



# **IMPROVING CHANGE MANAGEMENT IN CASE COMPANY X**

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Santtu Ruikka

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Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena on tarkastella viimeisintä merkittävää muutosta, joka vaikutti suurimpaan osaan tapausyrityksen henkilöstöstä, ja havainnoida sen avulla muutoksen johtamisen keinoja yrityksessä. Tutkimus keskittyy yrityksen vanhan viestintäjärjestelmän korvaamiseen modernilla järjestelmällä, jonka tavoitteena on parantaa datalähtöistä asiakaspalvelua ja operatiivista tehokkuutta. Tavoitteena on tarjota tietoa toimeksiantajayritykselle ja työkaluja muutoksen johtamisprosessien parantamiseen tulevaisuudessa.

Opinnäytetyö perustuu John P. Kotterin kahdeksanvaiheiseen muutoksenjohtamisteoriaan. Teoriaa tukevat muut muutosjohtamiseen liittyvät teoriat, jotka keskittyvät muutosvastarintaan ja sen teemoihin.

Tutkimus toteutettiin käyttämällä sekamenetelmää, jossa tutkimukseen sisältyi laadullinen haastattelu ja määrällinen kyselylomake, jossa oli joitakin avoimia kysymyksiä. Tutkimusmenetelmä valittiin tuottamaan tehokkaasti kaksi erilaista näkökulmaa muutosprosessiin. Lopputyön tekijä haastatteli muutoshankkeen avainhenkilöä ja lähetti verkkokyselyn työntekijöille. Näiden eri tutkimusten tuloksia tarkasteltiin erojen löytämiseksi ja verrattiin teoriaan. Tutkimus tehtiin retrospektiivisesti muutoshankkeeseen.

Tutkimus saavutti sille annetun tavoitteen, joka oli löytää kehityskohtia muutosjohtamisessa sekä antaa löydöksiin perustuen parannusehdotuksia. Tutkimuksessa tunnistettiin alueita ja toimia, jotka olivat vaikuttaneet työntekijöiden kokemukseen muutoksesta. Nämä alueet olivat pääasiassa viestinnän, koulutuksen ja tuen puutteita muutoksen aikana. Työntekijät kokivat muutoksenjohtamismenetelmät ja -työkalut osittain riittämättömiksi. Tulokset antoivat pohjan suosituksille, kuten viestintästrategian parantamiselle, fyysisen tuen lisäämiselle ja erillisen muutoksenjohtamissuunnitelman toteuttamiselle. Jatkuvia pieniä muutoksia suositeltiin myös parantamaan työntekijöiden muutosvalmiutta.

Tehokas ja oikein mitoitettu muutosjohtaminen on tärkeää uusien järjestelmien ja uudistusten läpiviennille. Annetut suositukset voivat ohjata ja parantaa toimeksiantajayrityksen tulevien muutoshankkeiden laatua, kunhan niitä sovelletaan oikein.

Avainsanat Muutosjohtaminen, Viestintäjärjestelmä, Asiakaspalvelu, Muutosvalmius, Muutosvastarinta

Sivut 49 sivua ja liitteitä 7 sivua

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Author Santtu Ruikka

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Supervisors Sajal Kabiraj

Abstract

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The aim of this thesis is to review the latest major change which affected most of the personnel working in the case company and observe the ways of change management. The study focuses on the recent replacement of the company's old communication system with a modern one, aiming to enhance data-driven customer service and operational efficiency. The objective is to provide information for the commissioning company and tools to improve the change management processes in the future.

The thesis was structured around John P. Kotter's theory of the 8-step process for change management. The theory was supported by additional change management related theories focusing on change resistance and themes around change resistance.

The research was conducted using mixed method where the research included a qualitative interview and a quantitative questionnaire with some open-ended questions. The research method was chosen to provide two different points of view efficiently. The author interviewed a key member of the change project and sent an online questionnaire for the employees. The results of these different studies were examined to find differences between the two points of view and compared to the theory. The research was done retrospectively to the change project.

The research reached its goal to identify areas of improvement and provide improvement suggestions. The study identified areas and actions which had affected the experience of the change among the employees these areas were mainly gaps in communication, education, and support during the change process. Employees perceived the methods and tools used to manage change somewhat insufficient. The results gave basis for recommendations which were improving communication strategies, providing more physical support, and implementing a dedicated change management plan. Continuous minor changes were also recommended to improve change readiness among employees.

Effective change management is crucial for the successful implementation of new systems and processes. The findings and recommendations can guide and improve the quality of the commissioning company's future change initiatives when applied correctly.

Keywords Change Management, Communication System, Customer Service, Change Readiness, Change Resistance.

Pages 49 pages and appendices 7 pages

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Appendix 1. Questionnaire for the Employees

Appendix 2. Interview for the Project Member

# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction**

The rapid development of technology and internet as well as the services in the internet itself have opened many new doorways for business in general, regardless of the area of business. Nowadays companies can reach and serve their customers faster and more efficiently than ever before and consumers have more options to interact with companies. A large amount of knowledge is available in a few mouse clicks and consumers are more aware and demanding than ever before.

This phenomenon also applies to insurance industry. Customers have high expectations for their insurance companies, and they want fast and professional service, both online and in person, and low prices. Damage covering must be fast no matter what sort of damage has been suffered.

Change management plays a big part when transitioning to providing a new service channel for consumers and developing and carrying through new projects or renewing company structure and strategy to better fit the corporate demand. In this thesis the focus is on the change management methods and application in a case company.

To preserve confidentiality, the commissioning company will hereinafter be referred to as Company X. Moreover, information about the change project and its events must be disclosed vaguely, also the commissioning company wishes to stay anonymous. The Company X replaced its old communication system with a modern communication system which includes partial customer relationship management functionalities. The goal for the system replacement operation was to improve data and information driven customer service and to improve the efficiency in the group of personnel that is in contact with customers.

The author of the thesis used this change project to examine the ways and effectiveness of the methods of change management in the commissioning company.

## **1.2 Objectives and Research Question**

Various changes have taken place in the last few years within the case company, also there will be various changes coming soon. Also, the Insurance industry is going through a

transformation, and this requires every company to react and make changes. The aim of this thesis is to review the latest major change which affected most of the personnel working in the case company and provide information and tools for future improvement in change management.

The objective of the thesis was to ultimately provide competitive advantage to the case company by giving tools and ways to further enhance the ability to advance and manage change in the future. Existing change management theories and research provides the framework for the research. The expectation was that by comparing the existing theories with the current methods of change management in the case company would provide sufficient basis for improvement suggestions and future planning of change management for the case company.

The focus point of this thesis is mainly on the customer service centre and its employees. The focus point was selected by two factors. First, the customer service centre uses the communication system the most and the change affected its employees the most as the new communication system is the main tool of the employees. Second, the author of this thesis works in the customer service centre and is most familiar with the team and the day-to-day life in there.

This thesis seeks to answer the question "How can Case Company X improve its change management?"

### **1.3 The Commissioning Company**

Company X operates in the damage insuring field and currently employs some 500 personnel with an annual turnover of over one-hundred-million euros. The roots of the company date back to late 19th century, where farmers originally formed a coalition agreeing to save money and materials for the use of rebuilding lives, after a loose fire destroys one's home and livelihood. A lot has changed since the early years and nowadays the case company offers various damage insurances.

Long lasting customer relationships, loyalty among customers and reliability towards customers are the core of the success of the case company. The fundamental parts of the company's strategy are fast and personal service for every customer, and personalized insurance products. The company emphasises the importance of continually improving customer experience with the aim to increase the number of customer-to-consumer

recommendations, as the recommendations are a core part of the marketing strategy. Company X as a company seeks to provide safety and continuance into the lives of its customers and to help the customers in suffered-damage cases. The head-office and the local offices have a united goal of serving the customers as personally and as professionally as possible.

## **2 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Literature Review**

This section reviews previous studies and literature on change management. A study conducted by J.S. Oakland and Stephen Tanner in 2007 followed 28 organizations and examined a gap between usual approach and 'best practice' which generated a helping framework for future initiatives. The research examined triggers for change, planning for change and implementation of change. The research led to the definition of two main constructs of change management, readiness for change and change implementation. (Oakland & Tanner, 2007).

There are many different theoretical frameworks regarding change. The author overviewed different theories and frameworks to find the most suitable theoretical framework to work as a foundation for the research.

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) is a framework designed to facilitate and assess the implementation of new innovations or reform initiatives, particularly in educational settings. Developed in the 1970s by researchers including Hall and colleagues, CBAM helps leaders understand and manage the complex process of change by focusing on the human element—the individuals involved in the change process. (CBAM: The Concerns-Based Adoption Model, 2015)

Improvement science is a change management framework that focuses on systematically improving processes and outcomes through iterative testing and learning. The framework emphasizes the importance of understanding human behaviour and psychology in driving and sustaining improvements. It highlights that successful change relies not only on technical solutions but also on engaging and motivating people. It is widely used in healthcare, education, and other sectors to drive sustainable improvements. It stresses the importance of

empowering people to act and make decisions. The framework provides strategies for effectively using data to support improvement efforts. (Hilton, K., & Anderson, A. 2018)

Kurt Lewin's three-stage model of change is a basic idea in managing change, helping both organizations and people move through changes smoothly. The change model explains that different forces affect how organizations and people behave during change. The forces pushing for change encourage and guide employees to adapt to new ways. On the other hand, the forces resisting change point out the obstacles and challenges that can block progress. The model has three steps: Unfreeze, Change, and Refreeze. The theory suggests that there must be a balance between the three phases. (Malik, 2024)

John Kotter's 8-Step Process for Leading Change is a widely recognized framework for implementing successful organizational change. The model provides a structured approach for managing change. The framework has eight steps and one of the key aspects of Kotter's model is its emphasis on involving a wide range of people in the change process. This includes forming a guiding coalition and enlisting a volunteer army to support the change effort. (Strategists, 2023)

As a conclusion, Kotter's 8-Step Process is the most suitable theoretical framework for this research as it focuses more on the process side of change and it has good multi-stage structure which helps to identify possible areas of improvement in the ways of change management in the commissioning company.

## **2.2 Change Management**

Change is usually triggered by a need for improvement within an organization and the need is generally observed by managers. Success in change occurs when there is a legitimate interest and support towards the object of change from the management. The most favourable situation is when there is an organic reason for the need of change and a desire to improve the operations of an organization. In these situations, the change is convincing and motivating for the personnel. One important requirement for a successful change process is that there is a legitimate and justifiable reason for the change. This helps the management in communicating the need for change to an organization. (Lämsä & Hautala, p. 186, 2005)

Technology and globalization are two of the many forces driving change in organizations. The readiness to manage and make change have become crucial for a company's success.

Today's pace for commerce has made standing still a rarity in business and change has become a core competence for businesses in highly competitive environments. (Bohlander & Snell, p. 13, 2012)

Organizations are being forced to lower their cost structure, improve the quality of their products and their services, and search for new growth opportunities and improve their profitability. Large scale change operations have helped some organizations to improve their competitive advantage, and the change operations have also paved the way for a brighter future for some organizations. (Kotter, p. 3, 1996)

Changes are always a challenge for an organization but when the changes are managed properly, they tend to create great value for the organization. On the flip side poorly managed change processes can drive an organization into various problems. The necessity for change is generally difficult to observe in organizations. Manufacturing the change needed from the basis of observations is also a consuming task. Identifying required actions and executing the actions will fail if the change process is not managed properly. (Kotter & Rathberger, p. 13, 2008)

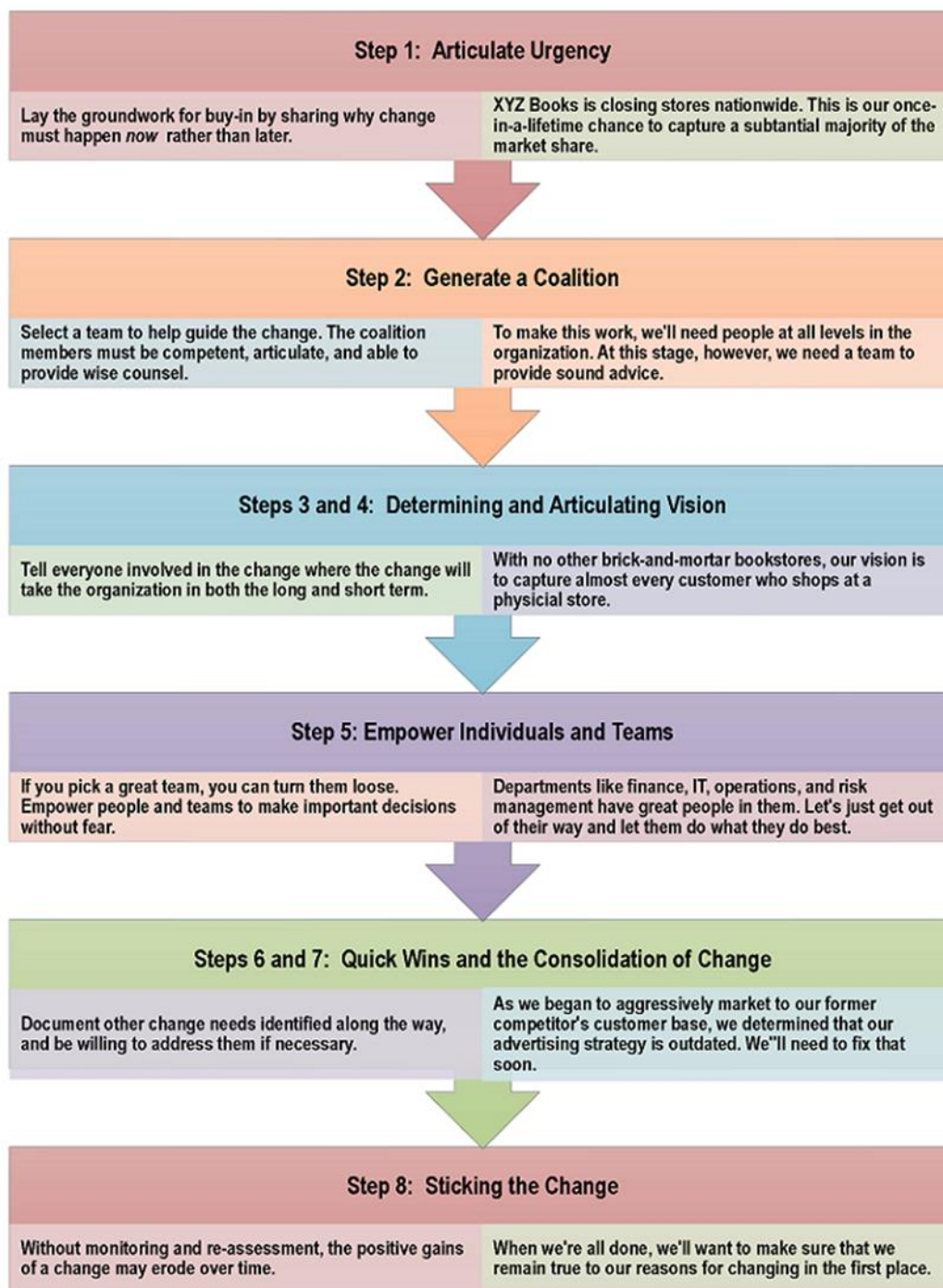
Change management is the people side of change and it is a process which has different tools and techniques to enable achieving the desired outcomes in business. To be able to thrive in today's business landscape businesses must be able to deliver consistent positive results in multiple change processes. A proper application of change management enables organizations to thrive on each change more effectively and build competences that promote organic growth. (Creasey, 2024)

There are two factors that enable success stories in change. First being a multi-stage process which is strong enough to overcome any notable resistance towards change. Second being effective management and more importantly leadership along the multi-stage process. (Kotter, p. 17, 1996)

### **2.2.1 Kotter's Multi-Stage Process**

The following figure demonstrates the Kotter's 8-step-process which is a known change management tool. The following sequence gives more detailed information about the 8-step-process.

Figure 1. Kotters 8-step process ([https://study.com/cimages/multimages/16/4702acaf-52ea-4fc9-b639-fddd9e82762b\\_kotters\\_8\\_steps\\_page\\_6.png](https://study.com/cimages/multimages/16/4702acaf-52ea-4fc9-b639-fddd9e82762b_kotters_8_steps_page_6.png), accessed 7.9.2024)



*Step one, creating a sense of necessary urgency*

To kick-start a change process efficiently there must be a sense of strong urgency. Urgency tends to naturally form coalitions, and it also lowers barriers between teams. If the general atmosphere is content with a current situation it is challenging to build a coalition that is impactful and strong enough to drive change forward. There are a lot of different causes for contentment within a company and these reasons often are a result of naive short-sightedness and a lack of ambition. To be successful in a change process the reasons for contentment need to be removed. To create a strong sense of urgency, radical actions must be taken. These actions should preferably create an artificial landscape which seems unbeneficial for a company. The actions can vary depending on the situation, but generally it is preferred to alter numbers on internal reporting to make the current situation of a company seem dire. Other method is to enable the voice of customer dissatisfaction to be heard throughout a company and building supporting reports to ensure that the consensus in a company is towards an artificial crisis. (Kotter, p. 37-39, 1996)

#### *Step two, building and forming a guiding coalition*

Success in large or massive changes needs an even larger force behind those changes and the force is the people making the change happen. There must always be a strong and influencing group of select people which is able to turn the consensus of a company's personnel towards the desired outcome. To ensure the effectiveness of the group the group needs a few key components; competence, power, expertise, credibility, and leadership. Leadership is the single most important component regarding success as leaders can drive momentum towards the desired outcome effectively. Good managers are a negative force in a change process if given the position where they are in charge because of the tendency to manage and to not lead people although managers are still needed in the process. Nevertheless, managers are needed in the coalition to produce visible and tangible results in the change process. To fully enable the functioning of a coalition there needs to be mutual trust and respect. To achieve the desired level of trust and respect the coalition usually needs to undergo different bonding activities. (Kotter, p. 45-58, 1996)

#### *Step three, determining vision*

Vision is a mental image of the future which either indirectly or directly gives affirmation to people on working towards making the mental image a reality in the future. Vision clarifies the direction of change which simplifies a lot of different decisions along the way. It also empowers and guides personnel to make difficult decisions even though the decisions might feel uneasy. Vision also enables coordinating the actions of even thousands of people. There are some

components for vision which enable it to be successful at being a guideline for a change process. Vision needs to be simple and clear enough for a person to fully imagine it clearly to see the bigger picture of the future. Clarity on its own is not enough to motivate people to buy the vision so it needs to be vastly desirable to be taken by heart. Vision gets its best power and effectiveness when the vision is accomplishable by action and when the statement of the vision is narrow and flexible enough to properly guide actions across departments. If a vision has all the required components, it should be easy to communicate to employees and because of that it can be rooted easily into the fundamentals of a change process. (Kotter p. 59-72, 1996)

#### *Step four, communicating the vision*

Successful vision communication enables a straightforward start for a change process. To be successful in communicating vision the communication needs to occur in various situations and in different channels. The discussion needs to begin within the guiding coalition well before the vision is communicated for other employees. This pre-emptive discussion prepares the coalition to address the questions of uncertain employees during the communication phase. The core message of communication needs to be clear and understandable for every member of a change coalition and for every employee. Communication becomes efficient and influencing when a person hears about the subject from multiple directions and can discuss with different persons in multiple occasions throughout a long period of time. This communication includes also open conversations with employees and general two-way communication about vision within a company. The purpose of this communication is to cement the vision in the organization's mind-set and to unearth possible conflicts in the cause and purpose of the vision. Conversations allow natural increase in knowledge regarding the state of a company and in the possible solutions to different problems that may arise when a change process is ongoing. Communication also includes corresponding actions from the key members of a company. If the higher level of leaders and managers act in a way that is against the company's change vision the change process will inevitably come to a stop. Acting against a desired goal leads to common distrust among employees. A mutual perception of a desirable future can push towards required actions and decisions. (Kotter, p. 73 -85, 1996)

#### *Step five, Empowering staff*

Internal change always requires participation from various people. Generally, the participating people might feel that they do not have required authorization to fully achieve the desired goals. There are different barriers that need to be addressed and assessed to efficiently empower as many persons as possible. Generally, the barriers generate friction or disable functions

towards change and to be successful in change these barriers need to be removed. These barriers generally are core parts of a company, and the challenge is to see why the core parts are barriers because they tend to be overlooked. Structural issues tend to arise when there are strict responsibility boundaries between different teams. In an ongoing change process these structural issues generally might be seen as a lack of teamwork and effort when the problem is in the structures. If structure is not complying with the change process, there is a real chance that the systems that govern the structure and other parts of the company are not aligned either to properly enable efficient change. A proper and a critical review about compliance of the systems is a necessity when it comes to managing change and driving change forward. (Kotter, p. 87-100, 1996)

#### *Step Six, Short term accomplishments*

Short term accomplishments validate the change vision for the change coalition. If there are difficulties reaching set goals or results are not surfacing, there is a possibility that the change vision needs to be reassessed or there are some other problems regarding the previous steps that may need more attention. Alongside validation the accomplishments give undeniable data and information for doubters and their objections about the direction of change. The data and information also empower and motivates the group of people that have neutral or positive outlooks on the change project. Accomplishments serve as concrete evidence that the change and the process is heading in the right direction. This step in the change process needs some strategic planning and critical thinking from the change coalition in advance. The planning for accomplishments needs to take the future into account in a way, that the results provide undeniable justification for the change process and a large portion of the organization notices visible improvements in specific areas of the company's operations. It is also beneficial to understand that different organizations require different time frames for results and the time frames correspond to the size of the organization and the change process. Large companies have more gears in the system than smaller companies and this stretches the time frame for surfacing results longer. (Kotter p. 101-113, 1996).

#### *Step seven, solidify improvements and generate more change*

When dealing with large scale change operations smaller change needs always surface. This results in a long cycle of different operations and improvement needs in various situations and departments to reach the final goal determined by the change vision. To be successful in the

arising change needs the guiding coalition needs more resources and usually the coalition grows in this step due to the lack of adequate knowledge and time in the original coalition. The arising change and improvement needs can either be easily dealt with or they can be time consuming and difficult. There is some structural variance which contributes to the level of challenge for improvement needs. Commonly in the departments or systems which have a low level of organizational dependency the changes and improvements can be achieved with reasonably little effort. When there is very little to no dependency there are only a few organizational functions to consider when organizing change or improvements. This organizational solitude promotes efficiency in communication and decision making. The counterpart for this fluency is highly dependent and bound departments or systems. Dependency in these departments and systems generates natural change friction which unfolds during critical reviewing of the departments or systems. Dependency can be either system-based or organization-based or a combination of these two. Dependency occurs when there are factors which effect the active operating directly and changes need to be made in various parts of a system to tackle the desired change. It can be said that the higher the dependency the higher the natural resistance to change as there is more components that need to be considered when making larger changes. (Kotter, p. 115-126, 1996).

#### *Step eight, sticking the change*

Change process can statistically appear to be effective and the general momentum of a company can also appear to be towards the desired outcome. There can still be some underlying cultural resistance among personnel which can degrade or slow down the change process drastically if left unattended. In these situations, the underlying culture does not align with the change processes' goals or there are some fundamental contradictions between the change processes' goals and the culture. Determining the culture and its effects is crucial to effectively maintain changes in the long run. (Kotter, p. 128-130, 1996).

Culture is the social order of a company's personnel as it guides an individual to function depending on what is generally encouraged, accepted, discouraged, or rejected within a community. Culture is a phenomenon which occurs within a group of people, and which stems from values, shared behaviour, and assumptions. Culture can be seen as the unwritten rules of a certain group of people. There is always a culture which has been developing prior to any change projects and if the prior culture is not acknowledged and handled properly many projects fail. (Groysberg, Lee, Price, Cheng, Harvard Business Review, 2018) To be successful in changing the culture blocking the change process there needs to be continuous and conscious efforts to alter the fundamentals affecting the culture. (Kotter, p. 135, 1996).

## 2.3 Causes of Failure in Change Efforts

Even though some organizations have benefited from change operations, unfortunately a lot of change attempts have failed resulting in negative or at best neutral outcomes. Resources have been wasted, employees have suffered from burnouts and the improvements have been minimal. The negative outcomes of change processes are somewhat inevitable. (Kotter, p. 4, 1996)

To study the change processes and change management in Company X effectively it is important to first explore the reasons why different change operations fail. This can help with identifying possible ongoing scenarios, reasons for possible delays on the communication channel project and it can also help in reviewing the current state and methods of change management in Company X. Kotter (1996, p. 4-13) has listed some of the most common reasons for failure in the change process:

### *Too much contentment for the current situation*

Driving change forward in an organization where the whole personnel have not understood or realized the need for change is the most crucial mistake that can be made. If the whole organization or some members are content with the current situation, all the goals of a renewal process will be left unachieved.

### *Too weak coalition driving the change*

Projects with a weak coalition may seem to make some progress for a while, until the project is clenched by opposing forces fighting against the change. Most commonly the failure arises because of underestimating the necessity for a strong coalition. No matter how dedicated the project group is they will fail if the coalition does not have strong enough influencers driving the change forward.

### *Underestimating vision*

Vision plays a major role in driving beneficial changes. It guides and helps in organizing large masses of people. Without a proper vision the project usually tumbles down into separate small projects that often drive a company to a wrong direction.

### *The vision is not communicated properly*

Personnel are not willing to make effort towards change if the outcome of change is not appealing enough on a personal level, or if the personnel do not believe in the possibility of succeeding of a change project. It is hard to connect to personnel on a sufficient level without proper communication.

*Obstacles blocking the new vision are not dealt with*

Even though employees share the vision for the project there still may be some obstacles that block the fluent operating. These obstacles may be only mental blocks or real physical obstacles that prevent and slow the project down. An example for a physical obstacle is organizational structure that outlines too narrow authorization.

*Short term accomplishments are not surfacing*

Large scale change operations are always in jeopardy to lose their effectiveness if there are no short-term goals which can be celebrated. If there are no accomplishments to celebrate many people might lose their interest and even change to opposing side. Failed change projects have lacked undeniable strides forward towards the final goal.

## **2.4 Change Assessment**

Successful change management involves planning and acquiring information about the onset of change. This information includes two critical areas with first being the scope, depth, type, and the overall size of the change itself. The scope of change determines the affected environment within an organization which can vary from smaller groups to the whole organization. This includes employees also. The depth and the overall size of change determines the time frame for desired change and the amount of change compared to the starting point. The type of change determines whether the change is process based, technology based, or human resource based. Factoring in this information helps in formulating an effective change strategy. (Creasey, 2024)

The second critical area is the organization and the employees in the organization. Understanding the organizational attributes allows leaders to prepare their teams and sponsors about potential obstacles blocking the change. Obstacles can arise from different aspects within the organization. These aspects are universal and can be found in every organization and they are the following (Creasey, 2024):

### 1) Values and Culture

Culture and values of an organization can give hints and guidance to predicting some reactions from employees.

### 2) Change Capacity

There is always a limit for change that an organization can adjust to and when the limit is reached the probability for another successful change diminish.

### 3) Power Distribution and Leadership

Leadership and management support play an important role in change management and it is beneficial to spend time assessing the leadership methods before acting on change.

### 4) Effects of Previous Changes

If previous changes have had positive feedback and outcomes the trust for a new change is higher compared to a situation where change has had neutral or negative effects on the organization.

### 5) Management's Change Readiness

Change can be very difficult to establish if the management is not change ready and the managers have high control over their teams. When the management is change ready and have high control over their teams the change process is easier.

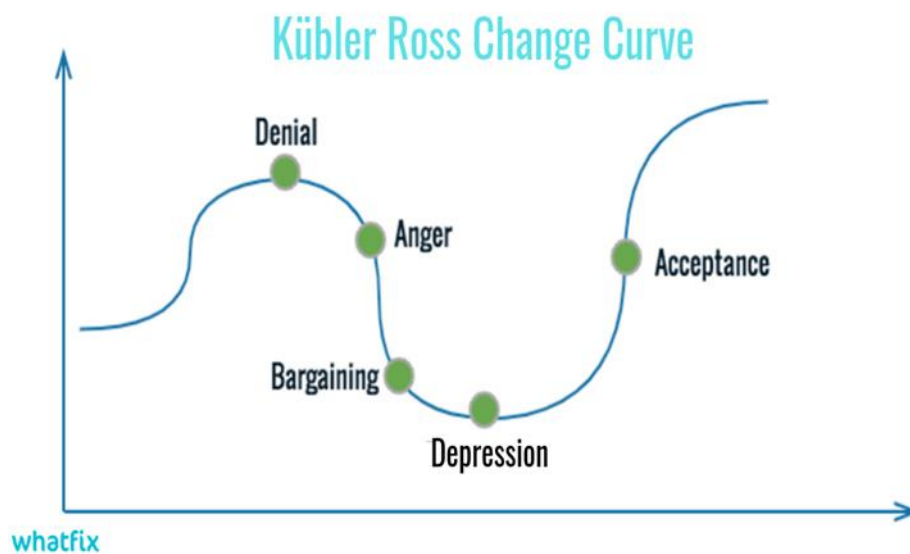
## **2.5 Change Resistance**

To be successful in any change process it is important to factor in the basic human reaction towards change. Humans tend to adjust to change gradually and at a different pace. Adjusting to change has various phases. Some the phases are the following: Denial, Resistance, Acceptance, Re-orientating, Drawback, and Permanent acceptance. If a person experiences certain change as a positive thing the person naturally gravitates towards change. If change affects a person's day-to-day life the change is harder for the person to accept. When the initial reaction for change is either anger or sadness a person needs some time for overcoming the reaction. The key factor in these situations is proper communication from authorial instances

and high-level management. To advance change, the communication needs to guide the focus on positive aspects of the change and the necessity of it. With proper communication the anger and sadness can turn into happiness and optimism and the emotional reactions can turn into sensible reactions. (Hiltunen, p. 107 - 120, 2011)

The following figure demonstrates the Kübler Ross Change curve which includes the most common phases for a person experiencing change.

Figure 2. Change Curve (Olmstead, 2024)



Change resistance is common in different organizations. Understanding the personal reasons behind the resistance is the first step for overcoming the humane obstacle on the path of change. A person might find learning something new challenging and thus may resort to doing tasks as always before since it is more convenient and familiar for the person. Change also has effects on a person's duties, powers, and influence. Alterations in the day-to-day life might have negative influence and the person affected by the negatives will resist change. If a person can't fully comprehend the change at hand and the reasons for it, the person might experience feelings of fear and dread. There are also common customs and habits for a person and if the person is pushed away from the comfortable and habitual ways of working towards new ways of working the most general reaction is resistance in some form. (Lumen Learning, 2021.)

When there is more than one person involved in a change process there is also more subsidiary resistance amplifiers such as central norms and hierarchies creating change friction as the group members are used to a certain way of working and to certain group dynamics. (Resistance to Change | Organizational Behaviour and Human Relations. 2021.)

### **2.5.1 Preparing for Change Resistance**

Change readiness is a personal trait which can be trained with continuous small changes by managers. Reoccurring minor changes in the day-to-day life of employees enhance their ability to cope with changes as they get accustomed to constant change. This lowers the magnitude of change resistance on major changes as it can be seen as just another change. (Pentikäinen, 2009, 59)

Proper assessment of change readiness prior to any change process is a great tool for managing change as it uncovers possible obstacles and other factors that influence change readiness. There are some areas which require thought and minor research prior to any change process. These areas are mainly cultural and focus on different aspects trust. When employees trust their managers and company management the change readiness is higher, and change is smoother. (Are Your Employees Ready to Commit to Change, 2021)

### **2.5.2 Overcoming Change Resistance**

From an employee's perspective there are environmental factors that might generate or amplify change resistance. These factors create uncertainty which manifests as a sense of inconvenience, doubt, or fear for the employee. Every event which might create uncertainty must be taken into consideration when preparing for a change project. Uncertainty arises when there is a possibility for job loss or if there is lack of mutual trust between management and employees. Lacklustre communication concerning change and insufficient engaging of employees as a part of the change are generally the main reasons for change resistance. (Paycor, 2023)

To overcome change resistance management must be proactive to guide the resistance into acceptance. Adequate planning and different steps help in overcoming the challenges concerning change resistance. There are some general methods that management can use to advance change (Managing Resistance to Change, 2024):

#### **1) Participation and involvement**

Employees who actively participate in the change process are generally less resistant to change. Being an active participant and having a hands-on impact on the outcome of the change makes employees more committed and motivated. Successful participating and involving of employees requires more time, more preparation, and more active planning.

Managers still need to have adequate control every aspect of the change process to guide change toward the desired outcome.

## 2) Education and communication

Communication and education are important and effective tools when dealing with change resistance. If change creates fear of the unknown the fear is amplified if management fails to communicate change properly. Good communication requires planning and multiple channels to be effective. When there are many people, impactful communication becomes harder, and this aspect should be considered when planning for communication and education.

## 3) Facilitation and support

Facilitation and support require time and resources to be effective. The optimal use of this method is for one person or a small group since managers can only have meaningful conversations and listening sessions with a small number of people at a time. This method should be used with the personnel who are resisting change the most.

## 4) Negotiation and agreement

Some changes require resource reallocation to succeed. Change resistant managers for example might have to be relocated to make room for a smoother change. This process is somewhat easy, but it can get expensive and time consuming as the initial negotiations might spark further negotiations and agreement processes.

# 3 Methodology

The aim of this research is to gain information about the ways of change management during the latest major change in Company X which affected most of the personnel working in Company X and provide perspective and tools for future improvement in change management. The author wants to identify areas of improvement in the ways of change management and gauge the success of the communication system change.

### **3.1 Research Method**

The chosen research method for this study is a mixed research method, where both quantitative and qualitative data are utilized.

Qualitative research explores and provides insights into problems by gathering participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviours. Unlike quantitative research, which collects numerical data, qualitative research answers "how" and "why" questions, making it ideal for understanding complex human behaviours and processes. Qualitative research can be standalone or part of mixed-methods research, combining qualitative and quantitative data. It often involves open-ended questions and non-linear design, allowing participants to explain their thoughts and experiences in detail. This approach helps identify themes and patterns that are difficult to quantify, ensuring the context and narrative are preserved. (Tenny, Brannan, 2022). The qualitative method allows the researcher to gain insight into the decision-making process concerning change management and to discover possible areas of improvement.

Quantitative research is a method of collecting and analysing numerical data to identify patterns, averages, predictions, and causal relationships. It involves methods such as surveys, experiments, and systematic observations. The numerical data helps to find patterns and possible correlation in the research. (Bhandari, 2023) This research uses quantitative research to gather general information about the employees to possibly discover some correlations when comparing the results. The qualitative research also gathers information about the experiences of the change process.

While qualitative and quantitative research are different, they are not opposites or mutually exclusive. They can complement each other; for example, qualitative research can provide deeper insights into correlations found in quantitative studies. This integration enhances the overall understanding of research findings. (Tenny, Brannan, 2022).

### **3.2 Research Approach**

The research was conducted with an interview with a key member of the project and a corresponding questionnaire to the employees. The aim of the study was to gather information about the communication system change and the ways of change management and find similarities and differences in experiences of the change process between both parties.

The author interviewed one key member of the communication system project with a semi structured interview. The person was chosen for the interview on the basis that the person participated on the project from the very beginning and had a high level of responsibility on deploying the changes and managing the process. The interview included questions derived from the theoretical framework of the thesis and from the common knowledge about the ways of working in Company X from the authors prior experience.

The author had previous knowledge that the employees would not answer to open-ended questions in a manner which would provide enough information. For this reason, the questionnaire for the employees was designed in a way which would maximize the usable information and save time from the research and would gather as much information as possible. The employees were given the opportunity to decline from answering to the questions. Most of the questions were based on the theoretical framework of the thesis. Some nontheory related questions were added to give information about the usage of support channels concerning the communication system. These questions also give indirect information about adaptation to the new ways of working.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

The research used primary data, which was collected with the questionnaire and the interview with the member of the project. The author used google forms to conduct the survey. The questionnaire was sent to 18 employees that were familiar with the previous communication system. Out of the 18 recipients there were 11 who answered the survey, so response rate was 61,1%.

### **3.4 Research Design**

The research was done as a retrospective of a change process.

The Interview can be found in the appendix 2. The author interviewed one key member of the communication system project with a semi structured interview. The interview included mostly open-ended questions which targeted the change process of the communication system.

The questionnaire can be found in the appendix 1. The questionnaire consisted mostly of close-ended questions. There were two themes in the questionnaire first theme being change management and the second being questions related to change resistance. The questionnaire

was anonymous. Most of the questions were based on the theoretical framework of the thesis. Some nontheory related questions were added to give information about the usage of support channels concerning the communication system.

In preparation for the surveying the author pre-tested the survey with three random employees to test the understandability and clarity of the questions and response alternatives. The survey included mostly claims from which the respondents needed to choose the most agreeable alternative. The response alternatives followed mostly the Likert-scale. The survey was originally done in Finnish and translated to English afterwards by the author.

### **3.5 Reliability, Validity, and Limitations**

Reliability in research is the consistency of the measurements within a study. If the results are consistent and reproduceable they are considered reliable. Reliability is an important factor in research design. (Roberts & Priest, 2006) The study was done with one company and its employees, so the results might be different for other companies. Same or similar experiments done within the commissioning company should yield corresponding results. As the research focuses on personal opinions, the personal backgrounds might result in different results in similar environments.

Validity in research refers to how accurately a study reflects or measures the specific concept the researcher aims to understand. It ensures that the study truly investigates the intended subject. (Stewart, 2024) The study was focused on a specific change process, and it is possible the results can reflect the respondents' personal opinions about the researched topics however the research used the specific change project as a tool for benchmarking the general change management methods in the commissioning company, so the results concerning change can be considered as valid. The research was conducted with a specific company in the insurance industry, and thus the results should not be taken as general results which would represent the whole insurance industry.

There were some limitations which affected the research. There were employees who were not familiar with the previous communication system and thus were ruled out of the research as they had not experienced the previous communication system, and the employment was so new that it could be argued that they were not really experiencing change. The new communication system has various user groups, and it is most used in the customer service centre. To narrow the scope of the research and to maintain a certain degree of efficiency and

clarity the research had to be focused and narrowed to a defined user group of the communication system.

### **3.6 Ethics**

Each employee was informed about the purpose of the research and the intended use of the survey responses. However, because the survey was anonymous, it was impossible to withdraw individual responses as they could not be linked to specific employees. This anonymity ensured the protection of employees' privacy. The participation of answering the questionnaire was voluntary for the employees.

## **4 Results**

### **4.1 Interview with the Key Member of the Project**

The author interviewed one key member of the communication system project with a semi structured interview on 10.09.2020. The person was chosen for the interview on the basis that the person participated on the project from the very beginning and had a high level of responsibility on deploying the changes and managing the process. The interview included questions derived from the theoretical framework of the thesis.

The author asked the key member of the project to give background information about the renewal of the communication system.

*"The renewal of the communication system was driven by the desire to build a good foundation for future development of the customer service of Company X. Also, there was a desire to take a "digital leap" in the technology and operations in the customer service of Company X and to update the customer service operations to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

*The communication system renewal was initially planned to take place in the spring of 2020 since the support and updating of the old system was to be ended by the provider in the spring of 2021.*

*The planned schedule was forced to be initiated earlier since the provider for the old system informed its clients about a merge, which pushed the support run-down for the old system to the summer of 2020."*

The author asked about planning for the process and about the initial communication for the employees.

*“The project consisted of purchasing process and launch-process and it had the following goals:*

- *To replace the old communicating system with new technology.*
- *To implement more functions in a single application.*
- *The product should enable the collection of customer data and to enhance better operating with customers and to provide a proper 360° view about the customer account.*
- *The new product/service will be used to improve customer satisfaction and from that Company X will strengthen its position in the industry.*
- *Updating the phone number information of our clients for instant customer recognition.*
- *Updating, changing, and removing phone numbers that are shown for customers in different channels and the processes related to them.*
- *Build a foundation for future development.*

*The purchasing process was well planned and properly phased. In the beginning of the project the project manager interviewed a lot of employees and followed the ways of working in various departments. The purchasing process was initiated after the project manager had done thorough requirement listing for the purchase.”*

The author asked which departments were responsible for the communication system renewal and about the roster of the guidance group.

*“The project group consisted of experts from various departments: Product development, customer & HR system development, insurance services, customer service, HR, damage coverage service and a professional project manager.*

*The guidance group had managerial representatives from B2C, ICT, development, product development, HR, marketing, and customer service.”*

The author asked from the project member about a plan for communication and how was the need for change communicated.

*”Yes, the project group made a communication plan.”*

*”The overall communication concerning change was carried through using different channels such as, Intranet, Moodle, internet, email, Microsoft teams, phone, and an internal fair.”*

*”It was communicated through different channels and in the education of the new communicating system.”*

The author asked about the communication of the benefits of the new communication system.

*”The benefits were discussed during communication and education.”*

The author asked about the amount of communication during the process.

*”There can never be enough communication.”*

The author made a question about the responsibility for change management for the change process and about the support to manage change.

*”The project did not include a plan for the responsibility for change management, the change itself was done according to the communicating plan. The responsibility for actual change management was given to the operational management. Change management and the commitment of operational management was discussed in the guidance group.”*

*”The operational management did not receive support directly, but the project included a training plan for the employees which included different support channels.”*

The author wanted to know the ways of monitoring change during the process.

*“The advancement of the project was monitored within the guidance group and there was a questionnaire which had questions about the change and the communication system after the process was finished. The monitoring ended when the project ended and no continuance for the project was determined. There haven’t been any follow up surveys for the employees. The responsibility for knowledge and education is on the supervisors of different departments.”*

The author asked about generating more change during the initial process.

*“The initial change was a large effort for the organization and all the available resources were tied to the launch of the communication system. One of the goals for the project was to create a real 360-customer-view using integration with existing software and applications after the initial launch. Unfortunately, the integration required more resources than we had so the integration which was supposed to enable the 360-view was later scrapped.”*

The author asked about the education process and the channels used for the education of the new communication system, and about the sufficiency of the amount of education.

*“The project included a training plan for the employees which included different support channels. The channels for support were an internal support phone line, extra training opportunities, named support personnel, Q&A thread in intranet, written guides and video guides, and there was support mornings with the service provider in Teams with voluntary presence. The education was carried out online. “*

*“In my opinion there was and is a lot of support for the employees but in my understanding the employees wanted more direct support that required physical presence. In my opinion successful learning of the communication system only required activity from the employees.”*

The author asked about deliberate effort to prepare for change resistance and about the examination of change readiness of the employees.

*“ There was no examining of change readiness before the process. The system renewal was somewhat forced since the service provider ended the support of our old system. In my opinion there was not enough preparation for the complete change process. In my experience the end users often experience self-learning and video guides as insufficient, and some have difficulties learning and using new systems from home office.”*

The author asked about the involvement of the employees in the change process.

*“Yes, the employees were monitored in different departments, and they were able to give wishes and requests concerning the new communication system. In addition, there was a group of personnel which was trained to use the new system beforehand to help other employees. The help-group held a meeting every day during the launch of the new system to discuss arisen subjects.”*

The author asked about short-term wins from the member of the project.

*Yes, but mostly the wins concerned the technical process and did not focus on the change process itself. The project group reported these to the guidance group.*

The project member was asked to tell an opinion about the level of expertise of the users of the new communication system.

*“The use of the communication system has improved significantly, and you can hear positive feedback about it from time to time.”*

The author asked if the project member can use the new system.

*“Yes, but I don’t use the system on a day-to-day basis in my work.”*

## **4.2 Survey for the Employees**

This subchapter includes the results of the survey for the employees. The questionnaire included quantitative questions and qualitative questions for the employees, and it was conducted during 21.09.2020 – 20.10.2020. The answers to the qualitative questions are listed at the end of this subchapter.

Figure 3. Age of the participant

1. Your age  
11 vastausta

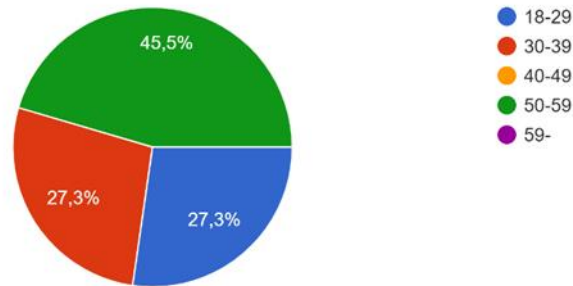
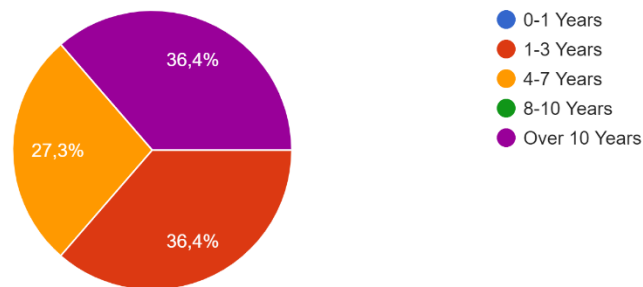


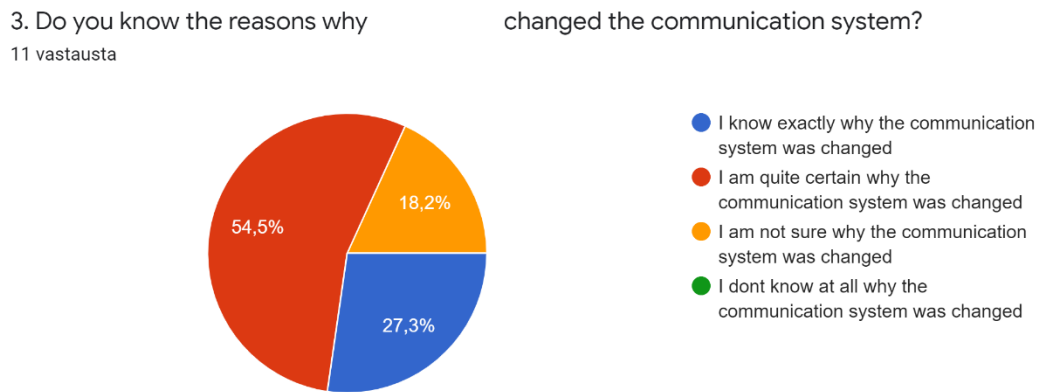
Figure 4. Length of the career

2. How long have you worked in  
11 vastausta



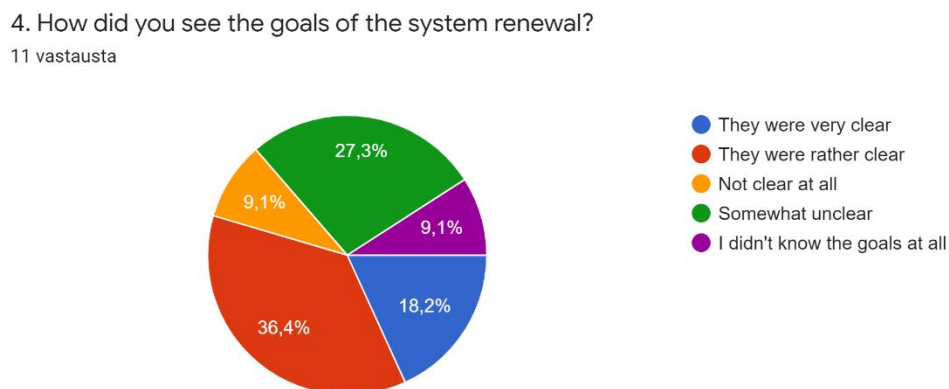
There were two classifying questions in the survey. The author was interested to know the age distribution of the employees and the length of the career in the commissioning company. The age distribution was quite large as 45,4% of the respondents were aged 50-59 years, 27,3% were aged 30-39, and 27,3% were aged 18-29%. It can be said that based on the results the employee base in the customer service centre represents many different age groups.

Figure 5. Knowledge of the reasons why Company X changed the communication system?



The results of question number 3 indicate that a large majority of the respondents have at least some knowledge about the reasons for the communication system change. There were only 18,2% who were uncertain why the communication system was changed and 0% who had no knowledge why the communication system was changed.

Figure 6. How clear were the goals?

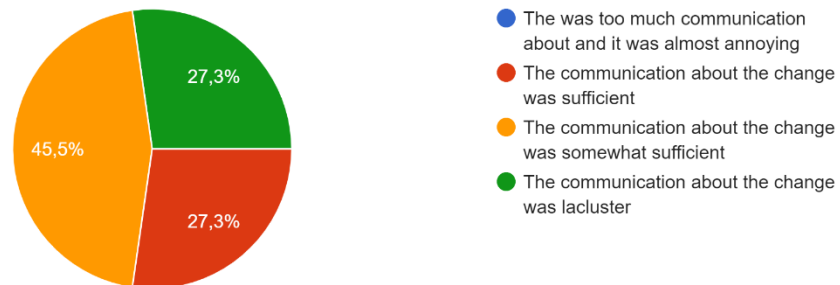


The results of question number 4 show that there was some discrepancy with the perception of the goals of the system renewal among the respondents, still over half of the respondents found the goals at least rather clear. The communication about the goals had not reached 9,1 % of the respondents at all.

Figure 7. The amount of communication

5. Was there enough communication about the change of the communication system in your opinion?

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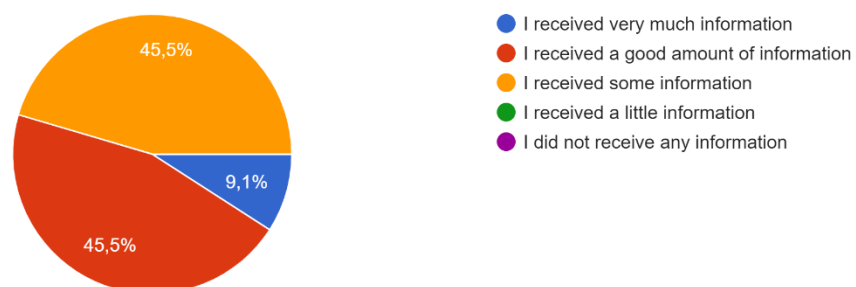


The results of question number 5 give information about the effectiveness of communication and the perceived amount of the communication during the complete change process from the employee's point of view. A large majority of the responses leaned towards at least some insufficiency in communication and 27,3% of the respondents felt that the communication was sufficient.

Figure 8. Information about the schedule and the change

6. Did you receive enough information about the change and the timeframe of the change?

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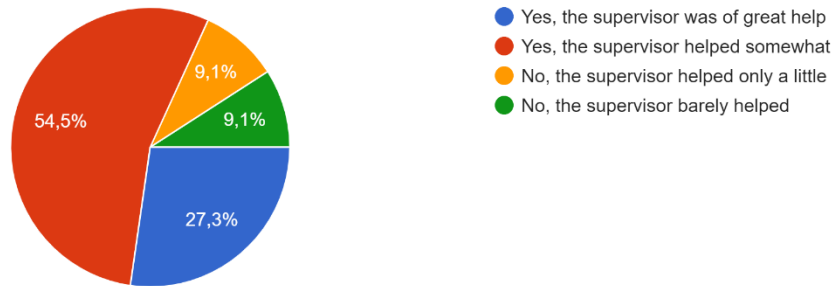


The results of question number 6 indicate that the amount of information received by the respondents was at least mediocre or better. This question was connected to change communication in general and to change resistance.

Figure 9. Support from supervisor

7. Did you receive enough support from your supervisor during change?

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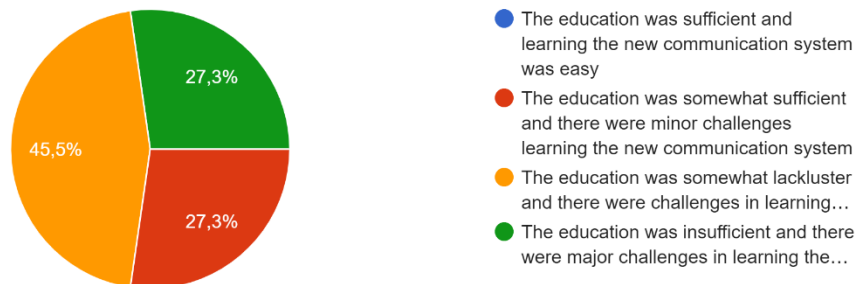


The results of question number 7 show that most of the respondents received direct support from their supervisor and 18,2% of the respondents felt that were left without necessary supervisory support

Figure 10. Education of the new communication system

10. Education of the new communication system

11 vastausta



Question number 10 was designed to give information about the success of the communication system education. The goal for this question was to mainly give feedback about the design of the education for the new communication system. This question also gave valuable indirect information about the level of preparation for change in general. The results show that there were challenges with the education.

Figure 11. Change and wellbeing

11. How did the change affect your wellbeing?

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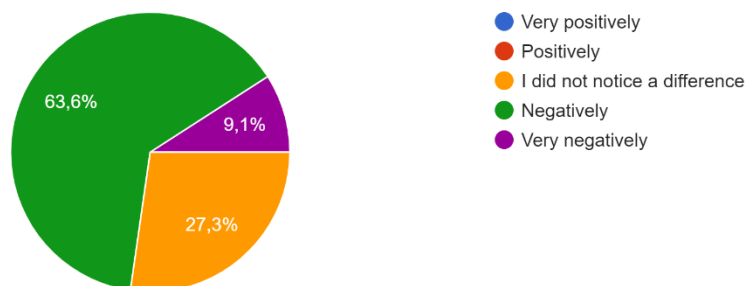


The results of question number 11 show that change had neutral or negative effects on the wellbeing of the respondents.

Figure 12. Change and working atmosphere

12. How did the change affect the overall working atmosphere?

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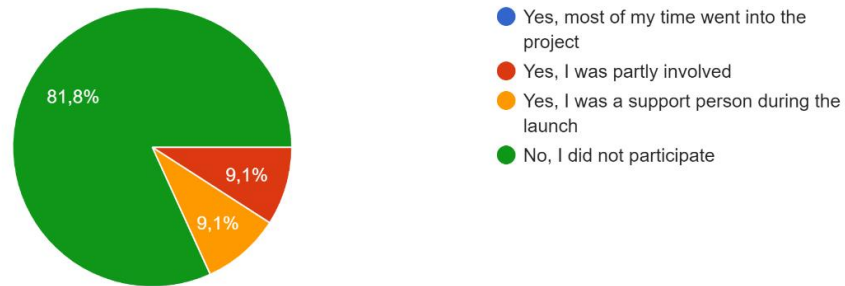


The results of question number 12 give affirmation to question number 11 and show that 63,3% of the respondents had noticed negative effects on the working atmosphere and 9.1% had noticed very negative effects. There were no responses leaning towards positive effects on working atmosphere.

Figure 13. Participation in the project

8. Did you participate in the communication system project?

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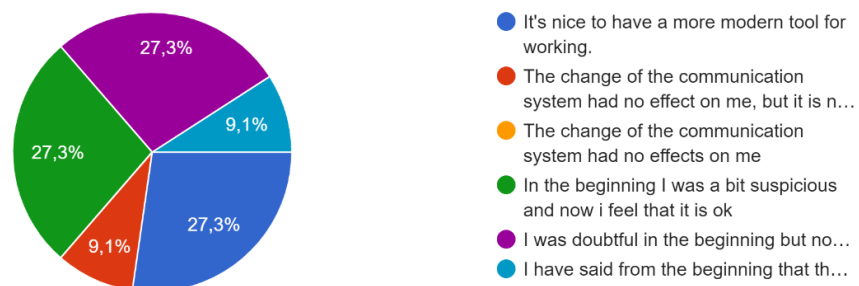


The results of question number 8 show that a minority of the employees of the customer service centre participated in the communication system project.

Figure 14. The experience with the change

9. Your experience with the change of the communication system.

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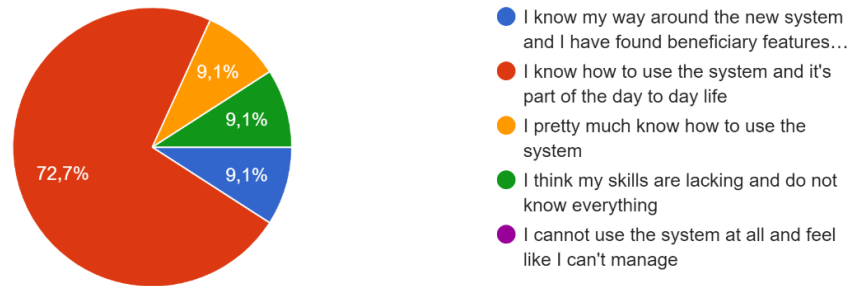


The results of question number 9 show that there is a large distribution of experiences about the new communication system among the employees of the customer service centre.

Figure 15. Level of expertise

13. What is your level of expertise of the new communication system?

11 vastausta



The results of question number 13 show that 72,7% of the respondents have adapted to the new communication system in a way that the new communication system is a part of their day-to-day life. There is 19,2% of the group who have not completely adapted to the new communication system and 9,1% who have adapted so well that they have found benefits with using the new communication system.

Figure 16. Expertise of colleagues

14. How do you see the level of expertise of your colleagues?

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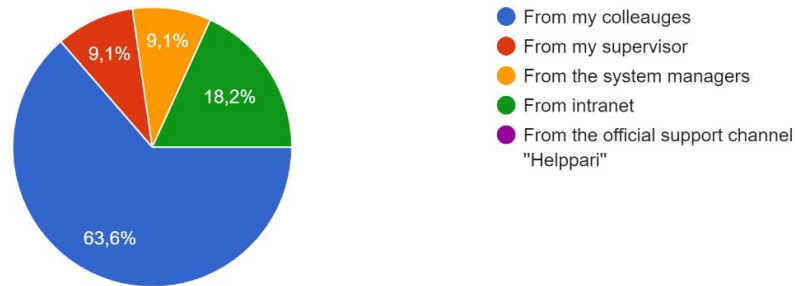


The results of question number 14 show that there is some uncertainty about the level of expertise on using the new communication system among the employees. 36,4% of the respondents think that the system is used properly, 27,3 % do not know if the system is used properly or not and 36,4% of the respondents think that there are some gaps in the skills of their colleagues.

Figure 17. Support for the new system

15. Where do you receive the most support for the communication system currently?

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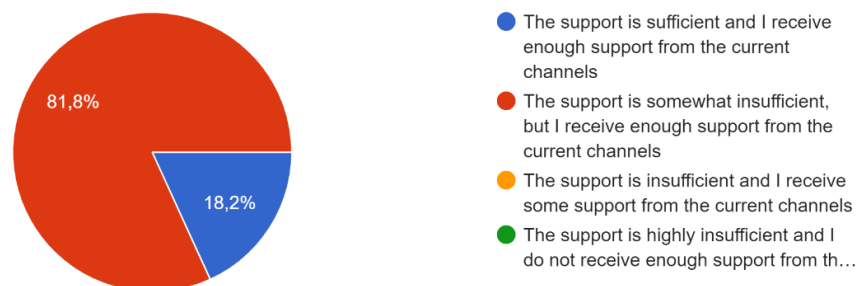


The results of question number 15 show that most employees receive support from colleagues or through some human interaction. 18,2% of the respondents use intranet the most.

Figure 18. Sufficiency of the support for the new system

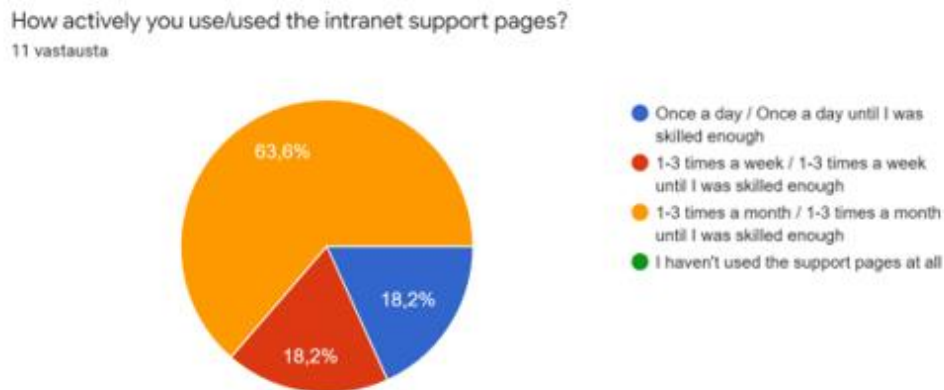
16. Do you feel that you have enough support with the communication system?

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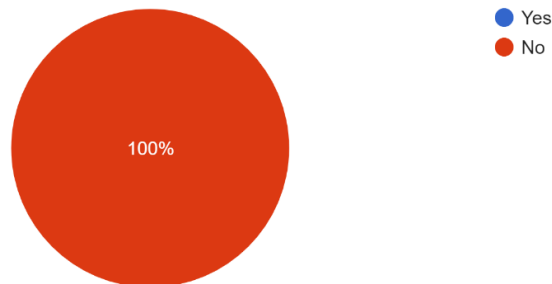
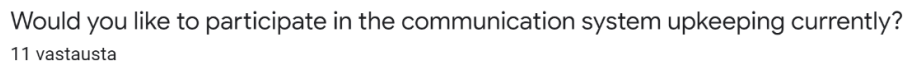
The results of question number 16 show that 81.8% of the respondents feel that they receive enough support even though the support is considered somewhat insufficient and 18,2% of the respondents feel that the support is sufficient.

Figure 19. Usage of the intranet pages



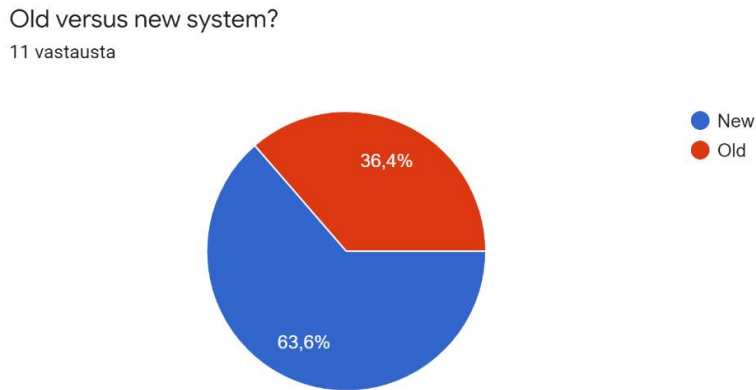
The results of question number 17 show the usage of the intranet support pages. The intranet has been used by every respondent, as 0% answered that they have not used the support pages.

Figure 20. Participation in upkeeping



The results of question number 18 show no interest in participating in the upkeeping of the new communication system.

Figure 21. Old vs. New



The results of question number 18 show that 63,6% of the respondents prefer the new system over the old communication system.

The survey included three open ended questions, and these questions did not receive complete answer rate. The purpose of the questions was to give deeper understanding about the perspective for the change process from the employees' side. The answers are typed collectively under each question.

Feedback about the intranet guides

*" Make the guides as short as possible"*

*"The guides should include more pictures. It is sometimes hard to understand someone else's thought process with only text"*

The participants were asked to pick between the old and the new system and to state the reasons behind the decision.

*"The new system is all-round more informative than the old system and the new system makes working easier."*

*"The old system had fewer flaws, worked faster and it was way simpler to use, and it fit better for day-to-day working."*

*"The new system is worse than any other system ever, problems and flaws all the time and it affects working negatively."*

*"The new system makes it easier to track customer activity."*

*"The new system has continuous bugs, and it makes working more difficult."*

*"The new system seems to offer a lot more opportunities if we can learn the system more and take the system in use completely."*

*- "In the new system the information is easily available, and it is more versatile. It helps with work and time management as you see your work cases."*

The employees were asked to give an opinion about the new communication system.

*"in-depth education about the system would be nice."*

*"These new system updates have made the communication system unreliable, crashing, and unpredictable. It is really bad service for customers when the calls end unexpectedly, sound is not working. Whatever the reason is, an insurance company must have functioning phone systems and other functioning equipment for the people who do the job."*

*"Good system education from the beginning and time to learn the new system."*

*"The system needs to function better."*

*"The system education was complicated and done with too much haste. There should have been more time for transfer especially when talking about such a big and important system."*

*"The education was too narrow and short and that is why we had issues after launch."*

*"Nowadays I can use the system well, of course there are some issues here and there. The downside is that all organizations don't use the system."*

*"The first days after were chaotic, education and launch had challenges. Well, we made it through."*

## 5 Analysis

This chapter focuses on analysing the results of the research. The research comprised of two points of view, the point of view of a key project member, and the point of view of the employees who experienced the change. This analysis compares the expectations of the change project to the experiences of the project. The primary research question of this thesis is “was the change of communication system successful in Company X? ” and this chapter seeks to answer that question along with the defining research questions.

### 5.1 Implementation of Change

This subchapter analyses the implementation of change in the commissioning company. This subchapter contains information from phases prior to the change process and information from during the change process. The analysis is done by combining theory and the findings from research.

Urgency for the change: The research implies that there were two justifiable reasons for change, and they were communicated to the employees in the commissioning company in a way that most of the focus group had at least some knowledge about the reasons. Kotter (1996, 36-39) states that a good foundation for a successful change process is a situation where the desired change is seen as a necessity, and it can be formed artificially if need be. In this research the urgency formed from the fact that the previous communication system was going to be discontinued by the service provider.

Building a coalition: The project had a project group which consisted of representatives from many different departments who were responsible for delivering the new communication system. However, there was very little or no focus on the responsibility of supervisors in implementing the change by the project management. There was a specific education plan which included continuous support for the end users. The main responsibility of learning the new system was left on the employee and according to the results of the questionnaire it caused issues in wellbeing and in the learning process, and thus in the change process.

The goals, vision and purpose of the change project were seen unclear among the employees. This can be said as the answers about vision and goals had a discrepancy in the answers. When a key member of the project was interviewed the key member listed different distinct goals for the new communication system. In the interview the key member told the author that

the communication system renewal project manager interviewed many employees from various departments to gather information and specifications for the new communication system. After gathering this information, the project manager made a list of different specifications and goals for the new communication system. The list was later used to help drive the change forward communicationally. When comparing the two different points-of-view, there is a clear gap between the experiences about the goals of the change project. Kotter (1996, 7 & 59-72.) stated that one of the key factors for a successful change process is a clear vision for the change. The goals and purpose of a change process are closely linked to change vision. A good change vision helps to guide, coordinate, and support the change process organically. In this research the change vision, the purpose of the renewal and the goals of the change project were not clear for the employees.

Communication and information: The survey results show that there was communication about the process, and it reached most of the focus group. But the amount and quality of communication were perceived somewhat insufficient among the focus group. In the interview with the key member stated that there was a communication plan made for the project and the communication was carried through various channels in different phases of the process. There were also discussions during the education of the employees. The project had a guidance group along with the project group itself and both groups had personnel for many departments so the information about the change process had a chance and a channel to reach many managers and employees. Kotter (1996, p. 73-85) stated that successful communication needs to occur in different situations and channels. This communication includes two-way communication and conversations between the company or project representatives and the employees. The research results indicate that change communication and the availability of information were sufficient but despite of the sufficiency the employees still were not satisfied about the amount of communication and information. The produced information did not reach the employees in a desired manner.

Empowering the staff, education, and support: The research shows that the employees of Company X from various departments were included in the complete process of the communication system change. The focus group for this research which was surveyed did not participate that much. The change was experienced having a mostly negative impact on working atmosphere and it had negative or neutral effects on personnel wellbeing. During the change process there was many channels used to support the transition to the new communication system but there was a need for physical presence for the employees to accustom for the new system according to the results of the research. Despite of the various support channels the education and support was perceived somewhat lacklustre. The open-

ended questions give insight that the education was done too quickly and there did not seem to be any further in-depth education after the initial launch which was seen causing challenges among the respondents. The key member stated that the education was carried through online, and the project group noticed that there was a demand for physical presence from the employees which was not possible during the launch. The key member stated that learning the new communication system required more activity in self-learning from the employees. Kotter (p. 87-100, 1996) stated that successful change requires participation and removal of different change barriers that create friction towards the change. Also, organizational structure can be a barrier which makes change more difficult. In this case study the organizational structure that drove the change forward eventually diminished to the level of an employee's responsibility to adapt to new ways of working.

Short term accomplishments: The interview with the key member of the project gave insight that there were no short-term accomplishments generated to solidify change among employees. The only communication about short term accomplishments was focused on technical improvement and bugfixes in the new system between the project group and guidance group. The improvements were not communicated to the personnel and there was no usage data to show the benefits of the new system. According to Kotter (p. 101-103, 1996) short term accomplishments gives momentum for the positive aspects of change and silences doubters. The accomplishments which are based on facts and data help motivate the personnel and give assurance that the change is good, necessary, and justified.

Generate more change: According to the key member of the change project there was a plan to generate more change in the form of integration after the initial launch. The integration would have enabled a complete 360-view to customer information, however the resources available were not sufficient to initiate further change. The changes generated were mostly bugfixes and improvements in functionality. Kotter (p. 115-126, 1996) stated that large change processes need support from simultaneous smaller change. Generating smaller change alongside the primary change results in a cycle of different operations and improvement needs in various situations and departments. The arising change needs require more resources and human-resources, and the changes can be easy or hard and time consuming.

## **5.2 Managing Change Resistance**

This subchapter explores the ways and the effectiveness of managing change resistance during the change process and after the communication system launch.

Preparing for change resistance: The interview gave insight to the ways of preparing to change resistance. According to the key member of the change project there was no examining of the change readiness of the personnel since the change was considered forced. The provider of the previous communication system informed about shutting down the communication system. Heathfield (2018) stated that change readiness assessment prior to change can help to build trust and smoothen the transition from old to new.

The change process started with interviews with personnel and with following the ways of working by another key member of the change project. This means that some of the personnel were involved in the change process even before it officially started, and the personnel were able to give requests and opinions concerning the new communication system. One tool to advance change is to involve employees in planning and decision making. (Creasey, 2024) When asked about the preparation for change resistance the key member stated that there was not enough preparation for change. The key member also listed some mistakes that were made concerning change resistance. These mistakes were lack of communication to end users, lack of ensuring commitment in management, and too tight schedule.

The survey for employees gave similar signals about preparing for change resistance. Most of the employees felt that the education was not sufficient, and the open-ended questions gave affirmation to this. The questionnaire also gave indirect feedback about preparing for change resistance. When asked about the experience of the communication system change, the results varied quite a lot among respondents.

#### Resistance during change:

The interview with the key member of the project gave information about the ways of managing resistance during change. According to the key member of the project there was a lot of communication in different channels and by various people from different roles. There was also a dedicated channel for arising issues and troubleshooting during and after the education and launch phase to improve the efficiency of the launch. Also, there was scheduled education which was carried out over Microsoft Teams and the main responsibility for deep learning was left to the end-user since the circumstances were rather unfavourable towards any other methods. To improve the rate of success and learning the project had various active support channels for employees to use.

As stated previously, the education was considered lacklustre by the employees, and it seems that the intended support channels during launch phase were not in efficient use by the

employees. This phenomenon could be explained with issues in communication and in the awareness among employees. One reason could be that the project group did not emphasize the support channels enough during the change process and there was not enough time available for the employees to properly educate themselves.

#### Resistance after change:

The key member of the project stated that the monitoring and active managing ended after the launch process of communication system change project was done. The responsibility of the system knowledge and education is among the supervisors and teams and there is no active surveying of the level of expertise among the employees. According to the key member of the project there are two main channels for the employees to use as a supportive tool while they operate the new system. One is a dedicated intranet section with videos and written guides and the other one is supervisor help and guidance if necessary.

The questionnaire for the employees gave some insight into the change resistance potential after the initial launch. The employees were asked to pick between the old and the new system and most of the respondents picked the new system. Which seems to indicate that the change has been accepted mostly. However, there was a group of respondents who showed dissatisfaction towards the new communication system. The employees were asked to give information about how they feel about change in general and all the respondents answered at least somewhat positively towards change.

### **5.3 Adaptation to New Communication System**

The employees of the customer service centre were asked to disclose the number of times they used the official intranet support pages in a set timeframe and most of the respondents used the intranet pages 1-3 times a month until they felt skilled enough. This implies that the initial education for the new communication system was successful. The employees were also asked to evaluate their expertise with the new communication system and a large percentage of the respondents evaluated their expertise as rather good or better.

The employees of the customer service centre were also asked where they receive the most support from with the new communication system currently and majority of the employees stated that their main channel of support is colleagues. The employees were also asked to evaluate their peers' expertise to further give information about the usage of the new communication system, however the responses were divided in way that does not allow any

conclusions to be made. This gives reason to believe that the adoption of the new communication system has been mostly successful as most the respondents have migrated from using the official support channels to asking from a colleague.

## **6 Recommendations**

The results and the analysis gave good feedback on the areas of improvement on the topic of change management. It seems that the change was taken somewhat for granted by the commissioning company and because of that, there were some areas of change management which could have been carried out more effectively and thoughtfully. The recommendations are mostly based on the Kotter's 8-step-process.

The change was properly initiated according to the Kotter's first step which is to create a sense of urgency as the change process was initially kickstarted by the ending of the support of the previous communication system. According to the key member of the project, the change was inevitable and the reasons for the system change were mostly external as the support for the old system was going to be discontinued. The results showed that the employees also knew the reasons for the change. The reason for the urgency was a legitimate external factor and it created a good basis for change management. For future change projects the recommendation is to generate or fabricate similar urgency and communicate it with the same level of emphasis for the employees.

The project had a dedicated project group which was responsible for the communication system change and for creating functionalities in the new communication system. The research showed that the group was not designed to be a guiding coalition, and they were not properly enabled to guide the organization through the change process. As the project group did not have the required mandate for leadership and responsibility the responsibility for change management was left to the supervisors who were not included in the communication system project. There was no dedicated change management plan included in the project and the focus of the organization was only to complete the project itself and the responsibility of change management was not grounded during any part of the process. In the future the commissioning company should include a separate change management plan or direct responsibility for change management in changes which affect a large part of the personnel.

The goals, objectives and change vision were good and practical, however they were communicated in a manner which did not reach the employees properly. This may be an issue

in the future also, since there was a specific plan for communication according to key member of the project and the communication was in multiple channels during the process. The recommendation is to pay even more attention to communicating the vision and to align the vision with the company's long-term objectives and communicate it more consistently during and after the change process in the future.

The education was carried out only online which seemed to affect the experience of the employees, and this might have also affected on the efficiency of learning. The project group had made several different support channels to fit many different needs despite the efforts of the project group the employees were still not satisfied. It seems that the employees were not making enough effort to learn the new system by themselves. The recommendation is to provide more physical support in the future and ensure that the employees also are held liable for educating themselves properly.

The project had short term wins, but they were only followed and discussed within the project group and the wins consisted mostly of different bug-fixes and other events which were not related to change management. The recommendation is to intentionally plan and generate different metrics and numeral objectives on at least team level which serve as achievements to increase the visibility of the upsides of the change. Predetermined and well thought accomplishments serve as a foundation on building coherent positive momentum towards the future of the change process. The short-term accomplishments need to be in line with the change operation's vision and goals. The accomplishments lose their purpose if there are any clear contradictions towards the direction of change or if the accomplishments are not impactful enough in the bigger picture.

There were intentions to generate more change by upgrading the communication system to support a complete 360°-view for the users about the customer being handled. However, due to insufficient funding and the resource heaviness of the improvement, the plans were discontinued. The recommendation is to be aware of the necessity of generating more change to really solidify change and to include for example a change roadmap for a project which has different change phases mapped and planned out pre-emptively. This mentioned roadmap could be used as a guiding tool for future project teams and managers.

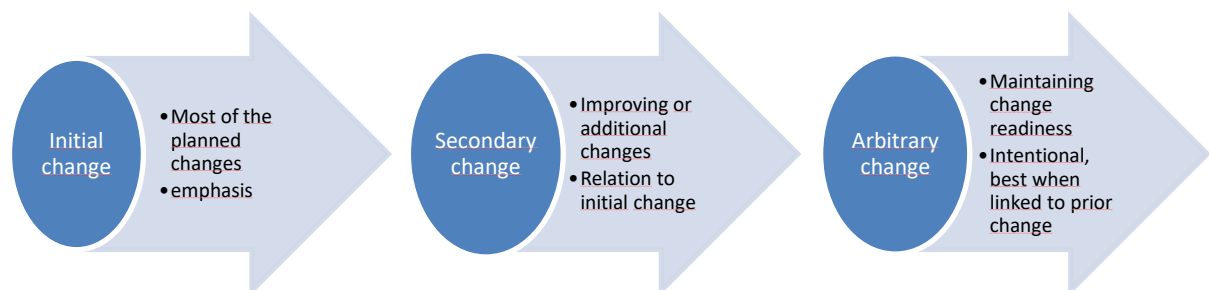
The research was done retrospectively, and the results still showed some clear dissatisfaction towards the new system which is a sign of change resistance. The symptoms of resistance are observable and often overt, such as complaining, not attending key meetings, not providing requested information or resources, or simply not adopting a change to a process or behaviour.

Although they are more evident, focusing on these symptoms will not yield results. (Kempton, 2024)

The commissioning company would benefit from having for example a systematic questionnaire for employees after change projects to gain a better understanding of the possible causes for change resistance and the magnitude of it for future reference. Change resistance as a concept should be communicated and educated to operational managers to use as tool to aid in the day-to-day change management, especially before large scale changes. The commissioning company should also pay attention to making minor changes continually as it can be a tool for dealing with change resistance.

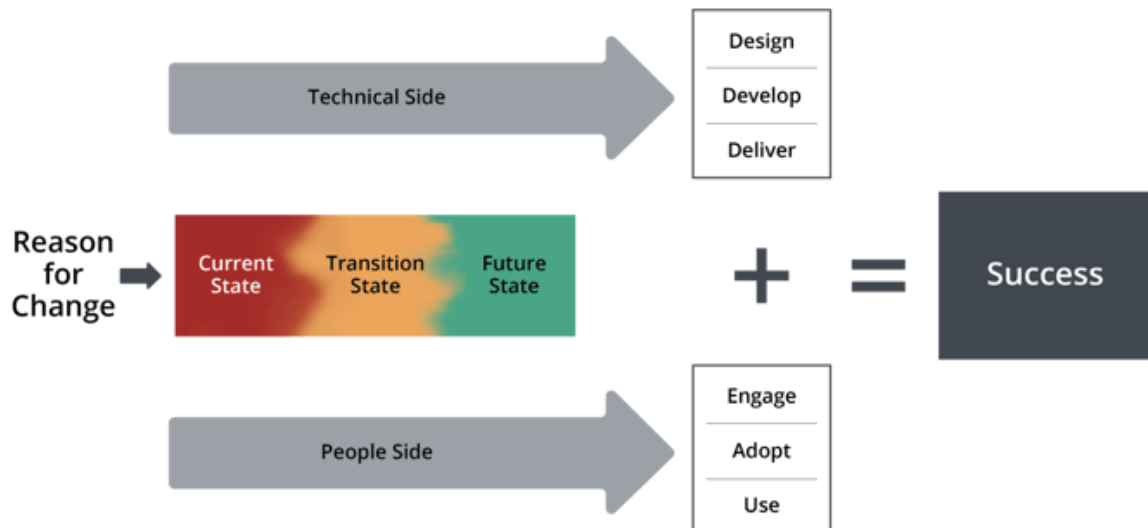
The company's personnel need support with adjusting to changes. Especially the operating managers need to be focused on when dealing with change since the operating managers are affected by the changes and manage the changes and drive them forward. The required support needs to vary depending on the change at hand. When facilitating change, there needs to be some inquiries about the needs for facilitating proper support. Effective support enables adequate operating during a change process. Different training programmes, coaching, change mentoring, and community activities are some methods of change support.

Figure 22. Example of a Change Roadmap (Author, 2024)



The figure 23 shows a great visualisation for change management tasks, which could be used in the future in the commissioning company when planning change and educating the management.

Figure 23. Unified Value Proposition (Kempton, 2024)



## 7 Conclusion

This thesis explored the ways and processes of change management within Company X, focusing on the transition to a new communication system. The research aimed to identify areas of improvement in change management using the renewal project to see the current ways of change management in the commissioning company. The research question was “How can Company X improve its change management?”.

The results revealed areas which can in fact be improved. There were significant gaps in the execution of change management. The project lacked a dedicated change management plan, and the responsibility for managing change was not clearly defined. Communication about the goals and vision of the change was insufficient, leading to confusion among employees. Additionally, the education and support provided were perceived as inadequate, highlighting the need for more hands-on and continuous training. Despite these challenges, the new communication system was generally accepted by the employees, indicating a successful adaptation over time. However, the negative impacts on employee well-being and working atmosphere underscore the importance of addressing change resistance more effectively in future projects.

There were also some areas of change management which were done adequately according to the theory used as a basis for the research. The findings revealed that the urgency for

change was well-communicated and justified and there were a lot of support channels and material available for the employees. If the commissioning company had used the proper tools and ways of change management to utilize the support, the employee wellbeing and the perception of the change would have most likely been better overall.

The theory used in the research fit well into the researched area and proved to be valid in this research also as the results and structure of the change process followed the theory. The main theory on which the thesis was structured around provided also some of the tools for the improvement suggestions for the commissioning company.

In conclusion, Company X can enhance its change management practices by developing comprehensive and flexible change management plans, improving communication, and by providing more managerial support to change, and training for employees. These improvements will help ensure smoother transitions and better outcomes in future change initiatives.

Further research related to this thesis could be done to gather information about the level of knowledge about change management and its methods amongst the operational management in Company X.

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## Appendix 1. Questionnaire / Online Survey

The Questionnaire was sent as a link to google forms by email, the employees were contacted in Finnish.

Email:

Hello,

I am doing research on the topic of change management and, I will research your experiences with the new communication system launch. The goal of this research is to gather information about the change management methods of Company X and provide improvement suggestions based on the findings. The research is conducted by using an online survey. The answers will be anonymous and no identifiable information will be collected, so please answer the following questions truthfully.

Best Regards,

*name*

Link to the questionnaire: *Link here*

1. Your age?
  - a. 18-29
  - b. 30-39
  - c. 40-49
  - d. 50-59
  - e. 59-
  
2. How long have you worked in Company X?
  - a. 0-1 Years
  - b. 1-3 Years
  - c. 4-7 Years
  - d. 8-10 Years
  - e. Over 10 Years

Questions related to the communication system and the change

3. Do you know the reasons why Company X changed the communication system?
  - a. I know exactly why the communication system was changed
  - b. I am quite certain why the communication system was changed
  - c. I am not sure why the communication system was changed
  - d. I don't know at all why the communication system was changed
  
4. How did you see the goals of the system renewal?
  - a. They were very clear
  - b. They were rather clear
  - c. Not clear at all
  - d. Somewhat unclear
  - e. I didn't know the goals at all
  
5. Was there enough communication about the change of the communication system in your opinion?
  - a. There was too much communication about the change, and it was almost annoying
  - b. The communication about the change was sufficient
  - c. The communication about the change was somewhat sufficient
  - d. The communication about the change was lackluster
  
6. Did you receive enough information about the change and the timeframe of the change?
  - a. I received very much information
  - b. I received a good amount of information
  - c. I received some information
  - d. I received a little information
  - e. I did not receive any information

#### Change resistance, change adaptation and support

7. Did you receive enough support from your supervisor during change?
  - a. Yes, the supervisor was of great help
  - b. Yes, the supervisor helped somewhat
  - c. No, the supervisor helped only a little
  - d. No, the supervisor barely helped
  
8. Did you participate in the communication system project?
  - a. Yes, most of my time went into the project
  - b. Yes, I was partly involved
  - c. Yes, I was a support person during the launch
  - d. No, I did not participate
  
9. Your experience with the change of the communication system
  - a. It's nice to have a more modern tool for working.
  - b. The change of the communication system had no effect on me, but it is nice
  - c. The change of the communication system had no effect on me

- d. In the beginning I was a bit suspicious and now I feel that it is ok
  - e. I was doubtful in the beginning but now I manage
  - f. I have said from the beginning that the system is bad, and it should be changed immediately
10. Education of the new communication system
- a. The education was sufficient and learning the new communication system was easy
  - b. The education was somewhat sufficient and there were minor challenges
  - c. The education was somewhat lackluster and there were challenges in learning
  - d. The education was insufficient and there were major challenges in learning the system
11. How did the change affect your wellbeing?
- a. I received more energy and enthusiasm
  - b. It did not make a difference
  - c. The change increased my stress levels and had a negative effect on my wellbeing
12. How did the change affect the overall working atmosphere?
- a. Very positively
  - b. Positively
  - c. I did not notice a difference
  - d. Negatively
  - e. Very negatively
13. What is your level of expertise of the new communication system?
- a. I know my way around the new system, and I have found beneficiary features
  - b. I know how to use the system and it's part of the day-to-day life
  - c. I pretty much know how to use the system
  - d. I think my skills are lacking and do not know everything
  - e. I cannot use system at all and feel like I can't manage
14. How do you see the level of expertise of your colleagues?
- a. The system is used with excellence
  - b. The system is used properly
  - c. I think that there are some gaps in the skills of my colleagues
  - d. I think that there are major gaps in the skills of my colleagues
15. Where do you receive the most support for the communication system currently?
- a. From my colleagues
  - b. From my supervisor
  - c. From the system managers
  - d. From Intranet
  - e. From the official support channel "Helppari"

16. Do you feel that you have enough support with the communication system?
  - a. The support is sufficient, and I receive enough support from the current channels
  - b. The support is somewhat insufficient, but I receive enough support from the current channels
  - c. The support is insufficient and I receive some support from the current channels
  - d. The support is highly insufficient, and I do not receive enough support
  
17. How actively you use/used the intranet support pages?
  - a. Once a day / Once a day until I was skilled enough
  - b. 1-3 times a week / 1-3 times a week until I was skilled enough
  - c. 1-3 times a month / 1-3 times a month until I was skilled enough
  - d. I haven't used the support pages at all
  
18. Would you like to participate in the communication system upkeep currently?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
19. Old vs. The new system?
  - a. New
  - b. Old
  
20. How do you feel about change in general?
  - a. All change is good
  - b. Change is commonly good
  - c. I have no opinions about change
  - d. Change is somewhat difficult / unpleasant
  - e. There should be as few changes as possible

Open ended questions

21. Your feedback about the intranet guides
  
22. Old or new system, why?
  
23. A word about the communication system, what is your opinion?

## **Appendix 2. Interview with the key member of the project**

Location of the interview: Headquarters of the commissioning company.

Attending people: The author of the thesis & Project member

The goal of the interview is to gather information about the communication system project and the focus point is in the ways of change management in the commissioning company. This project is used to benchmark the methods used in the commissioning company and then ultimately compare the results to relevant theory.

You were selected since you are a key member of the project and a link towards other departments in the company, so it can be assumed that you have the best available knowledge.

Background information

**What were the reasons for changing the communication system?**

Preparing change

**What plans were made before the project kick-off? Was there communication to employees at this point?**

**What departments were included in the project group and in the guidance group?**

**Was there a plan for communication?**

**How was the change of the communication system communicated?**

**How was the need for change communicated?**

**Were the employees informed about the benefits of the new communication system?**

**Do you think that there was enough communication during the change process?**

Change

**Was there a defined responsibility for some group for driving the change of the communication system?**

**Did the operational management receive support to drive the change?**

**How was the change process monitored?**

**Was there a deliberate effort to generate more change during the process?**

Support and education

**How was the new system educated to the employees?**

**Was there preparation for change resistance during the change process?**

**Was there any examination of change readiness of the employees before the change process?**

**Were the employees involved in the change process in any way?**

**Were there defined short-term wins during the process?**

**What is your opinion about the level of experience of using the new communication system in general?**

**Do you have the skills to use the new communication system?**

## **Appendix 3. Data Management Plan**

### **Management and storage of research data**

The research data for this thesis was collected through an online survey that was completed by employees of the commissioning company. The data is saved securely on Microsoft OneDrive and in Google forms where only the author has access to the mentioned data. All the gathered data will be destroyed one year after the publication of the thesis. The research refrained from collecting or using any data which would be used to identify the commissioning company or its employees.

### **Private and sensitive data processing**

The data was collected anonymously through an online questionnaire, and a personal interview. The interview responses were immediately recorded and translated to a word file, the author only recorded and translated the parts which did not include any information about the commissioning company or the names of the employees. If the answers included sensitive information they were censored or left out. No identifiable information was collected from the respondents. The participants were informed that the responses would be anonymous.

### **Data ownership**

The author of the thesis and the commissioning company owns the data used in the thesis.

### **Data usage after publication**

The data is not intended to be used in any way after the thesis work is published. The data used in this thesis will be destroyed after one year from the assessment and publication.