

Developing and facilitating managers' communication of strategy

Sofi Vuojakoski



Author(s) Sofi Vuojakoski	
Degree programme Master's Degree Programme in Communication Management	
Developing and facilitating managers' communication of strategy	Number of pages and appendix pages 79
<p>This qualitative research was conducted to find out how the communication professionals of the case organization can support, facilitate and develop middle-level managers' communication of strategy in the case organization. Secondary aims of the research were to find out how middle-level managers in the case organization perceive communication of strategy and what were their expectations towards the case organization's communication professionals regarding communication of strategy. In the theoretical part of this research earlier theories and research on communication of strategy, managers' role in communication of strategy and strategy in general were identified and collected into a theoretical framework for this research. Empirical findings were formulated based on data that was collected in eight semi-structured interviews with middle-level managers across the case organization. The findings were organized in groups according to what was discussed in the interviews. Based on these groups, recommendations for developing, facilitating and supporting communication of strategy in the case organization were created.</p> <p>Communication of strategy is not separate from formulating and implementing strategy, but an integral part of a strategy cycle process that covers formulating, implementing and communicating strategy. It requires everyone's input in the organization, but managers' role in it is irreplaceable. Managers recognized their important role in communication of strategy. The managers expected support for communication of strategy from the case organization's communication professionals. They wished to get support for concretizing strategy to their teams, delivering messages from the middle-level to the organization's management team, developing measurement systems for strategy on unit level, making sense of the timeline of the strategy, involving middle-level managers more in strategy formulating, target setting and some organization specific topics. Many managers highlighted that all actions of the organization must support communication of strategy, otherwise communication and validating strategy to their teams becomes very difficult.</p>	
Keywords Employee communication, manager communication, strategy, communication of strategy	

Table of contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Background.....	1
1.2	Commissioning organization	2
1.3	Communication of strategy in the case organization	3
1.4	Research questions and goals	5
2	Cycle of formulating, implementing and communicating strategy	7
3	Corporate strategy	11
3.1	Definitions of corporate strategy.....	11
3.2	Implementing strategy in an organization	13
3.3	Evaluating the success of strategy	16
4	Communication of strategy.....	17
4.1	Strategic communication and communication of strategy	17
4.2	Communication of strategy in practice	18
4.3	Different target audiences in communication of strategy	21
4.4	Typical barriers in communication and implementation of strategy.....	22
4.5	Other models for communicating strategy	22
4.5.1	Cascading.....	23
4.5.2	Interaction-based communication.....	25
5	Managers as communicators of strategy	27
5.1	Communication professionals as a supporting force	32
5.2	Employees as a target audience	33
6	Execution of the research.....	34
6.1	Aim of the research and research questions	34
6.2	Research approach.....	35
6.3	Data collection	35
6.3.1	Description of interview methods.....	36
6.3.2	Selection criteria for the interviewees	36
6.3.3	Conducting the interviews	37
6.3.4	Saturation of data.....	39
6.4	Data analysis	39
6.5	Validity and reliability of the research	40
7	Empirical findings	42
7.1	Concretizing of strategy	42
7.2	Involvement and support for managers	44
7.3	Measuring of strategy, target setting and bonus payments	47
7.4	Timeline of strategy.....	50

7.5	Organization specific topics.....	52
7.6	Managers' perceptions on communication of strategy.....	55
7.7	Managers' expectations towards communication professionals in the case organization	56
8	Answering the research questions.....	60
8.1	Facilitating, supporting and developing communication of strategy	60
8.2	Managers' perceptions on communication of strategy.....	61
8.3	Managers' expectations towards communication professionals of the case organization	61
9	Reflection of findings against the theoretical framework	63
9.1	Making strategy relevant to employees	63
9.2	Involving managers in strategy formulation	64
9.3	Measuring and follow-up of strategy.....	64
9.4	Target setting and bonus payments	65
9.5	Amount of needed information	66
9.6	Dialogue.....	67
10	Development recommendations for communication of strategy.....	68
10.1	Focus on managers as communicators of strategy	68
10.2	Translating and measuring of strategy on unit level	70
10.3	Target setting as support for communication of strategy	73
10.4	Increasing involvement in strategy formulating.....	74
10.5	Communication training for managers.....	75
10.6	Adopting informal communication as a structured model for communication.....	76
11	Summary.....	77
11.1	Ideas for further research.....	78
12	References.....	80

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

An organization cannot function without communication. All organizations should have a vision, and if it is only in the mind of the CEO, reaching that vision will be difficult. An organization cannot share its vision and its views with its stakeholders without communication and without communication there cannot be common goals among the organization. As an old wisdom says; *If you don't know where you are going, it doesn't matter much where you are now.* An organization without goals is like a pack of wild horses, they have a lot of energy but no clue where they are going. Strategy is the guiding vision for the employees in their daily work. Without knowing and understanding the organization's strategy, employees cannot work towards the organization's common goals and take independent decisions in their daily work that help the organization to implement its strategy. To make strategy known and familiar to all employees, consistent and clear communication is needed. The significance of communication of strategy and middle-level managers' responsibility in it is widely recognized. However, many of the existing studies in this field do not specifically focus on the middle-level managers' role in communicating and implementing strategy.

Communication of strategy is a continuous process that is inseparably linked to formulating and implementing strategy. Leaders and managers are in a crucial role in communication of strategy, as their responsibility is to communicate about the strategy to their subordinates and to make sure that their teams are working towards the organization's common goals, in line with strategy. Communication is often considered as a mechanical process of transferring information, whereas in reality, it is tied to all actions in the organization in everyday interactions. There are only a few researches that are focused on researching how middle-level managers perceive communication of strategy to their teams and how communication professionals can support them in this important communicating role. The purpose of this research is to produce information that supports the case organization in implementing strategy by the means of communication and thus enable efficiency within the organization. The case organization's aim is that all employees in the organization are capable of taking independent decisions in their daily work based on the organization's strategy. This would ultimately increase efficiency in the organization and lower hierarchy.

1.2 Commissioning organization

The commissioning organization is a large forest industry company Stora Enso, that operates in many countries globally. The company produces solutions in packaging, biomaterials, wooden construction and paper on global markets and consist of five different business areas that are called divisions. The company employs some 26 000 people worldwide and is publicly stock listed in Helsinki and Stockholm. This research is focused specifically in one of the divisions within the company and its managers and communication professionals. The division employs around 1 200 people, mainly in Finland, Sweden, Brazil and USA. There are also employees in several other countries, like China. The biggest mass of the employees works in production units in Finland, Sweden and USA. These groups are not easy to reach online. English, which is the official communication language in the company, is not preferred as main language for communication among these employees (except for the USA naturally), as they prefer getting information in their local language.

Each of the five divisions has their own divisional strategy to ensure that the strategy corresponds with the division's business environment. Division strategies are derived from the high-level corporate strategy, which covers the general aim of the company and transformation from a traditional industrial company to an innovative renewable materials company. Both the corporate and divisional level strategies cover global megatrends that affect and change the business environment. The division strategies are more specific than the company level strategy, describing the dedicated business environment and competitive environment more precisely, providing detailed information of the nature of the business and the business goals of the division. The corporate strategy is very much a change in the corporate culture and way of operating, whereas the division strategies are more focused on concrete business targets, customers and competitors. However, the division strategy in the case organization includes some change elements too. It is important that the corporate strategy and division strategies are in line and their alignment is visible to the employees. This research focuses on the division level strategy.

The middle management in this research covers all managers that are not part of the division level leadership team. The group of middle-level managers consists of approximately two hundred people in the case organization. There are different kinds of teams in the division that these managers lead:

- Teams that work in production in shifts and prefer their local language as main communication language. Managers of these teams do not meet all team members every day because of the shift schedules, despite they work in the same location. These teams might be difficult to reach online.
- Teams that work normal office hours and meet their manager daily. Some of these teams prefer English as their main communication language and some prefer the local language.
- Teams that are scattered in many different locations, where the team members meet their managers irregularly. These teams are ok with English as communication language and are fairly easy to reach online.
- Teams that are on the road almost all the time, like sales team, meeting their manager seldom face-to-face. These people might be difficult to reach online and use English as their communication language.

1.3 Communication of strategy in the case organization

This chapter describes the current state of communication of strategy in the case organization. The data was easily accessible for this research, as I work in the case organization and plan and implement communication of strategy there.

The annual strategy formulation process is a frame for communication of strategy in the case organization. The strategy is updated every year to make sure that it corresponds with the changing business environment. During this process the strategy may change, but during the latest years there have not been significant changes for the business, but rather smaller scale modifications that are in line with the previous years' strategies and thus the employees are familiar with the strategy.

Communication of strategy is ongoing throughout the year, but when the strategy is launched after the annual strategy process, usually in September, communication of the updated strategy in the organization begins. The strategy whitepaper, which is a document describing the strategy in detail, is distributed to those who report to the division management team members, but the distribution is not systematic throughout the organization and may depend on the specific leader or manager if they distribute it or not. The strategy whitepaper is confidential and thus not distributed to all employees at once.

Based on the strategy white paper, communication professionals formulate different materials for organization-wide communication of strategy. Traditionally these materials are a PowerPoint presentation in three main languages of the organization (English, Finnish and Swedish), booklets describing the strategy, videos, intranet articles and internal newsletter articles. Strategy, or certain parts of it, are discussed monthly in case organization's

monthly calls, where leadership team members discuss it. These calls are open for everyone in the organization to join, but mostly the participants are manager level representatives. Intranet and newsletter articles are published throughout the year too. The case organization hosts a townhall meeting every year, where strategy is discussed and cascaded from leadership to around 100 managers in the organization. Strategy is also discussed when leadership team members visit the units, and dialogue between employees and leadership is encouraged.

Traditionally communication of strategy in the case organization has focused on the “what” part of strategy, describing what the strategy is. There are many efforts to communicate the “how” part (how the strategy is implemented in the organization), but the challenge is to make it relevant to all teams and units and get the message through in these units and teams through managers. The level of communication of the content and phases of the annual strategy process has traditionally been low, but the aim is to increase it and make the strategy process more transparent to all. The general aim is to make communication a full and structured part of the strategy cycle, where strategy is implemented through means of communication. The desired state of the case organization is that all members of the organization know the strategy so well that they can take decisions in their daily work based on the strategy.

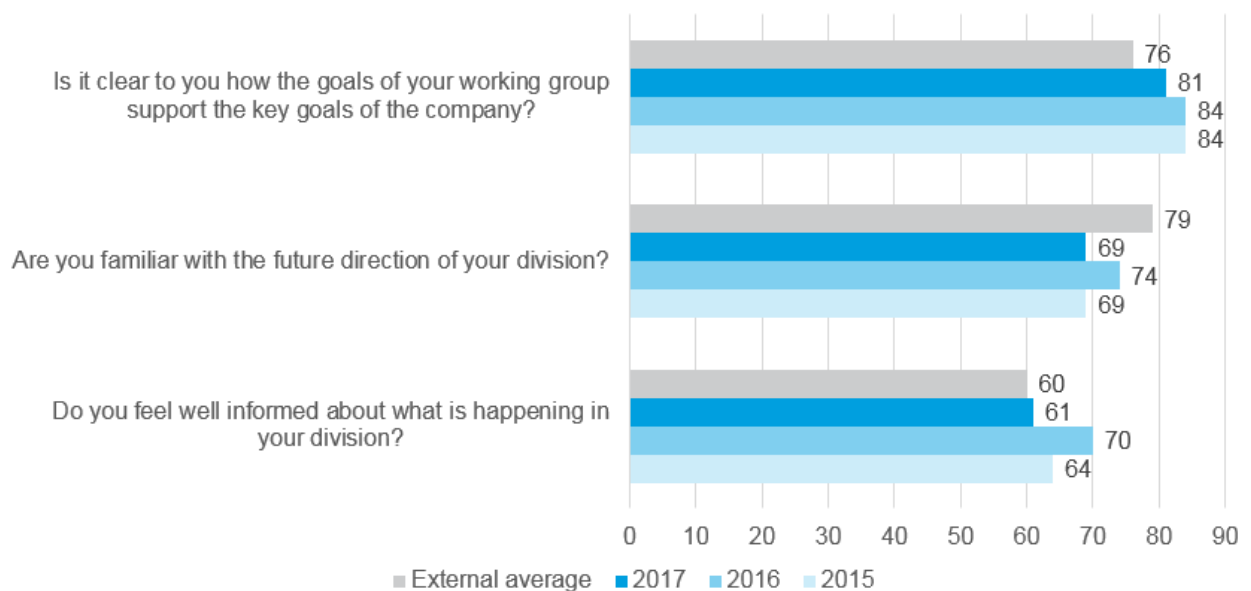


Figure 1. Your Voice annual employee survey

An annual employee survey called Your Voice provides this research with background information on how the employees of the case organization perceive their knowledge of the strategy, as shown in figure 1. The survey covers the whole case organization, meaning that leaders, middle-level managers and employees all respond to the survey. In 2017, 81% of the respondents said that they find it clear how their working group's goals support the key goals of the company. This is slightly less than in the previous two years, but still above the external average when compared to other companies. However, only 69% of the employees said in 2017 that they know the future direction of the case organization. It is ten percentage units less than the external average and five percentage units less than in the case organization in 2016. In addition, only 61% of the respondents said in 2017 that they feel well informed of what is happening in the division (case organization). This is almost in line with the external average, but much less than in 2016 in the case organization. The case organization aims at having better understanding for the future direction and increasing the feeling of being well-informed of what is happening in the division.

1.4 Research questions and goals

This research is made to find out how communication professionals can facilitate and develop middle managers' communication of strategy in the commissioning organization. The aim is to find out how managers perceive communication of strategy and how they see that the communication professionals in the organization could support them in it. Based on theory and collected data, this research suggests some actions and methods for how the communication professionals can facilitate, develop and support the middle-level managers in communicating strategy and the organization's strategic vision to their teams.

Main research question:

- How can communication professionals in the case organization facilitate, support and develop middle-level managers' communication of strategy?

Sub-questions:

- How do managers perceive communication of strategy in the case organization?
- What are the managers' expectations towards the communication professionals in the case organization regarding communication of strategy?

The goal of this thesis is find ways to develop communication of strategy in the case organization. This thesis aims at finding out how communication professionals can develop, support and facilitate managers' communication of strategy, ultimately enabling efficiency in the case organization. The secondary aims of the research are to find out what are the

managers' expectations towards the communication professionals in the case organization regarding communication of strategy and how the middle-level managers perceive communication of strategy. The focus of this research is on communication of strategy and implementing strategy with the means of communication, not on the content of the strategy.

The research questions will be answered with a combination of empiric study and theory that is based on literature and existing research. Eight middle-level managers in the case organization were interviewed for this research, and these interviews are used as a foundation for answering the research questions. An employee survey made in 2017 was used to find out the general level of understanding of strategy and the future direction of the organization among all employees. Theoretical framework of this research is limited on organizational strategy, communication of strategy and managers as communicators of strategy. This research covers strategy as a change process that is implemented with the means of communication. The individuals in the organization are the implementers of strategy and managers' responsibility is to support and facilitate their teams in implementing strategy with the means of communication.

2 Cycle of formulating, implementing and communicating strategy

Although an entire discipline is devoted to the study of organizational strategy, including strategy implementation, little attention has been given to the links between communication and strategy. Business communication researchers have become increasingly interested in the contribution of corporate communication to a company's ability to create and disseminate its strategy in the last decades. However, very few authors have investigated the link between corporate communication and strategy, and when they have, their focus has primarily been on how corporate communication affects the company's relationship with its various stakeholders. In that sense, multiple researchers have emphasized the importance of communication for the process of strategy implementation stating that effective communication is a key requirement for effective strategy implementation. (Li, Guohui & Eppler 2008, 18.)

The relationship between communication management as a strategic process and corporate strategy is evident in the strategy cycle, that is used as a model for communication and implementation of strategy in this research. According to strategy cycle model, communication, strategy formulation and strategy implementation are inseparable parts of the same cycle. It is a consciously shaped organizational process, which can be divided into various phases that are all related to each other. Corporate strategy and communication of strategy are interlocking levels of strategy, linked with one another by means of translation and information services where communication professionals perform the overall management. Communication is important in every aspect of strategy implementation, as it relates in a complex way to organizing processes, organizational context and implementation objectives which, in turn, influence the process of implementation. However, the significance of communication management for corporate strategy depends on whether the organization is more traditional or whether communication enjoys high standing within the organization. In traditional organizations influence of communication management is often minimal. According to the results of the European Communication Monitor in 2009, a long-term European-wide survey among communication practitioners, the link between business strategy and communication was regarded as the most important issue for communication management. (Raupp & Hoffjann 2010, 1-3; Cornelissen 2009, 100; Li et al. 2008, 18-19.)

As said, planning and implementation of strategy is a cycle, where communication of strategy is an essential and integral part. Separating planning, implementation and communication of strategy is almost impossible, as they are all tightly linked to each other as shown in figure 2. Communication, implementation and formulation of strategy is seen in

this research as a cycle-like process, where individuals create, process and analyze information in interaction with each other. Strategy is implemented by the means of communication, and in this process leaders and middle-level managers are in a crucial role when adopting strategy first into their own actions and then steering their subordinates towards implementing strategy. Leadership and communication are so tightly tied together, that it is hard to separate them from each other. Many researchers believe leadership and communication mean the same thing but from different perspectives. However, in this research corporate strategy and communication of strategy are described in separate chapters for the sake of clarity and readability. (Rouhiainen 2003, 5-33.)

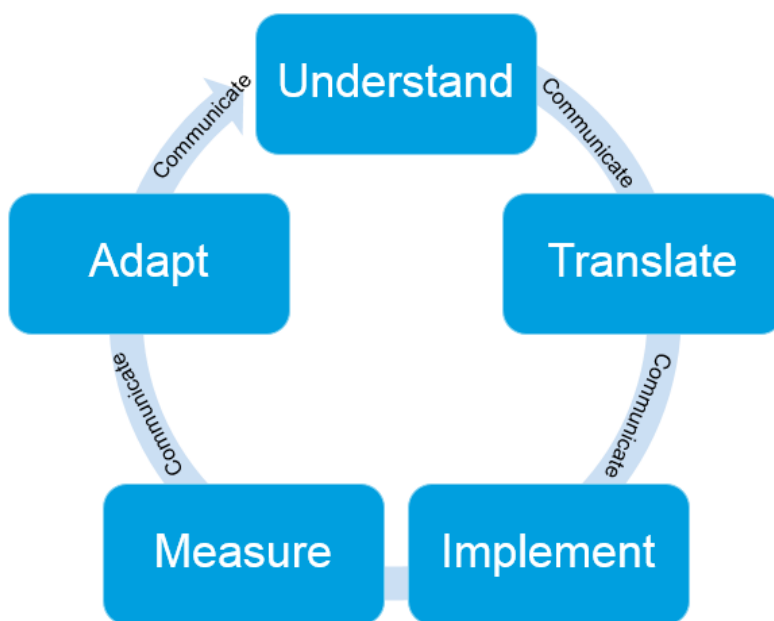


Figure 2. Strategy cycle for planning, implementation and communication of strategy

Building understanding for strategy requires frequent and constant communication when strategic change evolves one step at a time. An important key to building the seeds of understanding, identity, and commitment to strategy is communication between and among top and functional-level management as well as all employees. Communication is an important factor in strategy implementation in reaching mutual understanding, commitment and consensus. However, Li et al. (2008) did not find in-depth visual analyses about how exactly communication influences strategy implementation in their literature analyses of 60 different researches regarding implementation of strategy. As a call for action, Li et al. (2008) suggest that future strategy implementation frameworks must be based on prior causal analysis (regarding individual factors and their relations) and they should make research results accessible to practitioners by visualizing their findings in an interesting and

non-trivial manner. The visualization of strategy implementation and communication cycle in figure 2 is designed based on what is written about the relationship between communication and strategy process by Rouhiainen (2003) and Li et al. (2008), visual inspiration for the figure is by commercial source Insight Experience (2015). (Rouhiainen, 2003, 5-33; Li et al. 2008, 32; Insight Experience 2015.)

While strategy implementation is a cycle that is tightly integrated to formulation and communication of strategy, communication is sometimes overlooked as strategy formulators are keen on jumping to actions and implementing strategy. Effective implementation of strategy starts with understanding the strategy, both externally and internally. To implement strategy, everyone who are working for the organization needs to understand what is the strategy of the corporation, what are their functional strategies, what do their customers need and what their competitors are doing. Communication is in a key role to make strategy understandable within the organization. The next step is to translate the strategy into specific plans, that are aligned across the whole organization. Translating strategy into plans covers developing aligned local goals and activities, focusing activities on highest priorities, aligning and refining them with stakeholders and defining success metrics for these actions. These plans have to be communicated to employees so that they know how to implement them. (Rouhiainen 2003, 5-33.)

Only after consistent and clear communication has started, the organization is ready to start the implementation of strategy and move to actions. In implementation phase the organization builds capabilities, like people, processes or platforms, that are needed for strategy implementation. The organization aims at delivering against priorities and engages its stakeholders who are needed to deliver results. Again, the stakeholders are often engaged with the means of communication. (Rouhiainen 2003, 5-33.)

What follows, is critical for strategy implementation: measuring and making this information visible for all. It means that strategy planning and implementation need to be monitored towards specified metrics and that information needs to be shared broadly to create an accountable cycle of strategy. After measuring, the organization can learn and adapt its plans and actions, based on its experience from the strategy cycle. Organizations constantly have to anticipate changing priorities, emerging customer needs and shifting markets to adapt its strategy into its operating environment. Leaders can take corrective actions and adjust the plans and activities, and engage stakeholders who understand what is changing. Making and explaining tough decisions related to strategy are at the core of implementation of strategy, and it requires good and planned communication from the leaders and managers in the organization. Communication of strategy needs to be clear,

consistent and engaging for the employees. Strategy implementation is a process, where the organization cannot focus on only one step, but it must pay attention to the whole cycle. All steps are important and glued together with communication. (Rouhiainen 2003, 5-33.)

3 Corporate strategy

3.1 Definitions of corporate strategy

The central aim of the field of strategy is to explain and predict the performance of organizations within their operational environment, from analysis to the diagnosis of strategy formulation and implementation. However, the main interest often is on the economic performance of the organization. A well-defined strategy helps to lead the organization and allocate resources based on capabilities and strengths. Strategy enables the organization to react to changes in its operating environment and possible actions of its competitors.

Strategy is a plan, a consciously intended course of action, or a guideline to deal with different situations. Strategies have two essential characteristics: they are made in advance of the actions to which they apply and they are developed consciously and purposefully.

(Kärnä 2016, 108-112; Mintzberg, Lampel, Quinn & Ghoshal 2003, 3-4.)

Mintzberg (1987) famously states that strategic management cannot rely on a single definition of strategy, and defines five Ps for strategy as different viewpoints to corporate strategy:

- Strategy as a plan is made in advance of its implementation and is followed up.
- Strategy as a ploy is a specific maneuver intended to outperform competitors
- Strategy as pattern is sometimes explained as a pattern that is emerged rather than something that was pre-planned.
- Strategy as position is represented by finding niche with a special product or competences
- Strategy as perspective refers to organization's internal culture as strategy

These five perspectives to strategy compete against each other, but they also complement each other. Each of the Ps defines and adds elements to the concept of corporate strategy and help to understand the definition of strategy and organization's activities better. (Mintzberg 1987, 11-18.)

According to Porter (1996), companies often struggle separating operational effectiveness from strategy. The quest for productivity, quality and speed is endless and it has created a great number of management tools and techniques, which are often mixed up with corporate strategy. Operational improvements may be dramatic, but still many companies struggle

gle to translate their gains into sustainable profit. This leads the management to push forward in all fronts, which makes them move farther from viable competitive positions. As a result, operational effectiveness is necessary but not sufficient. A company can outperform its competitors only if it can establish a *difference* that it can preserve, and here it comes to strategy. A strategy helps the company to deliver greater value to its customers or create comparable value at lower cost, or do both. Sustainable profitability follows from this: delivering greater value allows the company to charge higher prices and greater efficiency results to lower costs. Competitive strategy is about being different to competitors. It means choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of value. Strategic positioning is often not obvious, and finding a good positioning requires creativity and insight. (Porter 1996.)

The simplest definition for corporate strategy is that organizations create strategies to succeed in generating profit or implementing their other purpose (non-governmental organizations). Similarly to Porter (1996), Groysberg et al. (2018) describe that strategy provides clarity and focus for collective action and decision making and that strategy is among the primary levers at top leaders' disposal to maintain organizational viability and effectiveness. Strategy offers a formal logic for the company's goals and orients people around those goals. Internally in companies the word strategy usually describes a set of consistent choices that the organization makes to successfully operate in its field of business. These choices are usually actions that are prepared and planned before the implementation. The aim of these choices is to make the company different from its competitors or alternatively similar but at a better value to the organization's customers. (Groysberg, Lee, Price & Cheng 2018, Porter 1996.)

To make strategy into reality, people in the organization must implement the strategy. Good leadership is in a key role in the implementation of strategy, as ultimately implementing strategy comes down to how to make people implement the strategy in an efficient and result-oriented way. It is often considered that the most important task of upper management is to define the strategic direction of the organization and communicate it. Upper management is expected to have insights on future and make right choices and decisions to guarantee the success of the organization. Sometimes strategic decisions require changes in the work of the organization and these changes may create resistance among the employees. Systematic and effective communication is essential in these situations. A corporate strategy is considered to concern the overall purpose and scope of an organization and how value will be added to the different parts of it. A generic plan becomes a strategy when it competes with alternative plans, with same resources including

land, labour and capital. Within a corporate strategy there are business strategies that define how to compete in different markets. Operational strategies mean different parts of an organization delivering corporate and business strategies by effectively employing resources, people and processes. (Aaltonen, Hämäläinen, Ikävalko, Mantere, Suominen & Teikari 2006, 9-18; Groysberg et al. 2018; Stanton 2017, 99-113.)

Traditionally, there are two different schools of strategy. The first school is strictly related to observing the organization, its operating environment and financial figures. This school narrows out the people who are implementing the strategy and only focuses on the organization, its competitors, partners and other external parties and their relationships. The second school considers that strategy ultimately consists of people who decide to work towards common goals, and that these people should be included in the strategy process as widely as possible and the operating environment analysis should be left secondary. This research combines these two views: it is crucial to look at the organization and its operating environment, but without people an organization cannot implement its strategy. (Aaltonen et al. 2006, 9-18.)

Ultimately, corporate strategy describes how the organization is going to reach their vision and implement their mission. Vision is a desired state in the future where the organization aims to be, and strategy is like a roadmap for how to get there. Strategy often answers the question "What do we need to do to be successful in the future?" It describes the means to reach the vision and the direction that defines how the organization will grow and develop. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 16, 21-22.)

3.2 Implementing strategy in an organization

Li et al. (2008) point out, that in over 60 articles covering implementation of strategy, there is only a little controversy regarding the terminology of strategy implementation. According to Li et al., terms like "execution" and "actualization of goals" are synonymous to the term "implementation", but they are not often used by the managers themselves. As far as the terms "execution" or "executing" in the strategy context are concerned, most of the 60 articles in the literature review Li et al. have made, use strategy implementation as a key word or as a part of the title and only very few use the term strategy execution. There are no articles differentiating strategy implementation from strategy execution in the 60 articles that Li et al. have reviewed, while some authors take strategy execution as an exact synonym of strategy implementation. (Li et al. 2008, 4)

Successful implementation of strategy takes thorough planning and actions from those who have formulated the strategy. However, usually successful strategy implementation is conditional to other people; those who implement the strategy in practice. Often those people are not specialists in strategy, but they are specialists in their own fields; managers or operators in sales, production, finance, etc. Strategy implementers are comprised of top management, middle management, lower management and non-management; whoever takes any kind of independent decisions in their work is an implementer of strategy. The different views and level of information between strategy formulators and strategy implementers often leads to a situation where some consider strategy the most important aspect of their work, whereas others consider it as unnecessary background noise. The latter is not a desired state in the case organization. Strategy implementation can be enforced in all levels of organization by concrete awards for achieving goals, like personal target setting and bonus payment, or consequences for failing to do so. (Aaltonen et al. 2006, 21; Groysberg et al. 2018; Li et al. 2008, 14.)

A good and clear strategy helps employees to prioritize their work. Prioritizing is easier and feels more practical if the strategic direction has been defined so that the employees feel that their input makes a difference in reaching the strategic goals. A strategy should be tempting and concrete enough so that an individual employee can feel that they can affect implementing it. Implementing strategy in everyday work means taking continuous and conscious decisions and choices that are based on the strategy and that guide the organization towards reaching its strategic goals. According to Aaltonen et al. (2006) companies are implementing strategy when there are people working towards common goals in a coordinated way. (Aaltonen et al. 2006, 56.)

In successful strategy implementation the organization's strategic direction has been made clear and it is communicated and interpreted to team and individual levels in a dialogue between management and employees. This way the employees can perceive their role as a part of the company strategy. Often those people who have formulated and defined the strategy are on the other side of a gap than the people who are supposed to implement the strategy with their daily actions. The strategy formulators, who often are managers, are trying to get the strategy implementers, who often are employees, to the same side of the gap so that they would ultimately share the same perceptions of the corporate strategy, as illustrated in figure 3. (Aaltonen et al. 2006, 56.)

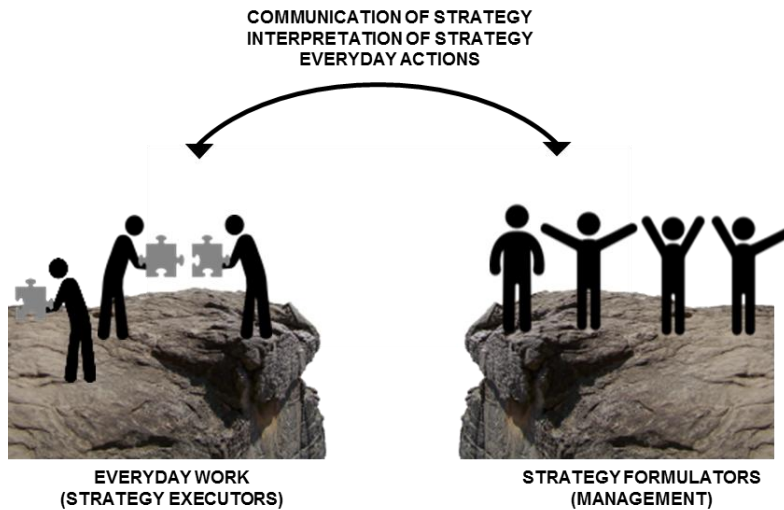


Figure 3. The gap between formulating and implementing strategy (According to the theory of Aaltonen et al. 2005.)

To close the gap there needs to be a clear strategy that is easy to interpret. There needs to be trust between the strategy formulators and strategy implementers. The formulators have to trust that the implementers are willing to think and work for the benefit of the organization and the implementers have to trust that the formulators share the purpose of the strategy and its core ideas as soon as they can. This is the traditional view of seeing all employees' actions as operational. However, according to Kärnä (2016), it is largely accepted that separating thinking and doing (strategy formulation and implementation) from each other does not lead to successful strategy implementation. Accepting strategy implementation as part of the strategy process requires that the practitioners, i.e. employees, are adopted to the process. However, on average, employees do not relate their tasks and role to strategy. This gap can be closed with consistent and effective communication of strategy. (Aaltonen et al. 2006, 56; Kärnä 2016, 121.)

For the success of an organization it is crucial that the employees, strategy implementers, understand their role in the strategy. An important question in making a strategy successful is "How is the strategy related to me?" The road maps, strategic goals, vision and critical success factors may seem distant if there is no clear connection between them and the employees' everyday work. The visions and strategies may be seen as high-level narratives that have no concrete meaning, or that they are only part of the upper management's work. Strategy is often not clearly visible in meeting rooms, office spaces or hallways. However, there is always a connection between the strategy and each team and member of the organization. This connection might be weak or strong. Making the connection visible means understanding the employee's own role in the organization's strategy and how their own decisions and actions affect the success of the strategy and the

company. As strategy is implemented in the means of communication, leaders and middle level managers are in crucial role in strategy implementation, as they transfer strategy first in their own actions and then steer their subordinates into implementing strategy. (Aaltonen et al. 2006, 84-193; Kärnä 2016, 121.)

3.3 Evaluating the success of strategy

There are a lot of plans in organizations. There are strategy plans, business plans, annual plans, production plans, marketing plans, etc. Goals and targets are set on corporate, business area, business unit, department, team and individual levels. If the strategy is wanted to be successful in all those levels, all the plans and targets have to be connected to strategy. However, as organizations usually look to the future, they seldom revert to their previous plans. They are focused on future; setting new targets and creating new plans. This is why evaluating the reaching of strategic targets is often dominated by evaluating and following up the short-term operative actions. Especially in stock listed companies the quarterly results may dominate all other evaluating and measuring. The numeric indicators are sufficient in short-term evaluation, but it is important to evaluate also other aspects in the success of strategy. These important aspects include leadership and success of communication. (Aaltonen et al. 2006, 84-193.)

Many successful organizations collect information on how strategy has been implemented, if there have been changes in their business environment, how the strategy has been communicated, what is the level of know-how in the organization and how the personnel have participated in planning the work. These indicators all help evaluating how successful the implementation of strategy has been. Organizations have to remember to take into account its capabilities for reacting to unexpected events if the business environment changes or shifts unexpectedly. After evaluating the success of the strategy, whether successful or not, the organization has to interpret why their strategy was successful or not and learn from it. (Aaltonen et al. 2006, 84-193.)

4 Communication of strategy

4.1 Strategic communication and communication of strategy

The scope of organizational communication has been broadened to include virtually everything an organization says and does, and everyone who is affected by the organization's existence and activities. Organizational communication has many names, such as public relations, communication management, corporate communications, integrated communications or strategic communication. According to Tench et al. (2011), communication professionals in Europe have developed a structure that links communication to decision making and strategic planning in organizations. Strategic communication conceptualizes the paradigm of communication in organizations and it is defined as "the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfil its mission". Strategic communication implies that people are engaged in conscious communication practices on behalf of the organization. (Tench, Verhoeven & Zerfass 2011, 95-117; Holtzhausen & Zerfass 2014, 34.)

Although strategic communication can be considered a form of strategic action, in this research strategic communication and communication of strategy are considered as different concepts: the term *strategic communication* covers all organizational communication activities and stakeholders, whereas *communication of strategy* is strictly restricted to communication of corporate strategy, where the aim is to engage stakeholders, who often are employees of an organization, to achieving the mutual strategic targets of their organization. Therefore, in this research, communication of strategy is considered to be one specific area of strategic communication, as illustrated in figure 4. (Holtzhausen & Zerfass 2014, 34.)

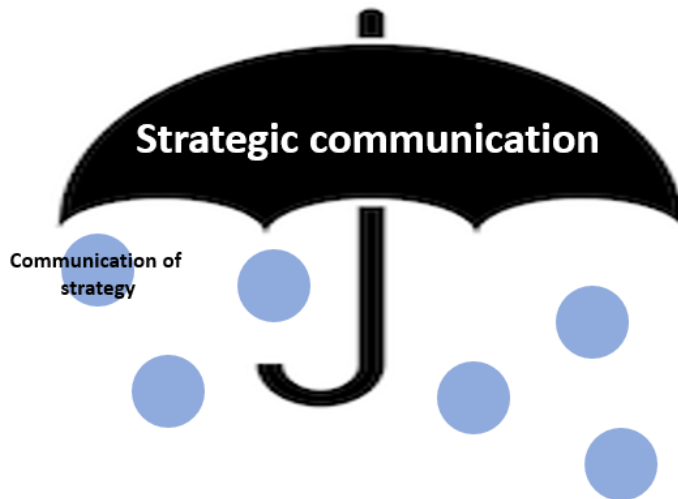


Figure 4. Communication of strategy as a sub-field of strategic communication. (Illustration for the theory in chapter 4.1: strategic communication and communication of strategy.)

As described earlier, strategy and communication of strategy are hard to separate from each other as they are a continuous joint cycle-like process. For the sake of clarity and readability, this chapter explains the role of communication of strategy in organizations. Communication management is a strategic management function. On the other hand, communication management itself should be organized and carried out strategically. The relationship between communication management as a strategic process and corporate strategy is evident in the strategy cycle, that is used as a model for communication of strategy in this research. According to strategy cycle model, communication, strategy formulation and strategy implementation are inseparable parts of the same cycle. It is a consciously shaped organizational process which can be divided into various phases that are related to each other. In this research communication of strategy is seen as a cycle-like process, where communication and strategy formulation as well as implementation are not easy, if impossible, to separate from each other. (Raupp & Hoffjann 2010, 1-3; Cornelissen 2009; 100.)

4.2 Communication of strategy in practice

Communication of strategy consists of both words and actions. Words are in crucial role when an organization wants to build good spirit, define cultural values that support strategy, tell about reasons that lead to change, set goals, express choices, follow-up on results or build trust and engagement. Actions are needed to build credibility for the words, to give meaning for the content and to demonstrate what kinds of actions are expected

from the organization. Even though each member of an organization communicates about strategy, sometimes without realizing it, the main responsibility of communication of strategy remains with the upper management, communication professionals and managers. Upper management and middle level managers act as role models and examples for the rest of the organization when strategy is being communicated and implemented. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 28-32.)

Communication of strategy creates understanding of goals and ambitions of the organization and thus helps the employees to understand the meaning of their own work, approve the strategy, engage to it and apply the strategy to their everyday work. A common understanding of goals of the organization creates engaged employees, a positive working environment and increases efficiency of the organization. Ultimately understanding of strategy among the employees leads them to feel pride and joy about their work and empowers them in their work. Communication of strategy enables coordinating of actions and choices that are related to all work in the organization. Increased understanding of strategy creates more possibilities to ideate, innovate and correct mistakes. Strategy is considered so important for organizations, that it would be unethical not to communicate about strategy within the whole organization; everyone has the right to know the main strategic themes and definitions that steer their work. However, communicators of strategy have to acknowledge that sometimes all details of the strategy are not significant to all members of the organization. It is important to take into account the different needs of different target audiences who might have unlike possibilities to take decisions in their own work. Often it is enough that some employees know the main strategic themes of the organization and those details that are related to their own work. They also need to have the capability to apply them into their work. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 38; Kärnä 2016, 108-112.)

Communication of strategy includes three different main areas:

- Content of the strategy
- Implementation of the strategy
- Strategy process

By communicating about content, strategy can be both implemented and created. Content communication includes consistent information sharing and creating common understanding of the strategy. Communicating about implementation of the strategy provides the employees with concrete topics related to strategy implementation, brings strategy closer to everyday work and thus supports the employees to deliver and develop their work in line with the strategy. It includes giving and getting feedback and collecting initiatives from the

employees. The third area, communicating about strategy process, means telling about the practicalities, systems and roles of strategy to the employees. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 54-56.)

In corporate strategies there are often big themes like customer centricity, trustworthiness and sustainability, that may not feel concrete for many employees. Strategies include terms like profitable growth and financial key performance indicators that may be difficult to understand from the employees' point of view and connect them to their everyday work. A strategy that is easy to understand and personal catches the employees' attention more easily. When explaining strategy, each organization should use terms that are familiar to the audience. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 54-56.)

Often it is considered that there is no need to explain what the concept of strategy is, as everyone is expected to know what it means. However, the word strategy may mean completely different things for different people. An easy-to-understand approach to strategy communication aims at adopting the strategy for the whole organization. It is not enough that a strategy document is sent to the whole organization as an e-mail attachment, as it does not guarantee that all employees have understood what strategy is, what it means to them and how to apply it to their decision making. This is why it is important that managers take time to discuss the strategy with their teams and define their unit or team's role in the strategy together. All employees do not need to know all details of strategy, but they need to know and understand the big picture and what parts of the strategy are crucial for their own work and why. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 54-56.)

Successful communication of strategy requires thinking how the strategy should be communicated. Often employees want to know how the strategic themes are related to their work and that is why it may be wise to plan the communication of strategy according to different target audiences. Practical examples derived from the strategy help the employees to perceive how everyone can contribute to implementing the corporate strategy. Two-way communication, where all employees have a possibility to ask questions and state their opinion, supports understanding of strategy as it provides a possibility for dialogue with their direct managers and upper management. One of the aims of communication of strategy is to justify the organization's strategic choices and to provide an opportunity for the employees to ask and discuss about strategy. Open communication provides an opportunity to share feelings like uncertainty, frustration, relief and excitement that may be related to strategy. Often people resist changes that are perceived as orders or commandments. That is why strategies are most successfully communicated and imple-

mented when those people who are affected by it are included in the planning and designing of the strategy. Even if all employees could not be taken into planning of the high-level strategy, they can plan how the strategy affects their own unit or team. Communication of strategy should focus on open and decorous conversation, where also those who are objecting the strategy are allowed to express their opinion. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 54-56.)

4.3 Different target audiences in communication of strategy

Especially in large organizations there are several different target audiences for communication of strategy and they all have different needs for information. Their needs, expectations, preparedness and mandates may differ significantly from each other. Those who have participated in strategy work naturally have more background knowledge and information than the rest of the employees, and usually they have also more power to make decisions and influence within the organization. Specialists may have more interest towards strategy than production workers. Thus, it needs to be considered that all parts of strategy may not be relevant for all employees and for some employees it may be enough that they know how the strategy affects their own daily work. However, all employees should have a possibility to know all the main themes of the strategy if they are interested in it. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 61-62.)

Middle managers can be considered as the most important target audience for communication of strategy within the organization, as their role includes communicating strategy forward to their teams and shaping their actions to fit and support the strategy. Middle managers' strategic influence arises from their ability to mediate between internal and external environments. In addition, positive effects on organizational performance appear to depend on their upward influence in the network of managers, and whether the pattern of downward influence is consistent with an appropriate balance between the organization's need for control and flexibility. When planning communication of strategy, it is important to map the most significant target audiences and make sure that they feel continuously well-informed about the strategy. Different audiences may need different channels for communication. For example, e-mails reach office employees, but production employees may not even have access to computers. Strategy is often communicated in townhall meetings, but those who work in shifts are not always able to attend strategy information meetings. Communication channels for communication of strategy need to be carefully selected according to the needs of different target audiences. Every employee should have an oppor-

tunity to discuss and give feedback about strategy, which means that there must be channels that enable dialogue and two-way communication of strategy. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 61-62; Li et al. 2008, 17.)

The corporate communication function is the department or unit whose purpose is to facilitate strategy implementation through communication. This department can also serve as the “antenna” of an organization, receiving reactions from key constituencies to the strategy of the company. Corporate communication function facilitates consensus within organizations: If members of the organization are not aware of the same information, or if information passes through different layers in an organization, a lower level of consensus may result. (Li et al. 2008, 20-22.)

4.4 Typical barriers in communication and implementation of strategy

There are many problems which corporations experience frequently, such as the involved employees having insufficient capabilities to perform their jobs, employees being inadequately trained, and departmental managers providing inadequate leadership and direction. These three are the most frequent strategy implementation problems in relation to human resource according to a literature review by Li et al. (2008). Line-level employees may use delay or prevent attempts towards change that they find particularly threatening or disagreeable. Strategic decisions are nevertheless formulated by senior-level managers of the corporation and then administratively imposed on lower-level management and non-management employees. If lower-level management and non-management personnel (employees) are not aware of the same information, or if information must pass through several layers in the organization, consensus regarding that information may never come about. Thus, the lack of shared knowledge with lower-level management and non-management employees creates a barrier to successful strategy implementation. (Li et al. 2008, 17-18.)

4.5 Other models for communicating strategy

In addition to traditional concepts, such as centralization of information or formal communication flows, there are several informal models for communication, like unstructured interactions and networking within the organization. This research focuses on the cycle-like process, where communication is an integral part of strategy formulation and implementation, as described in chapter 2. However, in the case organization, cascading is used as a formal process for communication of strategy, and that is why it is introduced in this chapter. Cascading model is often used in traditional organizations as the primary model for

communication of strategy. Another model called interaction-based model is also introduced in this chapter, as it may be something considerable when continuing to develop communication of strategy in the case organization. Interaction-based model for communication includes dialogue and networking, which are often not recognized as a formal communication process, but are known to be very efficient and important means of communication by those who implement strategy in their daily work. (Jablin & Putnam 2001, 545.)

4.5.1 Cascading

Cascading is a popular method in internal communications. It refers to the downward flow of information from the leadership, as visualized in figure 5. In cascading model of communication of strategy, strategic information proceeds from top-level management (formulators of strategy) to the grassroots of the organization. It means the cascading effect of when individuals make their decisions based on actions and information almost passively provided by others, instead of relying on their own information, resulting in a herd-like behaviour among the individuals. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 68; Rouhiainen 2003, 5-33; Kärnä 2016, 108-112.)

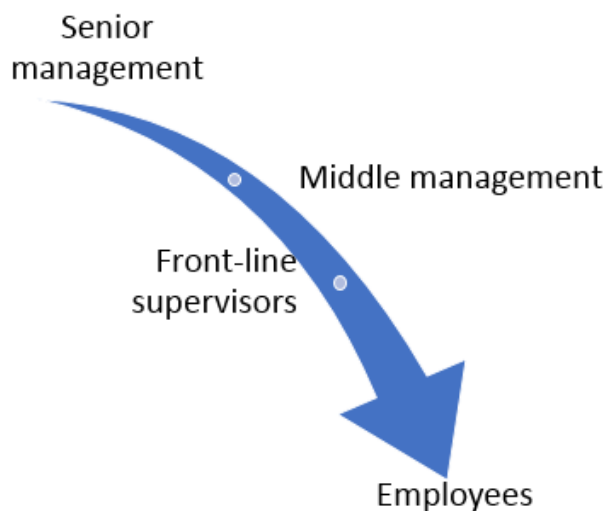


Figure 5. Cascading information in an organization

Cascading usually happens when the individuals do not have sufficient information on a particular topic otherwise. In large organizations strategy formulation is firstly upper management's responsibility and that is why communication of strategy flows from top to down in the organization. In cascading model strategy is distributed from one level of an organization to another through several different layers of an organization. As strategy is implemented in the means of communication, leaders and middle level managers are in crucial

role in strategy implementation when they cascade information in the organization. They transfer strategy first in their own actions and then steer their subordinates into implementing strategy. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 68; Rouhiainen 2003, 5-33; Cowan 2017, 8.)

In the cascading model, communication of strategy can be designed phase by phase so that the communication process is started for instance at the leadership level town hall strategy meeting where the strategy is cascaded first to middle level managers. Large events for sharing strategy might be useful, as then many members of the organization will receive the information at the same time. Middle level managers then have to ensure that their team members learn and understand the strategy and what it means for their own team and their tasks, and how to take decisions that are based on strategy in their own work to ensure working towards the organization's common goals. Managers cascade the strategy to their units and teams in their own strategy meetings and individual employees' performance appraisal discussions, keeping in mind that communication of strategy is a continuous process throughout the whole year. The leadership and communication professionals' responsibility is to make sure that the middle managers are continuously supported in this important task by providing them with access to information and different kinds of channels and communication materials that provide them with information about the strategy. In large organizations cascading is the most efficient formal way to communicate strategy and the easiest way make sure that the strategy reaches as many employees as possible. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 68; Rouhiainen 2003, 5-33; Cowan 2017, 8.)

Cascading strategy in an organization often is a structural process inside the annual strategy process. According to Kaplan and Norton (1996), a Balanced Scorecard is a tool that can be used to facilitate cascading of strategy in an organization. The Balanced Scorecard helps to translate the high-level organizational vision into operational terms that links the strategy to department and individual objectives and helps to review and evaluate the results. A Balanced Scorecard is a tool that allows the organization to coordinate and fine-tune its operations and businesses so that all activities are in line with its strategy. It augments traditional financial measurements with benchmarks for performance in three non-financial areas: company's relationship with its customers, key internal processes and the organization's learning and growth. (Kaplan & Norton 1996; Kärnä 2006, 121.)

4.5.2 Interaction-based communication

Communication of strategy can also be based on dialogue or interaction within the organization. Dialogue means that there is a constant conversation between the management and employees about the strategy within the organization. Despite the managers are in a crucial role in communication of strategy, all other employees are considered as communicators too. They formulate and share information in different communication forums. Unofficial communication forums, such as coffee table discussions, are sometimes the most influential and powerful forums for dialogue and interaction. In these forums employees and managers share information to each other in an informal dialogue, often in an unstructured way. In addition, different units, functions and people interact together in forums like project team meetings, get-togethers, e-mails, Skype calls, etc. If strategy is discussed in these forums, it leads to processing ideas and strong commitment as employees can participate in developing the strategy in an interactive way. In the interaction based model of communication of strategy the traditional idea of strategy is replaced by the concept that strategy is constantly shaped and developed, when the organization also learns all the time. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 61-62; Rouhiainen 2003, 5-33; Cowan 2017, 8.)

In Kärnä's research (2016), strategy practitioners, i.e. employees, shaped their roles through interaction and their cooperation networks. They spread wide in all levels of organization, up and down, as well as outside of the organization. Interaction occurred not only in the formal structures of the organization, but also in complex informal social webs of relationships. Through these interactions, employees gained understanding and knowledge of strategy and learning of what it means to their unit, which gave them meaning to their work, unit and communion with others in the organization. They also adapted new ways of working that were in line with strategy. Middle managers' role is essential for the flow of information within these informal groups and forums. (Kärnä 2016, 108-112.)

According to Kärnä (2016), social aspects are substantial for building identity and organizational communities at work. The strategy practitioners considered interaction as one of the most successfully experienced strategic activities, so this informal model for communication should not be overlooked when planning communication of strategy. Traditionally these tacit and informal processes are neglected in strategic management, even though they play a crucial role in strategic sense making. Communication professionals together with upper management and middle managers could make these informal interactions accepted within the organization by encouraging employees to join them actively and making these networks visible in the strategy process. Accepting the social networking model

of communication presumes a decentralized, cyclic and creative nature for interaction and processes. The challenge for managers often is that interaction and cooperation are social activities that require a holistic approach, not only dictating, but respecting, listening and understanding individual factors. (Kärnä 2016, 108-112.)

As summary, communication of strategy can follow either the traditionally accepted models of communication based on top-down effectivity, the informal interactions and networks, or both of them. In global large companies the managerial top-down planning of communication of strategy is efficient, even though more informal interactions within the organization are involved in communication for how to implement the strategy on local levels. Often in organizations the leadership encourages managers and employees to participate strategic discussions, but the strategy implementers, i.e. employees and managers, still express a need for more support and interaction to understand the meaning of the strategy in their work. This indicates that both traditional top-down communication and informal interactions and networks are important methods for communicators of strategy. (Kärnä 2016, 108-112.)

5 Managers as communicators of strategy

Middle-level managers' role in transferring strategy to practice is crucial, and lack of their communication is a significant factor that leads to failure in implementing strategy (Rouhiainen 2003). Middle-managers' responsibility is to learn and understand the strategy that is communicated to them and then communicate it to their teams and implement the strategy in their teams' work. It is a repeating constantly ongoing communication process where the same message is delivered in different levels of organization. (Nielsen & González 2010, 140; Rouhiainen 2003, 5-33.)

Manager communication refers to communication between a manager and his or her subordinate employees. Manager communication is often directly related to not only the specific tasks and activities of the employees, but also their morale and wellbeing. According to Cornelissen (2014), research on what managers do has proven that they spend most of their time communicating, and much of that in verbal, face-to-face communication. Besides face-to-face, managers use also channels like e-mail, video conferencing and corporate softwares to communicate with their employees. Managers need to use communication to implement change and strategies. Successful manager communication can make a massive difference in how a change or future vision is perceived in an organization. (Cornelissen 2014, 164-167, 232-234.)

Middle-level managers need to have the knowledge and capabilities to organize information and communicate in an influential way and they need to understand how employees can implement strategy in their work. They are often considered as an organization's central nervous system. They are responsible for receiving information and communicating it to their followers. They are also responsible for facilitating communication between top management and floor levels, integrating and implementing changes made by top management in daily work practices. Middle managers play a key role in setting a clear vision for what can be achieved through the implementation of top management decisions. They also help to ensure that those decisions are implemented at a pace where employees' skills and adaptability are taken into consideration, supporting employees in their work and personal development. (Nielsen & González 2010, 140; Rouhiainen 2003, 5-33.)

Even though it may not be possible to take all the members of the organization in planning the strategy, it is often possible to keep the whole organization updated about strategy and planning of strategy and in this way, give everyone an opportunity to let strategy be a concrete part of their own work. Participating creates motivation among the employees.

Usually the biggest responsibility of strategy process lies within the upper management as they are the ones formulating the strategy. Many other people may be involved in the strategy process, but the responsibility of upper management is to interpret and combine the collected information and formulate it into one sensible strategy. The upper management sets the goals and the means to reach those goals and should help others in the organization to understand their roles in reaching their goals. Upper management can be seen as architects, adaptors and facilitators of strategy. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 61-62; Ruben & Stewart 1998, 32-34; Kärnä 2016, 108-112.)

It is crucial for everybody to experience the meaning of own work. A person who sees a connection between their own work and their organization's success understands and accepts changes and transformation easier. Here middle-managers' role as communicators and links between the organizational strategy and their unit becomes evident. Middle managers have a crucial role in communication of strategy, as most of the employees are not directly in contact with the upper management. Middle managers are needed as interpreters of strategy to their teams. Those employees who feel the most empowered in their work, often state that it is due to the good interaction and cooperation with their superiors. In addition to delivering information from upper management to their teams, managers are responsible for communicating to the opposite direction as well. A remarkable idea for strategy may be found anywhere in the organization and the middle managers should encourage ideators in their teams to deliver their thoughts to the upper management. There might be "strategic flag bearers" anywhere in the organization, who can also affect the implementation of strategy outside their own team, where individuals create and interpret information in interactive processes. This means that communication does not flow only upwards and downwards, but also in lateral and diagonal ways within the organization, as shown in figure 6. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 61-61; Ruben & Stewart 1998, 32-34; Juholin 2013, 202-203.)

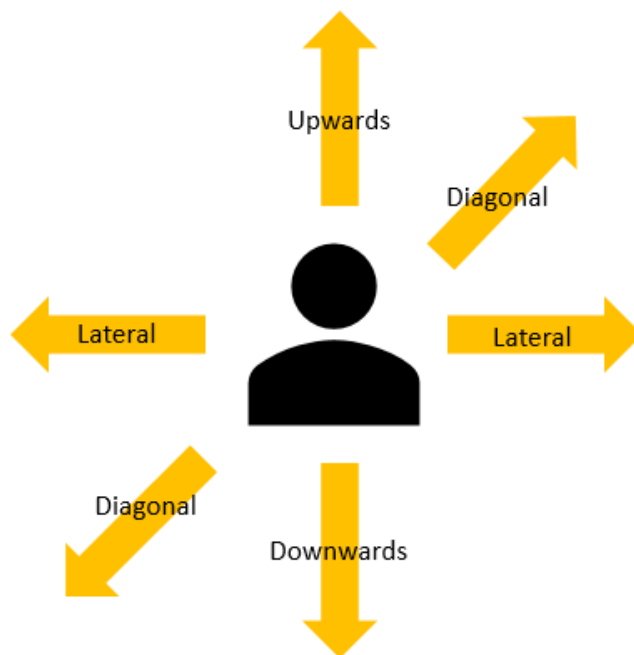


Figure 6. Middle-level managers' communication flows

Managers are close to their subordinates and they face a lot of expectations when it comes to communication. Both their subordinates and their managers and leaders expect them not only to share information but to listen and be present to their teams and to interpret information. They also deliver information from their teams upwards to upper management as well as sideways and diagonally to other teams and functions. According to Juholin (2013) managers' leadership and communication styles are the biggest reasons for their employees to change to a new job. Manager's role is clearly different from other roles in an organization, as they are links and interpreters between their teams and the rest of the organization. An inspiring manager interprets topics in such language that his or her team understands and adopts them well. (Juholin 2013, 202-203.)

As strategy is implemented in the means of communication, leaders and middle-level managers transfer strategy first in their own actions and then steer their subordinates into implementing strategy. Managers are expected to perform more face-to-face communication than delivered static communication. Managers may face their subordinates for example in following situations:

- Recruiting and starting in a job
- Orientation and introduction
- Performance appraisals and personal goal setting, career and development planning
- Strategic communication on unit and profit center level
- Daily work communication
- Meetings and other events

In addition to this, managers act in other forums together with their manager colleagues, their own managers and leadership teams. The rough categorization of managers' communication topics is as follows:

- Whole organization's strategy, results, plans and changes: interpretation for the home team
- Home team plans, results and changes
- Daily communication with home team
- Home team members' plans and insights for development
- Processing meaningful and difficult topics with home team and processing feedback

In large organizations some of the topics, like strategy or result communication, are supported by a communications department, but it is essential that these topics are interpreted from the unit point of view to make them relevant for the employees. (Juholin 2013, 210.)



Figure 7. Managers' communication responsibilities (according to Juholin 2013.)

Managers' communication responsibilities can be described as in figure 7, which demonstrates the large responsibility areas (bolded) and the personal level topics that the employees and managers themselves are interested in (regular text). Manager's position in a change situation is vital and the figure has to be interpreted so that the answers will be formulated as a result of a dialogue with the subordinates, so that the messages are relevant to the employees. (Juholin 2013, 210.)

Given the personal nature of management communication, it is important that the communicating managers are committed to what they are saying and communicate in consistent line with their commitments to demonstrate support to the topic. Authenticity gives consistency, personal touch and passion to the topic and it is more likely to win the audience over. Successful management communication also involves stories and frames to articulate a change initiative, like a new strategy or vision, and to motivate workforce, as well as to support continuous discussion. Stories can be useful for presenting the rationale for change, the steps that are needed for realizing the change or strategy, and the overall beneficial outcomes that are likely to result. Stories present actions and events leading towards a desired result as a form of plot. Skilful managers are mindful of the words and narrative patterns that they use, and about how they use their stories with others around them. (Cornelissen 2014, 164-167, 232-234.)

In addition to authenticity and stories, managers need conversational skills to participate in on-going discussions about the change across the organization. The aim is to mobilize discussions that enable others in the organization to see possibilities that they might have missed to see the organization in a new light. Discussions often mean a dialogue, where two parties can relate and to elaborate on each other's points, rather than a straight monologue or negotiation. Successful managers are able to have open conversations, are willing to say where they stand and what they think and listen carefully what others say trying to make sense of their points. In modern organizations, these conversations may even trigger a reformulation in the definition or implementation of the strategy. The importance of conversational skills emphasizes that a straightforward leadership presentation about strategy across the organization is not sufficient, but only a beginning. To continue and accelerate change strategies, managers and leaders need to have regular, on-going conversations with the people they are leading about the topics that are going on in their context. These detailed conversations often matter the most and may be the deciding factor to whether the employees are supportive or resistant towards the strategy. (Cornelissen 2014, 164-167, 232-234.)

5.1 Communication professionals as a supporting force

Successful communication of strategy requires strong cooperation within the organization between different functions, units and employees. According to Hämäläinen & Maula (2004) communication of strategy is doomed to fail if it remains as a separate project for communication professionals only. On the other hand, the experience and knowledge of communication professionals is needed for successful communication of strategy. It is important to map who and in which levels participate in planning and implementing the communicating of strategy and agree their roles and responsibilities beforehand. Cooperation is needed to formulate messages, in making the communication plan and implementing it. In large organizations there are many levels of employees who can participate in communication of strategy: upper management, middle management, communication professionals, human resources, business development, different units and their representatives, change agents, personnel representatives like shop stewards and external consultants and trainers. Clear roles and responsibilities in communication of strategy are crucial to avoid double work and to ensure effective communication. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 68.)

In addition to planning, communication professionals' responsibility is to support managers and leaders in their communication and to take care that there is sufficient information and suitable discussion forums available. Communication professionals produce and publish internal publications and make sure that the internal networks provide information for managers and employees. They also consult key people, like managers and evaluate employee communication, which is essential for efficient communication of strategy. They provide tools, channels and content that support managers in their communication of strategy. The role of a communication professional has changed a lot over the years. Nowadays it is not acceptable to consider communication as one-way information transfer process. Instead of the old-fashioned role of information dealers, in this research communication professionals are considered as creators and facilitators, who are an integral part of an interactive communication process. (Salminen 2014, 73-74, 96-98; Juholin 2013, 390-391; Cornelissen 2014, 164-167, 232-234.)

Creators aim at creating consensus between different roles and parts of the organization and create networks that benefit everyone in the organization. Instead of target groups they see active and aware audiences. Creators of communication want to create a positive atmosphere in the organization. Facilitator's role is described with words like dialogue, interaction, disclosure of intentions, observing, facilitating, communication process management and capabilities to communicate. For facilitators communication is dialogue and

their task is to maintain it. They create arenas where significant dialogue can flourish. They also choose participants for the dialogue, invite them, bring them together and lead the dialogue without necessarily participating in it themselves. Instead of being information bringers, facilitators lead communication by developing communication skills and capabilities in all levels of organization. (Salminen 2014, 73-74, 96-98.)

Communication skills are a prerequisite in participating in leading and managing organizations. Communication professionals coordinate the organization and influence the leadership through different roles that all reflect the reliability of communication professionals as advisors. Communication professionals have to know the processes, structures, social interactions and external networks of their organization to be successful in their work. They also need to understand how individuals observe topics in an organization and form opinions to be able to support managers in their communication. They offer the managers a general view of the organization and help them to understand the business environment to recognize threats and opportunities. As coaches, communication professionals help managers to develop their communication skills and as dealers they build common meanings for different topics, like strategy, in the organization. All these different roles and tasks of communication professionals do not exclude one another, but they are connected to how communication is perceived in an organization. (Salminen 2014, 73-74, 96-98.)

5.2 Employees as a target audience

The employees of an organization have an important role in communication of strategy, as their role is to receive the communication of strategy, interact and interpret with their peers and superiors, give feedback, as well as implement the strategy in their work. Employees form the target audience whose task is to take the strategy into practice and implement the high-level strategy. Ideally, employees would be involved in the strategy formulating process to create buy-in for the high-level strategy among them. If they cannot be included in the strategy formulating process, they must be guaranteed access to precise information on the organizational strategy. It is important that all employees of an organization work towards the organization's common goals. (Rouhiainen 2003, 5-33.)

6 Execution of the research

6.1 Aim of the research and research questions

This research aims at finding out how an organization's communication function can support middle-level managers' communication of strategy. This is the primary research question for this study. The secondary aims and research questions are to find out how middle-level managers perceive communication of strategy and what are their expectations towards the communication professionals regarding communication of strategy. The need for this study comes from the case organization, that aims at developing communication of strategy to increase the employees' capabilities for independent decision making and this way increasing efficiency in the organization. Strategy process and implementation and communication of strategy, as described in chapter 2.1. (Strategy cycle) is constantly ongoing in the case organization and middle-management's responsibility is to communicate about strategy to their teams around the year. The desired state in the case organization is that all employees understand the main features of the strategy, how it is a basis for their daily work and their unit and how the strategy should guide their decision making. In other words, strategy should be translated into the employees' daily work. Successful communication of strategy leads the organization to this desired state, and it requires commitment and willingness from the organization to act according to the strategy.

This research consists of a literature review to identify existing theories and studies and that present a theoretical framework for corporate strategy, communication of strategy and managers' responsibility for communication. This chapter introduces basic concepts of this research, and the following chapters introduce the gained understanding of communication of strategy in the case organization, that is developed based on data collection, which is described more in detail later in this chapter. Finally, there are suggestions for how the communication professionals in the case organization could facilitate, develop and support middle-level managers' communication of strategy. The research process is described in figure 8. (Yin 2009.)



Figure 8. Research process

6.2 Research approach

Empirical research can be conducted in quantitative or qualitative research methods. This research was made as qualitative research that focuses on increasing the understanding of a particular topic and answers questions “why” and “how”. The research method that was used for this research, case study, fits well for research that aims at producing development ideas. The most common purpose of a case study is to produce deep and detailed information on the development case, allowing understanding of the research objective comprehensively in its realistic operational environment in real time. It brings depth and understanding of complexity to development work and aims at getting a significant amount of information on a restricted subject. Case study clarifies how something is possible and why it happens and it often answers the questions “how?” and “why?” A case study is based on theories, methods and earlier research. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2014, 52-53.)

6.3 Data collection

This research started with a literature review to identify existing studies and theories related to corporate strategy, communication of strategy and managers’ responsibility to communicate. The literature review developed a theoretical framework for this research, that enables evaluating the collected data against the existing theories and best practices. The theory part will be used as a frame later in this research to give development suggestions for communication of strategy in the case organization.

To gain comprehensive understanding of middle-level managers’ communication of strategy in the case organization, a set of eight interviews were conducted. The selected method was cumulative semi-structured interviews. Cumulative data collection means that the topics and statements that are discussed during one interview are discussed again and confirmed during the next interviews and this way the data is collected in a cumulative way. For

instance, if interviewee A claims that topic X is important in their communication of strategy, interviewee B is then asked what they think about topic X and if it is important for them as well. This way I managed to confirm the most important common topics in the managers' communication of strategy in the case organization. (KvaliMOTV 2018.)

6.3.1 Description of interview methods

The data for this research was collected in semi-structured interviews. In semi-structured interviews data is collected so that all interviewees are asked the same or almost same questions in the same order. According to some definitions, the interviewee can change the order of the questions similarly as in theme interviews. Sometimes semi-structured interviews are called themed interviews, especially if the questions refer to specific themes, but not all questions are the same in all conducted interviews. Often the interviewee has defined topics for the semi-structured interviews, but in addition the interviewer has prepared specific questions for the interviewees. Semi-structured interview is fit for situations where the interviewer wants to have information on specific topics without letting the discussion flow too far from these topics. (KvaliMOTV 2018.)

6.3.2 Selection criteria for the interviewees

The criteria for selecting interviewees for this research were that they all are managers, but are not part of the case organization's management team, as this research considers upper management and middle management's responsibilities in communication of strategy different. Middle-level management is the scope of this research. In the case organization the management team members define the strategy and are involved in the strategy formulating process, so they are expected to know the strategy very well. Some middle-level managers are involved in the strategy formulating process of the case organization, but not most of them. Eight managers were selected from different countries, units and teams to get a wide view to the case organization and to see if there are variances between different countries, cultures, different types of units or teams. The group of the eight interviewees consisted of managers as follows:

Country of location			
China	Finland	Sweden	USA
1	3	3	1

Unit/team type			
Production	Sales & Supply Chain	Innovation	Administration
3	2	2	1

Table 1. Interviewees: country of location and unit types

In this scope, there is representation from teams that are easy to reach online and teams that work in shifts and that are not very much online. Some organizations within this scope are very international and some very local and prefer local language for communication. The selection criteria for the interviewees were

1. Diversity on what kind of teams the managers lead
2. Diversity on location
3. Not a division management team member

Two of the cumulative semi-structured interviews were made face-to-face and the rest six interviews were made as skype voice calls. Four interviews were conducted in English and four interviews were conducted in Finnish. To guarantee the anonymity of interviewees, all data is reported in English. The face-to-face interviews were recorded with a Dictaphone and the skype calls were recorded with a Skype integrated recorder.

6.3.3 Conducting the interviews

The interviews in this research did not follow pre-defined detailed questions, but they flowed according to pre-designed semi structured questions. The order of the topical questions was free during the interviews and all interviewees did not spend the same amount of time with each question. I took short notes of the discussions in the interview situations so that I could pay full attention to the discussion: the aim was to discuss the topics as freely as possible. It is essential to record the interviews, so the discussions can be returned to later.

Each interviewee was asked two background questions before the actual interview questions were discussed: "What is the size of your team?" and "How are you mostly in contact

with your team?” to gain understanding of their communication responsibilities and opportunities. The pre-planned semi structured questions for the interviews that led the discussions were:

- What does strategy mean to you and your team?
- How do you communicate about strategy to your team?
- Have you faced challenges in communication of strategy?
- What kind of support would you like to get from the communication professionals of the organization for your communication of strategy?

According to KvaliMOTV (2018) the gestures and behaviour of the interviewer are significant during the interviews, so I wanted to act as neutral as possible and let the interviewees talk about the topics that they felt relevant for their communication of strategy. In the beginning of each interview I explained the topic, the reason for the interview and the aim of the research for the interviewees to make sure that all of them had the same knowledge and understanding of the interviews as well as background and the aims of the research. I led the conversation during the cumulative phases when I wanted to confirm or further discuss some topics from the previous interviews. The interviews were conducted in September-October 2017 and the length of the interviews varied between 30 minutes and one hour, depending on how much the interviewee wanted to talk about the topics. Eight interviews were conducted for this research and all planned interviews were conducted. (KvaliMOTV 2018.)

A minor part of the data for this research was collected through observation method. The observations were made during normal daily work, almost by accident. Through observing employees, I got the employees' point of view for my research. Observation helped to validate if people act as they say they do. When researchers try to find out what is important to people, they may get different results based on whether they talk to people (interviews) or if they observe what they do and how they act. In my research, I got validation for some of the managers' interview statements by observing employees who report to the interviewed managers. As an advantage, observation provides first-hand information of individuals', groups' and organizations' actions and it lets the researcher access natural environments of the research subjects. In this research observation means that I had a possibility to access and observe natural discussions of employees in the case organization. My observation was unstructured and unsystematic. According to KvaliMOTV (2018), the observer must have extensive background information about the topic and she has to understand how the observation subjects are related to the topic. In this research these criteria were met. (KvaliMOTV 2018.)

Some statistics for this research was collected from an annual employee survey called Your Voice to gain understanding of current state of communication of strategy in the case organization. as described in chapter 1.3, Communication of strategy in the case organization. All employees in the case organization are asked to answer the survey yearly. The questions have remained the same every year and the response rate in the case organization is well over 90% each year, so the survey is considered as a reliable representation of the organization. The downside of the survey data is, however, that it only gives the percentage rates of the employees' opinions, but does not explain any reasons for why they have chosen to answer in a certain way. Your Voice employee survey is a good data source for quantitative data, but cannot be used as a qualitative source of data for this research.

6.3.4 Saturation of data

In qualitative research, there comes a point when the researcher has collected enough data for the research – it is called a saturation point. It is feasible to think that there is enough data when the researcher does not get new data anymore and the data starts to repeat itself. In some cases, the saturation point cannot be predefined, but it must be carefully observed during the data collection. Even a relatively small amount of data can be used for generalization when the saturation point has been reached. However, if the researcher can constantly find new angles for the data they are collecting, it is difficult to see when the saturation point has been reached. Another controversy for saturation point is that when can the researcher be certain that the subject has stopped providing new data. This was a problem in my research. I felt like I started to get some similar data in the final interviews, but on the other hand one of the goals was to see how different kinds of teams and managers perceive communication of strategy. In this research it was more important to research the heterogeneity of data than reach the saturation point in data collection. (KvaliMOTV 2018.)

6.4 Data analysis

The purpose of the interviews was to find out

- How can communication professionals in the case organization develop, facilitate and support middle-level managers' communication of strategy?
- How managers perceive communication of strategy?
- What are the managers' expectations towards the communication professionals in the case organization regarding communication of strategy?

The interviews all touched upon these topics. When an important and interesting topic came up, like measuring of strategy or personal target setting and bonus payments as part of communication of strategy, these topics were discussed in detail and thus some other topics may have had less attention during those interviews. The data was organized into main topics that came up during the data collection. It is a natural way to analyse data that has been collected in semi-structured interviews. The topics that were discussed with the interviewees were present in almost all interviews, but they varied in quantity and quality. Sometimes the final data analysis topics ended up resembling the structure of the interview topics, but that was not always the case. In thematic analysis the aim is to recognize patterns in the collected data and then identify data and classify it according to the patterns. All the data that fits under a specific pattern is identified and placed under the corresponding pattern. Then the patterns are combined and catalogued into groups, that bring together components or experiences, which may be meaningless when viewed alone. The thematic groups that emerge from the interviews, are put together to form a comprehensive picture of the interviewees collective experience. When the topics are collected and the literature is studied, the researcher can formulate theme statements that are called groups in this research. (Kvalimotiv 2018, Aronson 1995.)

6.5 Validity and reliability of the research

Validity is the most important quality criteria for qualitative research. It means that the research is thorough and that the conclusions and results are “real”. To reach that, the researcher must know which are the most suitable methods for their research. In qualitative research, validity most often refers to credibility of the research. According to Maxwell (1992), all qualitative researchers agree that not all possible accounts of some individual, situation, phenomenon or activity are equally useful, credible or legitimate. Validity, in broad sense, relates to the relationship between an account and something outside of that account. However, as observers and interpreters of our world, we cannot step outside our own experience to obtain independent data from our own experience. It is always possible that there are different, equally valid accounts from different perspectives. Maxwell (1992) also states, that data in itself cannot be valid or invalid, but the issue is the inferences drawn from the data. Also, a method alone is not valid or invalid: methods can produce valid data in some circumstances and invalid data in other circumstances. In this research validity and reliability are ensured by several means. The interviews were recorded. As the topic of the research is not very sensitive and the interviewees names are not disclosed, it is justified to assume that the interviewees have been truthful during the interviews. In some cases, single case studies can provide analytic generalization, but in this research, where the aim is

to understand communication of strategy and generate development suggestions for a specific organization, generalization of findings should be done cautiously. (Maxwell 1992, 279-301; KvaliMOTV 2018.)

7 Empirical findings

In this section, the interview findings are grouped in topics that were raised in the interviews. The topics were discussed after asking the questions “How do you communicate about strategy to your team?” and “Have you faced challenges in communication of strategy?” The thematic groups’ names are listed as sub-headings in this chapter.

7.1 Concretizing of strategy

According to the interviews, it is evident that the managers in the case organization wish to communicate about strategy in a way that makes the strategy concrete to their teams and their working environment. The substance of strategy was considered very important in all interviews. The participating managers said that they need to understand their own and their team’s role in the strategy before they can communicate about it to their teams and make it relevant to their subordinates. One manager stated in their interview:

“To make communication simpler, strategy needs to be concrete in the environment where you work.”¹

An important point for communication of strategy according to the managers is that it is important to communicate *how* the strategy is implemented, not only *what* the strategy is. One of the interviewees articulated it by saying

“Here is what we are supposed to do and this is how we do it.”

Links between the strategy and real-life actions were desired as proof points for communication of strategy. For instance, there have been several investment decisions during the past few years that were considered as clear links and proof points for implementing the high-level strategy in several teams. Especially in production units the managers wished that it was easier to link the strategy to their everyday operations so they could state to their teams that “when we do like this, it implements this part of the division strategy like this.” Strategic investments are good proof points for the managers in production units to link their teams’ work into strategy, as these investment projects are visible to the employees in their daily work.

¹ Four of the interviews were conducted in English and four of the interviews were conducted in Finnish. To guarantee anonymity of interviewees, all data is reported only in English.

Some managers in production units wished to increase the feeling of being part of something bigger with their teams, meaning that they are not just one team in one production unit, but that they are part of the whole division and company. The managers felt that this could help them to raise interest towards the division level strategy among their teams, but they also highlighted that all details in the division strategy may not be relevant to the production workers. It is more important to make sure that they understand their own part in the context of the high-level strategy rather than know all parts of it by heart.

In addition to making strategy concrete to their teams, the managers wished to communicate what are the drivers behind the strategy, for example what kind of megatrends are driving the division. When employees understand the drivers behind the strategy, the managers perceive it would ultimately make it easier for them to understand why the strategy is being cascaded into unit and team level strategies and plans. The interviewed managers wished to get more support for creating the link from corporate and division strategies to their unit-level plans. Then it would be easier for the managers to link their team's actions into the high-level strategy. Many of the interviewees stated that individual projects on which their teams are working are very good proof points and links to the strategy. The managers may use them as examples when they communicate about strategy to their teams and use strategy as a background for why they are working on that specific project. This was valid especially in production units with ongoing strategic investment projects and in innovation with different research projects. It was also perceived that the division strategy and sales plan could have more visible links to each other to make the division strategy more tangible in the Sales and Supply Chain team.

“I as a manager have to communicate to my team how their work is in line with our division strategy. We should find projects that the employees are working on to be used as examples of strategic development. Strategic reasons for the projects need to be brought up better. Sometimes it is hard to find those reasons.”

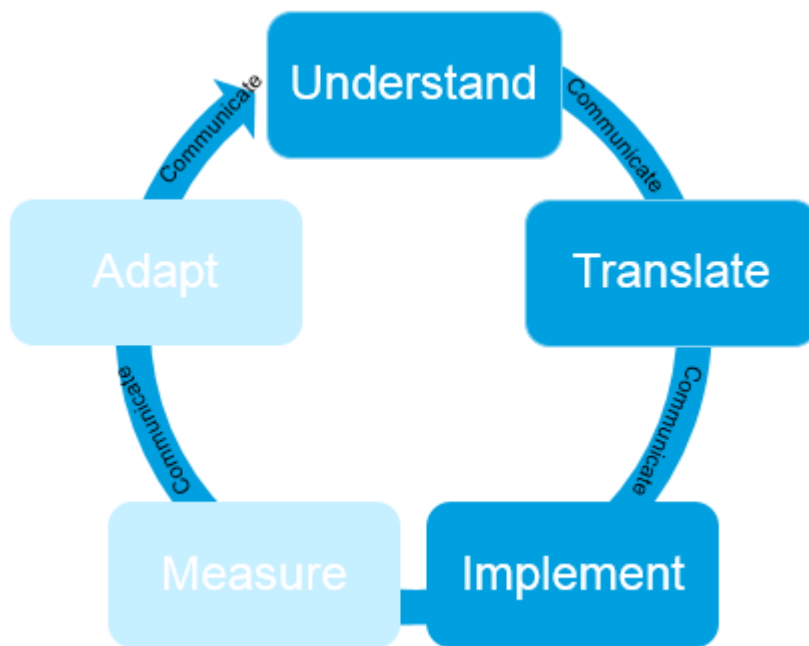


Figure 9. Concretizing of strategy is particularly strongly related to understanding, translating and implementing strategy in the strategy implementation and communication cycle model.

Concretizing of strategy as a topic emerges, as it is specifically essential when formulating strategy, translating it into concrete and understandable topics and implementing strategy in the cycle model for strategy implementation and communication, as visualized in figure 9. Effective implementation of strategy starts with understanding the strategy, and the managers wish to make strategy understood in their teams by making in concrete to their subordinates. To implement strategy, everyone who are working for the organization needs to understand what is the strategy of the corporation, what are their functional strategies, what do their customers need and what their competitors are doing. By understanding these topics, strategy becomes more concrete to the employees. Communication is in a key role to make strategy understandable and concrete within the organization and translating strategy into specific actions and plans across the whole organization. These plans have to be communicated to employees in a concrete way so that they know how to implement them. Only after consistent and clear and concrete communication has started, the organization is ready to start the implementation of strategy and move to actions.

7.2 Involvement and support for managers

In all interviews, the involvement of managers to the strategy process was discussed. Many interviewees said that they would feel more confident to communicate about the strategy to their teams if they were involved in the annual strategy formulating process

and this way they would know and understand the case organization's high-level strategy better.

“As a manager I need to be involved in the strategy process to be able to tell about the strategy to my team.”

“Ideally it would be good that we all agree that this is the future direction and then figure out with the team what this strategy means to us.”

Many of the interviewed managers stated that in an ideal world every manager in the division would be involved in agreeing what is the future of the division. Then they would have more capabilities to discuss with their teams what the strategy means to them and how it is relevant to them, even building a road map for the strategy implementation with their teams.

Some of the interviewed managers would like to have more regular discussions about strategy with their own managers to gain better understanding of the division strategy and its significance to their teams. One manager suggested that in steering or other kind of regular business meetings with the case organization's top management, there could be a time slot reserved for dialogue and discussion about the high-level strategy. In these meetings, the managers could discuss with their own managers how the unit's actions are tied to the high-level strategy and the unit or team's performance against strategy could be followed up. This would provide the managers with insight to how their team is performing implementing strategy and take adjusting actions if needed.

Regular possibilities for two-way strategy dialogue between the top management and their subordinates, who usually are mid-level managers whose responsibility is to communicate about strategy to their teams, is seen as a good way to gain more understanding on what the case organization has accomplished so far and what does the unit, function or team need to do next to implement the high-level strategy. In these meetings with the top management members, the managers perceive that they would learn what is expected to happen in the future and prepare their teams for it. One concrete example is Sales & Supply Chain team, where the managers and employees need information on what is coming from the innovation pipeline according to the division strategy, to be prepared and organize themselves for new products.

In addition to involving managers more in the strategy formulating process and having more dialogue with those who are involved in strategy formulating, most of the interviewed

managers wished to have more support to communicate about division and corporate strategies to their teams. They felt that there are enough communication materials, like presentations, for communicating about strategy, but they may not always know how to use them. One manager said:

“Let’s learn how to use the existing communication tools rather than create new ones.”

Based on these discussions it seems that there is no lack of communication materials, but the managers could use more support for using the materials in practice and instructions on how to talk about the strategy.

One interviewed manager suggested that the communication professionals of the case organization could help managers to organize strategy workshops for their teams. Some managers who work in production units suggested that the communication professionals could ask the case organization’s management team members to join their shift meetings more often to discuss about strategy. According to their experience this kind of meetings are effective for communicating about strategy, but it is hard to get the production employees to join, as they need to join them in their free time. Another manager suggested that the case organization communication professionals could participate in these workshops and collect notes from comments and questions that are presented during the workshops. These notes would help the communication professionals to develop the existing materials for communication of strategy. The discussed topics from the workshops could be then followed-up on division level, for instance in division Monthly Calls, that are hosted by the EVP of the case organization and where all employees are welcome to join. In these calls the links between actions and strategy could be highlighted too.

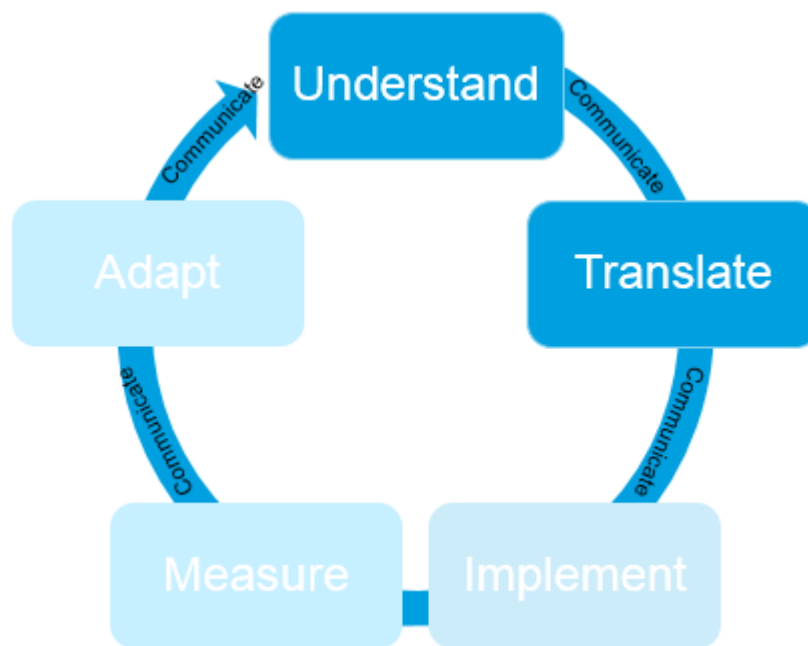


Figure 10. Involving managers in strategy formulating supports understanding and translating strategy in the strategy implementation and communication cycle model.

This topic was discussed with the managers in the interviews as it felt as a personal topic for them and it would provide concrete support for them if the managers were involved in strategy formulating process. As a result, they would have more buy-in and understanding for the high-level strategy as they would have been formulating it themselves. This would make it easier for the managers to then translate the strategy into concrete stories, examples and action plans to their teams. Supporting managers in communicating strategy to their teams is present through communication throughout the entire strategy implementation and communication process. Figure 10 illustrates to which areas of the cycle of communication and implementing of strategy these findings affect.

7.3 Measuring of strategy, target setting and bonus payments

In all interviews measuring of strategy, personal or team target setting and bonus payments were discussed as important elements of communication of strategy. Measuring and following up of performance against strategy were considered as important tools for making strategy relevant for the teams' everyday actions. Managers considered individual and team target setting as significant motivator for performing in line with the division strategy. Bonus payments that are often linked to unit or personal target setting are also seen as important motivator, but sometimes as an obstacle for communication of strategy.

“We have a lot of numerical performance indicators. We could have fewer indicators but they need to be clearer. We have to be able to link concrete actions to the indicators.”

The interviewed managers agreed that there needs to be clear and timely ways to measure if their team is succeeding in implementing the division strategy. For successful measuring, the managers need to have defined key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets that are relevant to the employees on unit or team level. These key performance indicators should be defined on top management level, based on the corporate and division strategies and then cascaded into smaller unit or team level targets that the employees can follow-up. Many interviewees stated that these KPIs should not be only lagging measurements, but also such that can help the unit to define immediate action points for strategy. One manager stated:

“It is very unclear how we can measure our team’s performance against strategy.”

It was stated in the interviews that it is good to have different kinds of key performance indicators, but they need to measure those things that the team can affect themselves, otherwise the measuring will not support the team’s interest and motivation towards how their actions are related to the high-level strategy. The interviewees who work in production units stated that the production unit level KPIs are clear for them and their teams, but still it was sometimes hard for the managers to translate the division level strategic KPIs to their teams and follow them up on team level.

“Our target setting and bonuses do not support implementation of strategy. If we want to bring out the best in our units, we need to measure those things we can affect ourselves with our own work.”

As the team’s performance is linked to the unit targets, the managers sometimes perceived it difficult to find the link between the team’s targets and the high-level strategy. In one unit there is a two-year completion bonus in use. It means that they have two years to reach the individual or team’s targets so that the individual or team gets a completion bonus payment if accomplished according to their specific KPIs. If the high-level strategy changes during this time, the completion goal may not be in line with the strategy anymore. In the worst case, it can steer an employee to a completely wrong direction, if the employee is driven by money and wants to earn the two-year completion bonus despite the changed strategic targets. This might make it difficult for the managers to motivate

their teams to act towards the high-level strategy instead of the monetary completion bonus. It does not matter what the manager communicates regarding strategy if the remuneration steers the employee towards another direction. Targets' and remuneration's link to high-level strategy is sometimes difficult to communicate on individual level.

“Even though our mill makes a production record, we do not get a full bonus payment and when our production level is poor we might still get a full bonus payment.”

This is because the production units' bonus payments were linked to all production units' total performance. All managers who were interviewed from production units thought that if the targets were on unit level, they would find it much easier to discuss the unit and division results and targets with their teams and tie them to the high-level strategy. As I observed shift operators from one production unit after interviewing the managers, the employees' discussions proved this point. They could not understand why they might get full bonus payments if their production has stalled and on the other hand if their production efficiency has been excellent throughout the year, they might not get any bonuses. They said that they were “happy if everything looks good to the head office”, referring to the production units' bonus targets fulfilment even though their own unit was not performing well at the time.

Personal and team target setting as well as bonus payments linked to the targets are important tools for managers to link high-level strategy to their team's work and they are concrete tools for their communication of strategy. According to the interviews, it seems that the target setting tool does not serve its purpose very well on the moment of the interviews. The interviewed managers said that their teams would find much more interest in the high-level strategy if they could see its relevance in their everyday work and if the personal target setting and the bonus payments supported them in communicating the link between the high-level strategy and their teams' everyday work.

“We have a two-year completion bonus in the innovation organization so that we are an attractive employer for new researchers. It is an on-off bonus that has certain completion criteria, the payment for the employee happens after two years. If the strategy changes during those two years, how can we follow up the completion bonus? If the employee is driven by money, the completion bonus may steer them to a totally wrong direction compared to the division strategy.”

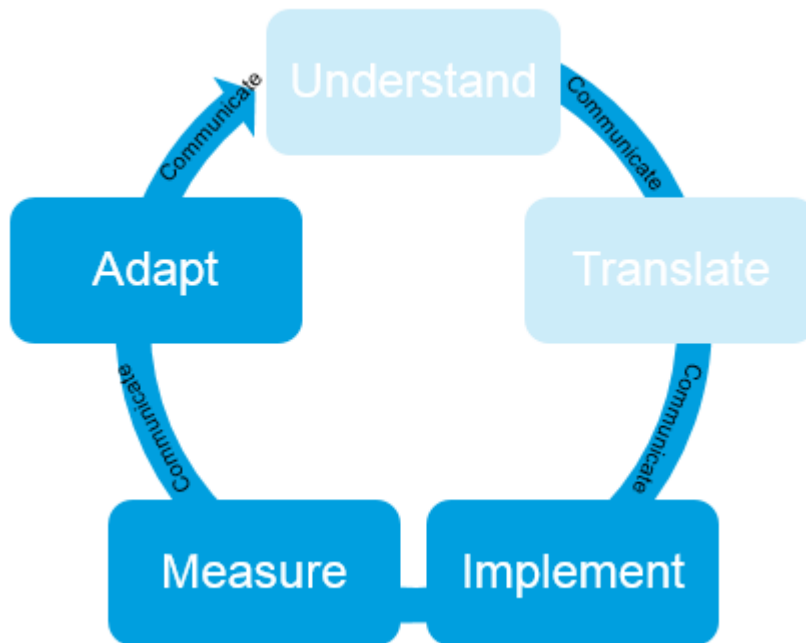


Figure 11. Measuring, target setting and bonus payments are particularly related to communication, measuring, adjusting and implementing of strategy in the cycle model for communicating and implementing strategy.

Measuring and follow-up of performance against high-level strategy and setting key performance indicators that support managers in measuring their strategic performance would increase successful measuring and adapting in the strategy implementation and communication cycle model. Currently, measuring, target setting and bonus payments as supportive force for communication of strategy seemed to be challenges for the managers' communication of strategy. If the managers can measure their performance, they are capable of taking independent decisions in adapting their team's actions to successfully implement the high-level strategy. Individual target setting and bonus payments related to target setting motivate implementation of high-level strategy on an individual level and make the strategy feel relevant and concrete in the everyday work. Figure 11 illustrates how these topics are part of the cycle model of communication and implementing of strategy.

7.4 Timeline of strategy

In general, the interviewed managers felt that the division strategy has been consistent and has not changed dramatically during the last years. There have been some additions and some changes, but overall, they felt that there have not been major changes that they

would have needed to communicate or explain to their teams. The managers felt that consistency and minor adjustments to the strategy instead of major changes make it easier for them to communicate about the strategy and validate it to their teams. One manager said:

“It is easier to communicate about the strategy when you can trust that things will not be totally different tomorrow.”

In the interviews some managers pinpointed that the high-level strategy should be a guideline for their teams for the next three to five years so that they can work according to the strategy on a longer basis. The managers wanted to make a difference between an annual plan and strategy, stating that despite the annual strategy process happens every year, it is good to have a long-term strategy as a guidance for their decision making and work.

“Strategy is very confusing because it is launched every single year. Strategy should be a guideline for 3-5 years to be worked on long-term basis. Yearly launched strategy should be called an annual plan with annual milestones.”

Some managers mentioned that it would be good to have a timeline for the strategy, so that they would know by when certain actions are expected to be completed. Some managers stated that even if the strategy formulation was still work in progress, they wish to know if some parts are finished and when the strategy is expected to be ready for communication. They felt that currently there was no information available on the strategy process and the timeline of the process.

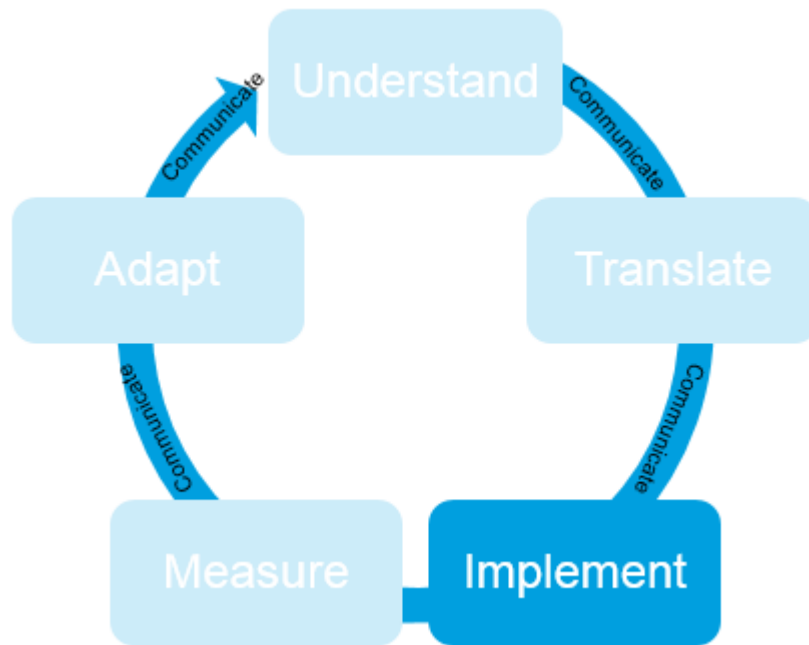


Figure 12. Timeline of strategy is most of all related to implementing and communicating strategy in the cycle process of communicating and implementing strategy.

Even though implementing and communicating strategy is a continuous cycle-like process, the high-level strategy is launched every year in the case organization. This seems to create confusion among some managers, as they consider high-level strategy as a long-term guidance that should steer their decision making. On one hand, the strategy has not changed much during the last years, but on the other hand it is still re-launched every year. A defined timeline for actions that implement the high-level strategy and communicating it would give support and guidance for the managers.

7.5 Organization specific topics

Some unit specific topics that were applicable only to some organizations within the division came up in the interviews with the managers. This is due to different natures of the organizations.

In the innovation organization, it seemed that the company and division level strategies were quite clear for the managers and they felt confident communicating them. However, the innovation strategy, that is also a part of division strategy, has been changing often while the division strategy has had only some adjustments to the business environment. During the interviews, the innovation organization was forming its shape. The Head of Innovation had changed several times during the past five years and the current Head of

Innovation was in acting role during the interviews. It was evident that as the several different Heads of Innovation had led the organization to several different directions and the organization's own strategy and goals had changed, communication of innovation unit strategy and linking it to the high-level strategy have been difficult for the managers in the innovation organization. Despite having difficulties in communicating the changing innovation strategy and plans, the employees have shown interest in the high-level strategy and they were willing to understand how the high-level strategy should guide their work and decision making, but at the same time they felt that the high-level strategy is distant to them.

In the production units of the case organization, the managers said that their subordinates do not often see the link between their daily work and the high-level strategy. That was the main reason why the employees were not very interested in the high-level strategy. Employees at the production units rarely have opportunities to join high-level events within the case organization, like the annual strategy communication event and town hall meetings. Some of the managers felt that if the employees were involved more in these kind of events, they could feel more interested and involvement in the high-level strategy. A question was raised that do all the employees in all production units need to know the whole high-level strategy? Maybe it would be enough if they knew their own organization's part in the strategy, their unit's targets related to the strategy, and how the employees can affect the strategy implementation with their own input. The interviewed managers who worked in production units link the strategy to the activities of their own unit when they communicate about it.

“It is easy to raise interest towards the division strategy in our unit by telling the teams about fluff pulp and how the division level strategy covers fluff pulp. We are part of something bigger than just one mill, we have a lot of collaboration inside our division and other divisions.”

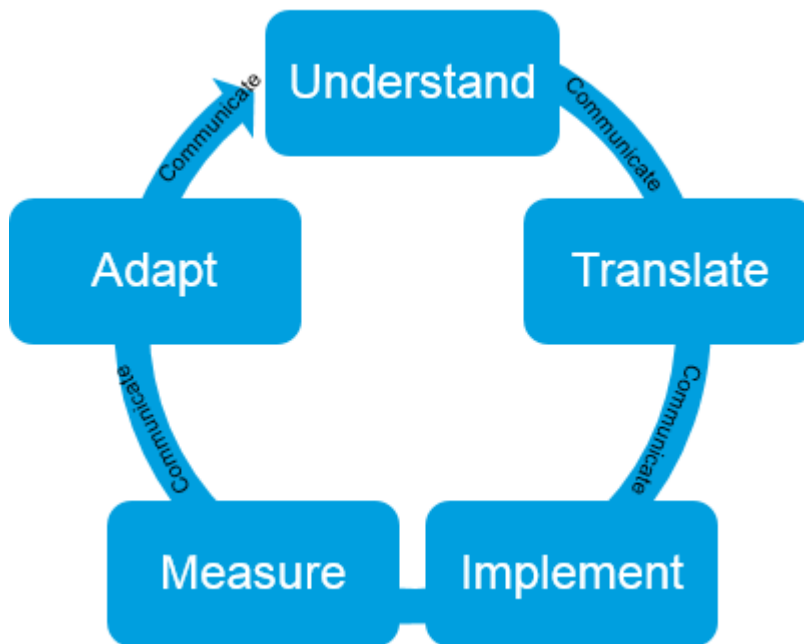


Figure 13. The organization specific topics raised in the interviews affected all areas of the cycle process of communicating and implementing strategy.

The open and uncertain situation in the innovation organization has affected all areas of the strategy communication and implementation cycle. The management of the innovation organization has been involved in formulating the high-level strategy, but the management has changed several times. The changing management and uncertainty has led to difficulties in understanding and translating the high-level strategy among the managers. As a result, implementation of strategy and taking decisions based on the high-level strategy has been difficult in the innovation organization. Measuring and adapting actions to match the high-level strategy have not been easy due to difficulties in understanding, translating, implementing and communicating strategy.

In production units finding the link between high-level strategy and everyday work is sometimes difficult. All employees may not need to know all details of the high-level strategy, but they need to understand what is their own role and their team and units' roles in implementing the strategy. Finding the links between high-level strategy and everyday work would facilitate managers' communication of strategy to their teams. This way their teams could take decisions guided by the high-level strategy and implement strategy in their daily work. Measuring and adapting actions in line with strategy would be easier if all links between the strategy and specific teams' work were clear for all employees.

7.6 Managers' perceptions on communication of strategy

All interviewed managers had a clear perception that communication of strategy is one of their main responsibilities as managers, when they were asked how they perceive communication of strategy. They recognize that their task is to put strategic plans into action by implementing the high-level strategy in their teams' daily work, secure employee buy-in for high-level strategy within their teams, ensure that day-to-day operations run smoothly, and communicate progress to all directions in the organization. However, they wished to get more support for finding the links between the high-level strategy and their teams' everyday work to make the strategy more interesting and relevant to their subordinates. They felt that while communication of strategy is their responsibility, they should not be left alone in it and they should get systematic professional support for it from the top management and the communication professionals. The managers felt that they need to make the strategy relevant and concrete to their teams, but especially in the production units the interviewed managers perceived that not all details of the high-level strategy are relevant to all employees. It should be carefully considered how much of information different teams need to avoid making the employees feel overwhelmed with too much information that they are expected to know. However, all employees should have access to the whole strategy if they are interested in it.

As concrete real-life examples for high-level strategy and its significance for target setting were discussed often in the interviews, it became evident that the managers perceive that communication of strategy is very much related to the organization's actions and how these actions represent strategy to the employees. If the actions in the organization are not in line with what is being communicated about strategy and the link between the actions and strategy is unclear, the communication of strategy becomes only empty words in the minds of the employees and they do not feel motivated implementing the strategy. Managers perceived that communication of strategy is easier for them when it is backed up with supportive actions and real-life links throughout the whole case organization, so that the actions within the whole organization become an evident part of communication of strategy.

None of the interviewed managers perceived communication as old-fashioned one-way informing. They like to have active dialogue in all levels and to all directions of the organization. Even though the managers discuss with their employees often, in operations controlling rooms the main objective is to secure smooth and efficient running of the daily operations and thus the high-level strategy is not the uppermost topic in the control room discussions between the manager and the employees. Several managers from the operations perceived that if the operations employees know the targets of their production unit, they do

not necessarily have to know all details of the high-level strategy. High-level strategy is regularly discussed mostly on manager level in the production units. Managers from different units and functions perceived that the biggest challenge in communication of strategy is to make strategy relevant on a personal level and to communicate the links between the employees' daily work and high-level strategy, as often the timelines of own work and high-level strategy are different.

“To make communication simpler, strategy needs to be concrete for the environment where you work. Sometimes strategy communication is too focused on business level, support functions are important too.”

7.7 Managers' expectations towards communication professionals in the case organization

Having asked the managers “What kind of support would you like to get from the communication professionals of the organization for your communication of strategy?” they often stated that communication professionals together with the strategy professionals within the case organization could involve the managers more in the annual strategy formulating process to help them gain more understanding of the strategy formulation process and this way make the managers feel more confident about communication of strategy. Many managers felt that they have no visibility at all to the annual strategy formulation process and that the communication professionals could help them to gain access or visibility to the annual strategy formulating process. If the managers cannot be involved in the strategy process, the communication professionals should make sure that they have access to the case organization's strategy document as a background information before they are expected to communicate about the high-level strategy to their teams and guarantee that all managers have access to the same amount and quality of information. In this connection, the managers wished to get support from the communication professionals to understand what parts of the strategy can be said to which stakeholders to avoid any confidentiality issues.

“Strategy communication is involvement. Involve as many people as possible in the strategy process to make them aware and understand what our strategy is and why.”

“Communication team should clarify what can be said internally and what can be said externally.”

The managers felt that the case organization's communication professionals provide them with enough materials to communicate about strategy to their teams, but they would find it useful if the communication professionals could teach them systematically how to use the materials before the managers are expected to communicate about strategy to their teams with the help of the communication materials.

Most of the interviewed managers wished to get other kind of support from the communication professionals than communication materials. In almost all interviews the managers discussed that they wished to get more support for finding the links between the high-level strategy and their team's daily work to make the strategy feel relevant to their teams. They suggested that the communication professionals could host workshops for all managers in the case organization, where they could find these links together with other managers whom they may otherwise rarely meet. They expected the communication professionals to provide more support for how strategy is implemented and how it can guide decision making, as most of them felt that they already get support for communicating what the content of the strategy is.

"It is important to communicate the how part of the strategy, not only the what part."

One concrete wish for the communication professionals in the case organization was not to use too fancy words when communicating about strategy. The managers felt that if the wording that is used for communication of strategy is too complicated, their teams will lose interest in trying to understand the content of the strategy.

"Do not use too fancy words, use words that actually mean something or at least explain what the terms mean."

Some of the interviewed managers said that they wish to have more strategy roadshows in their units and teams, where the case organization's leadership talks about strategy directly to the local managers and employees. The communication professionals' responsibility would be to organize these events, take notes of the questions and comments during these communication events and then follow-up after the events that all questions are answered and that the managers get support for communication of strategy. This would help the leadership, communication professionals and middle-level managers to understand what are the most interesting and important topics around the strategy in each unit and team. These events would make the employees feel more involved and allow the team members ask questions directly from the leadership, decreasing the expectations for communication of strategy towards the managers, when they don't have to be the messenger

between their teams and the leadership. In production units the interviewed managers felt that it is very good if someone from the case organization leadership comes and tells about the high-level strategy directly to all employees, but it is a challenge to get the employees attend the shift meetings in their free time. Due to shift work schedules, the shift meetings are held outside the employees' work shifts, causing that they are asked to attend these events on their free time.

“Strategy sessions, where employees can discuss the strategy in a large group with the leadership are very important and good. It is essential to involve people. We should have workshops where the employees can think themselves what the strategy means to them. Communications team should facilitate these workshops and support the leadership and managers during the workshops.”

The managers expected the strategy to be discussed more in the case organization's monthly all employee calls, where leadership talks about the strategy and gives real-life examples of implementation of strategy in different parts of the organization. The communication professionals' responsibility is to organize the all-employee calls and determine the topics together with the leadership. This is a part of the case organization's communication of strategy already today, but it can be improved with feedback from the participants.

“We could have more follow-up on strategy implementation for example in our monthly calls. There we should link our actions clearly to the strategy. Proof-points, like strategic investments, are important to communicate.”

Some managers wished to have strategy as a continuous topic between themselves and their own managers in their meetings, like steering meetings or business meetings. This would help the middle-level managers gain more knowledge of strategy and what is expected from their teams regarding division strategy implementation and to know if they are progressing well in line with the high-level strategy. Many managers belong to the case organization's leadership team, so the middle-level managers would gain first-hand information from strategy formulation process and their progress in these discussions. Communication professionals in the case organization could take these meetings into account as one official strategy communication channel for leadership and managers, when planning communication of strategy.

“We should take time for going through strategy in our meetings, instead of having just reporting meetings for management. We could have structured and regular meetings for steering committees and management to see what we have done so far as a division and what do we need to do now to execute our strategy.”

In addition, some managers said that the communication professionals could help the managers to get clear key performance indicators for strategy follow-up from the division leadership, to see how their teams are performing in line with the strategy.

All in all, the interviewed managers do not expect that the case organization's communication professionals feed them with communication materials for communication of strategy. Instead they wish that they got systematic guidance, coaching and facilitation for communication of strategy. Many interviewed managers stated, that the communication professionals can help them to get their messages to the case organization leadership, and this way increase dialogue between the managers and top management and make the managers' voice heard in a systematic way. The managers perceived that the communication professionals have influence in the case organization, specifically by having access to the organization's top management team.

8 Answering the research questions

8.1 Facilitating, supporting and developing communication of strategy

The main research question of this research was “How can communication professionals in the case organization facilitate, support and develop middle-level managers’ communication of strategy?”. The biggest learning is that the communication professionals in the case organization should ensure that communication of strategy is an inseparable part of the strategy cycle, where strategy is formulated and implemented in the means of communication. This cycle-model could be discussed within the organization to make sure that all members of the organization are aware of it and understand that they have a responsibility to communicate in order to implement the strategy successfully. Sometimes communication professionals may consider it self-evident, while those who are not professionals in communication may see communication in something simpler and more concrete, like writing stories or providing managers with PowerPoint presentations. It is essential, that all members of the organization understand the significance of communication in the cycle of strategy implementation and communication process; it is a significant part of strategy formulating, translating strategy into actions, implementing those actions, measuring them and adapting accordingly.

Another important point for communication professionals within the case organization is to facilitate dialogue within the organization. Traditionally, when using the cascading model for communication of strategy, the focus has been on from-up-to-down direction. However, to increase the amount of dialogue and feedback within the organization, communication professionals have to provide the managers with knowledge, tools and channels to have a constant dialogue to all directions in the organization: upwards, downwards, laterally and diagonally. This is essential to make sure that not only the employees understand the strategy, but that the leadership and other managers get feedback and all ideas related to the strategy are collected and processed within the organization.

In addition to these two main learnings, there are several other suggestions that communication professionals can take to facilitate, develop and support managers’ communication of strategy in the case organization. These suggestions are listed in chapter 10: Development recommendations for communication of strategy.

8.2 Managers' perceptions on communication of strategy

The first sub-research question was "How do managers perceive communication of strategy in the case organization?". All the interviewed managers had a clear perception that communication of strategy is one of their main responsibilities as managers. They recognized that their task is to put strategic plans into action by implementing the high-level strategy in their teams' daily work, secure employee buy-in for high-level strategy, ensure that day-to-day operations run smoothly, and communicate progress to all directions in the organization. They felt that while communication of strategy is their responsibility, they should not be left alone in it and they should get systematic professional support for it from the management and the communication professionals in the case organization.

The managers felt that they need to make the strategy relevant and concrete to their teams and perceived that communication of strategy is very much related to the organization's actions and how these actions represent high-level strategy to the employees. Managers perceived that communication of strategy is easier for them when it is backed up with supportive actions and real-life links in the whole case organization, so that the actions within the organization are a solid part of communication of strategy. None of the interviewed managers perceived communication as old-fashioned one-way informing. They like to have active dialogue in all levels and to all directions of the organization.

8.3 Managers' expectations towards communication professionals of the case organization

The second sub-question in this research was "What are the managers' expectations towards the communication professionals in the case organization regarding communication of strategy?". In the interviews the managers often stated that communication professionals together with the strategy team could involve the managers more in the annual strategy formulating process to help them gain more understanding of the strategy formulation process and this way make the managers feel more confident about communication of strategy. The communication professionals could help the managers to get better access to the organization's top management.

The managers wished to get support from the communication professionals to understand what parts of the strategy can be said to which stakeholders to avoid any confidentiality issues. They felt that the case organization's communication professionals provide them with enough support materials to communicate about strategy to their teams, but they would find it useful if the communication professionals could teach them systematically

how to use the materials before the managers are expected to communicate about strategy to their teams.

In almost all interviews the managers discussed that they wished to get more support for finding the links between the division strategy and their team's daily work to make the strategy feel relevant to their teams. They expected the communication professionals to provide more support for how strategy is implemented and how it can guide decision making and more opportunities for dialogue, including regular operational meetings as an arena for discussing strategy. In addition, some managers said that the communication professionals could help the managers to get clarify key performance indicators for strategy follow-up from the organization's leadership to see how their teams are performing in line with the strategy. As a summary, the managers wish to get systematic guidance, coaching and facilitation for communication of strategy and that the communication professionals act as a link between the leadership and middle-level managers.

9 Reflection of findings against the theoretical framework

In this chapter, the findings from the data collection are discussed against the theoretical framework of this research.

9.1 Making strategy relevant to employees

As said in the theoretical framework, communication of strategy consists of both words and actions. Words are in crucial role when an organization wants to build good spirit, define cultural values that support strategy, tell about reasons that lead to change, set goals, express choices, follow-up on results or build trust and engagement. Actions are needed to build credibility for the words, to give meaning for the content and to demonstrate what kinds of actions are expected from the organization. When both words and actions are carefully planned to communicate the strategy within an organization, strategy becomes a part of everyday work and begins to feel relevant for the employees. It is essential that the managers have skills to formulate wordings that makes the strategy feel relevant and concrete to their teams. Even more important is that all actions in the organization are aiming at implementing the strategy and reaching the common goals of the organization. This way the managers have concrete real-life links and examples that they can refer to when they communicate about strategy. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 28-32.)

Communication of strategy creates understanding of goals and ambitions of the organization and thus helps the employees to understand the meaning of their own work, approve the strategy, engage to it and apply the strategy to their everyday work. A common understanding of goals of the organization creates engaged employees, a positive working environment and increases efficiency of the organization. Ultimately understanding of strategy among the employees leads them to feel pride and joy about their work and empowers them in their work. When strategy is communicated in a way that makes the strategy feel relevant to the employees, successful implementation of strategy is more likely. The interviewed managers wished to make strategy concrete to their teams, communicate it in a simple way that is easy to understand for the employees, and increase the feeling of belongingness to the high-level strategy. Communication professionals can support the managers in finding real-life examples and leadership must make sure that there are no actions in the organization that are inconsistent to the high-level strategy that may harm the buy-in of strategy among the employees. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 28-32.)

9.2 Involving managers in strategy formulation

During data collection, many of the interviewed managers said that they would feel more confident to communicate about the strategy to their teams if they were involved in the annual strategy formulating process more and this way they would know and understand the division strategy better. In their opinion, ideally everyone in the organization would be included in formulating the strategy. Many managers felt that they have no visibility at all to the division's annual strategy formulation process and that the communication professionals could help them to gain access or visibility to the annual strategy formulating process.

According to Aaltonen et al. (2006), the different views and level of information between strategy formulators and strategy implementers often leads to a situation where some consider strategy the most important aspect of their work, whereas others consider it as unnecessary background noise. This is obviously not a desired state in any organization, thus, it is important to consider who should be included in strategy formulating in the case organization and why. To maximize the buy-in for the strategy, it is essential to guarantee that middle-managers or even non-managers are adopted to the strategy formulating process. This way they will feel that they are responsible for the strategy, as they have been formulating it themselves. That is why strategies are most successfully communicated and implemented when those people who are affected by it are included in the planning and designing of the strategy. According to Rouhiainen (2003), ideally all employees and managers would be involved in strategy formulating to ensure buy-in for the high-level strategy and to increase motivation to reach the common goals of the organization. (Aaltonen et al. 2006, 21 & 56; Härmäläinen & Maula 2004, 52-54; Rouhiainen 2003, 5-33.)

9.3 Measuring and follow-up of strategy

The interviewed managers agreed that there needs to be clear and timely ways to measure if their team is succeeding in implementing the case organization's strategy. For successful measuring, the managers need to have defined key performance indicators (KPIs). These key performance indicators should be defined on leadership level, based on the corporate and division strategies and then cascaded into smaller unit or team level targets that the employees can follow-up. Many interviewees stated that these KPIs should not be only lagging measurements, but also such that can help the unit to define immediate action points for strategy implementation. It was stated in the interviews that it is good to have different kinds of key performance indicators, but they need to measure those things that the team can affect themselves, otherwise the measuring will not support the team's interest and motivation towards how their actions are related to the division strategy.

According to Rouhiainen (2003), measuring strategy implementation and making this information visible for all is critical for successful strategy implementation. It means that strategy planning and implementation need to be monitored towards specified metrics and that information needs to be shared broadly to create an accountable cycle of strategy. After measuring, the organization can learn and adapt its plans and actions, based on its experience from the strategy cycle. Organizations constantly must anticipate changing priorities, emerging customer needs and shifting markets to adapt its strategy into its operating environment. This way managers can take corrective actions and adjust the plans and activities in their teams or units. (Rouhiainen 2003, 5-33.)

Aaltonen et al. (2006) state that evaluating the reaching of strategic targets is often dominated by evaluating and following up the short-term operative actions. Especially in stock listed companies the quarterly results may dominate all other evaluating and measuring. The numeric indicators are sufficient in short-term evaluation, but it is important to evaluate also other aspects in the success of strategy. Many successful organizations collect information on how strategy has been implemented, if there have been changes in their business environment, how the strategy has been communicated, what is the level of know-how in the organization and how the personnel have participated in planning the work. The interviewed managers stated that they wish to get high-level support for gaining proper measurement tools and definitions for their implementation of strategy so that they can take corrective timely actions when needed to ensure that their organizations are working towards the common goals and implementing strategy as planned. (Aaltonen et al. 2006, 84-193.)

9.4 Target setting and bonus payments

In all interviews with the manager personal or team target setting and bonus payments were discussed as important elements of communication of strategy. Managers considered individual and team target setting as a significant motivator for performing in line with the organization's strategy. Bonus payments that are often linked to unit or personal target setting are at the same time seen as important motivator and an obstacle for communication of strategy. Sometimes the managers perceived it difficult to find the link between their team's and its individuals' targets and the high-level strategy. According to the interviews, it seems that the target setting tool does not serve its purpose very well and sometimes it is very hard to explain the link between the bonus payments and high-level strategy, especially in some production units.

According to research, strategy implementation can be enforced in all levels of an organization by concrete awards for achieving goals, like personal target setting and bonus payment, or consequences for failing to do so. Prioritizing is easier and feels more practical if the strategic direction has been defined so that the employees feel that their own input makes a difference in reaching the strategic goals. A strategy should be tempting and concrete enough so that an individual employee can feel that they can affect implementing it. If the strategy is wanted to be successful in all those levels, all the plans and targets have to be connected to strategy. The managers felt that the simplest way to make individuals feel that their input matters in implementing the high-level strategy is to tie their individual or team targets to the strategy and make sure that the bonus payments support this link. This way the employees would easily know what part of the strategy they are implementing and they would be rewarded for successful strategy implementation. (Aaltonen et al. 2006, 21; Groyberg et al. 2018; Li et al. 2008, 14.)

9.5 Amount of needed information

It was discussed several times in the interviews with the managers that do all the employees in all production units need to know the entire high-level strategy? Some managers discussed that maybe it would be enough if the employees knew their own organization's part in the strategy, their unit's targets related to the strategy, and how the employees themselves can affect the strategy and unit's targets with their input. This was especially discussed with those managers whose teams work in production units and are rarely connected to the division-level discussions.

Communicators of strategy must acknowledge that sometimes all details of the strategy are not significant to all members of the organization. It is important to take into account the different needs of different target audiences who might have unlike possibilities to take decisions in their own work. Often it is enough that some employees know the main strategic themes of the organization and those details that are related to their own work. They also need to have the capability to apply them into their work. In this sense, it is not necessary that all individuals in the whole organization know all details of the strategy. This needs to be considered when planning communication of strategy and supporting managers in their communication of strategy. Too much information may only create confusion among the employees if they feel that they cannot affect the whole high-level strategy with their own work. While all parts of strategy may not be relevant for all employees and for some employees it may be enough that they know how the strategy affects their own daily work, yet, according to Hämäläinen & Maula (2004) all employees should have

a possibility to know all the main themes of the strategy if they are interested in it. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 38; Kärnä 2016, 108-112.)

9.6 Dialogue

When discussing managers' expectations towards communication professionals in the organization, it became evident that the communication professionals could facilitate more dialogue between the leadership and the managers, for instance when finding the links between their team's work and strategy and when involving managers in the strategy formulating process. All managers and employees should also have a possibility to give feedback and provide their ideas related to the high-level strategy. Open communication provides an opportunity to share feelings like uncertainty, frustration, relief and excitement that may be related to strategy. Communication of strategy should focus on open and decorous conversation within the organization, where also those who are objecting the strategy are allowed to express their opinion. Two-way communication, where all employees have a possibility to ask questions and state their opinion, supports understanding of strategy as it provides a possibility for dialogue with their direct managers and upper management. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 54-56.)

10 Development recommendations for communication of strategy

When it comes to communication, the interview findings are clear proof points that communication is both actions and words. After analyzing the collected data and reflecting the data against the theoretical framework of this research, development recommendations for communication of strategy were made. This chapter includes recommendations for the main research question of this research; how can communication professionals facilitate, support and develop middle-level managers' communication of strategy in the case organization? The recommendations are formulated based on the theoretical framework presented in chapters 2-5 and they arise from the collected data from the manager interviews. Some of the development recommendations are fairly easy to implement but some of them need more comprehensive planning and cooperation between several quarters of the organization to be implemented successfully.

10.1 Focus on managers as communicators of strategy

Li et al. (2008) state that there are studies that have examined the ambiguous relationships between top management and middle management in the context of strategy implementation: middle managers expect direction and support from their top management. If they receive this guidance, then they will provide support for the strategy in return. One of the key factors determining their need for support is their demographic situation (such as age, educational background, and business experience). (Li et al. 2008, 16.)

The communications professionals of the case organization recognize the crucial role of middle-level managers in communication of strategy, the support for communication of strategy for the middle-level managers could be more systematic in the case organization. The communication professionals could establish new forums for managers and their teams for thinking and finding out how the high-level strategy is linked to their everyday work. This would support the aim that strategy is not considered as a high-level narrative in the organization, but a concrete strategy that all employees have a strong connection to. Firstly, after the annual strategy process is finished, in addition to the townhall meeting where strategy is being cascaded from division leadership to middle-level managers, there could be Skype calls for all managers in the organization where the strategy is discussed between the division management, middle managers and the communication professionals. The aim of these Skype calls would be to make sure that everyone understands the strategy in the same way and to make sure that the managers see what is their unit or team's role in the high-level strategy.

For some managers the link between strategy and their team's daily work and progress in it is self-evident, but not for all of them. The managers must have understanding on how the strategy steers their decision making before they can communicate it to their teams and require their team members to take decisions in line with the strategy. The purpose of systematic involvement of managers is to make them feel confident about the strategy and communicating it to their teams. It is not enough that they are provided with communication materials if the managers do not know how to use them. Whenever communication materials for communication of strategy are launched in the organization, there could be a call for all managers, where the communication professionals explain how the materials should be used, simultaneously helping the managers to find links between the strategy and the managers' own units and teams. This would help the managers to gain confidence for communication of strategy and to make the communication of strategy a continuous and consistent practice in the whole organization.

Some managers wished that they would have access to the strategy paper that is updated annually during the strategy formulating process and that describes the whole division strategy in detail. This paper is confidential, but the communication professionals and management team of the organization could consider if this paper can be released to all managers in the case organization. It would increase understanding for the strategy among the managers and guarantee that all managers have access to the same amount and quality of information about the division strategy. At the moment there is no standard for who has access to the strategy paper in the case organization. This has led to a situation where some managers have more information about the division strategy than others. If the strategy paper can be released to all managers, communication professionals should clearly define and inform the managers on which parts of the content of the strategy paper can be communicated to which stakeholders to avoid any confidentiality issues.

Many managers stated in the interviews that not every employee has to know all details of the high-level strategy. In some cases, when the employees do not see clear links between the high-level strategy and their own daily work, they may become overwhelmed if their managers try to make them understand the whole high-level strategy with all its details. The managers wished to get support for finding out what are the important aspects that all employees need to know about the high-level strategy, which details are important to know for whom, and what can be left out to avoid overwhelming the employees. Communication professionals could support the managers in developing a communication plan for the main lines of the high-level strategy and help them focus on specific strategic areas that are relevant to their teams.

The communication professionals of the case organization could initiate making division strategy a mandatory regular topic in meetings between division leadership and their subordinates, who often are middle-level managers. This would support the wish from the managers, that they would have more regular opportunities to discuss the division strategy directly with their managers, who are top-managers and part of the group who formulates the strategy. For instance, all steering meetings and other regular team meetings would offer an excellent forum for interaction-based cascading for the division strategy, and they should be taken into account as excellent forums for communication of strategy. It requires that the communication professionals can systematically guarantee that high-level strategy is taken as a topic in these meetings.

10.2 Translating and measuring of strategy on unit level

Based on the interviews, some managers had difficulties knowing and following up how their unit is performing in the framework of high-level strategy and how the managers can take and communicate corrective actions implementing the high-level strategy if needed. They were asking for concrete measurements and key performance indicators for high-level strategy, that they could translate to their units to see if they are working in line with the strategy. If the teams could see concrete progress in their work compared to the strategy, it could motivate them to take solid decisions based on the strategy or make corrective action if they see that they are not performing well in line with the strategy. Measurements coming from the high-level strategy translated to the unit level would make it easier for the managers and their teams to understand the links between strategy and their daily work. One tool for making these links visible is Balanced Scorecard (BSC).

According to Kaplan & Norton (1996), a Balanced Scorecard, that is illustrated in figure 14, is a tool that allows the organization to coordinate and finetune its operations and businesses so that all activities are in line with its strategy. It augments traditional financial measurements with benchmarks for performance in three non-financial areas: company's relationship with its customers, key internal processes and the organization's learning and growth. When these areas are added to the financial metrics, the result is not only a broader view on the company's health and activities, it is also a powerful organizing framework. The BSC relies on four activities to translate short-term activities in long-term vision, that help managers and employees linking their everyday actions to strategy:

1. Translating the vision: By relying on vision, the scorecard forces top-managers to come to agreement on the metrics they will use to operationalize their visions.
2. Communicating and linking: When the scorecard is spread everywhere in the organization, strategy becomes a tool available for everyone. As the high-level scorecard is cascaded to all business units, the high-level strategic objectives and measures are translated into actions and measures that are appropriate for each particular unit and team. Tying these targets to individual performance and compensation yields personal scorecards. This way individual employees understand how their own work supports the overall strategy.
3. Business planning: The discipline of BSC forces companies to ensure that financial budgets do indeed support the strategic goals. After agreeing on performance measures for the four scorecard perspectives, companies identify the most influential drivers of the desired outcomes and then set milestones for measuring the progress they make with these drivers.
4. Feedback and learning: By supplying a mechanism for strategic feedback and review, BSC helps organizations to foster learning. They are able to reflect on inferences and adjust theories on cause-and-effect.

(Kaplan & Norton 1996.)

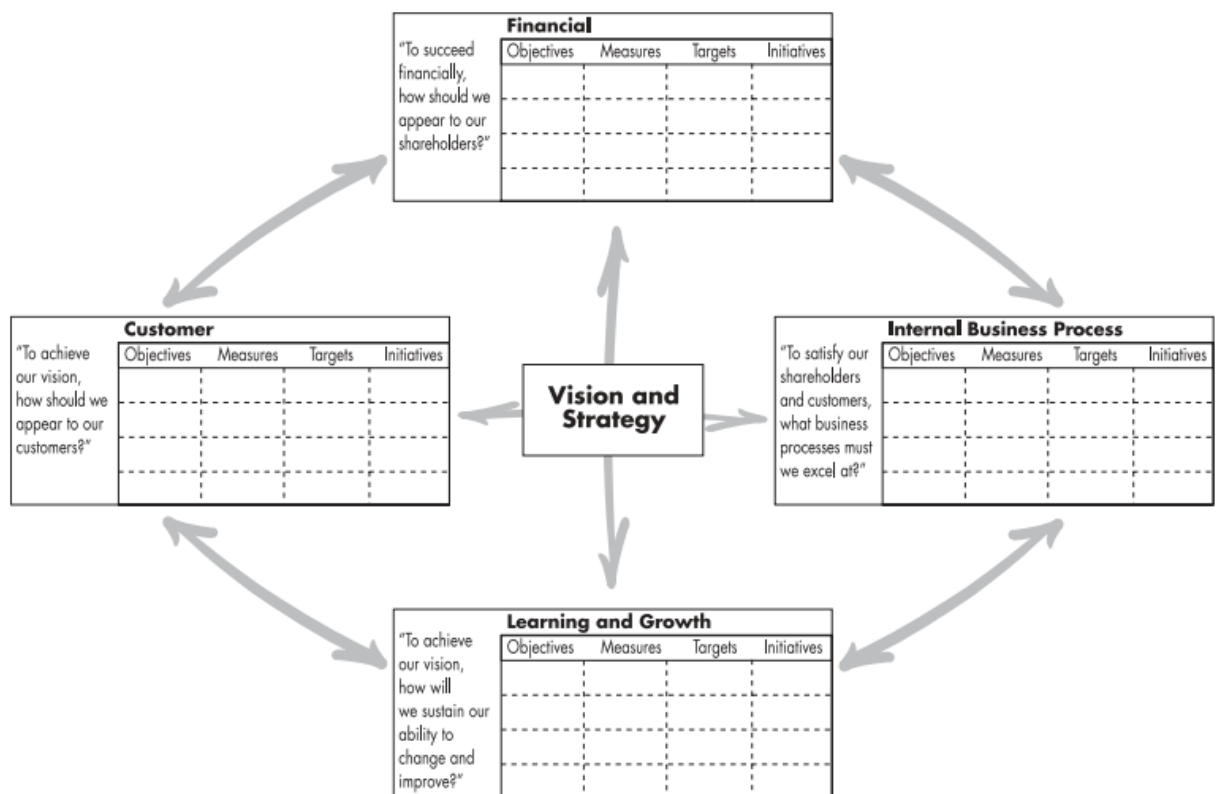


Figure 14. Balanced Scorecard template (Kaplan & Norton 1996.)

Many companies, like the case organization, already have many operational and physical measures for local activities. However, these local measures often are bottom-up and derived from ad-hoc processes. The scorecard's measures are grounded in the organization's strategic objectives and competitive demand. By requiring management to select a limited number of critical indicators within each of the four perspectives, the scorecard helps to focus on the strategic vision. In addition, while traditional financial measures allow following up what has happened in the last period, without telling the managers how to improve in the next period, the balanced scorecard functions as a cornerstone for the organization's current and future success. The BSC can serve as a focal point for the organization's efforts, defining and communicating priorities to managers, employees and other stakeholders. (Kaplan & Norton 1993.)

The communication professionals in the case organization could suggest taking Balanced Scorecard into use in the organization. The communication professionals' responsibility would be to spread the Balanced Scorecard everywhere in the organization and make sure that all managers and employees understand it. The communication professionals must help managers to translate and communicate the high-level strategic objectives into actions and measures that are appropriate for the particular unit and to help individual employees tie their actions to the overall strategy.

Implementing Balanced Scorecard in the organization would first require that the measurements for the four different areas of the scorecard are defined for the whole case organization and after that the Balanced Scorecard would support the managers in communicating strategy in their unit level, making the strategy relevant to their teams and providing them with a tool to follow-up their strategic progress and knowing how they can take actions in line with the strategy. This would facilitate independent decision making and efficiency in the case organization.

Adopting the Balanced Scorecard is definitely not only a communication professionals' effort, but it requires the whole organization to be a part of formulating the Balanced Scorecard and its content, specifically when the metrics are translated into unit level. After the Balanced Scorecard content has been defined for the case organization, communication professionals can help making "pocket scorecards" for the managers and employees, where they can see what they need to do to implement the strategy. In the pocket scorecard, the long-term strategic vision is translated into short-term actions, that the team or unit has to perform to implement strategy. For instance, in a global fast-food company, their strategic target on their Balanced Scorecard is to have XX% of the customers returning to their restaurants. In a pocket scorecard this can be translated to the employees in

the restaurant, that they must offer the customers with XX to make sure that they return to the restaurant. The purpose of the pocket version of Balanced Scorecard is to translate sometimes difficult high-level targets into easily understandable everyday actions for all employees in all levels of the organization. This requires cooperation from the communication professionals, leadership and middle-level managers in the case organization.

10.3 Target setting as support for communication of strategy

Successful strategy implementation is conditional to other people than those who formulate the strategy; those who implement and implement the strategy in practice. The strategy implementers often are employees who need to be motivated to understand and implement the high-level strategy. Strategy implementation can be reinforced by concrete awards for achieving goals, like personal target setting and bonus payment, or consequences for failing to do so. When the employees understand how high-level strategy is part of their daily work, prioritizing own work and taking independent decisions that are based on strategy is easier and feels more practical. Managers can translate high-level strategy into personal targets for their subordinates. If the strategic direction has been defined so that the employees feel that their input makes a difference in reaching the strategic goals, they are more motivated to implement strategy. According to Li et al. (2008), there are five managerial levers for strategy implementation phases: goals, organizational structure, leadership, communications, and incentives (awarding and bonus payments). Considering these factors in combination, provides a useful manner to improve strategy implementation. (Li et al. 2008, 30.)

It turned out in the interviews that the current awarding system (target setting and bonus payments) does not support managers very well in communication of strategy. Many of the interviewed managers stated that the link between rewarding (target setting and annual bonus payments) and high-level strategy is difficult to communicate and explain to their teams. Only some white-collar employees in the case organization have individual annual targets and bonus payment based on their individual targets. Those individual targets are cascaded from the high-level strategy and they make strategy implementing concrete for the employees who have these individual targets. Annual bonus payment that is linked to the individual targets motivates employees to achieve their targets and implement strategy.

In some cases, the employees have individual targets set, but the targets do not affect their annual bonus payment. Most employees have only company level financial targets

affecting their annual bonus payment, even if they had individual annual targets. The managers felt that if personal target setting and bonus payment practice was expanded to all blue-collar workers too, it would be easier for the managers to make strategy relevant to their team members, as their individual targets would steer the employee towards implementing the division strategy. This way, the division strategy would be visible on a personal level for all employees. Managers could define personal level targets to their subordinates based on the Balanced Scorecard. With the help of communication professionals, managers could plan their strategy communication and link strategy to their unit, team or personal targets that are derived from the high-level strategy.

10.4 Increasing involvement in strategy formulating

In the theoretical framework of this research it is stated that separating thinking and doing (strategy formulation and implementation) from each other does not lead to successful strategy implementation. If middle management do not think the strategy is the right one, or do not feel that they have the requisite skills to implement it, then they are likely to sabotage its implementation. Managers may sabotage strategy implementation by deliberate actions or inactions, if implementing the strategy may reduce their power and influence. Accepting strategy implementation as part of the strategy process requires that the practitioners, i.e. employees, are adopted to the process. However, on average, employees do not relate their tasks and role to strategy. This gap can be closed with consistent and effective communication of strategy. Strategy implementation efforts may fail if the strategy does not enjoy support and commitment by most employees and middle management. This may be the case if they were not consulted during the development phase. (Li et al. 2008, 16, 23-24.)

Many managers stated in their interviews, that they would like to be included more in the annual strategy formulating process to gain more understanding of the strategy, how the strategy can be implemented and the strategy process itself. According to strategy cycle, communication of strategy includes three different areas; content of the strategy, implementation of the strategy and strategy process. In the case organization, some middle-level managers are involved in the annual strategy formulating process, but not all of them.

Some years ago, the case organization hosted large strategy formulating workshops, where around hundred middle-level managers from the case organization were invited. If similar kind of events were organized again, it could increase understanding of strategy and the strategy process in the case organization and increase confidence of the middle-

level managers for communication of strategy. Involving more middle-level managers in the strategy formulating process would benefit both the managers and the strategy formulators: The middle-level managers provide the strategy formulators with fresh input and perspectives from different units and teams across the organization and the middle-level managers gain more understanding for the high-level strategy and confidence for communicating it to their teams in their home units. Including more managers in strategy formulating process would most likely also increase buy-in for the high-level strategy among the middle-level managers and narrow down the gap between strategy formulators and strategy implementers.

Again, this is an action that the communication professionals cannot implement alone, but the communication professionals together with the strategy team can organize and facilitate strategy formulation events and provide their support for the strategy formulators and middle-level managers by bringing them together.

10.5 Communication training for managers

Communication is a responsibility of all managers. Managers put strategic plans into action, secure employee buy-in for high-level strategy, ensure day-to-day operations run smoothly, and communicate progress to all directions in the organization. The ability for managers to communicate effectively is critical. However, sometimes it is taken as self-evident that all managers are capable for clear and consistent communication. In most cases, managers are not communication professionals and they would need support to fulfil their important responsibility of communicating.

As strategy is implemented in the means of communication, leaders and middle level managers are in crucial role in strategy implementation, transferring strategy first in their own actions and then steer their subordinates into implementing strategy. To guarantee that managers can communicate effectively, communication professionals could organize communication training sessions for the managers. During those trainings basic concepts and methods for communication are discussed together with the middle-level managers. In these trainings the managers would gain ideas for how to make stories and frames for strategy to increase the managers' conversation skills in face-to-face communication situations.

When the managers gain more skills for communication in general and more specifically for communication of strategy, they would feel more confident to communicate about strategy to their teams. Communication trainings would give managers confidence to bring the

division strategy to coffee table discussions with their subordinates and practice interaction-based communication of strategy, which is the most efficient method of communication according to strategy practitioners.

10.6 Adopting informal communication as a structured model for communication

Traditionally cascading has been the dominant model for communication of strategy in the case organization. However, as stated in the theoretical framework, informal communication is often perceived as the most efficient model of communication among the employees. Communication professionals together with upper management and middle managers could make informal interactions, such as coffee table discussions and other daily interactions, more accepted within the organization by encouraging employees to join them actively and making these networks visible in the strategy process. Accepting the social networking model of communication presumes a decentralized, cyclic and creative nature for interaction and processes. The challenge for managers often is that interaction and cooperation are social activities that require a holistic approach, not only dictating, but respecting, listening and understanding individual factors. Communication professionals in the case organization could support managers in adopting these informal ways of communicating in their communication of strategy by providing them with training on both communication and content of the strategy. (Kärnä 2016, 108-112.)

11 Summary

The purpose of this research was to produce information that supports the case organization in implementing strategy by the means of communication and thus enable efficiency within the organization. The aim in the case organization is that all employees in the organization are capable of taking independent decisions in their daily work based on the strategy. Ultimately it increases efficiency in the organization and lowers hierarchy. This research aimed at seeking answers for how communication professionals in the case organization can develop, facilitate and support middle-level managers' communication of strategy, how the middle-level managers in the case organization perceived communication of strategy and what kind of expectations they had towards the communication professionals regarding communication of strategy. Based on the theoretical framework and eight semi-structured interviews with middle-level managers, five development recommendations were formulated for developing, facilitating and supporting communication of strategy in the case organization. Some of these recommendations include several actions that can be adopted in the case organization to support the middle-level managers in communication of strategy.

This research started with a literature review to find existing studies and theories for communication of strategy, managers responsibility for communication and strategy in general. The literature review was made to gain understanding of the concept of communication of strategy and how it is an integral part of implementing strategy in organizations. In the theoretical part of this research previous theories and earlier research were investigated and combined into a suitable theoretical framework for this research. The literature review enabled evaluating communication of strategy in the case organization by presenting best practices and essential aspects for communication of strategy. The findings from the literature review were later used as a basis for creating development recommendations for communication of strategy in the case organization.

In the empirical part of this research the aim was to develop understanding of the case organization's middle managers' perceptions on communication of strategy and their expectations towards the communication professionals regarding communication of strategy with eight semi-structured interviews. The interviews were carried out with middle-managers who lead different kinds of teams and are based in different countries, and who were not part of the division management team. The diversity of the managers allowed the researcher to develop understanding of current state and challenges for communication of strategy in different kinds of teams. The findings were validated with cumulative interview method and some of the findings were also validated by observing employees in the case organization. The findings were classified into five groups and two topics that answered the

secondary research questions of this research. The last part of this research includes development recommendations for communication of strategy in the case organization.

The managers recognized communication of strategy as an important responsibility in their role. They all agreed that knowing and understanding of strategy is crucial for all employees in order to have an efficient organization. They all recognized the significance of high-level strategy in decision making. The managers expected support for communication of strategy from the communication professionals. They wished to get support for concretizing strategy to their teams, delivering messages from the middle-level to the case organization's management team, developing measurement systems for strategy on unit level, making sense of the timeline of the strategy, involving middle-level managers more in strategy formulating, target setting and some organization specific topics. Many managers highlighted that all actions of the organization must support communication of strategy, otherwise communication and validating strategy to their teams becomes very difficult. The development recommendations were created based on these findings. All of the recommendations were created for the communication professionals in the case organization, but as communication is not separate from implementing strategy, support from many other teams and functions is required to be included for successful implementation of the development recommendations.

Communication of strategy is not separate from formulating and implementing strategy, but an integral part of the strategy cycle. It requires everyone's input in the organization, but managers' role in it is irreplaceable. Many of the suggested development actions cannot be implemented by the communication professionals alone, as they need support and actions from the whole organization. This proves that in fact communication is actions; not only dialogue, informing or creating and distributing content. Communication professionals cannot tell the managers that "this is how you put strategy into action in your everyday work", but the whole organization must define how high-level strategy is developed into daily actions and how decisions can be taken based on the strategy. The communication professionals facilitate this work and supports managers in it.

11.1 Ideas for further research

This research has produced new recommendations for developing, facilitating and supporting communication of strategy in the case organization. While the recommendations have been created specifically to benefit the case organization, they can be implemented in other organizations too. The case organization has gained more understanding of how the middle-level managers perceive communication of strategy and what kind of expectations they

have towards the communication professionals in their organization. This information is useful when the case organization is planning the future communication of strategy and strategy formulating process.

It would be interesting to see how the recommendations of this research are taken into use and interview the managers after the recommendations have been implemented in the case organization to hear their current perceptions on communication of strategy, if strategy is known and understood better in the case organization and if efficiency of the case organization has improved thanks to increased capabilities for decision making. These thoughts arouse ideas for further research: How the recommendations have been implemented in the case organization? How do the middle-level managers perceive communication of strategy when they have had more support for it? Did they increase understanding for high-level strategy among the employees? Are the employees and managers capable of taking decisions more efficiently when they have more understanding on strategy? Did efficiency in the case organization increase thanks to more sophisticated decision making? There are constantly new research topics in the field of organizational communication, because organizational communication evolves together with the society around it. To gain deep understanding on organizations, research must be made on micro-level.

12 References

Aaltonen, P., Hämäläinen, V., Ikävalko, H., Mantere S., Suominen K. & Teikari, V. 2006, Organisaation strategian toteuttaminen, 2nd edition. Edita Publishing Oy.

Aronson, J. 1995. A Pragmatic View of Thematic Analysis. The Qualitative Report. Nova Southeastern University, USA. <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2069&context=tqr>

Accessed 15 March 2018.

Cornelissen, J. 2014. Corporate Communication - A Guide to Theory & Practice, 4th edition. Sage Publications.

Cornelissen, J. 2009. Corporate Communication - A Guide to Theory & Practice, 2nd edition. Sage Publications.

Cowan, D. 2017. Strategic Internal Communication – How to Build Employee Engagement and Performance. Kogan Page Ltd, 2nd edition.

Groysberg, B., Lee, J., Price, J. & Cheng, Y. 2018. The Leader's Guide to Corporate Culture. Harvard Business Review. January 2018 issue.

Holtzhausen, D. & Zerfass, A. 2014. The Routledge Handbook of Strategic Communication. Routledge.

Hämäläinen, V. & Maula, H. 2004. Strategiaviestintä, 1st edition. Infor.

Insight Experience, 2015. Strategy Execution Cycle. <https://www.slideshare.net/Insight-Experience/strategy-execution-cycle>

Accessed 15 March 2018.

Jablin, F. M. & Putnam, L. L. 2001. The New Handbook of Organizational Communication – Advances in Theory, Research and Methods. Sage Publications Inc.

Juholin, E. 2013. Communicare! - Kasva Viestinnän ammattilaiseksi, 5th edition. Management Institute of Finland.

Kaplan, R. S. & Norton, D. P. 1996. Using the Balanced Scorecard as a Strategic Management System. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2007/07/using-the-balanced-scorecard-as-a-strategic-management-system>

Accessed 18 May 2018.

Kaplan, R. S. & Norton, D. P. 1993. Putting the Balanced Scorecard to Work. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/1993/09/putting-the-balanced-scorecard-to-work>

Accessed 18 May 2018.

KvaliMOTV, learning portal for research methods

http://www.fsd.uta.fi/menetelmaopetus/kvali/L6_3.html

Accessed 3 January 2018. (interviews as data collection method)

http://www.fsd.uta.fi/menetelmaopetus/kvali/L6_3_1.html

Accessed 3 January 2018. (open interviews)

http://www.fsd.uta.fi/menetelmaopetus/kvali/L6_3_3.html

Accessed 20 May 2018. (semi-structured interviews)

http://www.fsd.uta.fi/menetelmaopetus/kvali/L6_4.html

Accessed 3 January 2018. (observation)

http://www.fsd.uta.fi/menetelmaopetus/kvali/L6_2_2.html

Accessed 3 January 2018. (saturation)

http://www.fsd.uta.fi/menetelmaopetus/kvali/L7_3_4.html

Accessed 4 January 2018. (organizing data in themes)

http://www.fsd.uta.fi/menetelmaopetus/kvali/L3_3_1.html

Accessed 4 January 2018. (validity)

http://www.fsd.uta.fi/menetelmaopetus/kvali/L3_3_2.html

Accessed 4 January 2018. (reliability)

Kärnä, E. 2016. Strategy – From Managers' Toy to Practitioners' Tool to Successful Implementation. University of Jyväskylä, Business and Economics. https://jyx.jyu.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/49956/978-951-39-6659-1_vaitos06062016.pdf?sequence=1

Accessed 7 January 2018.

Li, Y., Guohui, S. & Eppler M. J. 2008. Making Strategy Work: A Literature Review on the Factors Influencing Strategy Implementation. Central University of Finance and Economics, Beijing.

Maxwell, J. 1992. Understanding and Validity in Qualitative Research. Harvard Educational Review.

Mintzberg H., Lampel, J., Quinn, J.B. & Ghoshal, S. 2003. The Strategy Process – Concepts, Contexts, Cases. Pearson Education.

Mintzberg, H. 1987. The Strategy Concept I: Five Ps for Strategy. California Management Review. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.2307/41165263>

Accessed 15 January 2018.

Nielsen, K. & González, E.R. 2010. Engaging Middle Managers: Activities and Resources Which Engage Middle Manager Engagement. In Handbook of Employee Engagement. Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice. Ed. by Simon L. Albrecht. Edward Elgar. Cheltenham, UK.

Ojasalo, K., Moilanen, T. & Ritalahti, J. 2014. Kehittämistyön menetelmät - Uudenlaista osaamista liiketoimintaan. 3rd edition. Sanoma Pro.

Porter, M. E. 1996. What is Strategy? Harvard Business Review.

<https://hbr.org/1996/11/what-is-strategy>

Accessed 3 March 2018.

Raupp, J. & Hoffjann, O. Understanding Strategy in Communication Management. 2010. Journal of Communication Management.

Ruben, B & Stewart. L. 1998. Communication and Human Behaviour. Allyn and Bacon.

Rouhiainen, M. 2003. Yrityksen Strategiaviestintä – Keskijohdon ja Työntekijöiden Käsitteitä Muutoksen Viestinnästä. Pro Gradu research on speech communication. University of Jyväskylä. <https://jyx.jyu.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/11245/G0000418.pdf?sequence>

Accessed 22 February 2018.

Salminen, H. 2014. Viestinnän Osaajasta Strategisesksi Vuorovaikuttajaksi – Viestinnän Johtajuus 2010-luvulta Eteenpäin. Department of Social Sciences, University of Helsinki.

Stanton, R. 2017. Corporate Strategic Communication: A General Social and Economic Theory. Macmillan International Higher Education. 1st edition.

Tench, R. Verhoeven, P & Zerfass, A. 2011. Strategic Orientation of Communication Professionals in Europe. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*. Taylor & Francis Group.

Yin, R. 2003. *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*. SAGE Publications, London.