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DEVELOPING INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN A GLOBAL B2B COMPANY

Case: Company X

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ABSTRACT

This case study surveys internal communication in a global B2B Company. The study is commissioned by Company X. The purpose of the study is to investigate internal communication in Company X and consider how the communication could be developed.

Internal communication is the basis for the company's operations. Flow of communication between different departments and functions is necessary to the company's ability to operate. However, the significance of internal communication is commonly underestimated in comparison to external communication. Internal communication creates the basis for external communication and marketing. Internal communication also affects the atmosphere, wellbeing of the employees and the company's image.

The thesis consists of a theoretical and empirical part. The theoretical background of the study is presented first. The field of internal communication is covered extensively using printed and electronic publications related to the topic. The empirical part was conducted as qualitative research using themed interviews as data collection method. The interviewees of the research worked in different functions in Finland and abroad. The research problem was to survey the present state of internal communication and the personnel's satisfaction with it in Company X. In addition the study surveyed the functionality of communication during the process of quotation, order and delivery.

According to the study the personnel's awareness of different issues of internal communication varied. The responsibilities of internal communication were undefined and in some places unclear. There were also detectable lacks in communication and knowledge of the process of quotation, order and delivery. However, Company X had in use diverse tools for communication and open atmosphere, which create good prerequisites for the development of internal communication. In general communication with colleagues works well too.

The significance of internal communication is emphasized in Company X's project-oriented operation. Effective completion of a project requires close co-operation between all functions, which is enabled by internal communication.

Key words: internal communication, multicultural work community, project-oriented operation

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämä opinnäytetyö käsittelee sisäisen viestinnän kehittämistä kansainvälisessä B2B yrityksessä. Opinnäytetyö tehdään toimeksiantona Yritys X:lle. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on tutkia Yritys X:n sisäistä viestintää ja pohtia kuinka sitä voitaisiin kehittää.

Sisäinen viestintä on yrityksen toiminnan perusta. Tiedonkulku eri osastojen ja toimintojen välillä on välttämätöntä, jotta yritys pystyy toimimaan. Kuitenkin sisäisen viestinnän merkitys usein aliarvioidaan verrattuna ulkoiseen viestintään. Sisäinen viestintä luo pohjan ulkoiselle viestinnälle ja markkinoinnille. Sisäinen viestintä vaikuttaa myös ilmapiiriin, työntekijöiden hyvinvointiin ja yrityksen imagoon.

Opinnäytetyö koostuu teoria- ja empiriaosasta. Tutkimuksen teoreettinen tausta esitellään ensin. Sisäistä viestintää on käsitelty kattavasti aihetta koskevia painettuja ja sähköisiä lähteitä käyttäen. Empiria suoritettiin kvalitatiivisena tutkimuksena käyttäen teemahaastattelua tiedonkeruumenetelmänä. Tutkimuksessa haastateltiin sekä Suomessa että ulkomailla työskenteleviä työntekijöitä eri toiminnoissa. Tutkimusongelmana oli selvittää Case-yrityksen sisäisen viestinnän nykytilaa ja henkilöstön tyytyväisyyttä siihen. Lisäksi tutkimuksessa kartoitettiin yrityksen tarjous-, tilaus-, toimitusketjun viestinnän toimivuutta.

Tutkimuksen mukaan henkilöstön tietoisuus erilaisista sisäisen viestinnän aiheista vaihteli. Sisäisen viestinnän vastuita ei ollut määritelty ja ne olivat paikoin epäselviä. Tarjous-, tilaus-, toimitusketjun viestinnässä ja tuntemuksessa oli myös havaittavissa puutteita. Yrityksellä oli kuitenkin käytössä monipuoliset viestinnän työkalut ja avoin ilmapiiri, jotka luovat hyvät edellytykset sisäisen viestinnän kehittämiselle. Yleisesti myös viestintä työtoverien kesken toimii hyvin.

Yrityksen projektiluontoisessa toiminnassa sisäisen viestinnän merkitys korostuu. Projektien tehokas läpivieminen edellyttää kaikkien toimintojen välistä tiivistä yhteistyötä, jonka sisäinen viestintä mahdollistaa.

Asiasanat: Sisäinen viestintä, monikulttuurinen työyhteisö, projektiluontoinen toiminta

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1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis was commissioned by Company X, which operates in the global offshore ventilation business. Company X has a multicultural working community and part of the employees work abroad. Company X's operations are project oriented and one of Company's core processes, which the project goes through, is the process of quotation, order and delivery (QOD). Effective completion of a project requires close co-operation between all functions, which is enabled by effective internal communication.

1.1 The background of the study

The case study observes internal communication in Company X and also during the process of quotation, order and delivery. The study compares differences between personnel in Finland and abroad. Therefore the study focuses on the viewpoint of segments outlining the some SBU Finland functions, although these functions are part of the QOD-process. In this case study a segment means Company X's own division of business. Company X has divided its sales, project management and order handling & logistics to the three segments according to customers business. This case study focuses on these three segments. Strategic business unit (SBU) means a division of a business within the overall organization. Each SBU has an own mission, which can be planned independently of other SBUs in the same organization (US Legal, 2013.)

1.2 Research method and the scope of the thesis

The case study is conducted as a qualitative study to get profound and comprehensive understanding about the current state of internal communication in Company X. Theme interviewees are used as a data collection method, because the problems of internal communication in Company X were undefined and unclear. Theme interviews allow interviewees to approach the topic from different viewpoints and emphasize different themes, which they see as important. The study aims to provide new tools for Company X to improve and develop internal communication and cooperation in general and also during Company X's core processes.

The study focuses on observing internal communication generally in Company X and especially during QOD-process. The wider focus is chosen, because the current situation and problems are undefined. Internal communication is a wide concept and the study observes the topic extensively, but in a non-specific level. Change and crisis communication are also wide concepts and these will be only touched on.

1.3 The structure of the thesis

The study consists of theoretical and empirical parts. The theoretical part is based on printed and electronic literature on the topic thus providing the basis for the empirical part. Theoretical part goes through all the sections of internal communication in a general level and forms a general view of the wide topic. The different concepts, contents and tasks of internal communication are introduced in the theoretical part of the study. Multiple options for communication channels are also covered as well as responsibilities and challenges related to internal communication. Empirical part observes how the themes of the theory part work in the case company. The research problem was to survey the present state of internal communication and personnel's satisfaction with it in Company X. In addition the study surveys the functionality of communication during the process of quotation, order and delivery. The results of the study and development suggestions are presented in the end of the thesis.

2 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Internal communication occurs all the time within organizations. Its forms vary from informal “grapevine” conversations to formal financial announcements. Despite the fact that internal communication is viewed as a part of a company’s strategic communication function, it has been given relatively little attention by public relations scholars therefore there is a paucity of definitions on internal communication (Welch and Jackson 2007, 178.)

The field of internal communication is wide and creating a comprehensive definition is challenging. Mc Shane and Von Glinow (2009, 270) defined communication as “a process by which information is transmitted and understood between two or more people.” Welch and Jackson (2007, 183) analyzed earlier definitions in their research and ended up to defining internal communication as the strategic management of interaction and relationships between the personnel at all levels within an organization. However, they also admitted, that the definition is not extensive enough. More casually speaking all information flow among the people inside a company can be seen as internal communication.

Information flow within the corporation between the employer and personnel is regulated by the law of cooperation. According to this law, employer has the responsibility to at least inform their employees of issues related to finance and personnel policy (Laki yhteistoiminnasta yrityksissä 334/2007, 10-26§). The law states the minimum requirements for internal communications and outlines many important issues.

The impact of internal communication is commonly underestimated in comparison to external communication. Mc Shane and Von Glinow (2009, 270) highlighted, that the communication is one of the key factors for an organization, because without it the organization will not function. Rana (2013, 2) described communication as lifeblood of any organization. Internal communication is also vital to the success of a business. Juholin (2009, 153) referred to the results of Corporate culture 2009-research made by Central Chamber of Commerce of Finland. According to this research 72 % of corporate leaders see internal communication as one of the most important targets for development.

Furthermore Siukosaari (2002, 65) claims that the impact of internal communication has been proven during the recession of the 1990s. Companies, which reduced internal communication and communicators, suffered the most. Companies, which survived, had invested in internal communication and their personnel were well aware of the threat and were motivated to save their jobs.

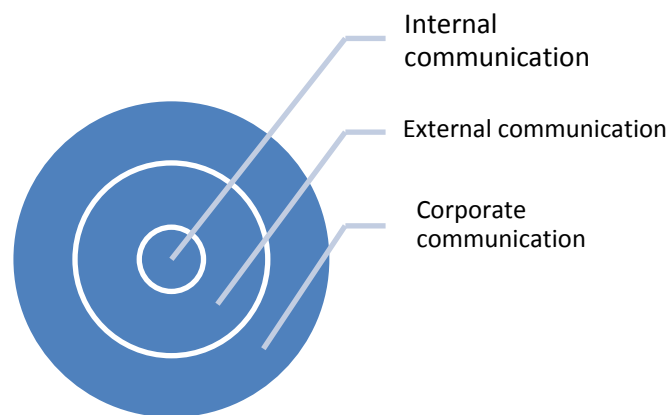


FIGURE 1. The structure of organizational communication (Isohookana 2007)

Isohookana (2007, 221) considers internal communication as a core of comprehensive communication. As the above figure 1 shows internal communication is the core in the middle and it is surrounded by external communication and corporate communication. Internal communication has instant effect on external and corporate communication. It affects significantly on the image that stakeholders' have on the company and its products and services. Kortetjärvi-Nurmi, Kuronen and Ollikainen (2008, 108) pointed out that employees' social networks reach outside the organization. Social network include family members, friends, colleges and other people, in which the people communicate with each other. Work and workplace are common topics of conversations among these networks and people share their concerns and experiences. People rather trust inside information than corporate's official communication and if these messages are in contradiction, it harms reliability and reputation of the company. According to Toivanen (2001) every employee is the face of the company. As Isohookana (2007, 221) suggested internal communication should be well managed to be able to support external and corporate communication.

Communicating with others also improves wellbeing of employees, because they can validate their self-worth and their social identity. Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. (2008, 106) referred to several researches, which have allocated, that work satisfaction and communication satisfaction have a connection to each other. If people are satisfied with the communication in the working community, they are contented with their work too. According to Toivanen (2001) employees' motivation depends on if they understand the company's targets and if they feel that they can affect to these targets.

Internal communication is under constant change. The main reason for that is development of communication technology. Employees are more concerned about their working community and they have become more active (Juholin 2009, 141.) Work has become an important part of people's identity and people want to affect to their work (Juholin 2009, 148). Organizations cannot control the information and communication as before. If companies do not communicate, employees will get the information from another source (Juholin 2009, 141.)

2.1 Contents of communication

Internal communication is a wide concept, but it can be divided into two main categories strategic content and the operations that support daily issues. The difference between these categories is that strategic content is decided by the company's management, when the operations that support daily issues are something the personnel of the company can participate in and affect to. Strategic contents are the company's vision, strategies, values and images. Daily issues include communication in the following topics: the company's financial situation, changes in operations, employment situation, training, personnel policy, activities of other departments and news about company's own industry (Juholin 1999, 133-139, 206.) Besides communication is related to strategy and daily issues, there are two categories related to change within company. These two are communication during change and crisis communication (Isohookana 2007, 231, 207.) Contents of internal communication are illustrated in figure 2 below.

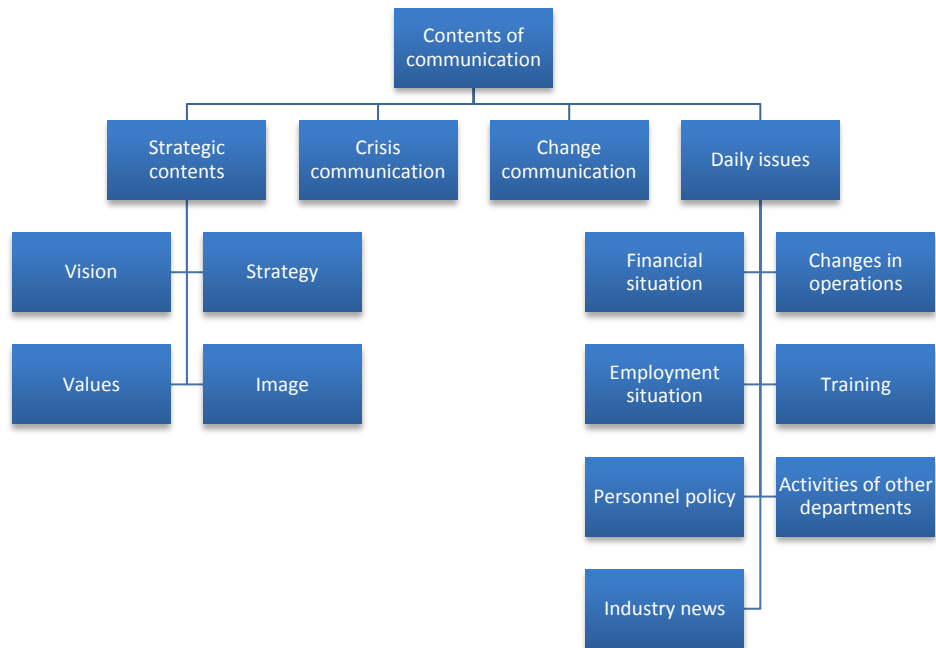


FIGURE 2. Contents of internal communication

2.1.1 Strategic contents

Strategic contents are the force that drives the internal communication of the company. All other communication as well as the company's actions are based on them. Vision is the company's target status in future. Strategies are action plans, which describe how the vision will be reached. Awareness of the vision and strategy helps people to align their work and understand where the company is going (Juholin 1999, 206.) People feel motivated when they know how their work contribution helps the company in the future. It gives a meaning to their work. Everyone within the company is related to the strategies of the company.

There are values in every enterprise whether they are defined or not. Undefined values might lead to confusions and unequal treatment within the work community. The values of the company communicate what the company hold important, how the company treat their personnel and environment and the issues the company allow or forbid (Juholin 1999, 210.) Enterprises generally define 3 to 5 values. People also base their daily decisions and choices on the values, which is why they need to be aware of them, understand them and accept them (Isohookana 2007, 224.) Values should support and reflect the company's vision and strategies.

Customers and stakeholders value community image as well as the quality of the company's products and services. Community image affects purchasing decisions, because customers build their own image also through their purchases (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, 147). Due to increasing global competition, it has become important for companies to create and maintain targeted community image. External community image is based on the internal image. Employees' attitudes towards their employer are the image they spread outside of the company. To create a good community image a company must first start from its own employees. Targeted image is based on company's vision, strategies and values (Juholin 1999, 211-212.)

2.1.2 Daily issues

Communication of the operations that support daily issues guarantees fluency and effectiveness in daily work. It affects the effective use of resources, creates a positive atmosphere and sense of community as well as prevents and manages conflicts (Isohookana 2007, 223.) The range of daily issues varies, but some main issues are examined in the following paragraphs.

Communication of the financial situation of the company is one of the most important issues, which is also set by law of cooperation. Communication of financial situation tells how the business is going and developing and makes people feel safe. Financial information could be communicated in many levels globally and locally as well as departmentally (Juholin 1999, 135-136.)

Communication about results and success creates a we-spirit and sense of community and motivates people to achieve even better results. The employment situation is closely related to financial issues. According to Juholin (1999, 135-136), employees need to be aware of future changes in employment situation, when the company is recruiting or downsizing.

The changing world challenges enterprises and work communities to develop continuously. New technology has brought forth new software and devices to help work become more efficient and less time-consuming. This development has also created a need for continuous training. Juholin (1999, 136) found that development within the companies could be seen on different levels, such as

organizational level, unit or occupational group level or individual level. It is important that the company informs its personnel about training possibilities the Company is offering. With communication companies can encourage its employees to develop themselves and increase the immaterial assets of the company.

The personnel have to be aware of changes in operations to do their work. Changes in operations could be a new way to do work or exceptional opening hours of canteen (Isohookana 2007, 231.) The most common lacks of information are related to personnel policy, benefits and services (Juholin 199,137). However, these issues are important to employees and part of the company's image. These issues show how much the company values its employees, which affects to the commitment of the employees. The company should keep its employees aware of what it is offering to them.

Enterprises consist of different units and departments, whose work is linked with each other (Juholin 1999, 137). Internal communication between these units or departments is vital to effectiveness. Nowadays there is so much information and knowledge in every unit that it is impossible to suppose that they could be aware of everything that happens in the other units. However, even general understanding of the work and processes of other units improves effectiveness and eases the work of all units (Isohookana 2007, 230.)

Industrial news interests everyone in the company and the most significant news is commonly informed by public media. Industrial news might bring forth conversation and concerns in companies, so it is important that the company conveys its views to their personnel. Knowing branch industry news gives employees a framework, which helps to understand and proportion issues in their own working community (Juholin 1999, 138-139.) For example if demand in the market has increased considerably, is it easier to understand why the company is recruiting more people.

2.1.3 Change and crisis communication

Changes in the company's operations could result from changes in technological, financial, political or social environments. Changes of environment cannot be prevented so the company has to adapt to them by changing its operations as needed. Changes could be planned or unexpected external demands (Isohookana 2007, 231.) Amendments are example of external demands. Communication has an important role in change situations. Change communication informs about the change, its reasons, effects and positive improvements, which the change brings. Changes cause concern and uncertainty. Change communication offers possibilities to discuss and ask questions about the personnel's concerns. The success of change requires whole community to be commitment to it. People cannot commit themselves to something they do not understand or accept (Juholin 2008, 126.) All in all, change communication convinces employees and stakeholders that the change is essential and best possible choice to the company.

Bigger and negative changes might be classified as crisis. Crises are unexpected, progressive occasions, which affect strongly to the company's operations (Lehtonen 1999, according to Isohookana 2007, 207). Crises could be caused by internal or external factors. Internal factors could be serious work accident or fire in the work place. External factors could be information leak or sabotage focused on company or its possessions. Crises affect to everyone in the company. They arouse concern, even panic and can paralyze the whole community. Internal crisis communication informs and calms personnel. Communication cannot prevent crises, but it minimizes damages and speeds up the community to recover (Isohookana 2007, 207.)

2.2 Targets and tasks

Isohookana (2007, 222) describes the targets of internal communication as creating and developing the company's identity and internal relationships and that way help the company to achieve its goals. Internal communication connects the company's units, departments and employees to be one unity.

Internal communication has three main tasks, which are flow of information, interaction and commitment. All of the tasks are illustrated on the figure 3 below. Flow of information assures that everyone is aware of the news and current issues of the working community (Siukosaari 2002, 79). Furthermore it gives personnel the information needed to do their work and it's easily available, when needed. Flow of information also aims to help individuals within the company to perceive how their work is related to the company's operations (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. 2008, 106-107.)

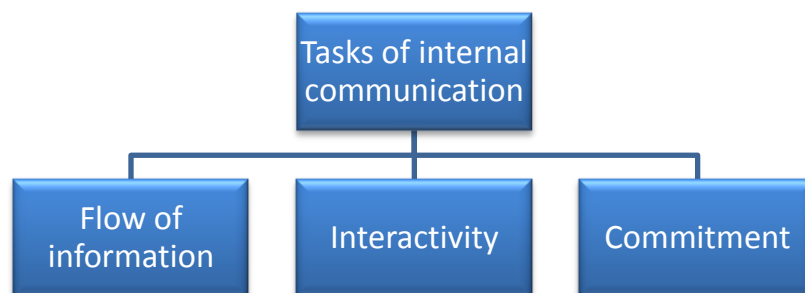


FIGURE 3. Tasks of internal communication

The second task of internal communication is to create and maintain open interaction, improve we-spirit and work motivation and encourage people to develop themselves and their work. Messages cannot go only top-down, but also from employees to leaders and horizontally between different units and individuals (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. 2008, 106-107.) Juholin (2008, 61) defined interaction as listening, talking and discussing while using natural language and gestures. Interaction enables to define unclear issues, ask and question information (Juholin 2008, 61.) Interaction occurs in organized meetings, occasions and conversations, but also in unofficial and occasional situations, such

as lunch or coffee break conversations (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. 2008, 106-107.) The concepts of reciprocity and respect are closely related to interaction. The term reciprocity means acknowledging the mutual dependency of interaction between communicators and using that to one's advantage. Respect is putting oneself into the others' position and trying to understand their point of view (Juholin 2008, 61.) Good interaction contains both of these concepts.

Commitment is third main task of internal communication. Commitment requires information and communication from the top management. Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. (2008, 106-107) pointed out that the company management has to tell about its vision, strategy and values to illustrate what these mean in practice and in employees' work. Corporate management also has to tell about company's targets, results, future plans and possible changes and discuss about them openly with the personnel. As Juholin (2009, 45) mentioned, when employees know their organization and community, it is possible for them to commit themselves to it. Commitment means that personnel is aware about the company's strategies, visions and values but also understands them and approves them (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. 2008, 106-107). Committed employees feel that they belong to the community and are responsible for the development. The importance of commitment has increased, because the abundance of skilled labor has decreased therefore enterprises have had to compete for accomplished workforce (Juholin 2009, 45.)

2.3 Methods and channels

Information occurs in two different forms; formal and informal. Choosing a form depends on channel, topic, audience and the relationship between communicator and receiver. Krlshnamacharyulu and Ramakrishnan (2009, 5-6) defined formal communication as information distributed via established channels. Formal communication has a formal tone and its topics are work related. Informal communication is defined as unofficial toned communication that is related to information regarding people and is found in the forms of gossips, rumors, conversations and discussions. In addition to these definitions, it is essential to notice that formal communication is mainly in control of the company's

management, but informal communication is not. Juholin (2009, 141) mentioned that the impact of informal communication has increased during the last ten years. Formally communicated issues have become more complicated and people have a need to discuss and exchange views on these issues in an informal way, which is at least as important as formal communication.

In all communication it is important that communicator can communicate in a way that audience understands the message. People understand information in very different ways, some conceptually, some very practically (Ryde 2009, 14.) Jargon means specialized words and phrases related to some specific occupations, which are designed to ease communication inside those occupational groups in which all people are familiar with them. The communicator has to take the target group into account and remember to translate the jargon into words that the audience can understand (Mc Shane & Von Gilnow 2009, 282.) However, Juholin (2009, 161) warned that strategy jargon and officialese cannot be avoided in a large scale.

According to Tervola (2008) two key features of effective communication is proactivity and openness. However, there are some limitations to the openness of informing. Juholin (2008, 68) draws attention to that stock exchange-listed companies have to follow certain practices related to informing of financial information. According to these practices other shareholders will be informed before employees (Juholin 2008, 68.) Tervola (2008) pointed out that the importance of internal communication is commonly highlighted, when the company is in crisis situation. However communicating in good times is as important, because the better the employees understand the business the better they can understand also the bad news.

There are a lot of different channels for internal communication and the amount is increasing all the time, especially the electronic ones. Juholin (2009, 170) draws attention to the fact that nowadays when speaking of communication channels Juholin would rather call them communication forums, because these better describe the interactivity enabled by Web 2.0. This case study prefers channel concept, because interactive forums have not yet replaced all traditional communication channels. However some channels enable such interactivity that

they could better match the definition of forum. Channels vary a lot depending on the community and they can be classified in many ways. Juholin (2009, 170) referred Åberg's classification, in which channels are divided to short-term and long-term channels. Åberg's classification is based on do people communicate directly or not. Juholin (2009, 170) herself divided the channels in three main types: face-to-face, printed and electronic communications, which suits better to the idea of this case study. The channels represented in following paragraphs are listed in the figure 4 below.

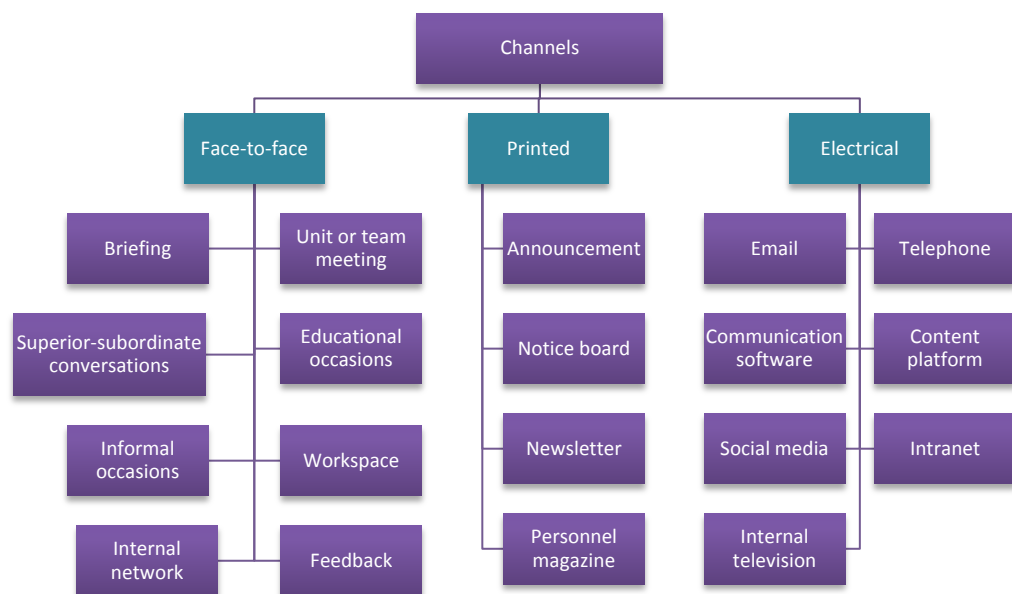


FIGURE 4. The channels of internal communication

2.3.1 Face-to-face communication

Face-to-face communication is pursued both among the whole community and among individuals. It is the most respected form of communication. Pursuing this form of communication requires that the people who communicate together need to be in the same place at the same time and it might take time to arrange a meeting (Juholin 1999, 141.) On other hand information might move surprisingly fast through the grapevine. Therefore the speed of information varies depending on the face-to-face channel. Stafford, Vanc and White (2007) observed in their research, that face-to-face communication leads to better satisfaction with received information and responsibility to support the company. Their study

showed that even though meetings and briefing occasions are time-consuming, people valued them, because they give them a sense of hearing things first-hand from the top management. Tervola (2008) pointed out that face-to-face communication gives employees a chance to ask questions and convey their concerns. For the company's management, face-to-face communication is an opportunity to show that they are present and care about their personnel. Juholin (2009, 172) observed that online meetings have become popular especially in global companies and have replaced traditional meetings. They enable several people to get together at same time no matter where they physically are. However these meetings haven't yet totally replaced the meaning of face-to-face meetings.

The merit of face-to-face communication is its adaptability and possibility to modify words, voice and style according the audience. Face-to-face communication enables also the use of non-verbal support as gestures and expressions (Krlshnamacharyulu & Ramakrishnan 2009, 71-72.) It also makes it possible to observe the reactions of the audience, get feedback and to see if the message is accepted or not. Some of the most common forms of face-to-face communication are illustrated on the figure 5 below and will be discussed in the following paragraph.



FIGURE 5. Channels of face-to-face communication

Briefing

According to Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. (2008, 110) briefing is commonly used, when the message concerns the whole personnel or several units. Briefing enables conversations and questions about the topic and it aims at a two-way interaction. Briefing is used, when something needs to be shown or represented to the personnel for example new products or the introduction of a new superior. Briefing is an efficient way to distribute the information to a wide audience at once with the same contents. The risk of briefing is that the occasion might conflict with people's schedule and therefore a part of the target group might not get all the information. Thus, briefing should be supported by announcements, so that they, who were not able to participate in the briefing, understand the main issues. Siukosaari (2002, 101) highlights the interactivity of briefing by claiming that if the briefing is possible to be replaced by announcements, arranging a briefing will be a waste of time.

Unit or team meeting

A regular unit or team meeting is a very effective communication channel. Current and urgent issues related to daily work are common topics covered in the meetings, which are held quite often for example once a week. Often held meetings help to prevent the grapevine effects in the community, because the lack of information does not have time to arise. The feedback is easier to get in these informal meetings than in briefing, because people of the unit or team are familiar with each other (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. 2008, 110.) Issues concerning the whole working community are not recommended to be discussed in team meetings if the rest of the community does not get the same information at the same time (Siukosaari 2002, 99).

Superior-subordinate conversations

People consider their superior to be the most important source of information. Even if the information is distributed generally, people have a need to confirm and discuss it with their superior to get to know how the information affects them specifically. The superior might have to be able to communicate with his subordinates about any issues the subordinates are concerned about, so he has to be well aware of all things going on in the company. Superior –subordinate conversations could be informal as talking of daily news during lunch break or

formal conversations (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. 2008, 110.) One of most common formal conversation occasions are regularly held feedback and development conversations between superior and subordinate. These are scheduled confidential conversations related mainly to work and career of both, but also motivation, concerns and future. These conversations are held once or twice in a year depending on the company (Siukosaari 2002, 93). Other common superior-subordinate conversations are orientation of new subordinate, further training and possible private conversations related to personal issues (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. 2008, 110.)

Educational occasion

Educational occasions are effective ways to distribute information to a larger target group, especially if delivering the information requires explaining and elucidation. In educational occasions it is possible to involve people (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. 2008, 111.) For example if the company is implementing a new action model or software, the personnel, who will use it, have a chance to try it out in practice, when the possible problems and lack of instructions will be found and solved immediately.

Informal occasions

Many companies arrange also informal occasions for their personnel. These are for example Christmas parties, physical exercise days and excursions. The main target of these occasions is creating and maintaining we-spirit, motivation, rewarding and commitment. In these occasions people get to know each other better, so it's easier for them to approach each other also at work (Siukosaari 2002, 72)

Workspace

Physical workspace is a communication channel, which delivers both formal and informal information. Interactivity is strongly related to informal communication. Colleagues come to ask a work related question and after that the conversation might turn into a dialogue of the events of their weekend. According to Juholin (2009, 171) open-plan offices are a common solution in enterprises today. In these offices information can move without physical limitations and make it possible for people to be up to speed all the time. It might be also harmful, because new

information keeps coming all the time and it strains people and weakens their concentration to their work.

Internal networks

Internal networks are communities inside the working community, which form naturally by doing same things or having same purposes or interests. These networks might grow strong and members might be in connection even outside the workplace. Internal networks are effective and fast to spread information even before it is officially released. The information can be completely correct or it might be based on rumors and speculations as well. Traditionally these are called grapevines or bush telegraphs, which make them sound a little bit negative and unacceptable. Nowadays internal network is a neutral concept, even though internal networks might be harmful to the working community, if they start to use the information to their own benefits (Juholin 2009, 147.) The grapevine-effect is commonly born due to the lack of information. One reason why attitudes have changes towards internal networks might be the corporations' new communication channels, which enable swift informing and reacting, so internal networks do not have time or need for speculations. The other reason might be the improved availability of information, which has made it possible to look for answers rather than speculate (Juholin 2008, 75.)

Feedback

Feedback is a useful method of internal communication. Feedback improves openness and development in the working community. According to Siukosaari (2002, 68) feedback is a good method that shows if the recipients have received the message, understood it and acted according to it. It also shows what they think about it and how it has affected to them. Juholin (2009, 164) drew attention to that everybody wants to get feedback from their work also the top management. Feedback is effective also in printed or electronic form, but face-to-face it is very personal (Juholin 2009, 164.) Giving positive feedback raises the atmosphere in working community, but constructive feedback rarely dampens it. Juholin (2009, 165) mentioned that negative feedback should be dared to give, because giving only positive feedback makes the feedback unconvincing.

2.3.2 Printed communication

Printed communication is commonly used, when the message needs to be carefully formulated and editable or when face-to-face communication is not suitable (Krlshnamacharyulu & Ramakrishnan. 2009, 6). The benefit of printed communication is that it is not bounded by time. It could be shown as long as it is relevant somewhere the target group could find it easily. Using printed communication channels, it is possible to publish also very heavy and very specific information for example law text, because the personnel have an opportunity to read it several times or come back to it when needed. The most common printed communication channels are illustrated on the figure 6 below.

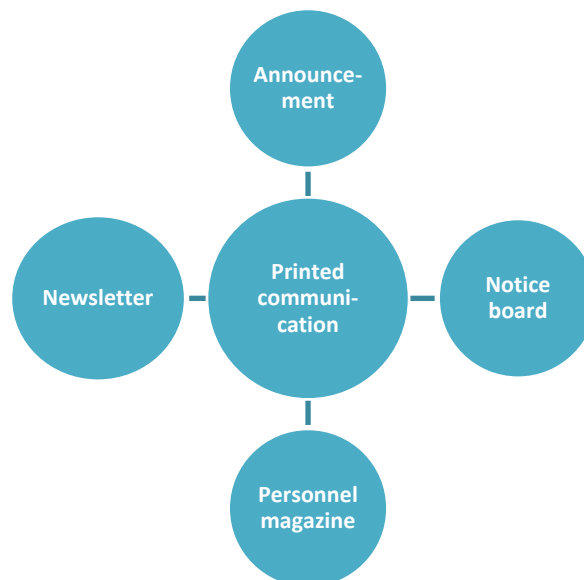


FIGURE 6. Channels of printed communication

Announcements

Announcements are one of the basic tools of communication and one of the fastest communication channels. Almost any issue could be informed by announcements (Juholin 2009, 178). Traditionally have announcements been printed on paper and distributed to notice boards. Nowadays announcements can be also electronic and distributed to intranet or straight to every employee via email. Some companies prefer printed and some companies electronic announcements, but many companies use both. Choosing the form of announcements usually depends on how many employees use computer in their work. An announcement is a short

and snappy text, which contain all essential information, but nothing irrelevant (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. 2008, 112.) Announcements are one of the most formal communication channels.

Notice board

Traditional notice boards have lost ground as a valuable communication channel after the electronic channels have become more popular. In many companies notice boards are still in use as a communication channel of not so urgent issues. Nowadays these are used as channel for permanent or “nice to know” issues as emergency instructions, leisure time activities and menu of the week. In companies, in where the main part of the personnel does not use computer in their work, traditional notice boards could still be in active use (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. 2008, 113.) Notice boards could also be used for informing about upcoming events and changes and training occasions (Rana 2013, 3). Nowadays notice boards could be also electronic and located for example in the intranet.

Newsletters

Newsletters deal with issues, which concern the whole working community. Newsletters are issued about every other week and they contain current issues and news (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al.2008, 113.) Its main target is to inform personnel of what is going on in the company. Newsletters are a common communication channel in big corporations, which have personnel and operations even abroad. Juholin (2009, 180) mentioned that in communities, in which intranet is widely used, the newsletters might be published there.

Personnel magazines

Personnel magazines are issued 4-12 times in a year. It also contains current issues and news as newsletters, but with more specific information, reasons and background information. Magazines are an interactive channel, because it usually contains columns for personnel’s communication and opinions and even a column for notices (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al.2008, 116.) The purpose of the magazine is to keep employees informed of business information, progress and goals. The magazine also encourages employees to improve quality and service, increase efficiency and take more social responsibility. Employees’ achievements and successes might also be recognized in the publications (Rana 2013, 3.) Personnel

magazine hasn't been replaced by electronic communication and it usually gets good feedback from the personnel (Juholin 2009, 181).

2.3.3 Electronic communication

Communication technology has developed a lot during last ten years and it has also had an impact on working habits. Ojala and Pöysti (2008, 18) mentioned that work, organizations and employees today expect a sense of communality, even though people cannot be physically near to each other's (Ojala & Pöysti 2008, 18). Achieving the sense of communality is challenging in companies, which have personnel working abroad or doing a lot of teleworking. These employees work most of the time outside of the working community. Electronic communication is commonly a fast way to distribute information. It is also the newest channel category, which is why it cannot be the only way to distribute information, until everyone in the community has access to it. The merits of electronic channels are strong interactivity, the speed of information delivery and access to information from portable devices. Different electronic communication channels will be introduced on the following paragraphs. All introduced channels are also illustrated on the figure 7 below.

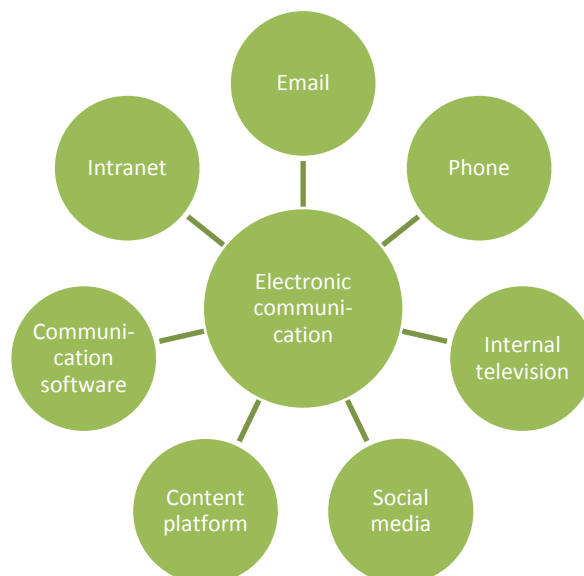


FIGURE 7. Channels of electronic communication

Email

Email is nowadays the most common communication channel among companies, whose personnel works with computers. Via email it is possible to communicate both horizontally employee to employee and vertically in both ways superior to subordinate and in the contrary (Rana 2013, 3.) Email could be formal or informal toned and it could contain text, pictures, charts and web links. Email is also a very fast way to distribute information. The weakness of email is the amount of it. People, who work with computers, might receive nearly 100 emails a day and some important email might drown in the excess flow if the receiver isn't able to read it right away. Mc Shane and Von Glinow (2009, 273) listed also some weaknesses for email. Email does not allow non-verbal communication, so words and tones have to be chosen carefully, so receiver does not get the wrong image. Email policy does not require such a courtesy and respect as traditional letters therefore the message might appear ruder than it was meant to. Based on these weaknesses Mc Shane and Von Glinow (2009, 274) do not recommend to communicate via email in complex and ambiguous situations. Email is preferred channel for coordinating work and for sending defined information related to decision making. According to Rana (2013, 3) email is used for ongoing day-to-day communication, informing updates or changes on important issues and also in crisis communication (Rana 2013, 3). The easy usability of email has reduced face-to-face and telephone communication, but at the same time it has increased employees' communication with superiors and management (Mc Shane & Von Glinow 2009, 273.) Communicating via email makes it easier to approach even the top management than communicating directly face-to-face.

Phone calls

Phone calls are fast way to contact people. On the phone the caller is able to use voice, words and style as in face-to-face communication and hear the reactions on the receivers voice (Krlshnamacharyulu & Ramakrishnan 2009, 99.) A phone call is found to be more personal and intimate than an email, but it does not replace face-to-face communication. However things might change after voice and video calls over the Internet will become more popular as they allow face-to-face contact via webcam, (Juholin 2009, 171.) A phone call is used as a

communication channel, when it is necessary to contact only a few people personally or the conversation is private.

Communication software

The range of communication software is wide and software might differ a lot from each other. Software can provide one or more functions as instant messaging, voice over Internet protocol or file transmission although nowadays software contain several functions. Communication software enables communication all around the world. Instant messengers are web-based communication software, which enables real-time communication between individuals or groups using the same software (Corporations for national & community services 2013.) Instant messaging is generally very informal, but can be used as email in simple issues and quick questions, because the message chain is faster than email.

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) is an application, which enables to call and receive phone calls over Internet. It offers lower fees than telecom operators (De Santis 2008.) VoIP software can be used as phone calls to inform a few people or to arrange online meetings among several people to replace face-to-face meetings. Using video calls allows the use of limited non-verbal communication as expressions. Tone and words can be used in the same way as on the phone. Microsoft Lync and Skype are two globally known communication software. Microsoft Lync can be used for instant messaging, audio and video calling and online meetings (Microsoft Corporation 2013). Skype is VoIP software, which enables video, voice and group video calls among Skype users, instant messaging and file sharing for free. It also enables to call from Skype to mobiles or landlines at low rates (Microsoft Skype 2013.)

Content platform

Content platform is a tool for enterprise document management. Content platform can be used as in the office or as a cloud service when out of the office. It contains social tools to communicate with co-workers (Alfresco Software Inc. 2013.) Content platform could also be used as a document library for enterprise. All the documents are in one place and easy to update. All employees can use the same

documents despite their locations, because the cloud service enables to access to the documents also with portable devices.

Social media (SOME)

Social media is a fast growing communication channel. These are Internet services, in which users, who interact with each other, create the content (Juholin 2008, 76). Online blogs are web-diaries, which are popular among politicians and celebrities, but also ordinary people. Blogs are personal and usually very informal as they are basically diaries. Politicians might use more formal tone. Public media follows often these blogs to gather information from the inside network (Juholin 2008, 76.) Community services are a part of social media. In Finland the most popular community services are Facebook and LinkedIn (Juholin 2009, 173). In United States Twitter has reached great popularity and it has reasserted itself also in Finland. According to Juholin (2009, 173) social media has raised networking to a totally new level. Companies can use social media in training, to form work groups, to maintain conversation and to innovation (Raunio & Haukkasalo 2010, 1). However, using social media in work polarizes opinions. Some enterprises recommend employees to use them, when others totally deny using them (Juholin 2009, 173). Many companies have limited employees' access to it, because they spend too much working time on these sites. Some companies have acted totally opposite and made social media site their intranet (Mc Shane & Von Glinow 2009, 275.)

Intranet

Intranet is a company's internal information network. It is easy and quick to update, so everyone always has current information available. Traditionally there are two kinds of information on the intranet; daily changing important and urgent news and announcements, which needs to be noticed and permanent background information, which needs to be available, when someone needs it (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. 2008, 111.) According to Rana (2013, 2) the permanent background information is usually values, principles, history, awards and organizational success. Intranet commonly contains information about benefits, pension, safety, training and procedures (Rana 2013, 2). Daily changing information is usually shown on the front page, so that it is easy to find and recognize. In addition to information distribution, is intranet also an interaction channel. Intranet might

have online-chat functions, conversation columns, feedback formulas or an electronic notice board (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. 2008, 111.) According to Juholin (2009, 176) attitudes towards intranet vary inside organizations. Some people use intranet as a matter of routine as a daily newspaper, when others do not even remember that it exists.

Internal television

Internal televisions are located along personnel routes and coffee rooms. Timed, short and informative notices are shown generally for 30-60 seconds. Internal television is a fast way to reach wide audience and a good channel to complete other channels, but its challenge is the limited space (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. 2008, 111.) When the news must be shortened into a few sentences, there is always a risk that the tone will be misunderstood.

Choosing the communication channel and method depends on the content, urgency and target group of the message. The target group could be one individual employee, team, unit or whole company (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. 2008, 109). Siukosaari (2002, 83) was of the opinion that a company should know its personnel and choose the effective channels based on that information. Mc Shane and Von Glinow (2009, 278) suggested that companies should choose a communication channel by considering social acceptance and media richness. Social acceptance means the norms and preferences the organization has related to the use of their communication channels. How people are accustomed to use those channels and where they are accustomed to get this type of information. Media richness means “the volume and variety of information that can be transmitted during a specific time.” Rich medium utilizes both verbal and non-verbal communication, allows direct feedback and interaction between sender and receiver and allows sender to customize the message to the audience. The more ambiguous or complex the issue is, the richer medium should be used (Mc Shane & Von Glinow 2009, 278.) According to this theory, face-to-face communication channels are the richest media and printed channels the leanest.

Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. (2008, 109) mentioned that the company should have different channels to communicate on different issues. Every issue should also be distributed via several different channels, which are chosen so that the message

will likely reach everyone. According to Tervola (2008) the choice of the communication channel has been successful, when the message is delivered equally to all employees at the same time.

2.4 Responsibilities

The responsibility of internal communication belongs to the top management of the company (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi & Co. 2008, 109). Top management defines the guidelines of communication, because it is part of company's strategy. Internal communication requires planning and scheduling as well as external communication, which includes communication strategy, target setting and result measuring (Tervola 2008). Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. (2008, 109) estimated that in small enterprises communication tasks could be taken care of by a managing director, but in bigger enterprises communication tasks require further organizing. The main questions are who informs who and when, in which occasions and how. In bigger companies there should be a communication person, who is responsible for communication either as their main function or besides his other function. In big companies a whole communication unit might be needed. The responsibilities are usually divided so, that the company's management defines and accepts contents of messages and the persons responsible for communication produce, edit and forward the messages inside the company.

According to Juholin (2009, 90) the responsible ones generally are the top management, superiors, team leaders and everyone in the community. The responsibilities depend on the issues (Juholin 2009, 90.) Due to the demand of real time information there is not a possibility to prepare the information suitable for everyone any more. This has passed more responsibility to obtain and adopt information to the individuals. They are also responsible to deliver the information to the others and ask for explanations to issues they do not understand (Juholin 2008, 68.)

In large and global enterprises the top management is usually even physically far away from its employees, which brings superiors a more important role as communicators. Juholin (2009, 162) mentioned that a superior works close to his team or unit and people expect more interaction, face-to-face communication and

personal contact from him than from the top management. A superior act as top management's messenger, who inform his team about the strategy, results, plans and changes in organization more specifically than top management and how these issues affect to his unit especially. Superiors communicate also on an individual level about work, career and developing related issues.

William Harrison (2009, 21-24) highlighted the impact and value of personal communication between a company's management and its employees based on his own experiences after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 in New York. He proved that it is important that even the top management is seen as a human among employees. Employees need to be contacted by humans, not only by papers or middlemen.

2.5 Challenges

Globalization has enabled companies to spread their operations around the world. Along with the globalizations the work communities have become diverse as employees from different countries and cultures work together. These employees enrich the company by bringing diverse skills, knowledge and expertise into the company (Rana 2013, 1.) Globalization has also created challenges to communication, because all employees of an organization are not in the same country or even in the same continent, which set limits to disposal of communication channels (Miller 2009, 3.) Communication requires flexibility and understanding, because the employees are in different time zones and cultures, which affects to meetings arrangements, choices of communication channels and the way they communicate together. Miller (2009, 5) considered also information security issues, which have increased along with the globalization. Important and classified information has to be shared via communication channels, especially nowadays via electronic channels, where new crimes related to data theft are revealed constantly.

One challenge of multicultural community is language. Even people, who speak the same language, might understand some words differently. Words could be misunderstood also because of limited vocabulary or accent and intonation, which distort the sound of the words (Mc Shane & Von Glinow 2009, 284.) Speaking

culture might also cause misunderstandings. Some cultures prefer pauses in speech as a sign of respect, when others interpret them as a sign of disagreement. In some cultures talking over someone's speech is a sign of interest to the topic, when others consider it rude. These are habits people cannot be aware of without knowing the culture, so misunderstandings are common.

It is also challenging to estimate the optimal amount of communication. Under-communicating happens, when information has not reached all people of the target group. It might be due to using wrong or too few channels. Juholin (2009, 44) mentioned that due to the increasing amount of communication channels, it is a common presumption that people's ability to receive and handle information is developed as well. However that has not happened and people cannot be supposed to find and interpret information on their own. In addition hectic work rhythm takes time from searching for information. On the other hand over-communicating is not effective either. Over-communicating means that information is distributed in too many channels or it is distributed to people outside the target group "just in case." Mc Shane and Von Glinow (2009, 283) referred to that, if people do not have enough time to process all the information, it easily gets overlooked and forgotten or misinterpreted. Balancing between under- and over-communicating is challenging. Tervola (2008) found that lack of knowledge causes rumors, which refers to that she considers under-communication to be a bigger problem than over-communication.

2.6 Theoretical framework

Theoretical framework of this thesis forms around the concept of internal communication. Figure 8 below shows how the theory is constructed and linked together. The theoretical framework will be explained in following paragraphs.

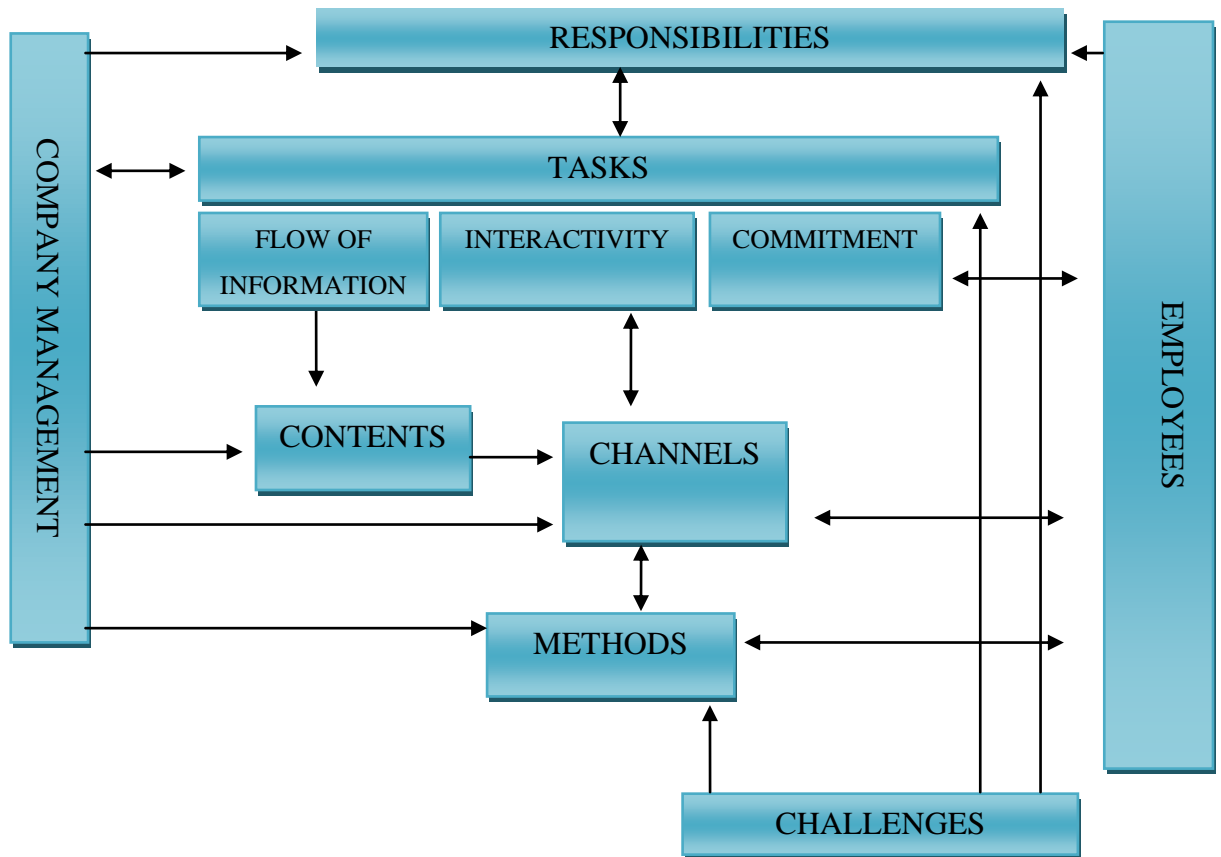


FIGURE 8. Theoretical framework

On the left side of the figure 8 is presented the company's management, which defines the internal communication in the company. The company's management divides responsibilities and defines the roles and tasks. Management makes sure that tasks of internal communication will be done and they work as planned. The company's management also decides the contents, methods and channels of communication. Although the company's management is responsible for the whole communication process, the employees have responsibilities too, because communication is two-way interaction. Responsibilities are related to challenges and tasks too.

Different tasks link differently to the other parts of communication. All tasks are also related to challenges. Flow of information links contents of communication. Different contents are delivered via chosen channels and informed with a suitable method to the employees. Employees respond to this message with a suitable method and deliver it via the chosen channel and this leads to the second task, interaction. When the foregoing tasks work both ways, it enables the third task, commitment, between employees and the company's management. The figure illustrates how internal communication works between the company's management and employees.

3 CASE COMPANY X

This thesis is commissioned by Company X. The empirical part of the research will be dealt with in this chapter. The purpose of the research is to survey the current state of internal communication in the Company and consider how the internal communication could be improved. The chapter starts with introduction of the case company. After company presentation the research method, implementation and the results will be discussed. In the end conclusion of the research and development suggestions will summarize the empirical part. In published version a part of the content is hidden to preserve the anonymity of Company X.

3.1 Group X

Company X is a part of the Group X. Group X is a family-owned company, which has operations in 25 countries. In 2012 the turnover of the group was Euros and the group has employees. Group X offers business enhancing products, systems and services.

Group X has three strategic business areas.

(Group X 2013). Strategic business area (SBA) is a combination of products and market based on behaviour of demand and competition. Strategic business area is independent strategic entirety, which is developed as a result of the segmentation of the markets (Taloussanomat 2013.)

3.2 The case Company X

Company X offers indoor climate solutions for demanding offshore conditions. Company X started in 1996 in Finland. The business grew bigger and became more and more international in past decades and today Company X has two factories, as well as eight sales offices abroad and over 25 distributors around the World. Company's main office is located in Finland. The business is very global and over 98% of Company X's customers are abroad.

FIGURE 9. Organization chart of Company X (modified by the author)

The figure 9 above illustrates the organization of the case company. The personnel of the main office have been divided mainly between segments and SBU Finland. In this case study the focus is on the three segments described green on the left side of the figure. Sales, project management and order handling & logistics have been divided in to these three segments according to customers' business.

The personnel of the segments have also been divided in same segments, so every segment has their own sales people, project managers and export assistants. A part of the sales people is international. The international sales people, which will be referred to as The Internationals, take care of the customers of their own geographical areas, so they have customers from different segments. Despite that, The Internationals have also been divided in segments according to their customers' main business.

3.2.1 The process of quotation, order and delivery

3.3 Research method

The research was implemented as a qualitative research. According to Metsämuuronen (2006, 88) qualitative research method is preferred, when research aims to understand causes and effects of some specific phenomenon. In this case study the research problem was to survey the present state of internal communication and personnel's satisfaction in it in Company X. In addition the study surveyed the functionality of communication during the process of quotation, order and delivery. The study compared differences between personnel in main office and abroad.

The data collection was conducted through theme interviews. Hirsijärvi and Hurme (2004, 48) defined theme interviews as a half structured interview method, in which the interview is based on certain themes not detailed questions. The interview proceeds conversationally between interviewee and interviewer. The method is semi-structured, so the themes are same for all interviewees, but specific shape and order of the questions could vary depending on the progress of the conversations (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2004, 48.) In this case study the main themes of the interviews were tasks of internal communication, challenges in communication, communication with colleagues and communication in the process of quotation, order and delivery. Themed interviews were chosen as a data collection method, because the problems of internal communication in Company X were undefined. Furthermore, theme interviews allow deeper insights to the problems and better understanding of the matter. The communication in the process of quotation, order and delivery required specific phrasing of the questions and it could not be conducted as profitable by questionnaire. The semi-structured method guaranteed that all important topics will be covered.

All eight interviewees were interviewed individually. Interviews were conducted during April and one interview took on average 45 minutes. The four interviews with personnel in the main office were conducted face-to-face in Company X's main office. Interviews with another four employees, who work abroad, were conducted via Skype. People abroad are used to communicate via Skype in their daily work, so the different execution method has not affected significantly to the

answers. All interviews were recorded for transcription to guarantee better quality. All interviewees reacted naturally to the recorder and no one resisted recording. Everyone requested to be interviewed accepted the request and no one declined the request. Protection of anonymity was guaranteed to all interviewees to encourage sincere communication. Company X is quite small and all colleagues know each other well. Thus, the transcriptions were conducted so that the interviews cannot be connected to any specific person, but there is still a possibility that someone recognize some of the interviewees, because of the way they speak or use of language. To avoid this and to protect the anonymity of the interviewees the recorded interviews were only for author's own use and they will not be published or given to Company X.

Reliability refers to the degree to which the findings of the study are independent of accidental circumstances (Silverman 2011, 360 according to Kirk and Miller 1986.) If the research has good reliability another author could repeat the research and come up with the same results. The reliability of this case study is good although the author's familiarity with the interviewees might have caused more trust and openness than unfamiliar interviewer. Some of the interviewees used names, when they talked about people, because they knew interviewer was familiar with them after six months internship. All the interviewees were of the opinion that it is important to develop internal communication in Company. Thus, they answered truthfully and described situations accurately. Recording the interviews and transcribing them word by word improved significantly the reliability of the study.

The interviewees might have feared to reveal something, which could affect negatively to them. This can naturally distort the reliability of the study. The author believes that anonymity given to the interviewees improved reliability. The interviewees own interests may also distort the reliability of the study. The interviewees might have highlighted some issues if they benefit from these issues to be changed. The author assesses these issues critically to improve reliability.

Validity represents the truthfulness of the findings (Silverman 2011, 360).

Validity means the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomenon to which it refers (Silverman 2011, 367 according to Hammersley

1990). According to Metsämuuronen (2006, 92) case studies have generally weak validity. The interviewees of this case study have been chosen so that the sample would represent extensively the focus group. Interviewees were chosen from different departments and different professions. The author took into account also the length of the career in the case company, when she was choosing the interviewees. Validity inside the focus group is good.

The language used in the interviews may affect to reliability and validity. The majority of interviewees conveyed the interview in their native language, but the minority conveyed them in a non-native language, English. Also the author conveyed the minority of the interviews in her non-native language. All non-native interviewees and the author use English in their daily work, so the author does not believe that using non-native language has affected significantly to the reliability or validity of the research.

None of the interviewees has been trained for internal communication. However, the field of internal communication is so wide that the author wanted to keep the topics of the interviews at a general level. Due to that many of the interviewees found some topics or questions of the interview difficult to answer without examples. The author has to describe some example situations to get the requested answers. The author gave the same example situations to all interviewees, but it reduced the validity of the research.

Furthermore, the author's own aims and personal connections to the people may affect to the reliability and validity. The author has been working as an intern for Company X for six months before the research and one of her duties was to maintain internal communication. However, the author is of the opinion that only honest and trustful study is useful to Company X and helps to improve internal communication in the case company.

3.4 Results of the research

This chapter represents the results of the interviews. The results were compared between the Internationals and interviewees in the main office. The results were also summarized to general opinions. The interviewees described problems through examples, which the author has also included in this chapter. Also other issues, problems and solutions, which were mentioned in the interviews, are included.

3.4.1 Contents and tasks of communication

3.4.2 Communication with colleagues

3.4.3 Communication in the process of QOD

3.5 Conclusion of the study and development suggestions

In this chapter the author summarizes the results of the study and introduces the author's development suggestions for some of the biggest problems appeared in the interviews. The author also takes a stand on some of the suggestions mentioned by interviewees.

4 CONCLUSION

This thesis was commissioned by Company X and it observed internal communication and cooperation in Company X. Company X's operations are project oriented, which emphasizes the significance of internal communication. Effective completion of a project requires functional cooperation and communication between all functions. This thesis aimed to improve the internal communication and cooperation in Company X in general and especially during QOD-process.

In the theoretical part the topic was covered through printed and electronic literature. Different concepts, contents and tasks of internal communication were presented at the beginning to introduce the topic and its purposes. Multiple communication channels and methods covered the tools of communication. The theoretical part ended in to considering the responsibilities and challenges related to internal communication. The theoretical part formed an extensive general view of the topic and provided the basis for the empirical part. Introduction of the case company started the empirical part of the thesis. The case company's business and organization were introduced to give an impression of the operations. Furthermore the case company has their own process of quotation, order and delivery, of which the communication was surveyed in the study. Thus the QOD-process was illustrated as well.

The case study was conducted as qualitative research using theme interviews as the data collection method. The research problem was to survey the present state of internal communication and personnel satisfaction in it in Company X. Furthermore the study surveyed the functionality of communication during the process of quotation, order and delivery. The research was conducted from the viewpoint of segments to enable comparison between personnel in Finland and abroad. The eight interviewees were chosen from different functions and segments. The four employees from Finland and four employees abroad were interviewed during April. The chosen research method proved to be successful. The results of the research responded to the research problem and revealed underlying problems.

The reliability and validity of the research were considered. The anonymity given to interviewees provided trust and openness and thus improved reliability. The reliability was improved also by recording and transcribing all the interviews word by word. The interviewees were chosen from different functions and segments to improve the validity of the research. The research focused on the segments' viewpoint, which outlined some main office functions from the research although they are part of the QOD-process. However this choice enabled better comparison between personnel in Finland and abroad and improved validity. Part of the interviewees conveyed the interview in their non-native language, in English. However, all of them use English daily in their work, so the author believes that the use of non-native language has not affected significantly the validity of the research.

The case company suggested the topic of the thesis, so it could be assumed that the research will be useful to Company X. The case company has invested in developing the internal communication in general and cooperation during QOD-process this year. The research will give them a new viewpoint and tools for development.

A suggestion for further study is to extend the research also to other main office functions and interview wider sample of employees working together in QOD-process. The results could be discussed together with all the different departments to find out what could be changed to improve the communication and cooperation between different departments. Internal communication in general and especially during the process of quotation, order and delivery could be measured regularly by quantitative research. The personnel could be encouraged to give feedback about the improvements.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: The framework used in theme interviews

1. Generally

What do you think about communication in Company?

- Satisfaction in communication
- Channels in use
- Communicators (superior, top management, inside network, co-workers)

2. Tasks

Flow of communication

Communication related to:

- Strategy, vision, values
- Financial issues, how business is going
- Daily issues
- Big changes in organizations
- Crisis situation?

Interaction

- With co-workers, superiors, top management
- Chance to ask questions and discuss, easy to approach
- Looking for information/news

Commitment

- Satisfaction with communication
- Amount of communication
- Timing of communication
- Openness, trust, atmosphere
- Feedback

3. Culture

Misunderstandings or confusing caused by:

- Language or expressions
- Cultural differences

4. Co-working

Communication with colleagues in FINLAND/ABROAD

- What information needed
- Amount of communication
- Ease to reach, what channels used?

Communication with OTHER COLLEAGUES in Finland/abroad

- What information needed
- Amount
- Ease to reach, what channels used?

5. Communication in the process of quotation, order and delivery

Communication between departments

- What information needed
- Satisfaction in communication
- Ease to reach, what channels used?

Meetings with project group