example duration of telephone call, dialect of the person calling, mood of the caller, the printed paper quality of the magazine, and the price of magazine. Additional information transmitted can be useful, useless, or even harmful (Ma 2015, 49-50.).

Feicheng Ma presented three different factors, which causes information additions (2015). These factors are described slightly different compared to factors when talked about information distortion. Natural factors are one of the factors causing additional information. Human participation as well as physical technologies and condition are relied in communication. For example, in conversation, additional information is caused by person's dialect, fluency or even dress of the person. Another factor mentioned are technological factors. These factors are partly natural and partly social. Additional information caused by technological factors are for example signal variations due to voltage alteration, or the quality of the printer paper or printer used in printing.

Most complicated and varied influence during communication is caused by social factors, which are third on the list. Information warehouse is something, where information is stored, like books or internet. Additional information is also created by skills of the writer, or criteria used to make a directory in a library. Legislation concerning communication, structure of the information systems and economic support are all supporting social structures, which are built in communication. Changes in the society cause additional information as well (Ma 2015, 49-50.).

Information distortion is presented so that it concerns information coming from the sender. Information additions concerns the part on information coming from the sender, which should have been received by the receiver. People usually receive additional information bit by bit (Ma 2015, 49-50.).

## **2.4 Information disorder, information fidelity and information redundancy**

### **2.4.1 Information disorder**

Ma wrote, that controlling of communication is more difficult than ever (2015). This because of amount of different communication systems keeps on increasing. Amount of information is massive and increases rapidly, Media and channels are diverse, overlap of the content keeps on growing, speed of circulation accelerates, and content quality is worsening (Ma 2015, 50-51). Information disorder causes inefficiency in communication, even though technologies have crossed many obstacles in communications.

Wardle and Derakhshan presented three types of information disorder on their report "Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making" on the council of Europe Report in 2017. One type of information disorder is misinformation, which means false information shared but without intention to do harm. Second type presented is Disinformation, when false information is shared on purpose and to cause harm. And the third type is malinformation, when information is originally shared to cause harm, often when private information is shared publicly (Wardle & Derakhshan 2017, 20).

Elements, which cause information disorder and phases of information disorder were presented as well. Elements of information disorder are the agent, messages, and interpreters. Phases of information disorder are creation, production, and distribution (Ma 2015, 50-51.).

### **2.4.2 Information fidelity**

For securing effective communication, it is necessary to react against information distortions and additions. Methods for securing accurate communication can be divided to two approaches, which are increase of information fidelity and increase of information redundancy.

Fidelity of information, which also means conservation of information, is one of communications basic requirements. Looking up the communication technologies with high fidelity has been prioritized always. However, perfect accuracy has not been possible. That's why fidelity goals, like certain baseline of improving information fidelity, are sometimes established. New technologies have increased information fidelity and decreased number of errors affected by information warehouses. When improving information fidelity, both information distortions and additions needs to be prevented. Retention of information fidelity is goal of communication and a result of human effort, while distortion and addition are happening naturally (Ma 2015, 51.).

### **2.4.3 Information Redundancy**

Basic method for information distortion decrease is to increase redundance. Potential loss of information can be decreased by adding redundant information by using multiple information channels (Ma 2015, 51-52.). For example, repeating information during everyday human communication, like speech, can help to avoid information loss, even though receiving information once could be enough. Different kind of expressions about same issue can make information easier to understand.

Multi-channel transmission is one form of information transmission. Multiple different ways to make sure that the information transmits to receiver can be used. Same information can be delivered by telephone and letter. When talking about social communication, media like television, newspapers and magazines may be counted as different methods. Information redundancy can also be organized by utilizing search function by using multiple methods and criteria in information systems.

Anti-redundancy is also known in communications. Information spread can have harmful effects, so it can be controlled by decreasing redundancy (Ma 2015, 51-52.). Cases where anti-redundancy activities may be needed are for example looking after criminals, important decisions about stock markets or protecting secrets of the state.

## **2.5 Internal communication**

### **2.5.1 Importance of internal communication**

In the book “Excellence in internal communication management”, Rita Linjuan Men, and Shannon A. Bowen (2016) mentioned some key activities inside the organization, where good internal communication is essential. Communications is said to be one of the most dominant activities of organization. It is needed for coordinating different activities between teams and individuals (Men & Bowen 2016, 1).

Communication helps workers to move towards the direction which is pointed by the top management. Employees need to understand organizations vision, mission, objectives, and goals, and communication is used for coordinating the direction top management wants (Bowen 2018, 7). Importance and scope of internal communication have both increased during last years.

One factor, which affects to success of an organization, is effective internal communication. Employees stay informed daily concerning their work, organization, and environment by internal communication. They can better understand the organization, strategies of the organization, and policies of the organization by the help of internal communication. Internal communication helps building the trust, common identity, and loyalty, which increases engagement of the employees (Men & Jiang 2017, 238-240.).

Social cohesion is improved by internal communication, it helps on connecting employees and building relationships. Internal communication has essential role in several important processes inside the organization, for example in change management and decision making (Berger 2008.).

Internal relations mean managing strategic relationships between internal stakeholders, and it is controlled by internal communication. Relationships can be maintained and built by strengthening and including internal stakeholders' values

and priorities in daily operations. In ideal case, relationships bring some benefits, which are similar to internal stakeholders and organizations.

Different kind of perspectives has been used when defining internal communication. Internal relations have been named internal public relations or internal communication in public relations, this highlight managing of relationships between internal stakeholders, like employees (Tkalac Verčič, Verčič & Sriramesh 2012, 226). In a stakeholder approach, internal communication was defined “the strategic management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders at all levels within organizations” by Welch and Jackson in 2007 (Welch & Jackson 2007, 183). Term of internal marketing has been used in marketing when organizational interactions need to be addressed with employees. In this concept, employees are defined as internal customers. Internal customers’ need are seen to be beyond achieving the organizations objectives. Satisfied employees are assumed to reach satisfied customers (Berry 1981).

### **2.5.2 Structure of internal communication**

In the book “Excellence in internal communication management” (2016) were presented different ways to present the structure of internal communication. Idea called “integrated internal communication” was originally presented by Kalla in 2005. Internal communication is built up on four different fields. The first field is business communication, which is focused on employees’ communication abilities. Second one is management communication, which focuses on leadership communication and management skills. Third field is called corporate communication and it includes formal communication of the corporation. And the fourth field is organizational communication, which focuses more on subjects which are philosophical and theoretically oriented (Men & Bowen 2016, 2.).

Internal communications have also been divided by its groups of different stakeholders, proposed by Welch and Jackson (2007). Stakeholder groups of internal communications are: Line management-, internal team peer-, internal project peer-, and internal corporate communication (Welch & Jackson 2007, 185).

Whitworth (2011) presented more dominant view, where internal communication consists of three building blocks. Hierarchical communication is the first block, it means communication between managers, supervisors, and employees. It represents top-down or bottom-up communication between different level of employees. In internal communication, manager's role is important. Manager needs to push messages and make sure all employees are reached, as well they need deliver employees concerns to top management. Supervisors are suggested to be most preferred information sources to employees by research (Whitworth 2011, 195-198.). Managers have different level of communication skills and their willingness to share information varies. That's why companies do not only trust on managers and senior leaders when communication to workforce is needed.

Another fundamental block of internal communication is the use of mass media addressed to audience of employees. This kind of programs are usually started from the communication department, so the message timing and wording may be controlled (Men & Bowen 2016, 3.).

Informal networks are the third base block of internal communication. A network means information flow in organization. When information is transmitted via official communication channels, is formal communication network used. Interpersonal, horizontal communication between employees happens in informal network. Information received from managers and other channels is shared between employees. This kind of information can be sometimes inaccurate, but it is often experienced more authentic than communication in formal network (Berger 2008.).

### **2.5.3 Historical perspectives of internal communication**

Examining history of internal communication helps to understand better its functions and practices.

According to Men & Bowen (2016), importance of managerial communication was highlighted by Chester I. Barnard in "The Functions of the Executive", in 1938. He wrote that developing and maintaining a system of communication is

the first function of executives. He noted that acceptance of message is not only caused by authority of the sender. Communication needs to be understandable, consistent with goals of organization and matching together with personal interest (Men & Bowen 2016, 5.).

In 1942, Alexander B. Heron promoted the idea that communication towards employees does not need to be persuasive or propagandistic. In employee communication “two way sharing of information” and “the freedom to ask questions, get answers and exchange ideas” is required (Hay 1974, 8.). In communication process, efforts from management and employees are needed.

#### **2.5.4 Scientific management perspective**

Fredrick Taylor pointed out that planning the work setting, training employees, and arranging good tool to get the job done, are on manager’s responsibility (Taylor 1911). According to Henri Fayol, organizations need both a classical and hierarchical structure of command, where orders and information come from the top down to the bottom. Clear commands and exact specifications are required on each level of the organization. Fayol identified need of connecting managers together, which is nowadays know as horizontal communication, earlier as “Fayol’s bridge” (Fayol 1949.). Weber’s contribution to the scientific management was presenting bureaucracy as an effective and rational management system. Earlier bureaucracy’s idea was to improve efficiency of the organization by hierarchy and procedure standardization. Weber’s solution was more a system, where hiring and rewarding of people is based on their talent to manage their work, and different solution for rational system like processes, policies, and regulations. Before Weber, organizations were more damaged for example by favoritism, wrong habits, traditions, or nepotism (Weber & Parsons 1947.). In Morgan’s point of view, organizations are experienced as machines and people as parts, which are exchangeable (Morgan 2006).

In scientific management, communication is managed from top-down and distribution of information is centralized. Communication includes clear instructions with task orientation, which decreases misunderstanding, and expresses

directives and decisions from management for increasing productivity and efficiency. At the time of scientific management, main feature of internal communication was one-way communication on channels of traditional printed media. “In this approach, communication is relatively one-way, based on a chain of command or hierarchy, controlled, formal, rational, and task-oriented.” (Men & Bowen 2016, 6-7).

### **2.5.5 Human relations perspective**

Human relations perspective is result of the from the Hawthorne studies, which challenged ground of classical scientific management. Change in employee attention and attitude were believed to improve productivity, without depending on working conditions. Human relations and setting of the work from social aspects had to be highlighted too. In human relations perspective, relationships of employees, their motives, needs, and attitudes are seen to be equally, or even more important than features like work design, structure of organization and rules, which belong to scientific management perspective (Men & Bowen 2016, 7.). Basic assumption is that higher productivity is achieved by improving social aspects of workers, making them feel important, appreciated, and valued. However, there may be risk that productivity decreases if efficiency is overridden by comfort (Harris 1993.). Naturally, human relations and scientific management are both equally important.

Communication in human relations approach emphasizes building relationships and increasing satisfaction of employees. Managers need to take upward communication and listening to workers more on account. Employee attitudes should be measured and followed. Managerial communication is more open and less formal. Enabling social interaction, face-to-face communication is important addition to traditional ways of communication. Communication in human relations is “relationship-oriented, people-oriented, and less formal, and it combines upward, downward, and horizontal communications.” (Men & Bowen 2016, 7-8.).

### **2.5.6 HR management perspective**

HR approach was developed later than previously presented scientific management and Hr management approaches, and it is based on those. Employee development and human need awareness in the organization are both identified in Hr management perspective. In 1960 Douglas McGregor developed Theory X-Theory Y, which is theoretical base of Hr approach. In theory X is assumed that people without ambition and motivation do not care of organizational need, they resist change, and will work as little as possible for rewards. Theory X managers are more likely authoritarian, rely on control and coercion for achieving organizational goals. Managers of theory Y see employees responsible and most likely motivated persons. They show respect, offer possibilities for personal growth and development (McGregor 1960.).

Rensis Likert was another contributor in HR approach, he brought together the scientific management and humanistic approaches. Likert presented that best results are achieved by employee centered management style including clear task orientation. In Likert's system 4 framework, he presents that manager has important role in connecting people on different levels of the organization. Communication does not only happen from top-down or bottom-up, but also between groups, formed by managers and employees, and individuals. In system 4, trust in employees is appreciated, and they are asked to participate to decision making (Likert 1967.).

In HR communication, employee growth and people development are important areas. Innovation in the organization is helped by employee participation, which is enhanced by open and two-way communication. Employee opinions are taken account in decision making by feedback collecting. Managerial and group communication are recognized important. Trust, empowerment, and participation are emphasized. Communication happens multidimensionally across different levels inside the organization (Men & Bowen 2016, 7-8.).

### 2.5.7 Systems theory perspective

Systems theory was originally used to understand how organizations work, it was developed by Niklas Luhmann in 1979 and 1984. Organization is treated as a system, which consists of subsystems, interrelated parts which are related to internal and external environments. (Bertalanffy 1969, Weick 1979). Organization is seen as a living organism, which needs to interact with its environment by information and material exchange to survive. Adaptation for changes in environment is needed for maintaining steady state. Adaptation needs gathering information from the environment, information gathering is called feedback (Bennett 1987.).

Organization should regularly monitor the environment, for identifying useful information for process of decision making. Organization usually counts on professionals on public relations, who collect information, which helps analyzing the effectiveness of organization's current operations. Their tasks are finding opportunities and issues and helping organization's strategy formulation by analyzing the environmental context (Grunig & Dozier 2002.). Organization's internal and external environments are equally important to it. Organization is interdependent on its most important stakeholders, which are employees on different levels. According to Rice, managing relationship of the system with its environment is the prime task of leaders (Rice 1963). Fundamental tool of managing this interdependence is communication (Grunig & Dozier 2002).

Internal communication is needed for improving relationships between the organization and internal stakeholders of the organization. Internal stakeholders are for example individuals, teams, and groups. Joint efforts from HR, PR and managers are required for internal communication and for building system of cross-enterprise communication (Men & Stacks 2014, 319.). In this kind of communication system, feedback is encouraged, and communication is bidirectional. Participation and collaboration are more dominant. Transparent, open, and employee-centered communication approach is supported (Men & Bowen 2016, 9-10.).

### 2.5.8 Organizational culture perspective

On the beginning or 1960s, culture was found as an important perspective, when trying to understand organizations by Halpin and Croft (Halpin & Croft 1963). This perspective was broadened to corporate culture and was presented by Harrison in 1972 (Harrison 1972). It is still one of the top issues and is today one of the main challenges for organizations worldwide. There are several different ways to define the organizational culture, simplest is just the way to get things done. It is created, sustained, and lived by members of the organization. Bormann (1983) presented two ways to define the culture. Functionalists sees culture something what organization has. They believe that artifacts of the culture may be monitored, modified, reinforced, or deleted. By interpretationalists, culture is defined as something that an organization is. They concentrate more on interactions and processes, which takes to shared meaning. And they highlight the deep, indirect, and unconscious culture origin (Bormann 1983.).

“The communication of vision, mission, core values, goals, strategy, stories, and shared meanings and experiences through formal and informal channels all combine to shape the organizational culture.” Men & Bowen 2016, 11). When asked how strong organizational culture may be built, effective communication was pointed by Kennedy (Kennedy 1983, 26). Bowen pointed out that in executive decision making, organizational culture is a determining factor, which is even bigger factor than individual belief systems (Bowen S 2002, 274). Berger presented that between organizational culture and communication is a reciprocal relationship. Communication characteristics are influenced by culture because of assumptions, rules, and values, which are determining organization’s atmosphere for communication. Participative organizational culture, which encourages empowerment and shared decision making, supports open symmetrical communication (Berger 2008.). Shaping of the organizational culture is helped by the values and company founders’ leadership communication, a good example presented by Men is Steve Jobs and Apple.

## **2.6 Current trends and subjects**

### **2.6.1 People engagement**

Workplace engagement has recognized as an important issue since 1990s. Communication can help engaging employees. Engagement may be improved by open, transparent, and participative communication climate. Trust can be increased by authenticity, consistency, and transparency, which helps in relationship building and improves engagement (Bowen, Hung-Baesecke & Chen 2013, 8.). Participative discussions with free expressions of ideas and feeling of getting respect are building engagement, managers should talk with employees, not talk to them. From internal communicators' point of view, engagement is possible to improve also by aligning organizational and managerial behavior with ethical values and missions, ensuring consistency as well as authenticity, encouraging to free opinions, taking part to decision making and building trusting relationships. Digital technologies can offer interactive tools, personify corporate communication, and build an organizational character, which boost employee engagement for the organization. "In essence, effective internal communication is an indispensable component for successful employee engagement." (Men & Bowen 2016, 14.).

### **2.6.2 Technology**

New strategies can be built based new fast grown digital technologies with huge amounts of available data. All communication, including internal communication, has changed, and evolved because of new technologies. Range of used tools has increased, organizations can be personalized by help of the social media, and stakeholders may be segmented and interacted by different communication tools. Social media helps on conversation between employees and management, blurring internal communication hierarchies and building communities. Employees are feeling more engaged in companies, which use interactive tools, like social media to connect with them. By using of social media, top leaders may create more easily approachable reputation. CEOs with social media presence, even on

a moderate level, receive positive attitude and are experienced to be more approachable, authentic, and better communicators (Men 2015, 468-469.).

### **2.6.3 Communication of ethics and values**

Importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has increased and become more common in modern organizations; CSR reports are often published with the annual reports. Corporate transparency is expected by important stakeholders and is boosted by new technological tools like social media, which helps at more open information sharing. "The basic premise of transparent communication is making all releasable information available to employees in a truthful, timely, and balanced manner" (Rawlins 2008, 75.).

Another point of view, which suggests even more openness, was presented by Bowen & Prescott (2015). They suggest that all information, which employees need and want, should be provided by the organization. They also underlined, that two-way communication, listening and participating employees, are essential (Bowen & Prescott 2015.).

One more concept is called corporate authenticity, organization should be honest towards itself and towards its stakeholders. Interaction between organization and employees should be genuine and non-manipulative. It is important that organizations practices should be corresponding what is says and presents, values, mission and principles should be identical with its guidance. For being authentic, the organization cannot hide important information from its employees (Arthur W. Page Society 2007, 15-18.).

### **2.6.4 Leadership communication**

Leaders are experienced to be most reliable information source for employees. Executives are managing company culture, influencing direction and strategy of the organization, and creating climate for internal communication. Styles of communication, communication channels as well as leader's communication skills are influencing to employee outcome. Social media tools have reduced distance

of power and blurred hierarchies of communication by its more personal, interactive, and democratic features. Communication from Management towards employees can be friendly, authentic and informal through social media channels. Continuous leadership communication needs effort from different departments of the organization, for example HR, public relations and naturally from leaders themselves. If leadership communication is carried out effectively, organizations may build strong and efficient communication network across various levels (Men & Bowen 2016, 16-17.).

### **2.6.5 Measurement and evaluation**

Measuring and evaluating of success of communication projects is important. Evaluating strategies and tactics, what has been achieved and lost, is essential tool for management and helps them make adjustments and improvements. Internal communication measures should connect results to long-term outcomes, wanted change in behavior, and return on investment. Measuring outputs, like event attendees or social media likes are natural. Most of the companies measure employee satisfaction and engagement by yearly surveys. Internal communication is in important role in resolving issues, which are covered by employee satisfaction surveys (Men & Bowen 2016, 17-18.).

“Internal relations is the strategic management of communication in managing interdependence and building mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and its internal public. Internal communication informs, acculturates, and connects stakeholders and plays an essential role in building relationships, employee identification, and internal communities.” (Men & Bowen 2016, 17-18.).

### **2.7 Internal public**

Building good internal stakeholder and publics relationships is an important part of organizational strategy. Good internal relations can help improving organizations competitiveness, because cohesive organizational culture may increase employee motivation and efficiency as well as decrease costs by smaller employee turnover (Men & Bowen 2016, 19.).

Employees are primary stakeholders of the organization and are mostly involved in issues concerning the organization. Stakeholders can be segmented based on characteristics and interests. Communication can be targeted better by better segmentation. Segmentation has defined the process as dividing “a population, market, or audience into groups whose members are more like each other than members of other segments” by Grunig and Repper (Grunig & Repper 1992.).

Internal communications two most usual forms are top-down communication and bottom-up communication, both happening across different levels of the organization. Employees on various levels of the organization have different information and communication needs. Men and Bowen mentioned five different often recognized internal publics, who have typical functions and communication needs: Frontline workers, line managers, middle-level management, senior management, and executives (Men & Bowen 2016, 19-20.).

### **2.7.1 Frontline workers**

Frontline workers are for example service employees who are responding to customers, or blue-collar workers doing physical work. Frontline workers are facing customers and have the possibility to effect on company’s customer relationships and reputation. Frontline workers are receiving feedback and information from customers and from the field, that’s why they are the best sources of possible observatory research. Workers on frontline are influencing a lot to success of the organization, even though they do not get so much attention and are hard to reach. Sometimes reason for this kind of situation is that they are geographically spread around, operating by their own ways, and having their own cultures. Because of this, corporate communication has hard to be forwarded through management and communication processes (Raywood 2015.). Building frontline workers, who can contribute to servicing customer, branding and productivity, requires careful planning and communication efforts.

Edelman’s employee engagement report, presented by Raywood, lists six phases for connecting with frontline workers. First one is to know the frontline

workers, understand their needs and environment where they work. Second stage is to plan communication channels, which suites for their needs and routines. Third step is to limit the information for distributing more focused and relevant messages. Fourth is to taking care of the dialog by new technologies, collecting feedback, improving engagement, and building a community. On the fifth step, frontline managers should be involved by providing communication training, And equipping them with messages and toolkits. Sixth, and the last phase, is just to have patience and use time and effort for making frontline workers life easier, they want to be committed to organization strategy and activities (Raywood 2015.).

### **2.7.2 Frontline managers**

Line managers' position is in the middle of the organizational hierarchy, they are valuable channel for delivering information to employees. Line managers are information supplier towards top management, and they can be most trusted and reliable information source for employees. Excellent communication skills are essential for line managers, they need listen and interpret messages from their subordinates, make corporate messages understandable to employees, and deliver feedback from frontline workers to be used in corporate strategic decision making (Men & Bowen 2016, 22-23.).

According to Men & Bowen (2016, 22), Burton (2016) mentioned a phenomenon called Concrete-middle, which means that at certain point in the management chain, information is not delivered down or above. This phenomenon occurs, because managers are threatened by change, want to hide information for power, are afraid of shared control, or have no idea how to communicate for common benefit. Employees experience that line managers personify and represent the organization. Line managers supervisory communication is necessary part of internal communication of the organization.

Juholin (2019) wrote that managers should have readiness to discuss with own personnel and customers, inform other stakeholders and media if needed, and follow the discussions, what is talked about (Juholin 2017, 270). Managers should

listen more than talk, according to Macnamara (2019), on average 80% of the organizational communication is one-way communication, for example speak, and in some cases even 95% (Macnamara 2019, 13).

### **2.7.3 Middle-level managers**

Middle-level managers function is more to work with peer relationships, horizontally communicate with other department's middle-level managers. They are connection between internal teams and members, they have access to top management and understanding of the operation, which makes their place unique in organization (Beringer, Jonas & Gemünden 2012, 19.). Middle-level managers play important role as a driving force of the organization's strategic goals, they gather information from the top management to frontline managers, explain the rules and policies as well as present those so specific that employees may digest and understand what is going on. Middle-level manager's job is also to be mediator between strategy and daily operations. They should have the overall view of the organization, but not use much time protecting their reputation, and achieve a supportive working environment by visualizing the big picture using similar vision and direction (Men & Bowen 2016, 23-24.).

### **2.7.4 Top management and board of directors**

Top management consists executives and board of directors, their tasks are determining direction and strategies of the organization, influencing to organizational relations, and express the image of an organization to internal and external publics (Men 2015, 462.). Top managers are expected to motivate employees forward to same direction and to be role models inside the organization. According to Pincus, Rayfield, and Cozzens (2014), open and closer relationship is wanted by the employees. Employees impression about top managers is "closely linked to their overall perceptions of the organization as a place to work and the general state of the morale" (Pincus, Rayfield & Cozzens 2014).

On external point of view, especially CEO from the top management is seen as the spokesperson for the company. Trust of the public in the organization is

affected by top managements character, like credibility and reputation. Internal communications atmosphere is on top managements responsibility, like communication philosophy and resource allocating together with supporting the communication function. Internal communication managers should support the top management by helping them to act on their roles, providing strategic communication mindsets, tools, and strategies.

### **2.7.5 Stakeholder segmentation**

Stakeholder segmentation is a key element in identifying working and communication flow of the company. Key element is also understanding the importance of certain information to certain public, so the information may be tailored to meet certain stakeholder's communication need.

Stakeholders and publics may be segmented by many different factors, like attitudes, behaviors, age, gender, etc. Messages may be tailored for targeted groups based on these different kinds of segmentations. Target group message tailoring is based on research, which segments the different stakeholders. Research should be done, so the external and internal public as well as stakeholders could be truly understood and segmented. Specialized companies are often used conducting research, which helps understanding different stakeholders, how to reach them and what information they need (Men & Bowen 2016, 25-26.).

## **2.8 Synthesis of theories**

Different communication models are taking account that original message is changing in the process when leaving from the sender on the way to receiver from various reasons. In Shannon-Weavers model of communication, information faces different kind of interferences, which is called noise. Laswell's 5D model concentrates more on content of information and the impact of communication. In Scramm's second model, he suggests that communicators should have shared experience, for example common work experience concerning topic of communication, for better understanding of each other's communication (Ma 2015, 23-26.).

Variance in information is caused by different factors. Information distortion may be caused for example information delivered through too many persons, social factors like restricting information and natural factors. Additional information may occur due to natural factors, like communicator dialect, technological factors like printed paper quality and social factors, for example legislation concerning communication. Information disorder is one factor causing problems in communication. Misinformation, false information delivered without intention to harm, is one type of information disorder (Ma 2015, 47-49.).

Two approaches for securing accurate communication are increasing the information fidelity and increasing of information redundancy. Fidelity may be improved by choosing proper information channels and setting fidelity goals for reducing information distortions and additions. Redundancy can be increased by repeating same information on different channels (Ma 2015, 51.).

Effective internal communication is seen important and effecting positive to organizational culture. Well-functioning internal communication is essential to organization, it helps building the trust, common identity, and loyalty, which increases employee engagement (Men & Jiang 2017, 238-240.).

Different kind of views on structures of internal communication are proposed, for example by different groups of internal stakeholders (Welch & Jackson 2007, 185), and formal and informal networks inside the organization (Berger 2008).

Historically, internal communication has been part in different management theories. In scientific management perspective, communication is clear top-down with clear instructions and task orientation.” (Men & Bowen 2016, 6-7). From human relations perspective, increasing employee satisfaction and building relationships are emphasized. Manager’s role is more communicating upwards and listening the employees (Men & Bowen 2016, 7.). In HR management perspective, employee growth and people development are important areas, employee participation is improved by open two-way communication. Communication is multidimensional across different levels of the organization. From system’s theory

perspective, joint efforts from HR, PR and managers are required for internal communication and for building system of cross-enterprise communication (Men & Stacks 2014, 319.). Transparent, open, and employee-centered communication approach is supported (Men & Bowen 2016, 9-10). Organizational culture perspective emphasizes building strong organizational culture by effective communication (Kennedy 1983, 26). Shaping of the organizational culture is helped by the values and company founders' leadership communication. Communication characteristics are influenced by culture because of assumptions, rules, and values, which are determining organization's atmosphere for communication (Berger 2008.).

One current communication trend is people engagement, by open, transparent, and participative communication atmosphere (Bowen, Hung-Baesecke & Chen 2013, 8.). Another trend is technology, which helps building new communication strategies by fast growing digitalization and large amount of data (Men 2015, 468-469.). Corporate responsibility is increasing trend, corporate transparency is expected by stakeholders and boosted by new technological tools like social media (Rawlins 2008, 75). In leadership communication leaders are experience to be most important source of information towards employees. Communication from Management towards employees can be friendly, authentic and informal through social media channels (Men & Bowen 2016, 16-17). Measurement and evaluation is one of the trends, communication projects as well as employee satisfaction and engagement are emphasized to measure for making improvements (Men & Bowen 2016, 17-18).

Building good internal stakeholder and public relationships is an important part of organizational strategy. Employees on various levels of the organization have different information and communication needs. Internal publics consist of different stakeholders. Frontline workers are important, since they are facing customers and they have possibility to effect to company's customer relationships and reputation. Workers on frontline are influencing a lot to success of the organization, even though they do not get so much attention and are hard to reach (Raywood 2015.).

Line managers' position is in the middle of the organizational hierarchy, they are valuable channel for delivering information to employees. Line managers are information supplier towards top management, and they can be most trusted and reliable information source for employees (Men & Bowen 2016, 22-23.).

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Top management consists executives and board of directors, their tasks are determining direction and strategies of the organization, influencing to organizational relations, and express the image of an organization to internal and external publics (Men 2015, 462).

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Methodological approach**

##### **3.1.1 Background**

Because the research was planned to be done on the Nordic level, situation in different countries and product lines needed to be estimated. Current situation and opinions concerning communication was possible to be investigated by survey including possibility to comment and to give ideas for possible improvement. Preferred way of communication was asked, and importance of different areas of communication wanted to be recognized as well. For example, pricing, changes in products, pre order campaigns and common issues feels to be communicated different ways every time and depending on the person who sends the information.

Communication happens from the office towards field sales and from the field sales towards the office. Both of these include different product lines and different departments. Information needs among the office workers differ from the needs of field employees, so two different surveys, with so much similar questions as possible, are needed for understanding importance of the information for different places to work. Most of the everyday communication from the office comes from two departments, marketing, and training. One survey was sent to office, to marketing and sales employees, and another survey to field employees, including customer service. Answers from customers service is not handled in this Thesis.

#### **3.2 Methods of data acquisition**

##### **3.2.1 Written objectives of the survey**

At first, objectives what is wanted to find out by the survey were written down (Patten 2017, 4). Objective is to examine how communication between marketing and field sales is experienced in different Nordic countries and product lines. Different person prefers different communication channels, so most liked

communication channel needs to be investigated. Communication is usually more information sharing, than direct communication. During the survey, also customer services, which is based in United Kingdom, satisfaction needs to be examined.

Objective: To determine field sales satisfaction on communication and preferred channels in terms of:

- A How satisfied field salespersons are to communication from 1 to 5
- B How understandable the communication is experienced
- C Importance of matters communicated
- D How satisfied they are to used communication channel
- E Preferred communication channel
- F How satisfied they are to used information sharing channel
- G Preferred information sharing channel

Different subjects communicated usually by different person at the marketing are for example: Launches of new products, Sales terms, campaigns, competitions.

### **3.2.2 Reviewing earlier research**

Some research and thesis were reviewed, idea was to learn from the work of others (Patten 2017, 6). Anniina Talja´s Bachelor´s Thesis "Improving Internal Communication between Marketing and Buying Departments: Case Company" from year 2014 was reviewed (Talja 2014).

### **3.2.3 Items reviewed by others**

Think-aloud with some colleagues complaining on challenges with communication was done. Survey was sent to couple of colleagues just get feedback on the structure. Thesis instructor from Michelin Nordic is communication manager, so she naturally checked the survey and suggested some adjustments.

### 3.2.4 Method of data collection

Survey was possible to send to entire population, so sampling method was not needed to be considered. But since population differs based on the place of work, survey was stratified to two subgroups (Trochim 2006). Because of different information needs, surveys differ slightly on each other. Survey method was a quantitative internet-based questionnaire, including possibility to give open qualitative answers after the questions. So, survey was more quantitative oriented than qualitative, open answers were not stated to be mandatory. Research material was imported to excel and analysed there.

Questionnaire was internet based and made by using MS Forms. Survey was previewed and tested several times, to make sure that layout would not affect on the answers as mentioned by Groves, Fowler, Couper, Lepkowski, Singer & Tourangeau (2009). Principles of visual design and visual communication are relevant to reduce errors in answers (Groves et al. 2009, 157). Aim was to make it relatively short, but still containing the most relevant information. Intention was to keep the survey relatively short for securing good response rate (Deutskens, de Ruyter, Wetzels & Oosterveld 2004, 33).

Employee's country and product line needed to be defined, since different product lines have different set ups in marketing department and countries have different set ups in field sales. Some countries are managed by one person, and in some countries different persons are managing different product lines.

Since information can be determined sensitive by some respondents, questionnaire was administrated anonymously. Aim was to get truthful and minimize socially desirable answers, as presented by Patten (Patten 2017, 2-3.).

Survey method was quantitative, but some qualitative open and closed questions are mixed in the questionnaire. If questions are open-ended, there can be several advantages. Issues, which were not been considered when executing the research could have been raised up by respondents and respondents may provide more accurate answers. (Andres 2012, 3.).

### 3.2.5 Structure of the questionnaire

Surveys sent to field personnel and to office personnel, were divided to four different sections. Each section had own headline and fourth section had a small introduction, as presented by Anders (Andres 2012, 2). First section covers background information needed; working country, product line and the department. Demographic factors were also added, on the request of the employer, just to get better vision if age and long work history would make some differences. So, age and years worked at Michelin were asked (Appendix 1,2).

Second section is for rating the importance of different information shared from the office to the field, or from the field to the office, depending on the survey. Information varies by survey because information needs differ by the location of the employee.

Third section handles different information channels. At first preferred ways to receive the information was asked, and after the question possibility to suggest other ways to deliver information was given. After this a simple question concerning importance of finding information from the same agreed place was asked. Third question was about different spaces where to store the information, and after the question a possibility for respondent to suggest other ways for information storage. Finally, an open possibility to give comments and development ideas to marketing was given.

Fourth section had more detailed questions concerning MS Teams, which has been used as a main communication tool during pandemic in 2020 and 2021. This was suggested by supervisor, to get more feedback on it. It suited well to the survey, even though it is not so important for this Thesis. After both questions was given possibility to comment the rating respondent gave.

### **3.2.6 Guidelines used in the survey**

Some guidelines, which were given in the reference book written by Patten in 2017 and which were valid in the survey, were used. It is favourable to ask on behaviour over a limited period of time. When asking star ratings, time was limited to one year. Negative questions were advised not to be used, and those were not used at all in the survey (Patten 2017, 8-11.).

When asked about different ways and different places to store information, an option named "I do not know / use it", was decided to use among usual choices. Since there may be some new channels, which are presumably not known by everybody. Some voluntary open questions were added to get more background information about star ratings.

Ranking was avoided when asking about preferred communication channel and information storage. It was considered, but because there may be some channels which are not known or used at all, ranking could have caused misunderstandings. Another point is that if there would have been some other not known channels or spaces to store data, ranking would have indicated only importance of choices related to other choices given in the survey.

### **3.3 Title for questionnaire**

Title needs to be short and include both areas, geographical and area of interest, and it may be used for drawing attention and improving response rate (Patten 2017, 8-11.). Survey was named: Sharing of information between the office and field-based colleagues. Nordic scope was communicated on the subject of e-mail and on the questions.

### **3.4 Introduction for the survey**

Introduction of the survey was presented on the survey e-mail, which was sent to respondents (Appendix 3). Some more details on the survey were presented on the first page of the survey as well (Appendix 1,2).

### **3.5 Population**

Two different survey questionnaires were delivered by e-mail. One survey to employees working on the field and another to employees working at the office. Altogether 98 persons received the questionnaire, out of them 69 are based on the field in the Nordics, 12 in the office in Stockholm and 17 in the UK office working in customer service.

Original survey participants were meant to be working on the field sales and in the Nordic office, on the marketing and training departments. Persons working in customer service were added to the survey on request of the employer, since they had experienced same challenges on information sharing as persons working on the field. Customer service at the UK office received same questionnaire as field salespersons, since both groups face same issues at their daily work interacting directly with customers. Answers from customer service were handled separately, but their wishes will be analysed and taken into account inside the company.

### **3.6 Response rate**

Altogether 41 answers from the field sales and customer service, and 9 answers from the office, marketing, and training departments, were received before sending the reminder. Reminder increased number of answers to 59 from the field sales and customer service, it didn't have effect to responses from the office. Only two answers from Norway were received (out of 10 sent), so together with reminder e-mail Norwegian managers were directly requested to remind their employees to answer the questionnaire.

At the end, altogether 68 answers were received, 46 answers from the people working with sales on the field, 9 from the marketing and 13 from the customer service. If all answers are calculated, response rate is 69,4%. Response rate without customer service, is 67.9% which is above average, when talking about web-based data collection surveys. Just to get the point, average response rate on paper surveys, has been earlier stated to be 55.6% (Baruch 1999, 429).

Depending on the source, on electronic surveys average response rate is 49.5% before sending the reminder and 65.6% after the reminder (Göritz & Crutzen 2012, 245). In this case reminder improved the response rate of the total survey from 51.0% to 69.4%.

46 answers from the field workers were examined on this study. From Sweden were 14 responses received, from Finland 12, from Denmark 11 and from Norway 9 responses. If responses are divided by different product lines, most of the answers, 22 answers came from the persons working with passenger car tyres. Truck tyre product line employees gave 11 answers, Michelin solutions and services 4, Agricultural tyres and Earthmover tyres both 3, and one and only employee from Motorcycle tyre product line in the Nordics answered to the questionnaire.

### **3.7 Timing**

Survey was open two weeks, and one reminder was sent. Timing was agreed with top managers, workload for salespersons was on relatively calm level since summer pre orders were made and winter pre orders were still to come. Only two answers from Norway were received (out of 10 sent), so managers responsible on Norway were requested to remind their employees to answer the questionnaire.

## 4 RESEARCH RESULTS

### 4.1 Section 1 Demographic questions, survey for the field

#### 4.1.1 Country

Number of respondents were divided evenly by the country. Amount of field employees is biggest in Sweden, response rate by country is lowest in Sweden.

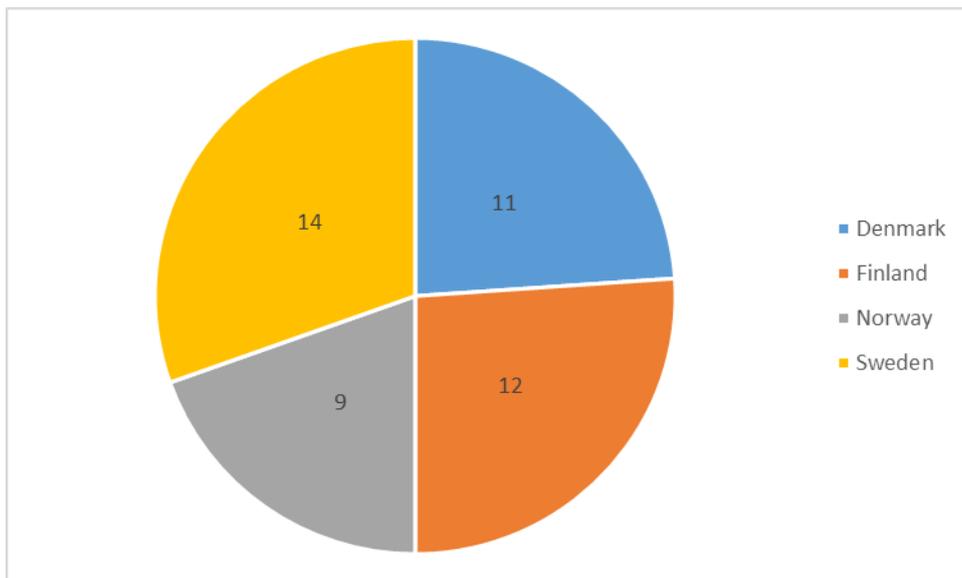


FIGURE 1. Field survey responses by the country, n=46

#### 4.1.2 Age

Most of the respondents are between 45 and 54 years of age, 10 respondents between 45 and 49 and 10 respondents between 50 and 54. This represents quite well age distribution between persons working on the field.

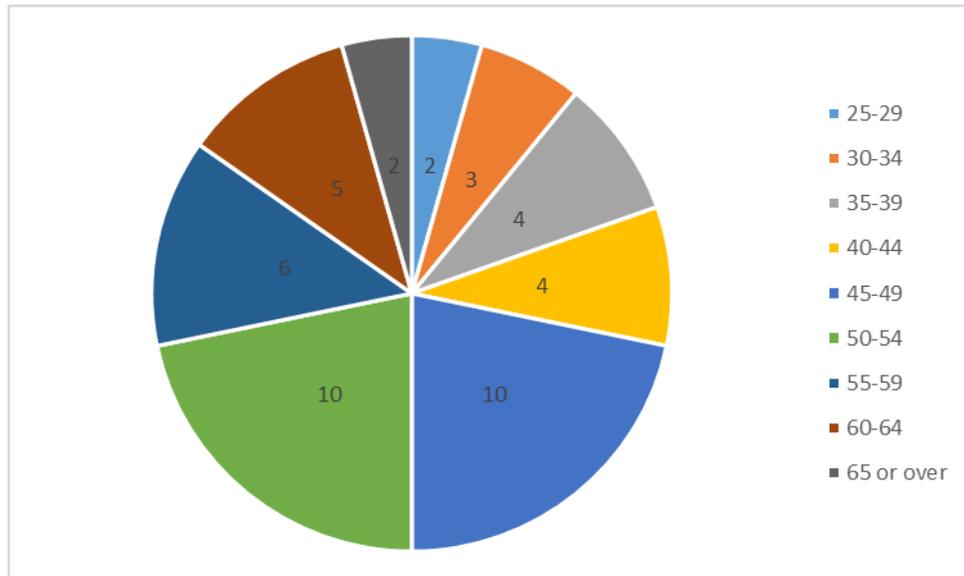


FIGURE 2. Distribution of Age by the respondents, n=46

#### 4.1.3 Work years at Michelin

The biggest work year groups of respondents were 5-9 years (11 respondents) and 0-4 years (9).

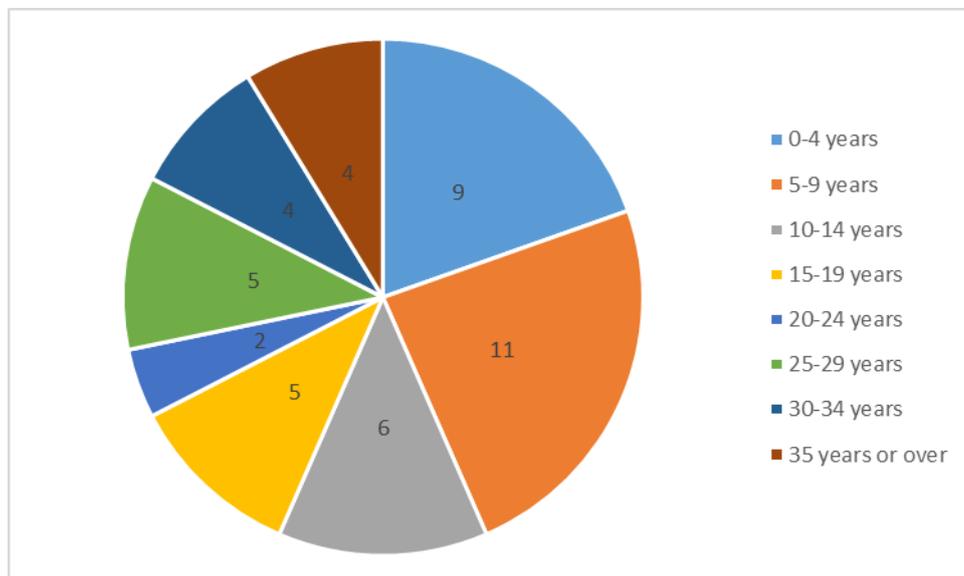


FIGURE 3. Distribution of work years by the respondents, field, n=46

#### 4.1.4 Product line

Most of the respondents, 22 persons, work at the passenger car tyre product line (TC), and second most (13) at the truck & bus (PL) tyre product line. Agro

represents agricultural tyre product line, Beyond road earth mover tyres, 2w two wheels motorcycle product line, and Ses means services and solutions, which is concentrated on kilometre-based contracts and other tyre related services offered to end users. At Michelin, passenger car has the biggest number of employees and second one is truck tyre product line.

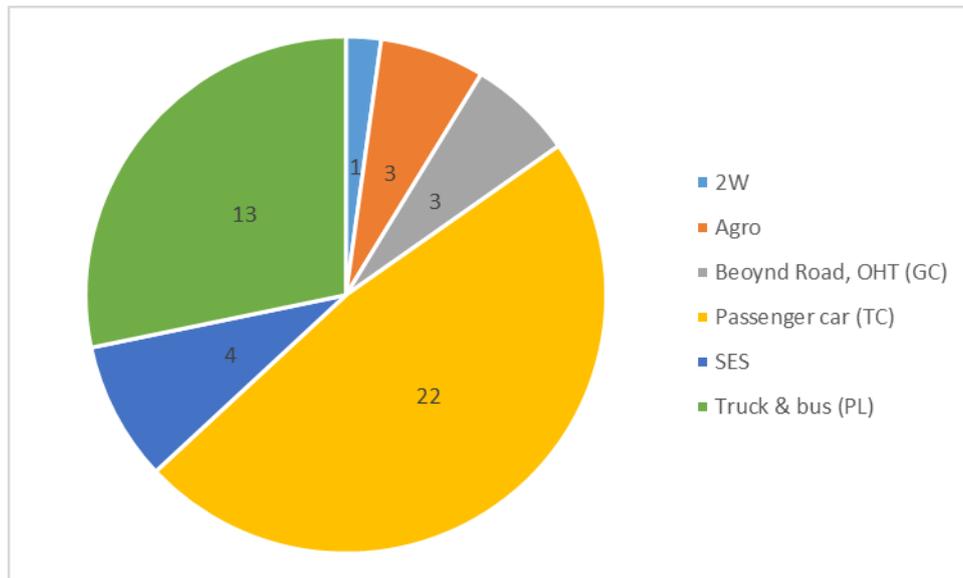


FIGURE 4, Responses by Product lines, field, n=46

#### 4.1.5 Work department

Since customer service attended to this survey too, were respondents asked to choose their department, so customer service was possible to sort out of the survey results. All the respondents work at the sales, most of them, 33 persons are working on the field daily. Eight respondents are key account managers, and five persons are sales managers, or their managers.

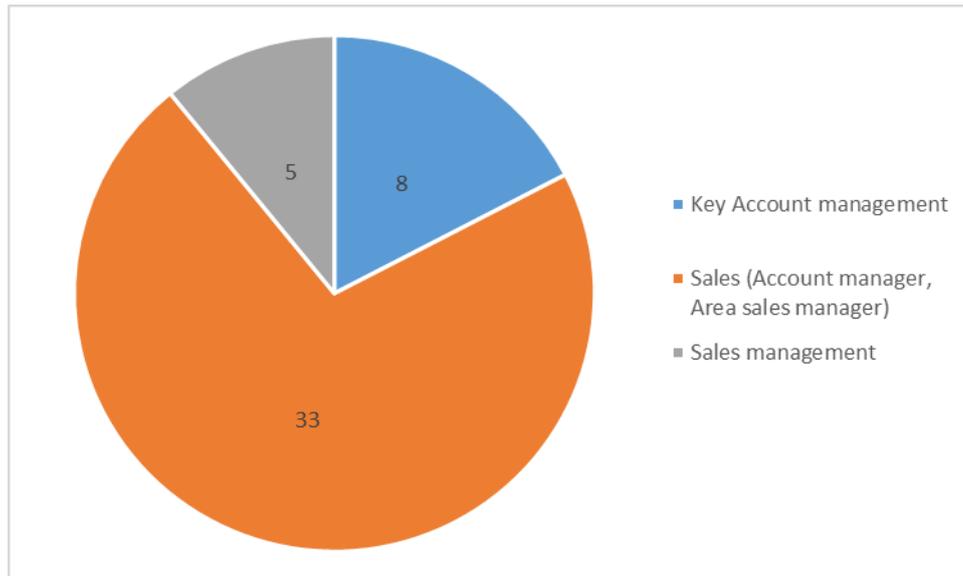


FIGURE 5, Responses by department, field, n=46

## 4.2 Section 2 rating of information / material shared, Survey for the field

### 4.2.1 Rating of communication

Question was: "How would you rate the quality of communication / information received from marketing in the Nordics during the last year?" Rating was decided to have six-star scale, one is the worst, and six stars is the best, so answers on the middle was not possible to give. Middle point was decided not to be possible to choose, as mentioned by Andres. Mention was to get clear vision, if communication quality was seen negative or positive side (Andres 2012, 14).

Average rating for the communication quality question was 4.02, when 6 is the best possible answer. Variation of answers is between 1 to 6 stars. However, there are some minor differences between countries and product lines. When looking answers by country and product line, there are only some single answers by product line in some countries, so it is not reasonable to look results by product line in different countries. Because of this, results will be looked by product line on the Nordic level and by country including all product lines, this guideline will be followed through the survey.

When looking ratings by country, Swedish gave the best ratings, which were 4.36 on average. Difference to the worst rating, 3.45 on average from Denmark, is not

so considerable. Rating from Finland was 4.00 and from Norway was 4.22 on average. In general, communication was considered to be on the positive side on most of the countries, about four stars out of six stars maximum (Appendix 4).

When thinking about possible reasons for these small differences between countries, could one reason for the best answers from Sweden be that it is easier to contact office where mother language is spoken, and which is based in Home country. Norway is managed by Swedish persons living in Sweden, so same analogy with communication could be used.

When looking ratings by product line, Services and solutions gave the best ratings 4.75 stars on average, together with one answer from 2 wheel, 5 stars. Truck tyres gave the worst 3.62 stars, which was decreased by 1.5 stars from Denmark. Product lines with most remarkable number of answers, were truck tyres with 13 answers and passenger car tyres with 22 answers. Average rating received from passenger car tyres was 4.09 stars.

In the Nordic marketing team, one person is responsible on passenger car tyres, one on truck & bus tyres and one on agro and beyond road (earthmover) tyres. Solutions and services have their own responsible outside the Nordics too, even though communications from the Nordics is asked, this could have affected to the results (Appendix 5).

#### **4.2.2 Open comments for rating of communication**

Altogether 36 persons out of 46 used the possibility to give open comments. Open comments were requested by a sentence: "Please, explain reasons for your answer to previous question (Nr 6)." Open comments are not marked mandatory. Based on the answers, may be presumed, that some respondents were not sure if they would get more possibilities for open comments. Some of the answers are more related to questions later on the survey. So, there is something to improve in the survey planning.

Both, positive and negative comments, as well as some development ideas were given. Already on this phase of the survey, it can be noticed that some persons know where to find the information and some not. Comments on slow reaction and communication were received, and some comments on bad translations. Smaller product lines and some other countries than Sweden, outside the head office had the feeling that they are sometimes forgotten. Couple of mentions on direct customer actions without informing the field persons were given. Positive comments came about improved cooperation and marketing personnel attending to field teams meeting. Lack of resources, like simply number of employees at the marketing, are also recognized, this helps respondents to understand slow managing of the tasks. Different languages are also understood to slow the process of communication, especially when talking about issues, which needs to be translated.

#### **4.2.3 Rating of storing earlier shared information**

Second question in the section one, number 3 in the form, was a six-star rating too. The question was “How would you rate the easiness of finding the received information afterwards?” and it was clarified inside the brackets; “(If you need to look after wanted info later, is it easy to reach?)”

Average rating for the easiness of finding stored information was 3.74 stars, slightly lower than rating of previous question. Again, the best rating came from Sweden, 4.07stars. Norwegians gave 4.00 stars on average, Finnish 3.33 and Danish 3.55 stars. Differences between countries are again relatively small. Practises of saving information may vary between countries and country managers.

When looking rating per product line, persons working at truck & bus tyre product line are most dissatisfied, rating was 3.23 on truck tyres. All other product lines, except Agricultural product lines 3.67stars, gave 4 stars on average or very near it. Different product lines have also different practises, when talking about saving the information. Most used information storage is MS Teams, but structure of different channels inside it varies a lot between product lines. Certain information is available on intranet or Salesforce. For some persons, it may be hard to

remember what kind of data belongs to teams inside MS Teams. It naturally depends on responsible person, how files are stored inside different teams and how changes are communicated.

#### **4.2.4 Open comments for rating of storing earlier shared information**

Altogether 32 open comments were given to information storing question. Several comments about challenges to find the information from different types of channels were given. Couple of comments about Bibprint, Internet portal for ordering and downloading printed material on products, were given as well, some negative and some positive. Most of the people like using Teams, even though the structure is not always experienced intuitive.

One comment regarding poor internet connections when using cloud services was given, this is something which touches most of the persons. One good point, not necessarily most advanced though, was just to store all necessary information to your own files by your own manner.

### **4.3 Section 3 Importance of information, survey for the field**

#### **4.3.1 Rating of information / material needed in daily work**

Third section was handling about importance of information, which is received from the office and needed to get daily work done on the field-based jobs. Question was: "Please rate importance of the information/material needed to get your daily work well done?" and instruction about options was given in brackets: "(choose one option for each line)" Altogether eleven different information titles were chosen, and five different response options were given. Options were: not important at all, somehow important, neutral, important and very important.

Different types of material or information can be examined on the figure nr. 8. Dated pricelists were considered clearly most important information, which is needed for daily work, 41 persons out of 46 rated it very important. Campaign and information on new products were experienced to be very important by most

of the respondents, product information had more answers on the important side (11 important + 33 very important). Product performance got very important information ratings fourth most. Information on other product lines got neutral ratings clearly most. Attitude towards printed materials varies quite a lot, some persons see those important and some not at all. Product leaflets are considered less important than product catalogues and technical data books.

Interest to printed materials depend on how people are used to work. All printed material is usually available in data forms like Excel or Pdfs. So same information can be used on different ways. When examining answer on more detailed level, for example respondents age does not affect to the answers.

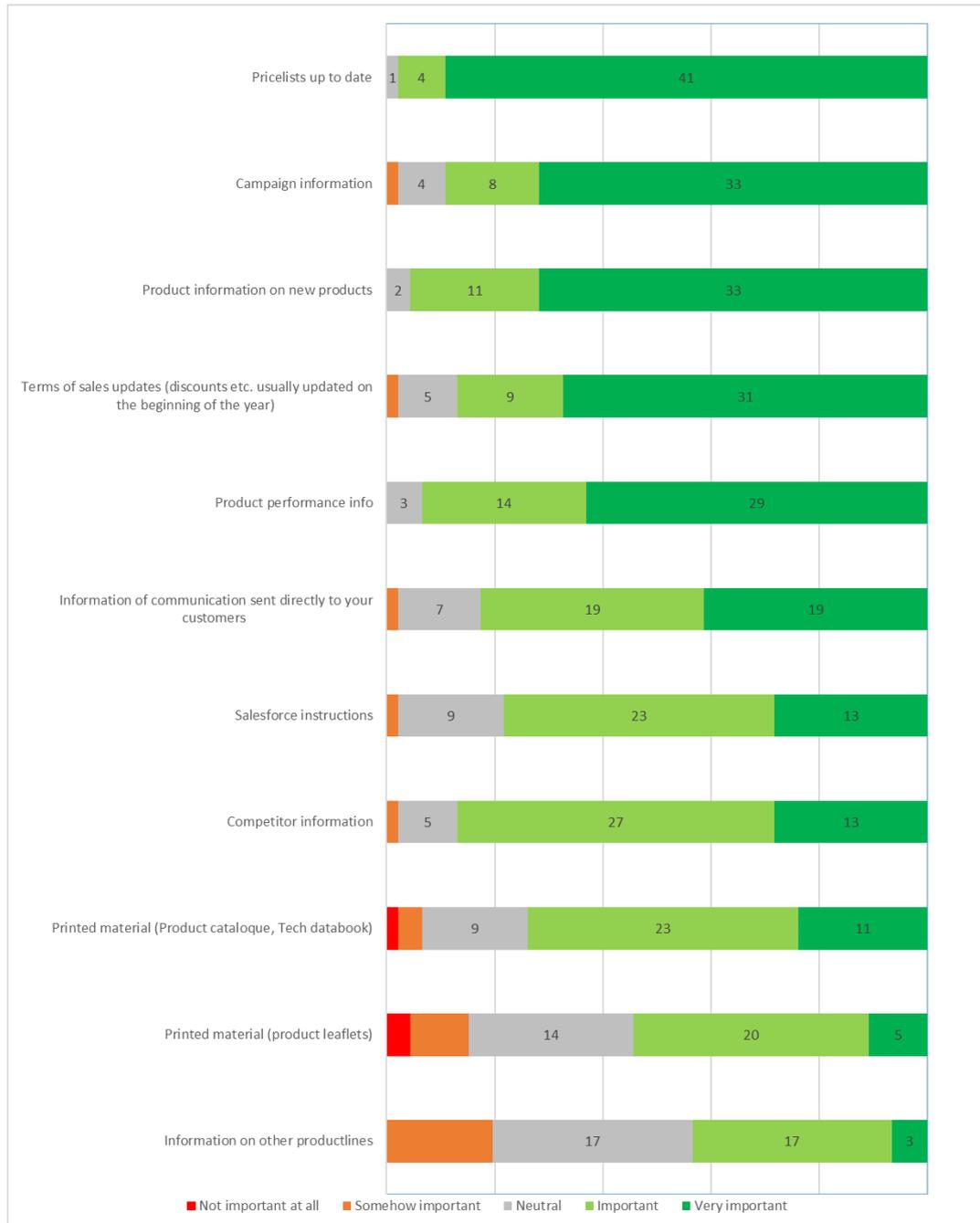


FIGURE 6. Rating importance of information, field, n=46

#### 4.3.2 Open comments for rating of information/material needed for daily work

In the open answer field was asked comments about other important information by question: "Please write a comment, if there is some other information, which you find important in your daily work?" Altogether 22 non mandatory suggestions were written. Some comments on direct marketing campaigns to customers were received, information about timing of these campaigns were requested. Sharing

of product performance, competitor information and technical information, even between different countries, are requested.

#### **4.4 Section 4, Information channels, field**

##### **4.4.1 Rating of information channels**

Altogether 14 different channels and ways to share information were listed. Channels included different digital platforms, but also different types of real-life meetings and webcasts. Rating options were very poor, poor, neutral, good, very good and I do not know/use it. Possibility to choose "I do not know/use it" was decided to be provided as an option, since there could be some channels, which are not known by some persons (Patten 2017, 49).

Biggest amount of very good answers got an e-mail option and the second biggest amount of received positive answers got Nordic townhall meeting. Nordic town hall meeting is executed by MS teams and outside pandemic people at the office are attending to it at the office together, field persons attend always by Teams. Country meetings got 27 very good answers and MS Teams 26 very good answers. If examined answers so that very good and good rating are calculated together, e-mails are seen the best with 44 answer on the positive side, but then MS Teams and Nordic Townhall meeting are both on the second position with 43 answers on the positive side. Physical Nordic and country meeting are seen positive ways on information sharing channels, with 41 and 40 answers on the positive side.

Biggest amount of answer on negative side, 16 answers, got Yammer. Yammer is used as a company messaging platform for all employees, consisting different groups like all company, EUN and the Nordics. Company's results are presented quarterly in CEG Webcasts, it seems most of the employees do not even know it, or use it, since 18 answers indicated so.

When looking after effective solution for everyday communication, only e-mail and Teams from the top 5 could be considered, since different meetings could not naturally be arranged more often.

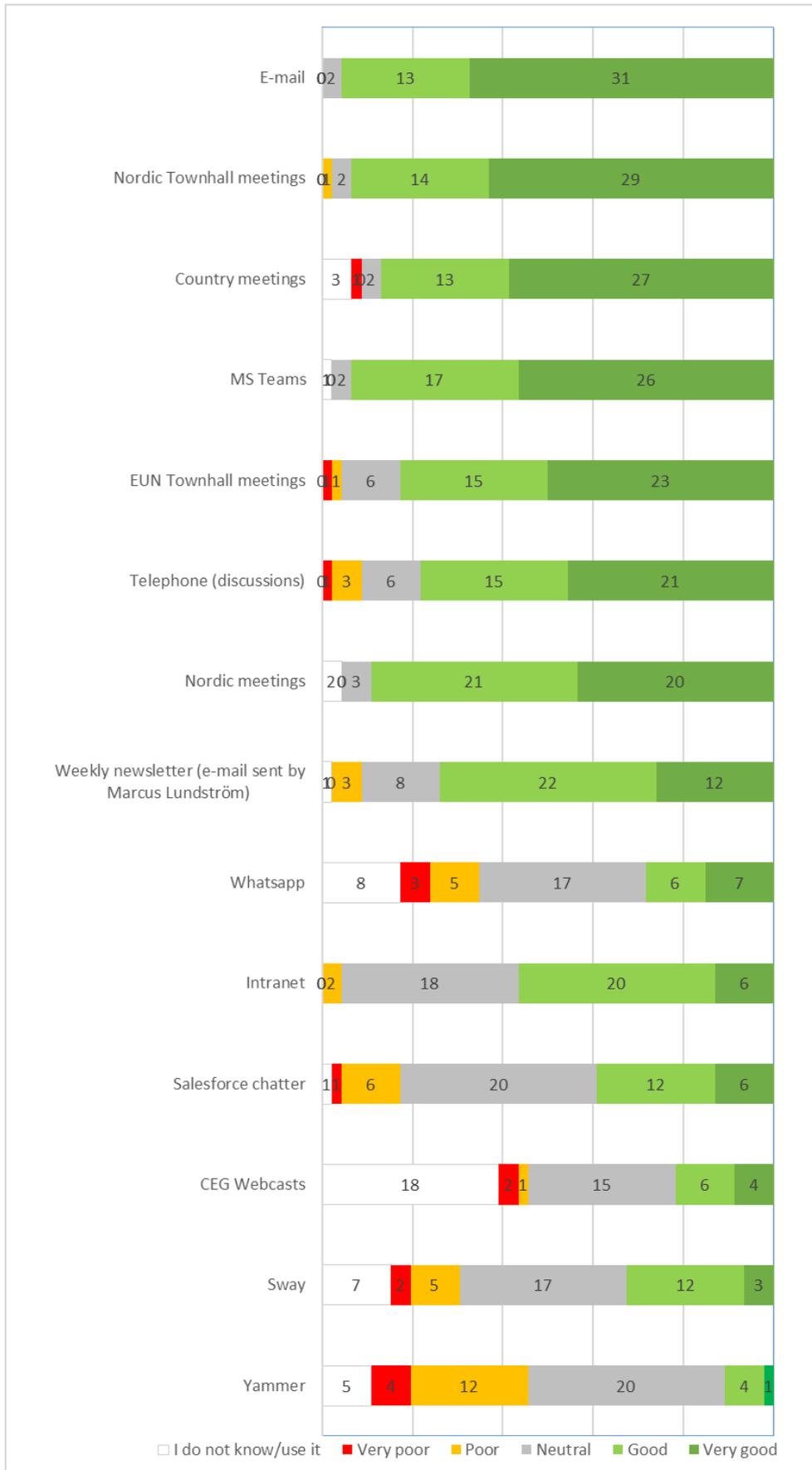


FIGURE 7. Rating of information channels, field, n=46

#### **4.4.2 Rating of information channels, open comments**

Open comment was requested, if respondents had some other channels, which they preferred. Altogether 13 open comments received from 46 respondents. Several respondents' comments included points on several different channels and challenges to find needed information from those. One point was that used channel depends on the person, who is sharing the information. Information flow from several different channels is also commented to be hard to follow.

#### **4.4.3 Availability on the same channel**

The question nr. 14 was "Is it important to you, that all information is always available on the same place/channel?" Options for answers were simply: yes, no and does not matter. Interpreting difference between "no" and "does not matter" can be challenging. These can be easily mixed. The meaning was just to get straight answer if information availability is simply not important, or the issue is not so serious. Anyways, most of the respondents experienced that availability on the same place is important. Altogether 38 answered "Yes" (Appendix 6.).

#### **4.4.4 Opinion on different channels to store information**

Question nr.14 was "What is your opinion on different places / channels to where information (for example files) could be available for sharing and later use?". Rating options were same as earlier: very poor, poor, neutral, good, very good and I do not know/use it.

Clearly the most appreciated channel for storing information is Teams, with 40 ratings on the positive side. Second one is Salesforce (31) and the third one Bib-print (27). Most depreciated channel is Yammer with 19 answers on the negative side and 7 respondents who stated they do not use it or know it. Yammer received 16 neutral answers, which is clearly most of all channels. Only Sway got more I don't use it/know it -answers (8) than Yammer.

Salesforce is, or at least should be, on everyday use with most of the respondents. Most of the respondents have received detailed training on the Salesforce and are emphasized to use it as a data storage too. Teams is used almost daily as a meeting platform and, in most cases, as a data storage too. However, training for using Teams is not yet arranged.

Explanations for negative point of view concerning Yammer could be that it is not familiar to most of the persons. Altogether 7 respondents said that they do not use it or know it. Yammer is surely not meant to be a data storage. But published data can be found there by a search function. Conclusion is be that most of the employees need training for different platforms. Different departments have different ways to store the data, but most of the information, or links to existing information is available on the company intranet.

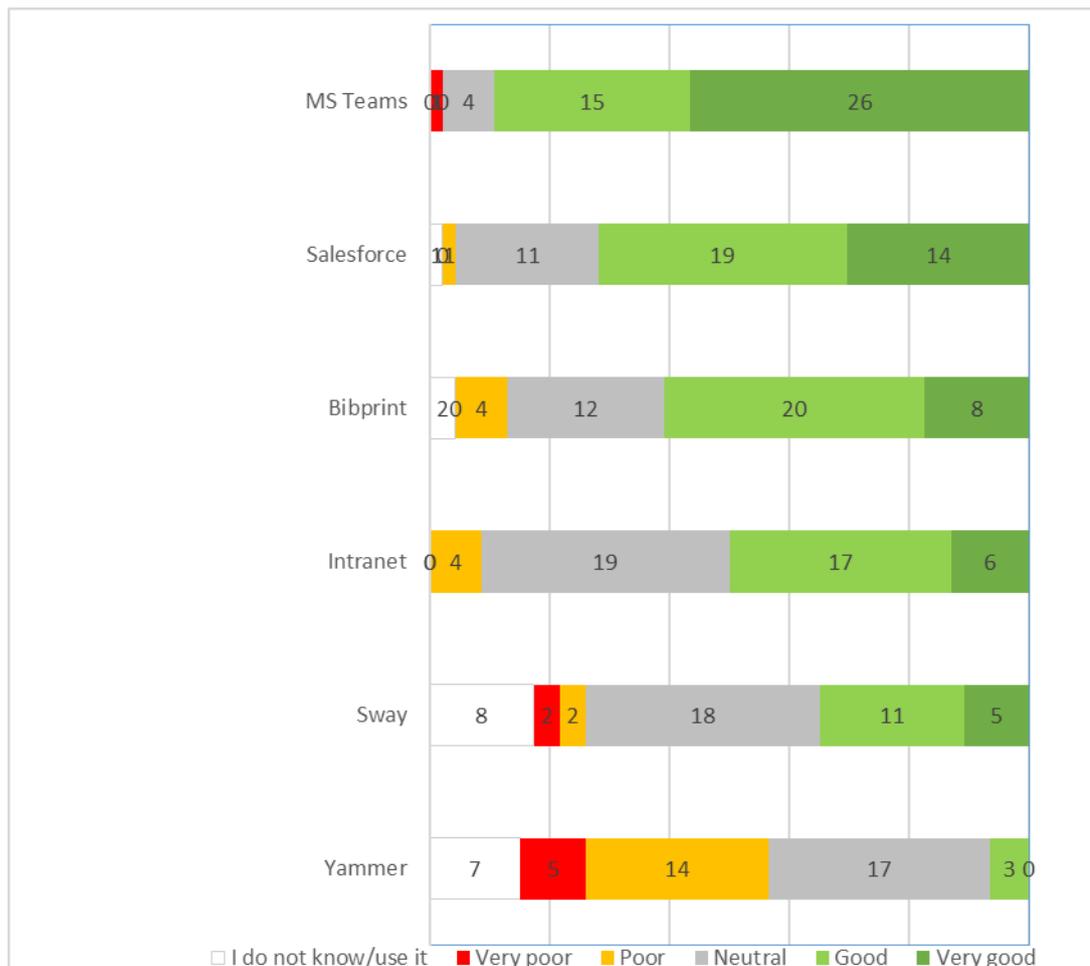


FIGURE 8. Different channels to store information, field, n=46

#### **4.4.5 Different channels to store information, open comments**

Amount of the open comments decreases towards end of the survey, only seven open comments were given. Some comments on storing information were already given at earlier phases of the study.

According to open comments, easiness of finding information is appreciated. Structure of the information stored was also pointed out. Difficultness to find the latest update of certain files was mentioned in comments. Since intranet was on the list of different options, some negative comments about finding certain information from there was given.

Based on the open comments, it would be great to have common structure in each channel to make finding information looked easier. Presentation of the information stored and how it is structured on the company Intranet would be great thing to have.

#### **4.5 Section 5, MS Teams as a tool on meetings and information sharing, field**

##### **4.5.1 Rating of personal skills of MS Teams usage**

This question was setup, because of surveys administrator asked for it. It has not necessarily so much to do with the thesis subject itself, but it will be examined here. Question was “How would you rate your skills as a Teams user”. Five options of proficiency levels were given, based on ACE proficiency scale: Fundamental awareness (basic knowledge), Novice (limited experience), Intermediate (practical application), Advanced (applied theory) and Expert (recognized authority) . Options were explained more detailed in brackets, which were left off at the tables attached.

Over half of the respondents (54,4%), 25 persons, rated themselves as an intermediate. Clearly more rated themselves above intermediate than below it, 14 respondents (30,4%) told that they are on advanced level. This is sort of surprising,

since company has not offered any training for Teams. But Teams has been used several times per week, in some cases daily, because of Covid-19 pandemic. So, most of the respondents have used it over a year before the survey.

When looking results by different demographic factors, there are not clear common factors for example by country or product line. Since assumption was that older persons could have more difficulties to adapt using teams, especially during pandemic when teaching is executed by Teams itself, answers were examined by age group too. When analysing responses by age group no one over 60 years of age (7 respondents) stated that they are advanced or experts. All in age group 24-29 years (4 persons) stated that they are on advanced level at Teams skills.

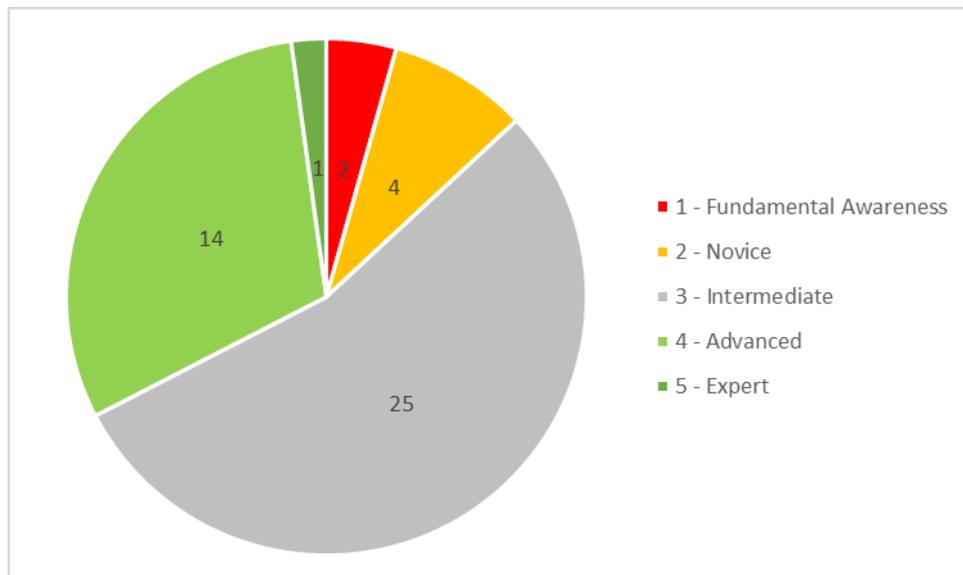


FIGURE 9. Personal skills as a Teams user, field, n=46

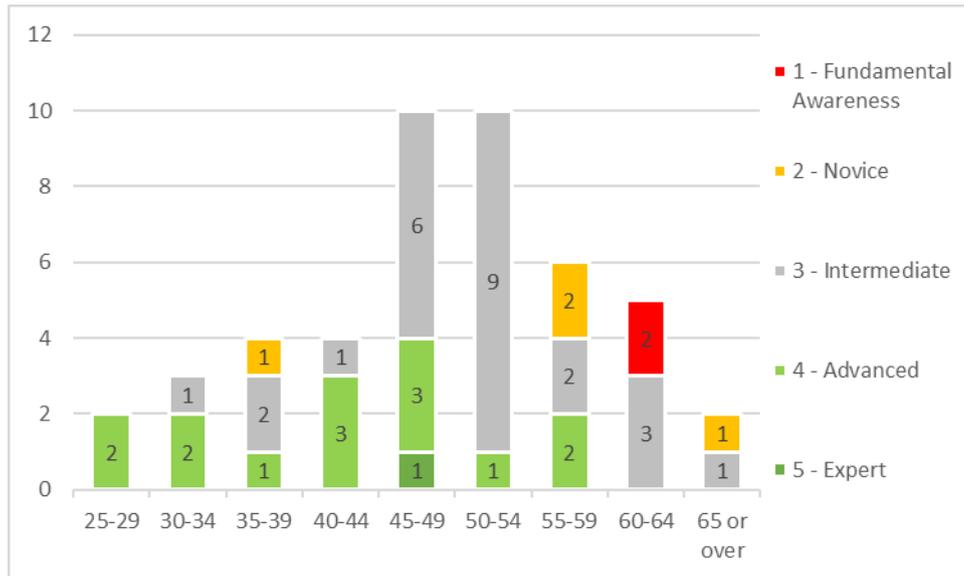


FIGURE 10. Split between age groups, field, n=46

#### 4.5.2 Rating of easiness of finding the information afterwards

Opinion about easiness of finding information from Teams by one to six-star rating was asked. Question was: “How would you rate easiness of finding information/material afterwards from Teams?” This differs from the earlier question so, that now the point was earlier was asked the opinion on different channels and now the experience of finding the information specially from MS Teams. This question was setup because it is supposed that several individuals have problems to find the information from MS Teams.

Average rating was 4.37 stars. When looked rating by country or by product line, there is not noticeable differences. Services and solutions is only product line, which respondents rated easiness lower than four stars. Big product lines, passenger car (4.54) and truck tyres product line (4.45) gave both nearly 4.5 stars on average. Variation between answers is surprisingly small, between six and three stars, no one gave under three stars. When looking answers by age groups, conclusion can be that persons over sixty years of age feel that finding information afterwards is harder, then their younger colleagues.

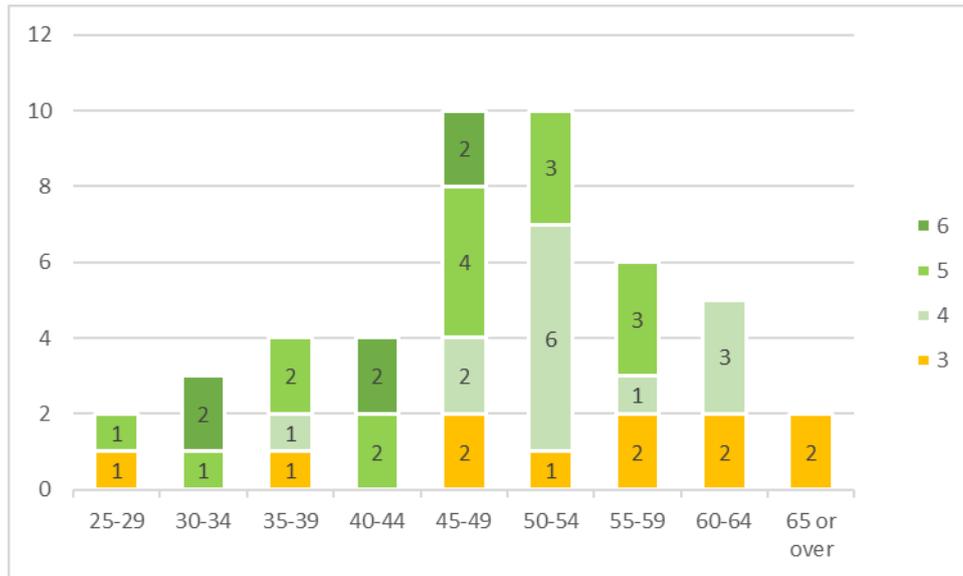


FIGURE 11. Finding information from Teams, split between age groups, field, n=46

#### 4.5.3 Open comments on Teams

Thirteen open comments about Microsoft Teams were given. Some comments about structure of folders inside teams and information's validity in terms of age were given. Also, some general points about Teams meeting with blurring picture or voice were commented. Couple of clearly positive and supportive opinions were written as well.

It seems clear that someone should be responsible on the information and validity of it. In first-hand the responsible should be the manager or he/she should point a person to be responsible uploading and following the data.

#### 4.5.4 Open answers concerning information sharing

Last question was non mandatory comment field concerning the whole survey, 15 open comments were written. Question was: "Do you have some other comments or/and development ideas for sharing information from the Nordic head office?"

Points concerning consistency, simplicity, and alert when something is updated were commented. Negative comments on several different channels were given

once again. Informing salespersons before approaching the customer from marketing side, would be highly appreciated. Positive comments on common "town-hall" meetings were received, as earlier. One point about rejecting parallel communication channels, outside the ones chosen by company was mentioned.

Looks like most of the comments were repeated from earlier open answers. Simplification is something, which is emphasized by the employer nowadays. It is true that several different channels, lack of information when files are updated, and non-consistent information sharing are clearly causing difficulties. Surprisingly, parallel channels, like for example WhatsApp, were recognized as a problem only by some single respondents. Based on author's experience, using WhatsApp as an information sharing channel causes severe challenges. It is extremely hard to look after information when there are several different everyday discussions. If executed properly, WhatsApp could be used as a "heads up" information sharing, when some important tasks with quick reaction time is needed. However, using WhatsApp is rather forbidden than encouraged by the employer.

## **4.6 Demographic questions, Survey for the office**

### **4.6.1 Age**

Country and product line are not taken account in this survey since all respondents are working in Sweden and nearly all work for several product lines.

Most of the respondents working at the office are between 45-49 years of age.

All 9 respondents are older than 40 years.

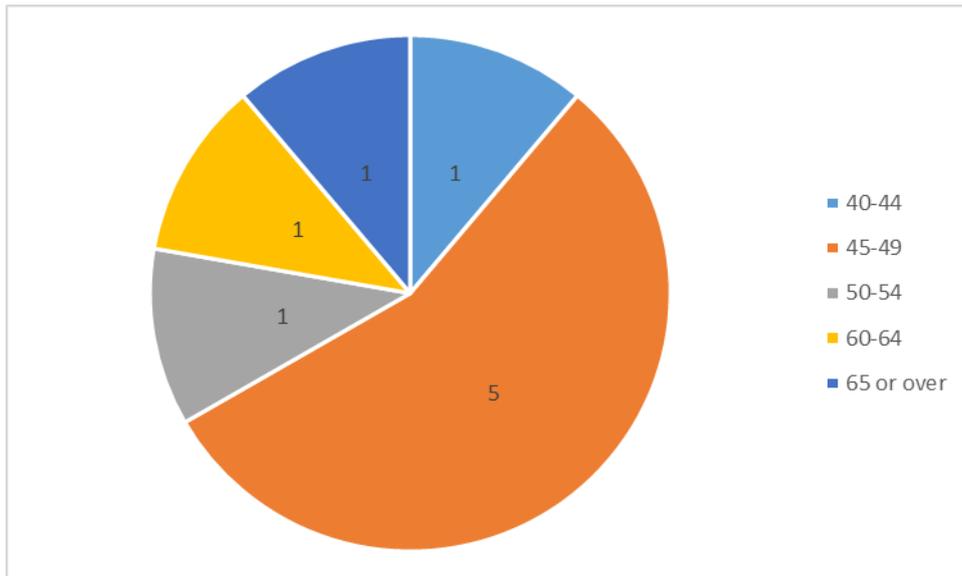


FIGURE 12. Distribution of Age by the respondents, office, n=9

#### 4.6.2 Work years at Michelin

Length of the career at the Michelin varies more among office employees than field staff. Several respondents have worked different five years' time periods at the Michelin. Six out of nine respondents have worked over ten years at Michelin, while two has worked less than ten but more than five, and only one less than five years. When compared to field staff, 1/3<sup>rd</sup> has worked under ten years at the office, but on the field 43% of the respondents have worked less than ten years.

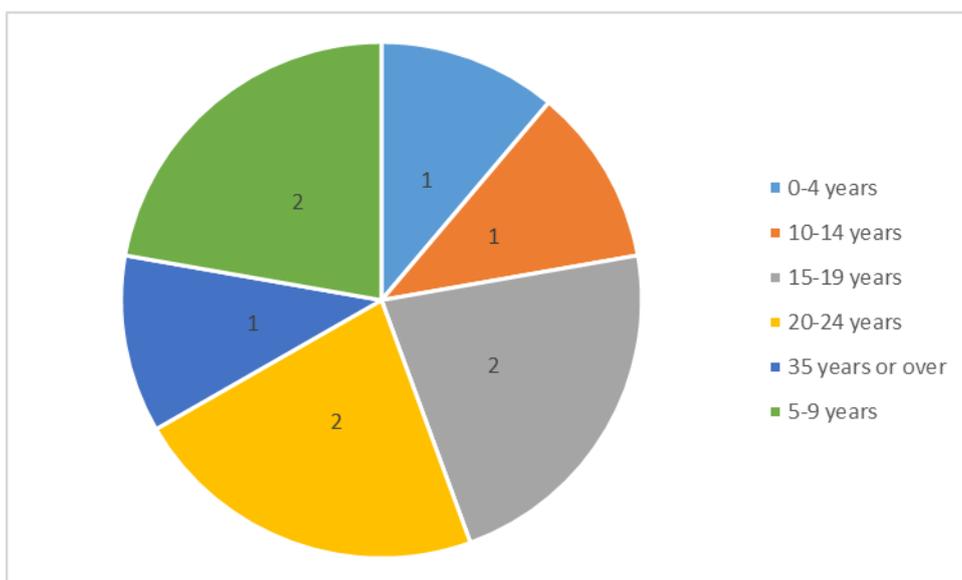


FIGURE 13. Distribution of work years by the respondents, office, n=9

### **4.6.3 Working department**

Survey was sent to training and to marketing departments. Two out of nine respondents worked for training, one respondent stated to work “other” department and rest five respondents for the marketing department.

## **4.7 Section 2 rating of information / material shared, survey for the office**

### **4.7.1 Rating of communication**

Question was: “How would you rate the quality of communication / information received from the field in the Nordics during the last year?” and the answer possibility was exactly same six-star rating as it was in the survey sent to field employees.

Average of rating of all respondents was 4.22 stars, slightly better than (4.02) rating received from the field. There are not significant differences between average ratings received from training (4.50), other (4.00) and marketing departments (4.17). However, rating varies between 3 to 6 stars depending on the respondent, most of the respondents (4) gave four stars. There are several different functions inside the marketing.

Cooperation and communication with the field employees vary a lot by the position at the marketing, as well as contact persons on the field. Some may communicate with managers and some with account managers and/or area sale managers.

### **4.7.2 Open comments for rating of communication**

All respondents gave an open comment. Most of them are satisfied, mostly because their main channels are sales managers. One point on difference between information and communication was mentioned. Level of information is experienced to be good, but communication depends on the person and could be developed more. Lack of coordination when talking about needs of the salesforce

working on the field was pointed out, sales managers should coordinate ideas and support planning of different initiatives. Working multi product line at the office is experienced challenging. One of the good points was that people working on the field do not necessarily understand, what is important information to other departments. In some cases, they have valuable information, but it is not recognized and not shared at all, and sometimes information may be thought to be commonly known even though it is not.

#### **4.7.3 Rating of storing earlier shared information**

Question was:” How would you rate the easiness of finding the received information afterwards (If you need to look after wanted info later, is it easy to reach)?” Respondents gave 3.78 stars on average. Variation was between 2 to 6 stars, when five respondents gave 4-star rating. Not noticeable difference between different departments, marketing gave 3.83 and training gave 4 stars.

#### **4.7.4 Open comments for rating of storing earlier shared information**

Same kind of comments about challenges of several different information channels were given, as from the survey addressed to the field employees. Difficulties to know which of the several channels should be used in which occasion, was mentioned. Lack of way to receive ideas from the salesforce was commented. Poor e-mail know-how, meaning for example structuring and writing subjects, was also mentioned by one respondent.

Ideas are too often disappeared when having several persons in the communication chain. It would be great to have marketing people more often in the field sales meetings, so ideas could be handled immediately. Different ways to use e-mails are also recognized problem. E-mails should have known subject, so the information could be easily retrieved later. Sometimes there are several different e-mail chains on the same subject, because answers to e-mails do not always meet. Instructions for common e-mail behaviour and training for using e-mails surely have demand for some individuals.

## **4.8 Section 3 Importance of information survey for the office**

### **4.8.1 Rating of information / material needed in daily work**

Persons working at the office were asked to rate information and material needed for their daily work, just like from the field employees. Answer options were different, suiting better for information used at the office. Goal was to get feedback on the information, which marketing and training people would like to receive from the field. Different options were: Competitor pricing information, competitor product information, Feedback on Michelin printed material, feedback on Michelins point of sale material, feedback on Michelin pricing and feedback on Michelin products (like performance etc.).

Tasks executed by the office employee vary much more than by employees working on the field. Different information is appreciated by different persons, depending on their tasks. For example, one person is responsible on the pricing issues, so it can be presumed that he rates pricing information important, while his colleagues do not.

Rated options were more valid to the persons working at the marketing department. Training departments two respondents rated all the option not important or somehow important. However, clearly most important information needed is feedback on Michelin products, six responses out of nine respondents rate it very important (5 answers) or important (1). Feedback on Michelin printed material was rated very important by two respondent and important by 3 respondents. Feedback on point-of-sale material was rated important by 4 respondents. Competitor pricing get worst rating, most likely being important only for the pricing manager. Second worst was competitor product information. Clearly all kind of feedback on Michelin actions is appreciated by persons working at the office and especially marketing.

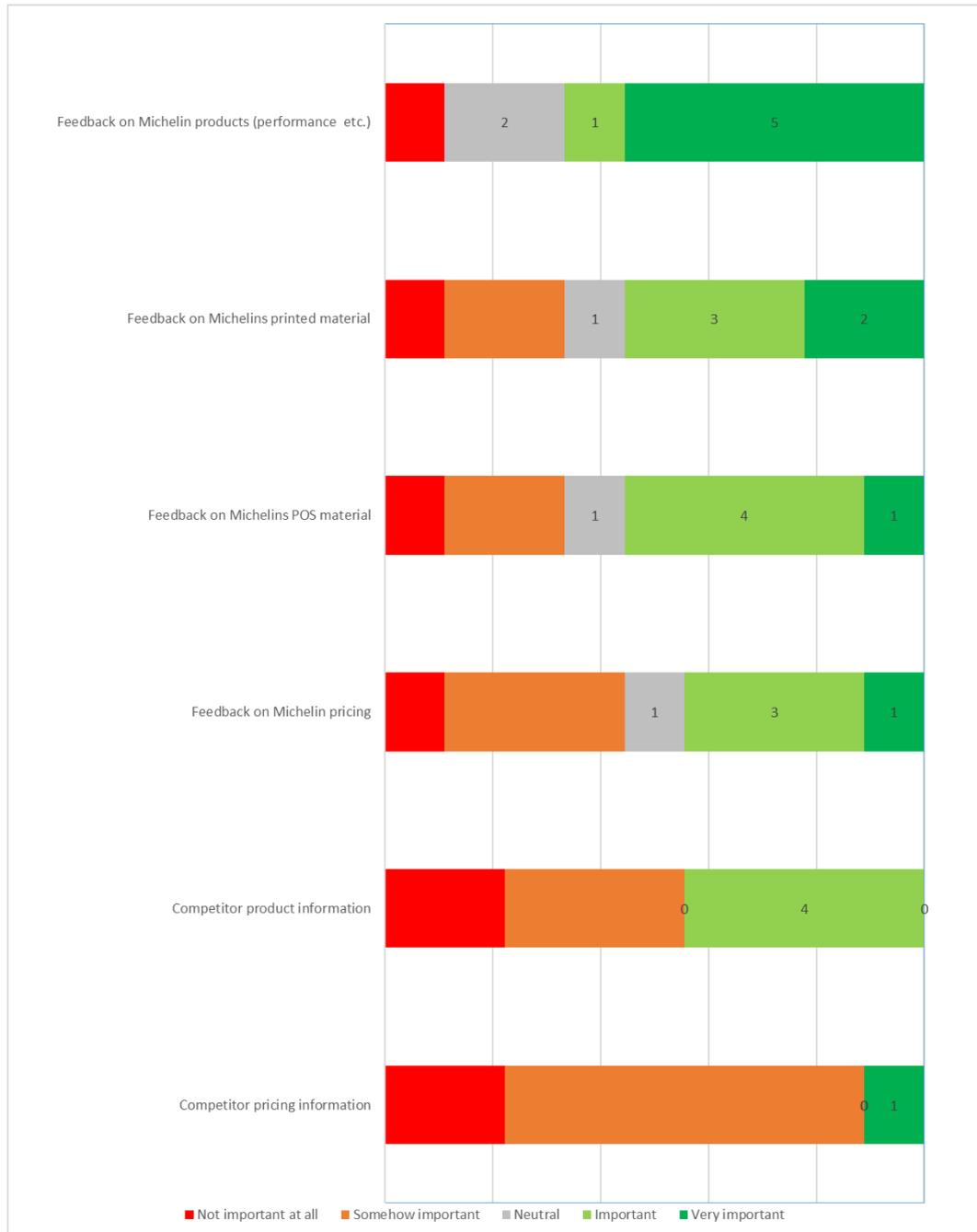


FIGURE 14. Rating of information, office, n=9

#### 4.8.2 Open comments for rating of information/material needed for daily work

Six respondents wrote open comments after rating. Market evolution, product usage, customer actions with Michelin and feedback on those. News on distribution, competitor actions and organisation as well as observations in the press on tyre related issues were mentioned. Different usage of tyre products was seen an

interesting information too. Communication on customer initiatives for sell out actions, communication with customers, and planning of these were also requested.

Several different kinds of information were stated to be important, many of those sounded extraordinary and usually are not communicated forward. Looks like importance of different information needed at the office is not fully understood among persons working on the field. Information sharing and asking should be more emphasized by managers working on both sides, office, and the field.

## **4.9 Section 4, Information channels office**

### **4.9.1 Rating of information channels**

Most appreciated information channel among office employees is clearly MS Teams eight out of nine respondents rated it very good and one good. Physical country and Nordic meetings were both rated very good by seven respondents. Telephone discussions was rated very good by five and good by two respondents. Nordic town hall meeting, where most of field employees are attending via Teams and office employees on the site, got eight ratings on positive side, five good and three very good ratings. E-mail as an information channel received five good ratings and two very good ratings.

Worst ratings as an information channel got WhatsApp, two rated it very poor, one poor and four persons did not use it at all. Slightly surprising was, that Yammer is not appreciated as a communication channel among office employees either.

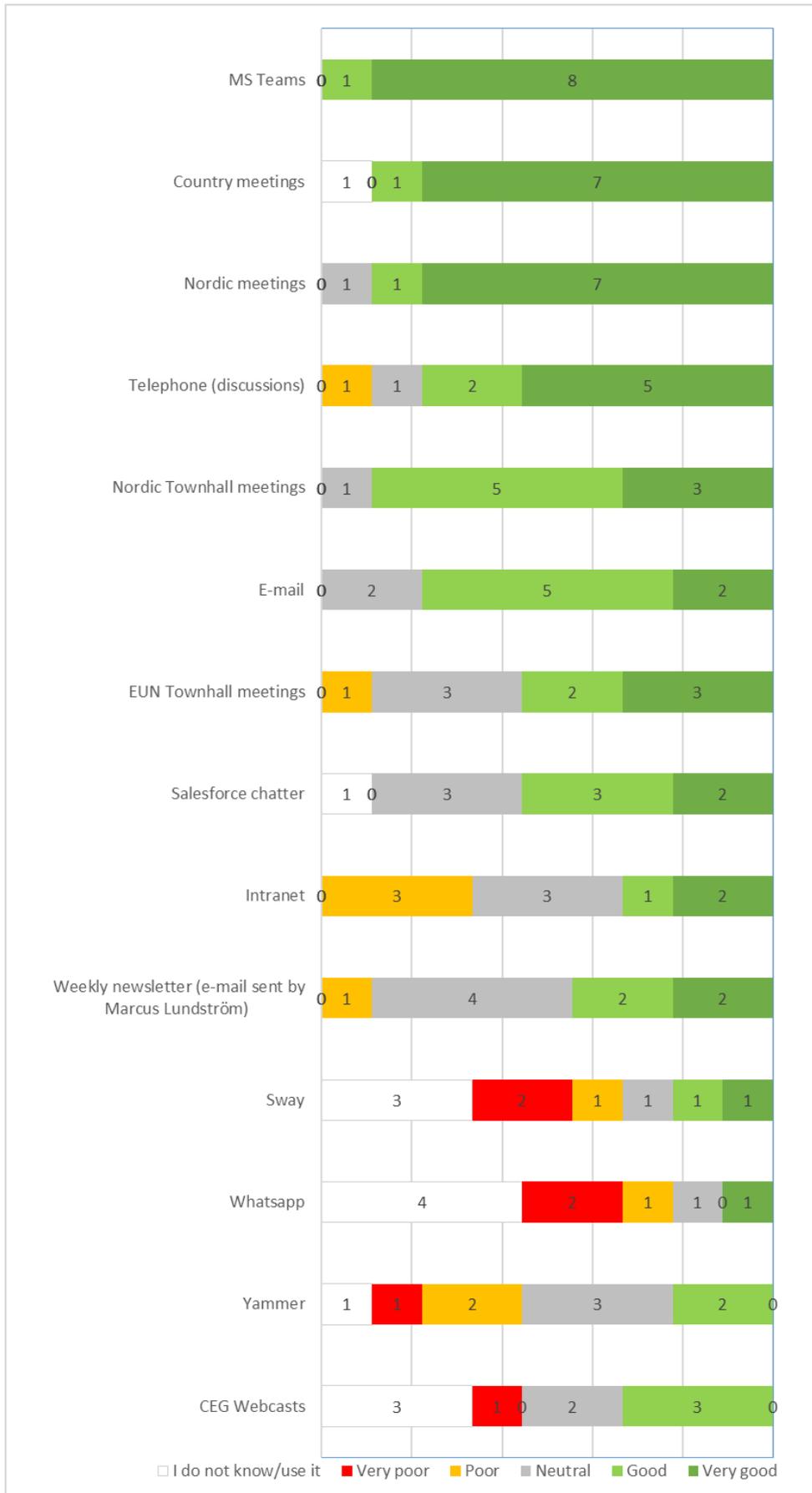


FIGURE 15. Rating of information channels, office, n=9

#### **4.9.2 Rating information channels, open comments**

Only two comments were received. One respondent commented that there are several central head offices information channels, which are well up to date. Another comment was to choose the communication channel by what is wanted to be achieved.

#### **4.9.3 Availability on the same channel**

Less than half of the office responded that it is important that all information is available on the same channel. This is totally different than opinion among field employees, where 82,6% of the respondents saw it important. It can be assumed to be natural that person, who works on the field and who should meet the customers, do not have time to use information from different channels, especially when they do not use certain information so often. People at the office work with different information channels and different information daily, so they usually know where to look for (Appendix 7.).

#### **4.9.4 Opinion on different channels to store information**

MS Teams is clearly preferred as a information storage among the office employees, as it was among field employees too. All answer were positive; seven respondents out of nine rated Teams very good and rest two respondents rated it good. Yammer got worst ratings, most of the answers were on the negative side, three respondents rated it poor and two very poor.

It is sort of surprising that Salesforce and Intranet did not get more positive answers, since these are the tools, which most of the marketing and training persons should be using. Maybe explanation is same as it is with Yammer, these are not so good tools to find needed data quickly during daily work. Salesforce received more positive grades from the field. Explanation can be that most of the field employees are looking after data and most of the office employees are sharing the data. Teams is surely simpler to use when storing the information, than Salesforce.

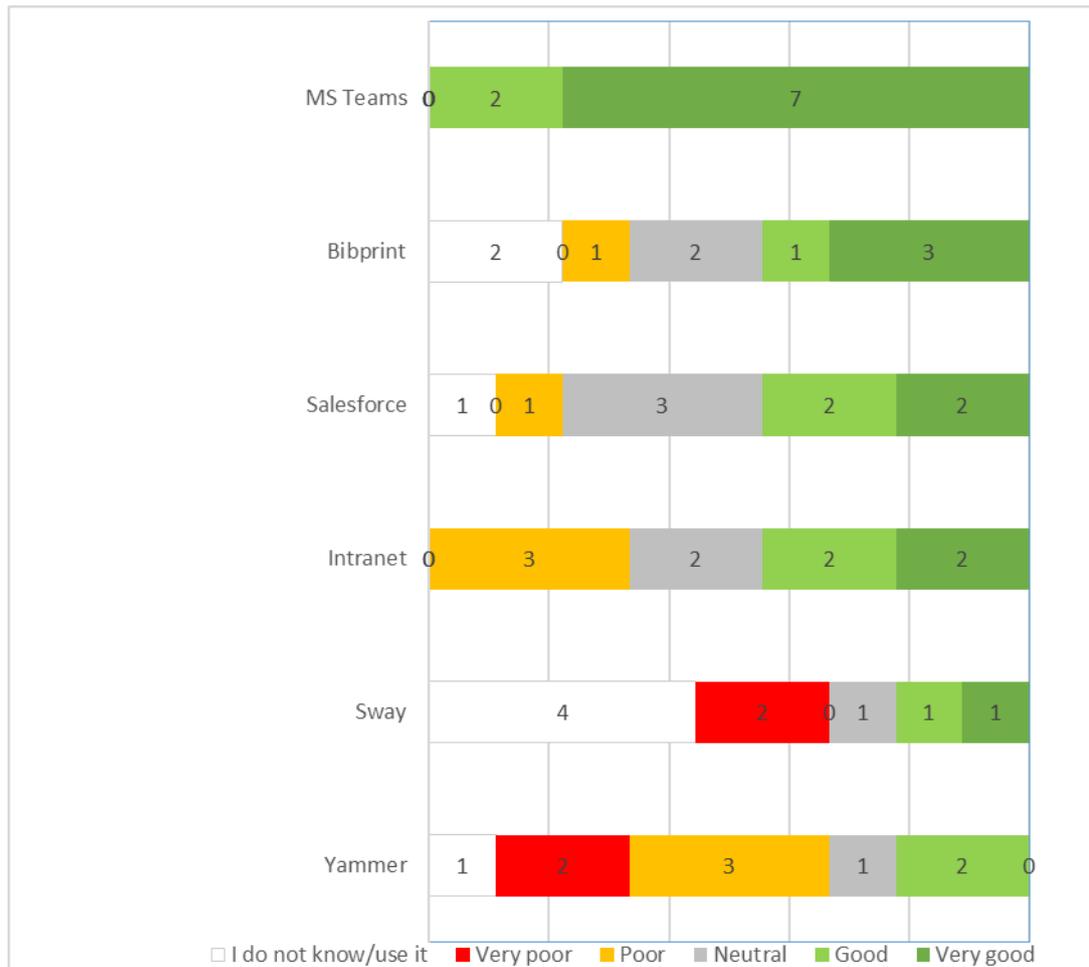


FIGURE 16. Different channels to store information, office, n=9

#### 4.9.5 Different channels to store information, open comments

Three open comments about storing information were received. One comment pointed that different kind of information topics can be found from different information channels, for example Salesforce for customer related information. Another point was that needed infrastructure for information storage exists, but the information should be stored by more structured manner. Same problem exists when communicating and sharing data by e-mail. Lack of structure and clear rules are missing when using e-mails.

There is clearly demand for training personnel to work by more structured manner, to understand how e-mails should be built and how to write corresponding subjects on e-mails. On the same training could be presented same structure of storing information which could be applied on all different channels.

## 4.10 MS Teams as a tool on meetings and information sharing, office

### 4.10.1 Rating of personal skills of MS Teams usage

Skills as a Teams user are on much better level among office employees than field employees. Six out of nine respondents (2/3) rated themselves as an advanced user of MS Teams and one rated him/herself as an expert. Better Teams skills among office employees is as expected, most of them use it daily in several meetings, arrange meetings via teams by themselves and store data in Teams.

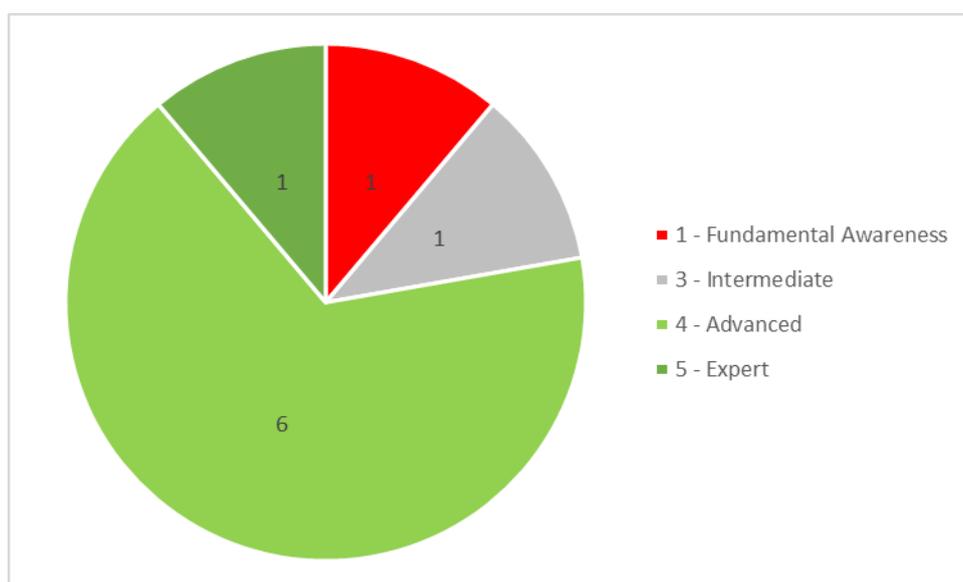


FIGURE 17. Personal skills as a Teams user, office, n=9

### 4.10.2 Rating of easiness of finding the information afterwards

Average rating for the office was 4.0 stars, which is surprisingly slightly lower than 4.36 star on average from the field. When looking rating by age groups there are not significant differences. On the office survey 2 persons responded to be from training department, 6 from marketing and one from "other" team. Persons from training department gave 5 stars on average and from marketing 3.67 stars. Variation on answers from marketing was relatively big, between 2 stars and 5 stars. Reason for variation could be that persons working at the marketing are belonging to different teams inside Michelins EUN organisation and their way to store data in Teams differs from each other.

### **4.10.3 Open comments on Teams**

One comment about the importance of structuring of the data. Files copying between different Teams' folders and storing bigger amounts of data is experienced not to work well. Request about training to link teams to OneDrive and best ways to share documents.

### **4.10.4 Open answers concerning information sharing**

Suggestion about clear information, roadmap on which person is responsible on which area of information. Often information or requests are sent to wrong persons and the reaction time can be very long. File sharing outside the company is experienced difficult and a proper solution for this is asked. One respondent commented that Market watch in Salesforce chatter is good for quick information sharing, more detailed info could be shared in meetings and Teams could be used as a information storage. Request about marketing people attending to field person weekly meetings was written, including a comment that we are same team together.

## **4.11 Summary on the survey results**

### **4.11.1 Section 2, Rating of communication and storing the information**

Not clear differences between countries or product lines in rating of communication (4.02/6 stars field, 4.22 office). When looking the open answers, slow reaction and slow communication were found as a development item. Persons outside the office and working for smaller product lines experienced that they are sometimes missed when sharing information. Direct customer actions should be informed better to persons, who are direct contacts towards the customers. Marketing persons attending to field staff meetings were seen very positive and experienced to improve the cooperation. In open answers from the office was mentioned that better coordinating of ideas and initiatives should be arranged. Often valuable information is not shared, because it is not understood that information could be valuable to someone or it is thought that information is already known.

Rating of finding earlier shared information was 3.74/6 stars from the field and 3.78 from the office. One of main learnings of the survey received from the open comments, is that different channels and finding looked information from those was commented to be challenging by several respondents from the field and from the office. Using of e-mail in terms of writing subject, keeping the mail chain unbroken etc. are recognized as a problem.

#### **4.11.2 Section 3, importance of information**

Respondents from the field rated pricelists as a most important information, information on new products as a second most important and campaign information as a third most important. In open comments, more information sharing between the countries when talking about product performance, competitor and technical information was suggested.

Persons working at the office are concentrating on different tasks during their daily work, this clearly causes some variation on the answers. For example, pricing is not seen important information among most of the respondents, but for the person responsible on pricing, the price information, including competitor pricing and feedback on own prices, is essential. Most important information among office employees was rated feedback on Michelin products, second most feedback on printed material and third most feedback on point-of-sale material.

Based on open comments, need of different information at the office is clearly not understood on the field. More open comments from the office concerned about need of information about market evolution, product usage, customer actions with Michelin and feedback on those. News on distribution, competitor actions and organisation as well as observations in the press on tyre related issues were mentioned. Different usage of tyre products was seen an interesting information too. Communication on customer initiatives for sell out actions, communication with customers, and planning of these were also requested. Several different kinds of information were stated to be important, many of those sounded extraordinary and usually are not communicated forward. Looks like importance of

different information needed at the office is not fully understood among persons working on the field. Information sharing and asking should be more emphasized by managers working on both sides, at the office, and on the field.

#### **4.11.3 Section 4, information channels**

When rating the different information channels, traditional ones received the top ratings. Most liked information channel among field employees was e-mail, second one was Nordic townhall meeting, third one country meetings, number four was MS Teams and the fifth one was EUN Townhall meetings. Some open comments about difficulties to follow several different communication channels were given. Most liked information channel among office employees was MS Teams. Nordic meetings and country meeting were both on shared second place. Telephone discussions were appreciated well among office employees, right after Nordic and country meetings.

When asked availability on the same information channel 38 Yes answers out of 46 were given from the field, which means 82.6% of the answers. At the office, information availability always on the same information channel got 4 Yes answers out of 9, which is 44,4% of the answers and is clearly lower than among the field employees.

When asked about information storage places, field respondents liked most about MS Teams, second most on Salesforce and third most on Bibprint. In open comments question, difficulties of finding and knowing the latest update of information was pointed out. Office employees liked most MS teams as a information storage, just like the field employees. Second one was Bibprint. Salesforce and Intranet were both on the shared third place. Open comment about suggesting storing different type of information on certain channels was given. Meaning that, for example, customer related information should only be stored in CRM tool Salesforce. Another key point received in open comments and repeating on the survey is information structure, which is experienced difficult as well as e-mail without clear rules and structure.

#### 4.11.4 Section 5, MS Teams as a tool

Most of the respondents working on the field, 54.4% 25/46 respondents said that their personal skills are on intermediate level (3rd option out of 5). Rating on finding information afterwards from MS Teams was 4.37 stars out of 6. Persons working at the office rated their personal MS Teams skills slightly higher than field employees. Six out of nine (66.7%) think their skills are advanced, which is second best option. Easiness of finding information afterwards received four stars.

Same points were repeated when asked open comments on information sharing in general, as in earlier open comments. Consistency, simplicity, and alert when something is updated were commented. Informing salespersons before approaching the customer from marketing side, would be highly appreciated. Positive comments on common “townhall” meetings were received, as earlier. One point about rejecting parallel communication channels, outside the ones chosen by company was presented.

Open comments Suggestion about clear information, roadmap on which person is responsible on which area of information. Often information or requests are sent to wrong persons and the reaction time can be very long. File sharing outside the company is experienced difficult and a proper solution for this is asked. One respondent commented that Market watch in Salesforce chatter is good for quick information sharing, more detailed info could be shared in meetings and Teams could be used as an information storage. Request about marketing people attending to field person weekly meetings was written, including a comment that we are same team together.

## **5 DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Discussion of results**

#### **5.1.1 State of everyday information change**

In general, situation of everyday communication is seen more positive than negative, 4.02 stars out of six from the field and 4,22 stars from the office were rated. Some areas of improvement were noted in the open comments. However, goal should be the best possible six stars and some improvements based on the survey and literature will be proposed under practical conclusions.

#### **5.1.2 Importance of information**

For the field personnel, among most important information are issues directly related their customers, or information which helps them on their daily work. Price-lists, campaign info, product info, sales terms and product performance are top five on importance. Employees working at the office have different kind of interests, which was noted already on the question setup. Product performance is rated important by most of the office personnel, but after that, importance depends on their personal daily responsibilities. Different kind of information were mentioned in open comments, feedback on different issues and competitor actions are experienced important.

#### **5.1.3 Model of communication**

On everyday information change, Shannon Weavers communication model is easiest to apply when planning the way of communication. Reducing the noise during everyday information sharing should be one of the priorities (Ma 2015, 23.). Direct communication from office to field, or vice versa, concerning important matters should be emphasized. In this case, due to different level of language skills and due that most persons are not communicating on their native language, and for avoiding information variance, information would be better to get directly from the source, without line manager in the middle. If managers are acting as

transmitters, misinformation could occur due to reasons mentioned earlier, at least more than in direct information sharing.

On matters with lower importance, it would be recommendable to ask line manager to collect the information and communicate it to field workers. Manager's role would be also to remind on all different tasks they and other departments have communicated earlier.

Different platforms used in company should be trained and presented, for example Yammer, used mainly as company's internal information channel, may contain some important information. Following other communication channels should be on manager's responsibility, if not then it should be pointed to someone.

In Scramm's second model of communication, is presented that both parties in communication should have shared experience on the issue communicated, which helps sender and receiver to understand all the signals (Ma 2015, 24-26). Often persons working at the office do not have any sales experience and they do not know by heart what are frontline workers and customers exact needs, but same problem occurs among field employees, they do not know what information is needed at the office. Office worker's co-travelling on the field can be recommended as well as regular attending to weekly meetings arranged by MS Teams.

Open and transparent communication should be emphasized, it improves internal relationships inside the organization, as mentioned by Men and Bowen in the chapter of system theory perspective (Men & Bowen 2016, 9-10). Organizational culture may be built strong by an effective communication (Kennedy 1983, 26).

#### **5.1.4 Preferred channel of communication**

One main observation of the survey, based also on several open comments from different persons, is that number of different channels is experienced challenging by both groups, people on the field and at the office. Most of the field personnel, 82,6%, wants that information can be found from one channel. According to the survey results, most preferred communication channel varies between

employee's working department. Persons working at the office rated Teams as the best communication tool. Persons working on the field, preferred most e-mails. Among field employees, second and third most preferred channel, or way of communication were live meetings, Nordic townhall and country meetings, which naturally cannot be used on daily communication. MS Teams was ranked number four on preferred communication channel when asked from employees working on the field.

Natural choice of everyday communication channel is MS Teams, and not least because of its large range of possibilities. If certain persons prefer e-mails, they may set up an alert to e-mail when something is mentioned on Teams. Teams chat function may be used for daily communication between sales personnel travelling on the field and people working at the office. An assumption, that skills on using MS Teams and understanding of its potential have improved since the survey, can be done because MS Teams was relatively new tool in the company on the time when survey was executed. However, MS Teams training including everyday tips and tricks should be arranged.

#### **5.1.5 Preferred channel of storing the data**

Persons working on the field, as well as persons working at the office rated MS Teams as the best channel to save information. In this case, choice is clear. However, one of MS Teams clear benefits is, that it can be used as a communication channel and a data storage, where from information may easily be distributed. Another point repeated in the open comments is structure of the data stored. Too often finding data looked for is experienced difficult due to non-intuitive structure of storing it.

#### **5.1.6 Practical conclusions**

Clearly one of the pain points is that people not necessarily understand importance of information they have, especially among field employees. More interchange between field and the office, for example marketing personnel attending to weekly field employees' meetings could help on this issue.

Marketing personnel should attend regularly to field persons weekly meetings, to make sure that all information is updated, on the field and at the marketing and for receiving valued feedback, pointed in the survey. This could help to avoid misinformation, information additions, and information variance, if information is communicated directly by person representing marketing department, instead of line manager in the middle, extra noise in information, as presented in Shannon-Weaver model of communication, could be reduced. Direct communication from person to person should be worked for, this helps decreasing the noise. Attending to the meetings would help gathering information mentioned in importance of information questions open comments, in meetings information could then be asked directly from one department to another. Challenges with technical problems, common understanding about the daily issues and language problems could be better solved by deeper cooperation.

In HR communication, employee growth and people development are important areas. Innovation in the organization is helped by employee participation, which is enhanced by open and two-way communication (Men & Bowen 2016, 7-8.).

If several channels are wanted to be used, information should be divided by its character. For example, for information distribution and storing, which is needed on daily work, should be used MS Teams. And for example, competitor information and product performance, could be shared in Salesforce chatter. And this should be clearly communicated to all stakeholders. But since most of survey respondents think that information should always be stored in the same place, more recommendable is that different teams are created to MS Teams for different type of information, and people responsible of the issue of information, could share it forward to higher level inside the company. Also, if used several different channels for delivering same information, information redundancies may decrease (Ma 2015, 51-52).

Training of employees to work by more structured manner, to understand how e-mails should be built and how to write corresponding subjects on e-mails should be arranged. Slow communication and slow response on e-mails could be

improved by training as well, in practise by even simple answer that e-mail is noticed but answer will be late due workload could be polite.

It is recommendable to arrange communication training to frontline managers, like presented by Raywood (2015) in Edelman's employee engagement reports six phases of connecting frontline employees. It is important that all managers understand their role in communication, and they are able to make sure that information is received by all stakeholders needed (Raywood 2015.). It is also essential to engage all frontline workers, in this case field workers, on giving feedback on essential issues towards marketing department. At the moment only couple of individuals are sending feedback, and sometimes do not get comments whether their information is valuable or not.

Common structure of stored information, which could be applied on all different channels or different teams established in MS Teams should be built. This could be great help in reducing information disorder. Based on the open comments, it is recommendable to have common structure in each channel to make finding information looked easier. Presentation of the information stored and common guideline concerning the information structure for example on the company Intranet would be great thing to have.

Stored information should be up to date. Someone should be pointed as responsible to update information. Naturally this should belong under each responsible person's responsibility, for example pricing manager should keep pricelists updated. On general and according to literature, line managers should be pointed to be responsible that all necessary things are updated and communicated so, that each stakeholder has information they need. Line managers are mentioned to be most important channel of information for frontline workers (Men & Bowen 2016, 22-23).

MS Teams may be used in meetings, storing information and as a chat. It can be used by computer or by a mobile phone. Notifications by chat channel can be turned on so, that a chat message notification can be sent to an e-mail or be noticed on mobile phone. Chat may be used for everyday information change,

since employees who are travelling may read messages right after they have access to mobile network. Updating of important file in MS Teams folder could be pointed out by a chat message on corresponding Teams channel. All employees have smartphones. If e-mails are afraid to be full of different notifications, messages from each channel could be directed to own e-mail folders by small effort. Using MS Teams chat function with higher urgency questions could help to get answers faster too.

## **5.2 Critical evaluation of the research design and implementation**

This could have been great opportunity to research, if certain persons on managerial level need communication training and coaching, however, this idea about asking manager's communication skills was rejected on the beginning. This could have been helpful for finding some more detailed root causes for improving daily information change. Idea was not to find potential persons quilt for possible problems. For this possible problem, yearly employee satisfaction survey is the correct channel. Aim was also to make as short survey as possible, for maintaining interest of the respondent and securing good response rate.

Open comments were asked after several questions. Possibility to give more open comments should have been told and reminded clearly during the survey. Since this was not properly done, same answers, not necessarily related to the question, repeated during the whole survey, and number of open answers decreased towards the end. At the end, where possibility to give development ideas were asked, only few open comments were received.

Different information needs, especially for the person working at the office, could have been better investigated more before sending the survey. Information needs vary a lot by the person's work tasks, so the information received from the office has great variation.

Taking customer service personnel as a part of the survey, caused some challenges during the reporting, since data was taken off from the results and original report received from MS Forms was not possible to use. Anyway, this was very

helpful for the company and helped in making suggestions to improve communication on that department.

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## 7 APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Survey for the field

# Sharing of information between the field and office based colleagues (Survey for field)

We would like to get your feedback on the different ways we share information between departments today. Your feedback is highly appreciated and handled with trust. Mandatory questions are marked with a red star (\*)

\* Required

\* This form will record your name, please fill your name.

### Back ground questions

1. Please select your country \*

- Denmark
- Finland
- Norway
- Sweden

2. Please select your age \*

- 20-24
- 25-29
- 30-34
- 35-39
- 40-44
- 45-49
- 50-54
- 55-59
- 60-64
- 65 or over

3. Please select, how long you have worked at Michelin \*

- 0-4 years
- 5-9 years
- 10-14 years
- 15-19 years
- 20-24 years
- 25-29 years
- 30-34 years
- 35 years or over

## 4. Please select your product line \*

- Agro
- Passenger car (TC)
- Truck & bus (PL)
- Beyond Road, OHT (GC)
- 
- Other

## 5. Please select your department / function \*

- Sales (Account manager, Area sales manager)
- Sales management
- Key Account management
- Customer service (CSA)
- 
- Other

## Rating of information / material shared

6. How would you rate the quality of communication / information received from marketing in the Nordics during the last year? \*

Very poor ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ Very good

7. Please, explain reasons for your answer to previous question (Nr 6).

8. How would you rate the easiness of finding the received information afterwards (If you need to look after wanted info later, is it easy to reach)? \*

Very poor ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ Very good

9. Please, explain reasons for your answer to previous question (Nr 8).

## Importance of information

10. Please rate importance of the information/material needed to get your daily work well done? (choose one option for each line) \*

	Not important at all	Somehow important	Neutral	Important	Very important
Terms of sales updates (discounts etc. usually updated on the beginning of the year)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pricelists up to date	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Campaign information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Product information on new products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Printed material (product leaflets)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Printed material (Product catalogue, Tech databook)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information on other productlines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information of communication sent directly to your customers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Salesforce instructions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Product performance info	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Competitor information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Please write a comment, if there is some other information, which you find important in your daily work?

## Information channels

12. How would you rate the different ways to share information listed below work for efficient information sharing in the company? (choose one option for each line) \*

	Very poor	Poor	Neutral	Good	Very good	I do not know/use it
E-mail	<input type="radio"/>					
Telephone (discussions)	<input type="radio"/>					
MS Teams	<input type="radio"/>					
Salesforce chatter	<input type="radio"/>					
Yammer	<input type="radio"/>					
Sway	<input type="radio"/>					
Country meetings	<input type="radio"/>					
Nordic meetings	<input type="radio"/>					
Intranet	<input type="radio"/>					
Weekly newsletter (e-mail sent by Marcus Lundström)	<input type="radio"/>					
Whatsapp	<input type="radio"/>					
Nordic Townhall meetings	<input type="radio"/>					
EUN Townhall meetings	<input type="radio"/>					
CEG Webcasts	<input type="radio"/>					

13. Please write a comment, if you have some other preferred way to share information?

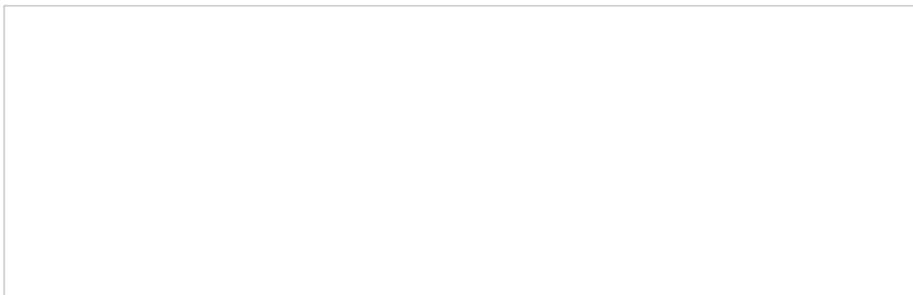
14. Is it important to you, that all information is always available on the same place/channel? \*

- Yes
- No
- Does not matter

15. What is your opinion on different places / channels to where information (for example files) could be available for sharing and later use? (choose one option for each line) \*

	Very poor	Poor	Neutral	Good	Very good	I do not know/use it
MS Teams	<input type="radio"/>					
Salesforce	<input type="radio"/>					
Yammer	<input type="radio"/>					
Sway	<input type="radio"/>					
Bibprint	<input type="radio"/>					
Intranet	<input type="radio"/>					

16. Please comment, if you have some other preferred place / channel to store and share information?



## MS Teams as a tool on meetings and information sharing

Michelin has chosen Teams as a platform for online meetings, due to covid 19 pandemic it has been used as a main tool on meetings and trainings

17. How would you rate your skills as a Teams user? \*

- 1 - Fundamental Awareness (basic knowledge)
- 2 - Novice (limited experience)
- 3 - Intermediate (practical application)
- 4 - Advanced (applied theory)
- 5 - Expert (recognized authority)

18. How would you rate easiness of finding information/material afterwards from Teams? \*

Very poor ☆☆☆☆☆ Very good

19. Do you have comments, wishes or ideas concerning using of MS Teams?

20. Do you have some other comments or/and development ideas for sharing information from the Nordic head office?

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 Microsoft Forms

12/6/2021

## Appendix 2. Survey for the office

# Sharing of information between the field and office based colleagues (Survey for office)

We would like to get your feedback on the different ways we share information between departments today. Your feedback is highly appreciated and handled with trust. Mandatory questions are marked with a red star (\*)

\* Required

### Back ground questions

1. Please select your country \*

- Denmark
- Finland
- Norway
- Sweden

2. Please select your age \*

- 20-24
- 25-29
- 30-34
- 35-39
- 40-44
- 45-49
- 50-54
- 55-59
- 60-64
- 65 or over

3. Please select, how long you have worked at Michelin \*

- 0-4 years
- 5-9 years
- 10-14 years
- 15-19 years
- 20-24 years
- 25-29 years
- 30-34 years
- 35 years or over

## 4. Please select your product line \*

 Agro Passenger car (TC) Truck & bus (PL) OHT (GC) Multi 

Other

## 5. Please select your department \*

 Sales Sales management Marketing Training 

Other

## Rating of communication

6. How would you rate the quality of communication / information received from the field in the Nordics during the last year? \*

Very poor ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ Very good

7. Please, explain reasons for your answer to previous question (Nr 6).

8. How would you rate the easiness of finding the received information afterwards (If you need to look after wanted info later, is it easy to reach)? \*

Very poor ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ Very good

9. Please, explain reasons for your answer to previous question (Nr 8).

## Importance of information

10. Please rate importance of the information/material needed to get your daily work well done? (choose one option for each line) \*

	Not important at all	Somehow important	Neutral	Important	Very important
Competitor pricing information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Competitor product information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feedback on Michelins printed material	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feedback on Michelins POS material	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feedback on Michelin pricing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feedback on Michelin products (performance etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Please write a comment, if there is some other information, which you find important in your daily work?

## Information channels

12. How would you rate the different ways to share information listed below work for efficient information sharing in the company? (choose one option for each line) \*

	Very poor	Poor	Neutral	Good	Very good	I do not know/use it
E-mail	<input type="radio"/>					
Telephone (discussions)	<input type="radio"/>					
MS Teams	<input type="radio"/>					
Salesforce chatter	<input type="radio"/>					
Yammer	<input type="radio"/>					
Sway	<input type="radio"/>					
Country meetings	<input type="radio"/>					
Nordic meetings	<input type="radio"/>					
Intranet	<input type="radio"/>					
Weekly newsletter (e-mail sent by Marcus Lundström)	<input type="radio"/>					
Whatsapp	<input type="radio"/>					
Nordic Townhall meetings	<input type="radio"/>					
EUN Townhall meetings	<input type="radio"/>					
CEG Webcasts	<input type="radio"/>					

13. Please write a comment, if you have some other preferred way to share information?

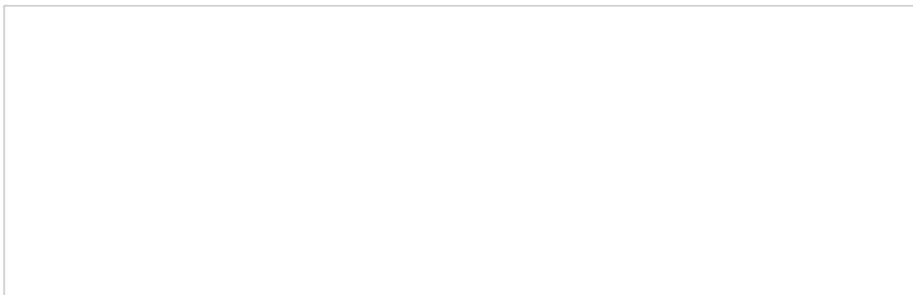
14. Is it important to you, that all information is always available on the same place/channel? \*

- Yes
- No
- Does not matter

15. What is your opinion on different places / channels to where information (for example files) could be available for sharing and later use? (choose one option for each line) \*

	Very poor	Poor	Neutral	Good	Very good	I do not know/use it
MS Teams	<input type="radio"/>					
Salesforce	<input type="radio"/>					
Yammer	<input type="radio"/>					
Sway	<input type="radio"/>					
Bibprint	<input type="radio"/>					
Intranet	<input type="radio"/>					

16. Please comment, if you have some other preferred place / channel way to store and share information?



## MS Teams as a tool on meetings and information sharing

Michelin has chosen Teams as a platform for online meetings, due to covid 19 pandemic it has been used as a main tool on meetings and trainings

17. How would you rate your skills as a Teams user? \*

- 1 - Fundamental Awareness (basic knowledge)
- 2 - Novice (limited experience)
- 3 - Intermediate (practical application)
- 4 - Advanced (applied theory)
- 5 - Expert (recognized authority)

18. How would you rate easiness of finding information/material afterwards from Teams? \*

Very poor ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ Very good

19. Do you have comments, wishes or ideas concerning using of MS Teams?

20. Do you have some other comments or/and development ideas for sharing information from the field?

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 Microsoft Forms

12/6/2021

## Appendix 3. Introduction e-mail

**Subject:** Survey on Sharing information between the field and office based colleagues in the Nordics

Hi all!

I hope you can find some time to answer this questionnaire, it takes about 10mins to answer. Goal of this questionnaire is to make everybody's work easier at Michelin Nordic by finding a most convenient way to share information between field and office-based colleagues. Survey is also part of my studies. Please answer before Friday 2nd of April.

Great thanks in forehand!

Link to the survey:

<https://forms.office.com/r/UZvCFt1Lpm>



Ystävällisin terveisin / Best regards / Med vänliga hälsningar / Mit freundlichen Grüßen / Cordialement,



**Sami Virtanen**  
Michelin Nordic AB

Senior Account Manager, Kuorma-autonrenkaat

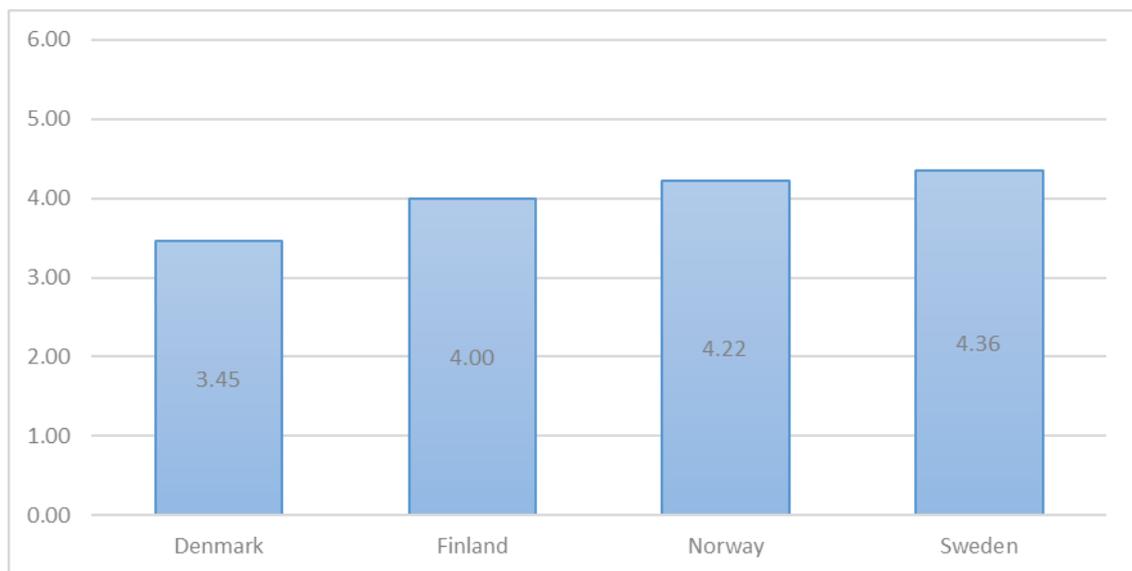
 [sami.virtanen@michelin.com](mailto:sami.virtanen@michelin.com)  
 +358 (0)40 172 2538  
 Oy Suomen Michelin Ab  
PL 6600  
00002 Helsinki, Finland  
 <http://kuljetus.michelin.fi>

**Katso myös:**

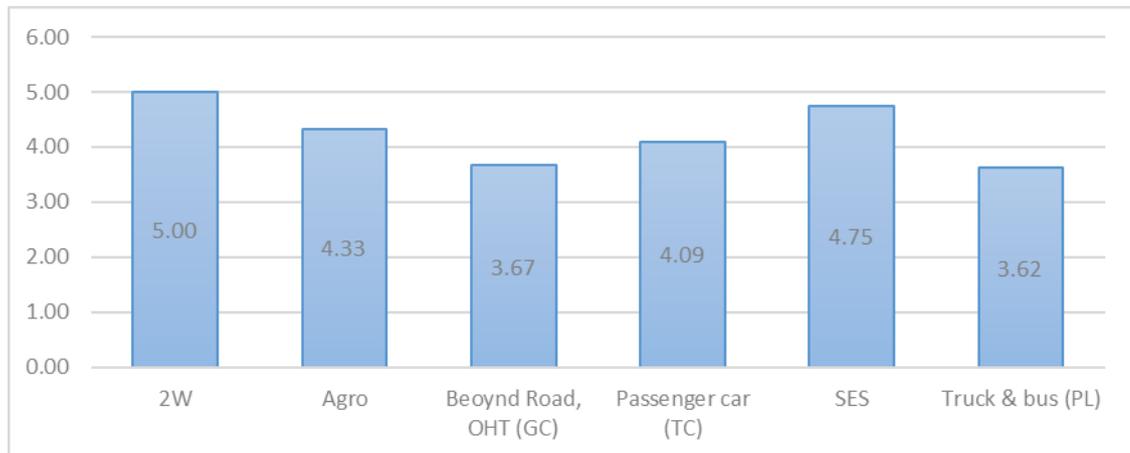


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Confidentiality D3 - Archive duration < 90 days*

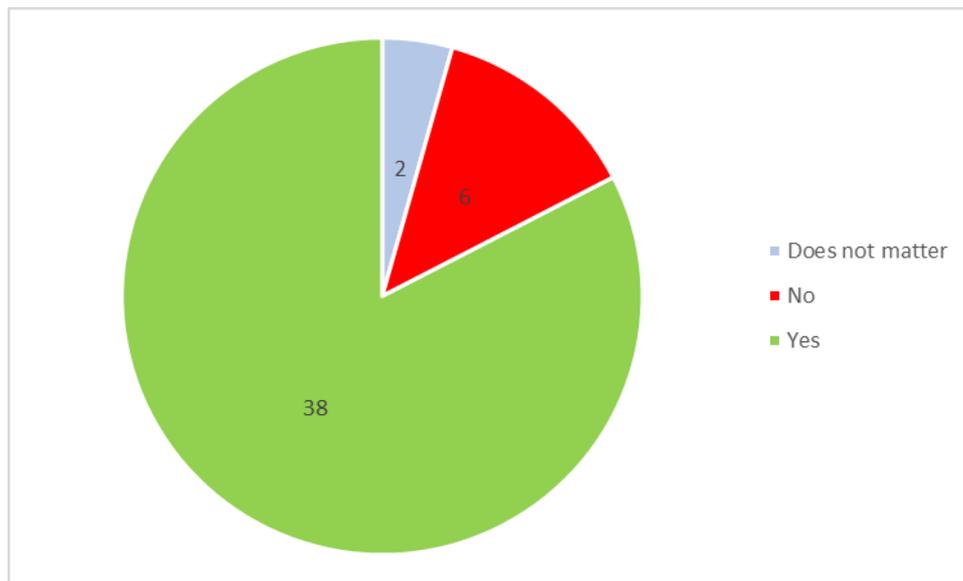
Appendix 4. Quality of communication divided by the country, field, n=46



Appendix 5. Quality of communication divided by the product line (notice 2w only one respondent), field, n=46



Appendix 6. Importance of information on same place/channel, field, n=46.



## Appendix 7. Importance of information on same place/channel, office, n=9

