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# Capturing Initiatives in an MRO Organization

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The autumn 2014 had already been full of changes prior to starting the thesis process. I had just recently changed the company to work for, and was going through a heavy learning process alongside with the studies. Fortunately, seeking a thesis topic was not an issue as the case company had recently gone through major changes meaning it was just a decision which of the areas requiring improvement to select. After discussing with the managing director of the case company, I choose to focus on area of my personal interest of employee involvement where an initiative process at the case company was entirely missing causing a confusing and inefficient work environment.

The subject quickly gained popularity within the case company. Employees and management were eager to have the process established and in place. I was glad to find out that seeking for volunteers throughout the company never was an issue. As a new employee, having personal discussions with employees all over the company turned out to be a chastening experience. I was utterly impressed by the high motivation and great ideas of the participants in the case company who all taught me a lot during the journey. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all the participants and the managing director of the case company for helping me to formulate the final process.

However, life is not a bed of roses. Soon after starting the thesis process we found out that a new family member was on its way to delight us but the joy soon changed to a despair once the aggressive nausea that lasted for over two months started. During this period it was time to put the thesis aside and take care of my fiancée and son. Once it was finally over, I was heavily dragging behind the schedule. From that point onward, the evenings and weekends were spent purely either in a library or isolated in an own room reading and writing the thesis. During that period, it was the endless support, patience and sincere love from both my fiancée, Minna, and my son, Sulo, that kept me going and reach the deadline.

Finally, I would like to show my gratitude to my instructor, Dr. Thomas Rohweder, and to Dr. Marjatta Huhta and Zinaida Grabovskaia who all pushed me forward and helped me to gather my thoughts together. The process has now been completed in time and now it is the time to focus on welcoming our new family member.

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<p>This study generates a tailored initiative capturing process to be used in the case company context. The case company currently does not have an initiative process in place but due to a high level of commitment and expertise of the shop floor specialists, and various ways of evaluating the employee initiatives, there is a clear requirement to generate a standardized process to use with the initiatives.</p> <p>Due to the qualitative nature of the study and high involvement of employees from various departments within the case company, the selected research method is an extensive case study. The research design is a five-step approach that collects data from the case company and combines the company findings with the best practice for initiative processes, motivation, and employee involvement.</p> <p>The outcome of this study is a process that captures, evaluates, implements and documents the employee initiatives. The process is approved by the top management and is ready for implementation. The initiative process that is formed from five sub-processes is supported by a template to be used for submitting initiatives, and performance indicators for managers.</p> <p>The initiative process generated in this study helps the employees and managers of the case company to get the employee initiatives documented, evaluated and implemented, thus increasing employee motivation through involvement, and creating a foundation for continuous improvement and possibility for financial benefits for the case company.</p>	
Keywords	Initiative Process, Suggestion Scheme, Employee commitment, motivation and involvement

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## 1 Introduction

Increasing competition has led companies around the globe to find ways to continuously improve their performance. Out of the three principle resources of capital, natural and human, human resources i.e. the employees are the only resources that the competitors cannot copy (Ahmed 2009: 153). This makes it important for companies to focus on their unique resource to unleash the huge potential there is to increase performance. One way to do this is to create a process that captures employee initiatives and enables employees to continuously share their ideas with each other to gain the best possible outcome for the entire organization. The established and well-communicated process is a crucial factor in developing a culture in which employees proactively participate in the future development of their company.

One of the reasons for an organization to establish a process for capturing initiatives is the financial benefits. According to Yasuda (1991: 17), Toyota implements more than 90% of their employees' initiatives. Buech et al. (2010: 518) refer to a study of German institute of economics made in 2008 that ended up showing an average cost saving of €6022 per implemented initiative while the study of Management Institute of Finland in 2012 showed an average of 113 initiatives being submitted per 100 employees. By looking only at these figures, for an organization employing 100 people this equals to early savings more than €600 000. It is, however, crucial to understand that there are huge variations depending on what type of initiatives a company tries to achieve and how well the process is built.

Another, arguably even more important reason to establish a process to capture initiatives is to increase the employee participation and to bring the top management closer to the shop floor (Ahmed 2009: 157). Most of the initiatives do not necessarily generate any cost savings but can make the employees to feel themselves important if evaluated properly. Wood (2003: 26) emphasizes the importance of these small initiatives that do not necessarily generate any cost savings. The importance is explained by stating that the big cost saving ideas get usually quickly copied by the competitors as the word spreads while the small ideas usually get unnoticed and generate the difference between a successful and less successful company. It is hence the financial and non-financial reasons together that need to be considered when creating a process for capturing initiatives.

The goal of this study is to build a process for capturing employee initiatives in a case company context. Due to the nature of the case company business and the current state discussed in Section 3, the emphasis is on capturing the initiatives of the shop floor employees and from supportive activities such as technical support and logistics. The study is conducted through interviews and thus employs a qualitative research approach. The study is a real-life project made for the case company.

### 1.1 Case Company Background

The case company of this study is GA Telesis engine services (GATES) that is a Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) organization focused on aircraft engine repair and overhaul. The facility is located at the Helsinki-Vantaa airport area and has a capability to overhaul up to 200 engines per year. With the current production figures, there is a huge potential for growth before reaching the facility limits. The case company started its operations in May 2013 after completing the acquisition of the Finnair Engine Services.

Although the case company as the case company is rather new, most of the employees are highly experienced engine maintenance professionals who have been with the company for years. The number of employees is around 100 but given that the plans for the future go well, the company will need to recruit many new professionals during the forthcoming years. Due to the nature of the business, most are shop floor employees working in (dis)assembly, repairs shop and inspection. These three departments cover more than 60 percent of the entire work force. These department are supported by technical support and logistics which are also a part of this study. The average age of all employees is slightly less than 50 years. Table 1 below shows the distribution of the employees within the different departments of the company at the beginning of 2015, together with the average number of employment years with the company.

Table 1. GATES' employee data at the beginning of 2015.

<b>Department</b>	<b>Number of Employees</b>	<b>Number of Years with the Company in Average</b>
<b>Assembly / Disassembly</b>	29	21,09
<b>Repair Shop</b>	27	20,53
<b>Inspection</b>	10	25,89
<b>Logistics</b>	10	17,03
<b>Technical Support</b>	9	24,74
<b>Other</b>	11	11,72
<b>Entire Organization</b>	96	20,17



Each of the departments listed in the table above are built to support each other but due to the nature of the aviation industry, the competencies of each individuals are mapped precisely giving them qualifications to perform only certain tasks for the engines. This means that job rotations are difficult to arrange which limits the view of the employees to applying their expertise only to the areas for which they are trained for. To illustrate the complexity and variety of required expertise, the repair shop for example, includes the areas of expertise in cleaning, non-destructive testing (NDT), milling, grinding, turning, thermal coating, plating, heat treatment, painting, welding, peening, blade repair and part bench repair. In this kind of environment, it is highly important to get these individuals to proactively share their insights and observed development opportunities. It also required that the shared knowledge of one individual is widely discussed throughout the case company.

## 1.2 Business Challenge

The main business area of the case company is the overhauling aircraft engines. Overhauling an aircraft engine and its components is a challenging task that requires expertise from many different areas. The employees required for overhauling an engine need several years of training and job experience to become professionals. Currently, these individuals are not able to share their knowledge in any structured way causing the case company to work inefficiently in some areas as ideas of the employees are not heard and implemented.

Currently, there is no structured process for capturing employees' initiatives, document them and implement good ideas. Some ideas are evaluated and implemented but due to the lack of a standardized process and culture that encourages employee participation, most of the ideas are not said out loud or evaluated causing inefficiencies in the production and ultimately lower profits. Additionally, ideas that eventually are evaluated in a proper way do not reach their full potential due to the lack of communication between the departments. This, combined with the relatively high average age of employees, causes a high risk of losing valuable tacit knowledge with the retirements of the specialists. If no actions to improve the situation is done, the valuable knowledge will permanently be lost and can be seen as a threat for the future of GATES' engine overhaul business.

### 1.3 Objective, Outcome and Scope of the Study

The objective of this study is to create a process to capture, evaluate, document, and implement employee initiatives. By creating the process, the goal is to enhance employee participation throughout the organization and by that helping to create a culture that encourages the employees to proactively participate in the development of their company and its future success. This requires different approach than the traditional suggestion box so that the participation and idea sharing between different departments is emphasized and most of the tacit knowledge is captured before losing it. The study will find a process suitable for the environment of engine overhaul business

The outcome of the study is a documented, top management approved process that may be implemented in the case company. The scope of the study includes a process suitable for the engine overhaul environment to capture, evaluate, implement and document initiatives. The scope of this study does not take into account the training required for taking the process into use nor does it consider the possibly required incentive systems or tool requirements due to the following reasons. First, training requires plenty of time and a separate execution plan. Second, the tools commercially available for capturing and evaluating initiatives usually come together with a process hence selecting a tool prior to understanding the requirements of the own process may well end up in a situation where the process fails. Third, the type of incentives may better be evaluated only after the process is created and understood what type of initiatives is hoped to be captured and would an incentive system support in achieving that goal.

This study is written in seven sections. Section 2 describes the research method and approach to give an overview of the study and its components. Section 3 includes a current state analysis made at the case company by interviewing the shop floor employees and individuals from the supportive activities of technical support and logistics to understand the current environment. Section 4 introduces the existing knowledge about initiative processes and combines that with aviation specific requirements. Section 5 builds a proposed process by combining the information received in section 3 and 4, and by having workshops with the individuals participating the study. Section 6 further improves the process by collecting feedback from the top management, and formulates the final process by adopting the required changes based on the feedback. Section 7 concludes the study and gives ideas for future development.

## 2 Method and Material

This section gives an overview of this study and its components by describing the steps in research design, data collection and analysis.

### 2.1 Research Approach

The research approach used in this study is an extensive case study. Baxter and Jack (2008: 544) define the case study approach in the following way:

Qualitative case study is an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. This ensures that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood.

Where the intensive research method would only focus on one or few individuals i.e. cases, Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008: 122) define extensive research methods as follows:

An extensive case study design would not focus on any individuals as intrinsically interesting cases. Here, the focus would be on issues that could be studied by using several individuals as instruments in the study.

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008: 122) further argues about extensive research method:

The researcher would try to collect similar kind of empirical data on each case because they would need to have material for comparisons, or they would need to replicate the cases in a cumulative way.

With the qualitative case study approach, Baxter and Jack (2008: 545-546) challenge the reader to determine the unit of analysis i.e. is the target to analyze individual, program or process. In this study the process of capturing employee initiatives is analyzed in the case company context. This requires a process that is equally beneficial not just for one individual or department but throughout the case company.

### 2.2 Research Design

The research design of this study is divided into five steps, namely identification of the business challenge, current state analysis and search for best practice, process proposal, and top management approval. Figure 1 below illustrates these five steps and their content.

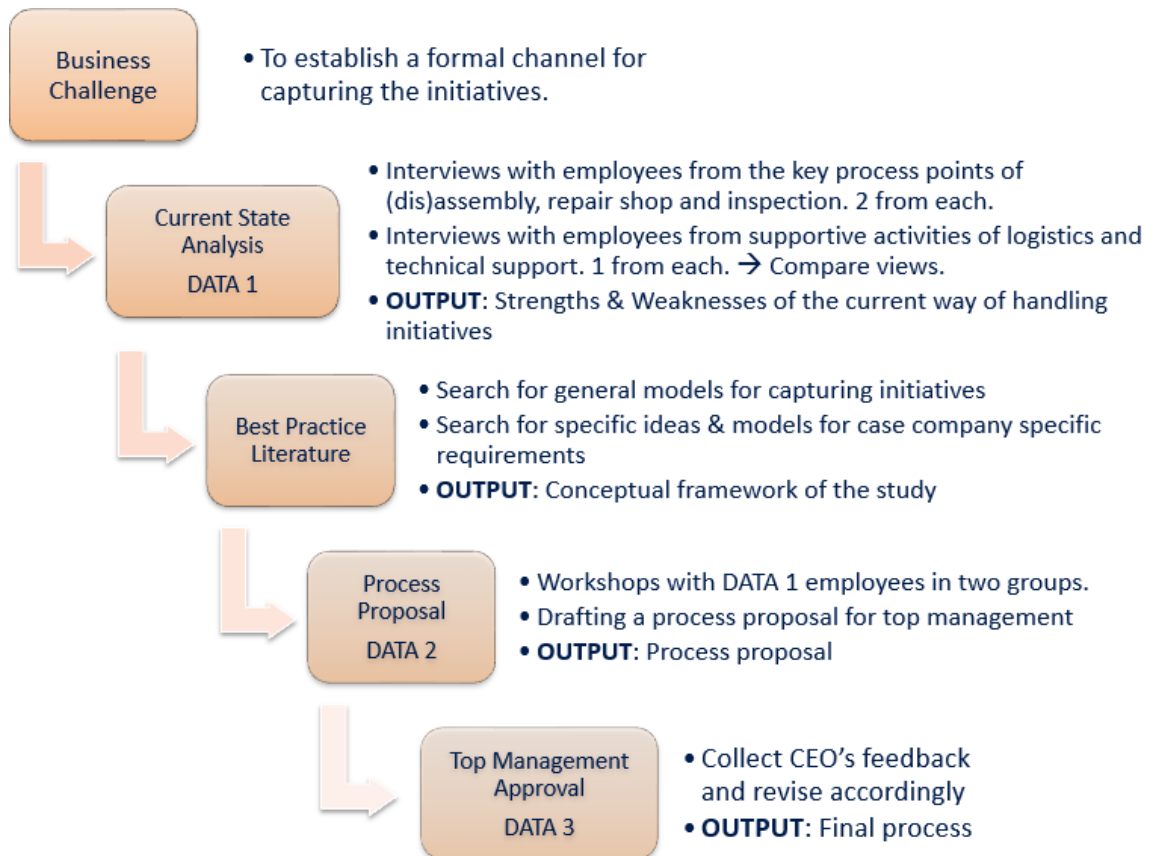


Figure 1. Research design flowchart.

In step 1, the business challenge is formed. The actual problem is defined by having discussions with the top management and middle managers. A problem that has financial and non-financial aspects is chosen.

In step 2, the current state at the case company is analyzed. In this step the management is given no attention and all focus is on the shop floor employees and office employees of supportive activities. The shop floor employees are from three departments of (dis)assembly, repair shop and inspection. Two employees from each department are interviewed. In addition, one office employee from technical support and one from logistics are interviewed and their ideas compared to the shop floor employees to form a good foundation for the study.

In step 3, the existing models for capturing employee initiatives are studied from literature. Additionally, all generic guidelines are being investigated to develop a good understanding of the topic. Literature specific to aviation and MRO organizations is studied to understand the specific factors affecting to this study and hence the end result.

In step 4, a proposal for the end process is formulated based on the data collected from interviews in Step 2 and the knowledge received in Step 3. The process proposal is being presented to the same individuals participating in Step 2 of this study. A workshop is arranged in which the participants are divided into two groups. These groups give their feedback on the process. The process proposal is being revised with the information received from the workshops.

In step 5, the final process proposal generated based on Step 4 workshops is being introduced to the top management. The feedback received from the top management is taken into account and discussed, and the process modified if necessary. The end result is the final process that is approved by the top management of the case company.

### 2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, the data is gathered from three data sources: the interviews and workshops, analysis of the internal documentation, and participant observations. The data is collected from a wide range departments within the case company to receive a deep understanding of the phenomenon. The main focus is on in-depth face-to-face interviews with the selected individuals but also workshops are used to gather the views of the individuals in various ways. The collected data in this study ranges from shop floor employees to managerial positions. The data to understand the current state is collected in a semi-structured way in order to be able to compare it individually and within subgroups to find commonalities and discrepancies.

The data for this study is collected in three stages which are: (Data 1) current state analysis, (Data 2) building of process proposal, and (Data 3) seeking for top management approval. Data is collected through interviews and workshops. Table 2 below presents details to the data collection in this study.

Table 2. Interview & workshop information.

	<b>Informant's position</b>	<b>Data collected</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>FN = Field Notes TR = Tape Recording</b>
<b>1</b>	(Dis)assembly 1	a) Interview b) Workshop 2	a) 25.2.2015 b) 22.4.2015	a) 45min b) 2h	a) FN + TR b) FN
<b>2</b>	Repair Shop 1	a) Interview b) Workshop 2	a) 27.2.2015 b) 22.4.2015	a) 45min b) 2h	a) FN + TR b) FN

3	Inspection 1	a) Interview b) Workshop 1	a) 27.2.2015 b) 17.4.2015	a) 45min b) 2h	a) FN + TR b) FN
4	Repair Shop 2	a) Interview b) Workshop 1	a) 27.2.2015 b) 17.4.2015	a) 45min b) 2h	a) FN + TR b) FN
5	Inspection 2	a) Interview b) Workshop 2	a) 3.3.2015 b) 22.4.2015	a) 45min b) 2h	a) FN + TR b) FN
6	(Dis)assembly 2	a) Interview b) Workshop 1	a) 5.3.2015 b) 17.4.2015	a) 45min b) 2h	a) FN + TR b) FN
7	Technical Support 1	a) Interview b) Workshop 2	a) 20.3.2015 b) 22.4.2015	a) 45min b) 2h	a) FN + TR b) FN
8	Logistics 1	a) Interview b) Workshop 1	a) 26.3.2015 b) 17.4.2015	a) 45min b) 2h	a) FN + TR b) FN
9	Managing Director	Interview	30.4.2015	1,5h	FN + TR

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008: 81-82) divide the types of qualitative interview techniques into three categories. The first category includes structured and standardized interviews that aim to collect facts by asking what type of questions in preplanned format. This type of interview is used to collect data that is systematic thus comparable. The second category include guided and semi-structured interviews that can include both what and how questions. This type of interview has an outline with certain focus areas but the wording or order of questions may vary between each interview that makes the results harder to compare than with structured interviews. The third category includes unstructured, informal, open and narrative interviews that aim to collect data from the participant's point of view. This type of interview has some guiding questions to start with but the interview can freely move to any direction. This type of interview is especially good in pointing out areas which the researcher has not thought of.

In the current state analysis (DATA 1), semi-structured interview technique is used. The main reason for this is to make the results somewhat comparable and to collect data from certain categories that the researcher expects to have the most use for. The participants in the current state analysis include the shop floor and office employees whose responses are analyzed in two ways. First, the interview results of the shop floor employees including dis(assembly), repair shop and inspection are combined and analyzed together while the results of the office employees are combined and analyzed separately to see similarities within the subgroups and strengths and weaknesses of each. Second,

the interview results are compared against each other to find contradictory views between the shop floor and office employees, and the underlying reasons for these. Detailed information about the interview questions used in the current state analysis are listed in Appendix 1.

In the process proposal building stage (DATA 2), the same shop floor and office employees that participated the DATA 1 interviews are divided into two groups with mixed departments. One workshop is held with each group where they are introduced with an initial process draft that is built based on the analyzed results of the current state analysis and literature review, and is the researcher's idea of the best possible process for the case company. Both of the workshops provide their feedback to further develop the initial process draft. The feedback is analyzed and taken into account when formulating the final process proposal. Detailed data from the workshops is illustrated in appendix 5.

In the top management approval stage (DATA 3), the open interview technique is used. Open interview is used to have feedback on areas that may have not been thought of rather than leading the conversation to less vital details. Appendix 6 gives details of the interview and its results. The feedback is analyzed by going through the replies in detail and sorting the results to obligatory and optional changes of the process to reach the final initiative process for the case company.

All data from the interviews is documented by using field notes and tape recording. Data documented from the workshops is the written feedback by the groups and researchers field notes. The data from all stages is analyzed using the thematic analysis method.

## 2.4 Reliability and Validity Plan

For any study, it is important for both the reader and researcher to understand how the validity and reliability of the study are ensured, and to what extent the results can be generalized. Quinton and Smallbone (2006: 126) argue that:

The really important point about validity for your work is that you must make clear to whoever is assessing your work that the rigour of your approach and your thinking about it is transparent.

Quinton and Smallbone (2006) divide validity into two subcategories of internal and external validity where internal validity asks whether the study measured what is was stated

to measure in research design and external validity looks whether the results of the study could be used in other contexts and to what extent.

Qualitative studies may have difficulties in achieving high internal validity as they do not necessarily measure anything concrete in numbers as it is the case with quantitative studies. This may make the level of internal validity poor but not necessarily as argued by Quinton and Smallbone (2006: 128):

Internal validity is sometimes seen as a particular strength of qualitative research in general, because you collect so much data that it must in itself be sufficient to tell you something about the subject of study.

Riege (2003: 78) lists different techniques for improving internal validity in case studies. These include for example pattern matching within the case and cross-case, and illustrations of the analysis in diagrams to help the reader to understand the full picture of the case study.

In this study, the internal validity is achieved by having interviews with employees from several different departments inside the case company. The number of interviewed individuals corresponds to close to 10 percent of the total work force of the case company. The data from the current state analysis is distributed between the shop floor and office employees to form two different subgroups. First, the analyzed results of both subgroups are reviewed to highlight the issues that concern only certain departments within the subgroup, and then combined see similarities and differences between the subgroups.

Not only will the individuals be interviewed in face-to-face interviews but in a later stage of the study, they are also brought together to give feedback in workshops where small groups of four with mixed departments will evaluate the initial process proposal and give feedback to ensure that the final process proposal supports the requirements of each department. The interviews and workshops together are seen as a key in this study to achieve a high level of internal validity.

The external validity and generalization have a strong link between each other and are hence discussed here together. Quinton and Smallbone (2006) argue that both, external validity and generalization aim to answer how transferable the findings of the study are and can those be used in another context. According to Quinton and Smallbone (2006: 129) "The use of case studies and small samples makes it hard to generalize from qualitative research studies". Quinton and Smallbone (2006: 132) further argue that "as a



researcher, perhaps the first question you should think about is whether you need to generalize from your own work at all". This study collects data from a rather small MRO that has been operating under the new owner for only few years. Although, to increase external validity, the conceptual framework of the study includes best practice from several different industries, it is important to understand that the results of the study reflect to a specific aviation related MRO and may not be used elsewhere as successfully as in this case study. The fundamentals of capturing initiatives are mostly the same regardless of the industry but the case company specific requirements together with the qualitative approach make it difficult to generalize from this study. Additionally, the goal is to have the best process generated for the case company use hence the concept of external validity and generalization are not seen important.

*Reliability* is defined by Quinton and Smallbone (2006: 129) "as an assessment of whether the same findings would be obtained if the research were repeated, or if someone else conducted it". Riege (2003: 81) points out a problem with this as "In case study research this can raise problems as people are not as static as measurements used in quantitative research". It is hence difficult to obtain a high level of reliability in a qualitative case study research. There are, however, methods for increasing reliability in qualitative research. Riege (2003: 83) recommends the use of structured or semi-structured interviews, tape recording, developing a case study data base at the end of the study, and the use of peer review.

In this study, reliability concern is tackled by, first, having semi-structured and tape recorded face-to-face interviews to ensure comparability of the answers and to avoid losing any valuable information. Later in the study, the initial process proposal is evaluated by the shop floor and office employees. Additionally, feedback from the top management is collected to reach to the final, approved initiative process. By allowing the feedback on several different stages of the study, the individuals taking part may continuously monitor that their views and opinions are understood correctly.

The validity, reliability and generalization of this study are again discussed in Section 7 with conclusions to verify the aspects discussed in this section. The next section discusses the current state of the initiatives capturing in the case company to understand the existing situation and identify its strengths and weaknesses.

### 3 Current State Analysis

This section analyzes the current state of evaluating and implementing the initiatives in the case company and identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the current situation.

#### 3.1 Implementation of the Current State Analysis

The current state analysis (CSA) was conducted in the case company in February and March 2015. To conduct the CSA, two office employees, one from technical support and one from logistics, and employees from the main shop floor process points of the case company were asked to participate. The main shop floor process points at the case company are dis(assembly), repair shop and inspection. The current way of handling the engine overhaul at the case company is divided into seven gates'. Figure 2 below illustrates the gates' in the current process.



Figure 2. Engine overhaul flow chart.

The discussed shop floor employees are working in Gates 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. The employees from the (dis)assembly are mainly dealing with Gates 2 and 6 but they also have responsibilities in Gate 4. The repair shop employees are dealing with Gates 3 and 5 while the inspectors are dealing with Gate 4. The technical support has responsibility of Gate 1 but due to their supportive role, they are heavily included throughout the engine overhaul cycle. The logistics main responsibility is part of Gate 5 but also for them, the role is mostly supportive meaning they have an important role in each and every gate.

Eight employees in total were interviewed representing some 8,3% of the total work force of the company. Detailed information about the interviews of this study was presented in Section 2.3. The average age of the interviewed employees at the beginning of 2015 was 40,9 years (median 42,3) which is 6,8 years below the company average while the average experience in the company of the interviewed employees was 18 years (median 20,6) which is 2,1 years below the company average. Although it can be observed that compared to the company average, the younger individuals with slightly less

experience in the company were volunteered, the interviewed employees still have strong background in the organization.

The data for the CSA was collected in semi-structured one-to-one interviews. The interview form with the questions is represented in Appendix 1. All interviews were tape-recorded and field notes were collected. The material has been available for the instructor's review but is not included in the appendices as field notes. A database including the main points from the shop floor and office employee interviews is illustrated in Appendix 2.

### 3.2 Handling of Initiatives Today

As discussed in Section 1, there is currently no formal process for capturing initiatives. The fact that the formal process has not been thought of does not mean that initiatives are not submitted or evaluated at all. In fact, as found during the current state analysis, the employees are eager to submit initiatives but the evaluating, documenting and implementation of those varies plenty inside the company. The following sections, first, analyze the main points shared by the shop floor employees, then moving forward to the insights from the office employees after which the views of shop floor and office employees are shortly compared against each other. Finally, the last section summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of all interviews to finalize the CSA.

#### 3.2.1 Findings from the Shop Floor Employees

To obtain the results from the shop floor employees, the researcher used a questionnaire (interview template), divided into six categories: (a) participant details, (b) current way of submitting of initiatives, (c) identify strengths and problems in the current state, (d) motivation to submit initiatives, (e) feedback to initiatives, and (f) other including the aspects that were not discussed under the other categories. Each of these categories is discussed individually to form a better view of the bigger picture in capturing, evaluating, implementing and documenting of initiatives in the case company.

##### *Participant details*

The shop floor participants were from three main process point of the (dis)assembly, repair shop and inspection. The participants from the engine (dis)assembly were engine

mechanics, from the repair shop a process worker and craftsman, and from the inspection inspectors. These employees are directly dealing with the daily rotation of the engine parts hence have a physical role in the overhaul business.

All of the shop floor employees are experienced with initiative processes in other companies. Most of the shop floor employees (five out of six) have been with the company before the acquisition and are hence experienced with the process that was in use during the Finnair years. One of the engine mechanics has recently joined the company and he's experience is from another industry. It is important that the individuals are experienced with a process to give them a point of reference for the proposed process in Section 5.

#### *Current way of submitting of initiatives*

The types of initiatives the employees have put forward are mostly minor things regarding general order of work stations, layout changes and acquisitions of tools and equipment. From the shop floor employees, the inspectors' initiatives slightly differentiate from the others as they had given initiatives concerning also processes and how those could be altered to better serve the business of an engine overhaul. Initiatives are submitted approximately once per month. There is, however, huge variation as an engine mechanic said he submits initiatives three times a month while one of the inspector mentioned submitting initiatives two times a year.

For most of the shop floor employees (five out of six) it was not clear who to approach with the initiative. To solve this problem, the easiest route was always selected. This for the employees meant approaching the supervisor in charge of the shift or with the inspectors the manager as they do not have a supervisor. One of the repair shop employees stated that *"it is a bit unclear whether we need to contact the supervisor or not and where the limits are if we need to contact a supervisor or can we just make the decision by ourselves"* (Repair Shop 2). Some employees stated telling their ideas to the first person who they see that could be practically anyone who may have no power in making decisions.

When asking how the person who you approached did handle the initiative, one observed commonality was that none of the supervisors and managers wrote down anything. The initiatives are heard and implemented if it is an easy task to do and do not require further discussions with others. The fact that managers and supervisors listen the employees is

a positive sign but unfortunately there is a risk of losing the motivation of the employees in submitting the initiatives as the quality of evaluation and implementation greatly varies. Additionally, most of the initiatives are not properly evaluated but the decisions are mostly based on feeling rather than facts causing a good environment for poor decision making.

The shop floor employees prefer to submit initiatives verbally but also email and sms are used. An engine mechanic said that *"I try to avoid email as those are usually not read until three weeks later or so"* ((Dis)assembly 2). A clear distribution with the preferred method can be seen from the interviews. Inspectors, who all have their own computers and heavily rely on electronic manuals, prefer the email option while repair shop staff and engine mechanics who do not have their own computers and are working in conditions where a computer might not be instantly available, prefer submitting the initiatives verbally through a supervisor. These employees also see it important that they can have the verbal option in the future as well.

#### *Identify strengths and problems in the current state*

In general, the handling of initiatives at the case company gets a poor grade from the participants. Since a process is missing, the employees are not encouraged in submitting initiatives and silly decisions are made without asking the employees' opinions. An inspector also pointed out that *"There should be a process in place that would allow us giving initiatives also anonymously. Currently it is not an option"* (Inspection 1). A repair shop employee stated that *"the attitude of give us ideas is missing"* (Repair Shop 1). This might have a negative effect on the awareness of employees and the number of initiatives received.

There has not been any major development of the situation since the beginning of the case company in May 2013. The main reasons for this is seen to be the lack of a process and the fact that there is no nominated individual to look after the initiatives. One of the engine mechanics said that *"the situation is probably even worse than a year ago"* ((Dis)assembly 1). The reason for this was seen to be the change of a manager. On the other hand, however, a repair shop employee stated that *"the situation has been developing to a better direction. I feel like employees are listened more carefully and things are actually processed and implemented"* (Repair Shop 1). As observed from the comments, there are contradictory views but the general feeling is that the current way of working with the initiatives has no future.

The current role of managers is not seen as active but their role in getting the initiatives implemented is seen vital. As one of the repair shop employees stated “*They have more power in making decisions, better network and wider understanding of the big picture. They also get support from other departments*” (Repair Shop 1). Currently, the managers are not getting initiatives implemented effectively enough. One of the inspectors speculated that this might be due to not having the tools to help them with the implementation of the initiatives. The managers are also not active in motivating the employees and reminding them of submitting the initiatives. As pointed out by an engine mechanic “*I personally have not met anyone to come and say that good job, please keep submitting initiatives. It is really on your own responsibility to stay active*” ((Dis)assembly 2). The lack of a proactive atmosphere may well reduce the number of submitted initiatives which again causes the development of the case company to slow down as the ideas of the employees are not getting through, evaluated and implemented.

#### *Motivation to submit initiatives*

Interestingly, although the current state has several major down sides, most of the participants still stated that they see it worth the trouble submitting initiatives. The main reason for this was told to be making their own job easier. The engine mechanics clearly had contradictory views regarding the motivation. Both stated that for easy fixes they go and say them out loud. If it is a more complex item, they do not see any benefit in submitting the initiative as they already know that nothing will happen and the idea is soon forgotten. This is an alarming sign towards the state where the employees do not see it worth the effort to submit initiatives. Additionally, one of the engine mechanic stated that “*The complex ideas are usually not listened careful enough and even if something is made, the credit is taken by the one who actually implemented it, not me, who had the idea*” ((Dis)assembly 1). These situations further limit the motivation to submit initiatives, especially the big ideas which might have the biggest value for the case company.

The general atmosphere amongst the colleagues is seen as positive and they are openly discussing about the ideas with each other. The discussions are done interdepartmentally, for example an inspector mentioned that “*We openly discuss with each other about the ideas we have. Most of these are coffee break discussions*” (Inspection 1). The idea sharing over departments is not common. Additionally, as pointed out by an inspector, the problem with coffee break discussions is that the so called decisions are usually

forgotten or not obeyed by everyone. The benefits from good ideas are hence lost if no one actually takes an effort to implement them.

Thus, the main reason why initiatives are submitted is to make the employees own life easier. The same reply was received from each and every shop floor employees. The employees are active in reporting the ideas that directly concern their job. However, from the answers it can be concluded that issues not affecting directly to their own job might well be not said out loud which is not an optimal situation. The general atmosphere would also need to encourage in submitting initiatives even though the provided initiative would not have a direct impact in one's own job.

#### *Feedback to initiatives*

The repair shop employees and engine mechanics have not received feedback regarding the initiatives they have submitted. The inspectors, however, stated both having received feedback at least for some of the cases. One inspector brought out that "*Our managers have changed quite often meaning we really do not have a stable situation*" (Inspection 2). This seems to have an effect on the received feedback as the person who they submit the initiatives has changed often. The feedback when received is usually nothing major but rather a note that what has been put forward and what not. No particular reasons were given. The feedback from colleagues is received which is seen as a positive factor amongst the participants.

Due to the lack of feedback, most of the employees do not know with what initiatives the manager is proceeding with. Some employees who had given only few minor initiatives knew which had been implemented and which not. The general feeling, however, is that the initiatives are thrown to the supervisors and managers, and nothing is really heard afterwards. The employee may notice that some of the initiatives have been implemented but in general no feedback or communication within the department about the change is made. Thus, no credit for the employees have been given from submitting the initiatives and by doing that, encouraging the employee to keep submitting initiatives. The credit is not always seen as an important factor unless the implemented idea is a major improvement that benefits the entire organization.

### *Other not discussed aspects*

Nothing major relating to the current state was brought up in this stage. The participants felt that the interview had included all they had to say about the current state. The importance of having a process was emphasized together with the importance of recording the initiatives. Additionally, feedback from all of the initiatives was seen as an important factor to bring up again in this stage. These issues may be categorized as the most crucial ones as they are brought up separately in many different stages during the interview.

Furthermore, suggestions for the future process were asked and given. These are not directly related to the current state but were asked to prepare a view of what type of fundamentals of an initiative process are appreciated. Based on the feedback, the process would need to be as simple to use as possible to allow initiatives to be submitted anywhere and by anyone. Additionally, the tracking of given initiatives and their statuses should be available for everyone. Thus, the managerial support in reminding the employees to submit initiatives was also seen as important.

### 3.2.2 Findings from the Office Employees

This section analyses the interviews of the office employees by using the same six categories that were used with the shop floor employees, including: (a) participant details, (b) current way of submitting of initiatives, (c) identify strengths and problems in the current state, (d) motivation to submit initiatives, (e) feedback to initiatives, and (f) other aspects that were not discussed under the other categories. Each of these categories is discussed individually to form a better view of the bigger picture in capturing, evaluating, implementing and documenting of initiatives in the case company.

#### *Participant details*

The office employees come from the supportive activities of technical support and logistics. The participant from technical support is an engine test cell engineer and from logistics a receiving inspector. These employees have a supportive role in the engine overhaul business and are not necessarily directly dealing with only the engine in internal overhaul cycle. Both participants are experienced individuals with a long history in the case company. Both participants have gone through many departments within the com-



pany starting from the engine (dis)assembly and from there moving forward to other positions inside the company. Both are experienced with the initiative system from Finnair and hence can be said to have a point of reference in further stages of this study.

#### *Current way of submitting of initiatives*

During the interviews, both participants raise out the problem that defining what an initiative is gets difficult as the company does not have any guidelines. The ones that the participants consider as initiatives relate to factors that benefit either the entire organization or at least the work of many. This might be due to the fact that the participants have worked in many different positions inside to company, thus become linked to the overall overhaul picture as described in Figure 2. The frequency of submitting initiatives is for both hard to tell but both are on the same path of quite low numbers of 1-2 per year of what they recognize as an initiative.

The way office workers are approaching with an initiative is usually by having a discussion with their colleagues first before going forward. As the employee of technical support said *“The ideas usually come during discussions on the aisles and when I have an idea, I say it out loud. The colleagues then can instantly say if it sounds a good idea or not”* (Technical support 1). Only after the discussion with the colleagues, the initiative is brought forward. The initiatives are either presented to the own manager or then to the manager responsible of the area the initiative is covering. As said by a participant (Technical support 1):

*“Our company is rather small meaning we all know each other and can openly discuss when we see each other. Therefore it is easy to go and say directly to the person in charge of the area. One of our visitors actually said how nice it is that you can speak with the president of the company and a mechanic simultaneously while grabbing a coffee from the vending machine”.*

The way initiatives are evaluated varies a lot. Where in technical support the easiest initiatives are the ones that are implemented, in logistics the smaller initiatives are usually not considered important. The person who to approach is clear for both employees. It either is the own manager or then the manager in charge of the area. The problem as stated by logistics employees is *“We do not have any individual responsible of the initiatives hence for me our manager is the only logical option”* (Logistics 1). This strongly recommends the requirement of having an individual in charge of the initiative process.

The initiatives are given verbally whenever possible. With more complex initiatives email is usually preferred but as stated by a participant *“I give them verbally but it is because of the person who I am giving the initiatives. He is usually available so it is easy to give these”* (Logistics 1).

#### *Identify strengths and problems in the current state*

Both participants recognize the problem of not having an existing process that would define the way initiatives are evaluated. Due to this reason the participants also mention that they have not seen it developing into any direction. The technical support employee also mentioned that *“We are just beginning the life with the new owner so that might be the reason why no one has not focused on this aspect”* (Technical support 1). The urgent need for a process arise from the discussions.

The extremely important role of managers with the initiatives is recognized by both participants. Unfortunately, due to the inefficient processes causing heavy work load for many and especially for the managers, many ideas remain unevaluated. This creates a vicious cycle where important process improvement initiatives are not evaluated because the managers argue for themselves that they do not have the time for the initiative evaluation. As said by the logistics participant (Logistics 1):

*“Our manager really does all kind of things he should not be doing. We have said him about this that he should be focusing on other, more managerial issues but he still does some of our jobs”.*

The fact that evaluating initiatives is not part of the managers' performance indicators is clearly causing a situation where many of the important initiatives that would make the processes more efficient or reduce the overall work load are not evaluated but managers are focusing on achieving the other targets they have.

#### *Motivation to submit initiatives*

Both participants are still highly motivated in submitting the initiatives although the evaluation of those, as discussed earlier, is not that good. The motivation stays because the employees are highly committed to their job and they truly believe that by staying patient, the initiatives will eventually be evaluated and implemented. Luckily, the general atmosphere amongst the colleagues is open which makes it easy to approach them with an initiative. With the help of the colleagues, the initiatives can better be pushed forward as the managers hear the same story from the mouth of many instead of one.

The main driver for the employees to submit an initiative is to have an effect on the own working conditions as well as benefit the entire organization. As said by the logistics participant: *“My initiatives nowadays affect also other departments than just us. I try to look at the big picture and think which might be the best way for us all”* (Logistics 1). The technical support participant pointed out that *“Of course, an incentive plays a role if I can get a reward for giving good ideas”* (Technical support 1). Currently employees are not rewarded as any guidelines for incentives have not been created. The incentives however do not play a major role in submitting initiatives but rather the positive feeling that arises after getting the own initiative implemented.

#### *Feedback to initiatives*

Both participants have received some type of feedback for their initiatives. The feedback is mostly unofficial, usually verbal and not detailed feedback. The quality of the feedback and documentation needs major improvement. Both participants say they know how many of their initiatives have been implemented and how many have not even though the feedback weak. Even the slightest unofficial feedback help the employees to understand which of their initiatives are going forward.

The participants have not received any credit of their initiatives. The good initiatives are not brought up in staff meetings or company material. The colleagues within the same department usually know whose initiative was implemented but at a company level the management does not highlight the good initiatives by any means.

#### *Other not discussed aspects*

Both participants felt that everything regarding the current state was discussed. The technical support participant emphasized the need for the initiative process. Regarding the future process, the technical support participant stated that *“I would like it to be as easy to use as possible. If it becomes too hard, then the ideas will not be submitted”* (Technical support 1). The importance of ease of use process must hence be closely evaluated during the process proposal in Section 5.

### 3.2.3 Comparison of the Results

Since the case company does not currently have an initiative process, the idea of this study is not to find ways of improving it but rather find the way each department is currently dealing with the issue, as well as to compare the perspectives between the shop

floor and office employees. This comparison points to the main differences and similarities found during the current state analysis.

The interview results of both, the shop floor and office employees have been discussed separately. Going back to Figure 2, the shop floor employees are fixed to certain gates' in the engine overhaul process while office employees are supporting the entire flow of an engine overhaul. Therefore, a brief comparison of the results between the departments is important and is illustrated in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Interview result comparison between the shop floor and office employees.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Shop Floor Employees</b>	<b>Office Employees</b>
<b>Initiative types and scope</b>	Work station arrangements, tool acquisition proposals. Items concerning own job.	Process improvements that consider the entire organization. Items looking at the big picture.
<b>Is it clear who to contact?</b>	No for (dis)assembly and repair shop Yes for inspectors	Yes
<b>Handling of initiatives</b>	Easy items are usually evaluated and implemented. Some initiatives are implemented purely based on the general feeling rather than facts. The difficult items are not evaluated at all.	Varies a lot. Some items are evaluated well but many are not.
<b>Preferred method for submitting initiatives</b>	Verbally	Verbally
<b>Problems with the current state</b>	No process in place. No option to submit initiatives anonymously. Employees are not informed about the planned changes.	No process in place. Heavy work load of the managers is causing them to leave initiatives in the background.
<b>Motivated and active in submitting initiatives</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Main driver for submitting initiatives</b>	To make the own job easier	To make the entire organization to function better
<b>Has feedback been received?</b>	Usually not	Yes but really unofficial, nothing has been documented

As seen from the table above, the major differences are in the type and scope of initiatives. Where the shop floor employees tend to have initiatives considering the physical performance of a certain work task to make their own job easier, the office employees

are more focusing on the big picture of making the entire organization to be more efficient. The underlying reason for this difference may be due to the office employees being part of the entire overhaul process from the start to the very end hence having a wide understanding of the entire organization. Another possible reason may be that the office employees are experienced individuals who have worked in many different departments inside the organization. The third possible reason may be the way the office employees understand an initiative varies greatly from the way the shop floor level understand it, and thus the minor improvements are not regarded as an initiative by the office employees.

For the shop floor employees it was not clear who to contact except for inspectors who said that they mostly know who to contact. The office employees said they know who to contact. The differences are caused by how the organization is structured. Where the inspectors, logistics and technical support have only one manager and are working during the office hours, the repair shop and (dis)assembly are working in two shifts, over the weekends and each shifts has their own supervisor. The supervisors do not have a managerial responsibilities but the entire department is handled by a manager who often, however, is not available for the employees to contact directly due to the changing working hours.

Evaluation of the initiatives is problematic in both areas. Usually the easy items are evaluated and implemented leaving the big items unattended. In some cases the implementation is based more on feelings rather than facts leaving a door wide open for poor implementation decisions. All employees prefer giving initiatives verbally but none of the persons who receive the initiatives actually writes down anything which causes a high risk of forgetting the initiatives. The possibility of having a verbal way of submitting initiatives need to be there but the receiving parties need to understand the importance of these.

For all the employees the biggest problem is that there is no process in place. Many of the represented issues are caused by the lack of a process as employees do not know how they should proceed with an initiative and what happens afterwards. This finding confirms the requirement of creating a process for the case company. Although the state of evaluation of the initiatives is poor, the employees are motivated in submitting the initiatives to make the processes and work tasks more effective. The employees are not

submitting the initiatives in the hope of receiving incentives but they genuinely want to make the company to be more effective without any ulterior motive of receiving rewards.

The feedback if received, is unofficial and not documented. The shop floor employees do not usually receive any feedback at all. The problem with the initiatives is that they are not document by any way hence the feedback is also lost in many cases and some ideas might pop up again due to no audit trail being available. The quality of the feedback also requires major improvement in all areas.

### 3.3 Strengths of the Current State

Although the lack of a process with the initiatives causes many weaknesses, a few positive sides from the current state can be found that are listed in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Strengths of the current state.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Submitting of initiatives</b>	The supervisors and managers are open for new ideas and listen the employees.
<b>Identify strengths and problems</b>	Rather small company where each and every employee knows each other. Open communication possibilities.
<b>Feedback</b>	Feedback is received from the colleagues that is also seen as important amongst the participants.

As seen from the table above, the first strength is that the supervisor and managers are open to new ideas and believe that the employees can generate excellent initiatives. The employees see the current atmosphere open and do not feel that the managers and supervisors are not easily approachable. This open atmosphere of communication creates the basis for the future process and the benefits of it need to be maximized. Fixing a communication issue would require a change in the company culture that cannot be solved purely by establishing a process.

Although the feedback from the managers is not usually received or the quality is poor, the colleagues are active in giving feedback to each other regarding the initiatives. The open atmosphere, again, creates an environment where discussions with the colleagues are easy to do and part of an everyday work. Thus, the strength of the current state is in

the open atmosphere that supports the discussions and idea sharing. This strength is important to keep in mind to get it included in the final initiative process.

### 3.4 Weaknesses of the Current State

The observed weaknesses of the current state are listed in Table 5 below. Many of these are the end result of not having a process but need to be examined closely when creating the process proposal in Section 5.

Table 5. Weaknesses of the current state.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Submitting of initiatives</b>	The company definition of what an initiative is has not been created.
<b>Submitting of initiatives</b>	No appointed person to have an overall responsibility of the initiatives.
<b>Submitting of initiatives</b>	The process with initiatives and their evaluation has not been defined. It is not clear who to approach with an initiative.
<b>Submitting of initiatives</b>	Initiatives are not documented to have an audit trail.
<b>Submitting of initiatives</b>	The managers and supervisors do usually not write down the verbally received initiatives. There is no good way of submitting initiatives electronically.
<b>Submitting of initiatives</b>	No possibility to submit an initiative anonymously.
<b>Identify strengths and problems</b>	Effective initiative handling is not part of the managers' performance indicators.
<b>Identify strengths and problems</b>	Only the easy items are evaluated and implemented.
<b>Identify strengths and problems</b>	No existing process.
<b>Identify strengths and problems</b>	The employees are not encouraged and reminded by the management to submit initiatives.
<b>Identify strengths and problems</b>	Idea sharing and discussions between the departments is rare.
<b>Motivation</b>	The department managers do not encourage their subordinates to submit initiatives.

<b>Motivation</b>	Staying active with finding ways to improve remains solely on the responsibility of the individual.
<b>Feedback</b>	No detailed and documented feedback.
<b>Feedback</b>	The management does not bring up the best initiatives in staff meetings.
<b>Feedback</b>	The status of each initiative is not available to see for the employees.

As seen from the table above, the list of weaknesses is long and there are plenty to do on all areas that were included in the interviews. As mentioned earlier, many of the issues exist because the process has not been defined but there are also weaknesses not caused by that. For example, the management and department managers are currently not active in reminding of the importance of initiatives. Additionally, the submitted initiatives are not implemented effectively enough due to them not being a part of the managers' performance indicators. Without the requirement to perform well with the evaluation and implementation of the initiatives, managers will focus on other areas where they are measured.

Currently, the submitted initiatives are not documented by any ways. Initiatives submitted verbally will only stay in minds of the receivers and initiatives given by email or sms in personal folders with no general access. The audit trail is hence totally missing and actual performance improvement is difficult to measure and report to the headquarters. Additionally, duplicate initiatives may appear as the history is not available.

### 3.5 Key Findings from the Current State Analysis

The current state with capturing the initiatives at the case company has several weak points. These weak points range from submitting and evaluation all the way through documentation and feedback. The positive findings all relate to the open atmosphere and communication between the colleagues but are trivial in the big picture of initiative capturing process.

First, the employees do not recognize what counts as an initiative due to lack of company definition for it. For this reason they do not necessarily know which items they can proceed by themselves, which need to be taken for a manager, and which are not counted as initiatives at all. The current state with submitting the initiatives on the shop floor level is unclear for the employees due to the lack of a standardized process. The initiatives



that are submitted are usually evaluated poorly and implemented initiatives only include the easy ones. This all emphasize the need for a standardized process that is clear for each and every employee and manager, and where the responsibilities are listed. A standardized process that is followed would also force the managers to evaluate both the easy and though initiatives. Additionally, the requirement of having a person an over-all responsibility of the process is observed. The implementation rates at the case company are not remarkable. Managers' performance indicators do not include anything about initiative evaluation and implementation. For this reason, the initiatives are not seen important by the managers and they are not encouraging their subordinates to submit them, and to actively thinking of finding better ways of doing the engine overhaul business.

Next, the documentation of initiatives is not agreed in the case company. This causes initiatives to be forgotten, stored in personal folders with no general access, lack of audit trail, and possibility of submitting duplicate initiatives hence losing valuable time of both, the submitter and evaluator. An electronic way of processing the initiatives need to be created while also remaining the option of verbal initiative submitting which is important for some of the employees.

Finally, discussions over departmental borders are not common and some decisions are made without discussing with the employees first. This raises a communication issue. Some decisions are also made purely based on feelings rather than evaluated facts. On the other hand, interdepartmental communication between the colleagues is functioning well and employees are active in discussing about the initiatives with each other. This communication need to be widened to break the departmental borders.

The current state at the case company has now been discussed. The next section explores the literature guided by the findings in this section to generate a process proposal for the case company.

## 4 Best Practice of Handling Initiatives

This section discusses the findings from the best practice and literature review for the effective initiative process focusing on the areas identified in Section 3.

### 4.1 Defining Initiative

In this study, the initiative is an act of voluntarily sharing a proposal for improvement. The exact definition for an initiative is established by the top management and employees of the case company. It is important to notice that an initiative does not have a single definition but any company may create their own based on the objectives they are looking to achieve with the initiatives. Howard and Pittman (2006: I-B-3) define initiatives as *“ideas that define a problem or objective, present a solution or plan for improvement and tell how the solution will improve the efficiency, economy or effectiveness”* while Ahmed (2009: 162) gives an example of Dubai municipality where initiative is defined as *“any new idea that contributes to improving the workflow/processes”*. The definition is linked to what the company is aiming to reach with the initiatives which again is derived from the company strategy and vision. Important factor with the definition is that it need to be simple and understandable to the employees to get the best outcome. Without the definition companies may fail in their goals of increasing employee commitment through initiatives as employees are not aware of what they are expected to deliver.

Porter (1986: 76,78) argues that the risk in not defining initiative may lead to a situation where complaints and other incorrect items may end up in the system causing the data contamination and slow down the handling process of the actual initiatives. Ahmed (2009: 157) lists categories of not valid initiatives such as reporting problem without a solution, a repeated or duplicated idea, and a complaint or grievance, as an example from a case company. By defining the initiative and making it clear and visible to the employees, a company may guide the behavior and thinking of the employees to the right direction thus making the initiative process more beneficial to all.

### 4.2 Building Blocks of an Initiative Process

Initiative process can roughly be described as a sequence of actions that start from an improvement idea and leads to an implementation to remove the flaw. The initiative process may end up being complex yet, at the same time, it should be as simple as

possible for all parties. Instead of defining the entire process, it may be easier to understand by splitting it into smaller sub-processes that combined for the overall initiative process. In the end, an effective initiative process is reached when as less effort as possible is required from each participants and everyone knows the status of each initiative.

For defining the building blocks of an effective initiative process, it is important to understand that the basics of each process are company specific tied to the values, strategy and needs of the company hence a successful initiative program of one does not necessarily become successful in another (Lloyd, 1996a: 27). This may sound complicated but as stated by Lloyd (1996b: 37): *“Simple ideas, simple procedures to deal with them – it is as simple as that”*. As a simple procedure by its own do not tell anything, the fundamentals of an initiative process need to be examined. In business practice, there are certain general aspects that are shown to have a positive effect when generating an initiative process. Ahmed (2009: 154-155) refer to Lloyd who presents the five most crucial elements of a successful initiative process. These five elements are listed in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Elements of a successful initiative process.

Top management commitment
Commitment from middle and junior management
Effective administrative and evaluation process
Promotion and publicity
Rewards and recognition

As seen in the table above, the commitment from both, the top and middle management is seen as a vital part for a successful initiative process which means a top-down approach where the managers are actively showing their support towards the process for the employees. This commitment is further discussed in Section 4.4 of this study. Promotion and publicity together with rewards and recognition are also seen important as the employees who submit initiatives would like to see themselves being appreciated by the management and also reminded about the existence of the process. These subjects are further discussed in Section 4.3 of this study. This section focuses on the effective administrative and evaluation process which is used as a foundation around which the commitment, promotion and recognition aspects are built on.

Wood (2003: 23) identifies five sub-processes that need to be described as a part of an overall initiative process. These sub-processes are: 1) capturing initiatives, 2) quick handling, 3) effective evaluation, 4) proper implementation, and 5) rewarding and/or recognition methods. The first four of these processes are now looked into more detail while the fifth is discussed under Section 4.3.

#### 4.2.1 Process for Capturing Initiatives

As business practice suggests, there are many ways how initiatives may be captured. The most important factor for submitters is that it is easy to use, clear and open to everyone who is willing to participate. Both, individuals and teams need to be able to participate and also anonymous participation should be an option although not the preferred way. The initiative capturing process should encourage cooperative thinking involving all levels of the company. The more there is human contact between the idea creator and evaluator the more successful the system will be. (Wood, 2003: 23)

To get employees to submit initiatives, it is important to understand which the main reasons are why employees do not submit initiatives. Wood (2003: 23) has done a research that shows the many reasons there are for not participating. These reasons are listed in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Reasons for not submitting initiatives.

Lack of publicity about the initiative process
Employees do not believe they can participate
Employees do not know how to participate or participation is too complex
Employees believe that their initiatives are not good or considered as initiatives
Employees do not have anyone assist them in formulating the initiatives
Employees fear rejection or that the credit will be taken by someone else
Initiative handling times are too long
Employees believe that they are not listened in the evaluation and implementation process

As seen from the table above, most of the factors affecting to the submission of initiatives related to misbelieve and not knowing how to participate, who to contact, or if the employees may even participate. These are purely communicational issues that exist due to poor training and disinterest towards the process. This is supported by the first listed reason of lack of publicity about the initiative process. Most of the reasons for not participating may easily be fixed by just enhancing the communication but not all.

To capture the initiatives, a company also needs to have a standardized process in place. This can have various forms from the old suggestion box format where papers were dropped in a box to a modern web based systems where employees may submit initiatives anywhere if they just have an internet connection. There may also be a mix of these but the problem with too many ways of submitting initiatives is the complexity of the program.

El Sherniby and Abdel Aziz Hadia (2014: 280) argue that one of the main reasons for employees not submitting initiatives in an old suggestion box format is the lack of transparency. They further argue that the first web based systems did improve the situation but the inflexibility still caused issues, the evaluation times were long and wrong people were evaluating the initiatives. El Sherniby and Abdel Aziz Hadia (2014: 280) identifies a problem with the modern web based systems where the initiative submitting becomes even too easy when the load becomes massive and finding of the important initiatives gets difficult. This problem may be tackled by better defining the initiative as discussed in Section 4.1.

Another way of overcoming the issue with the massive load of initiatives is a categorization. This way the company may focus on certain aspects it currently sees most important. Additionally, the company may create a campaign to collect only certain types of initiatives and by categorization, the finding of these become easier. At one case company the initiative categories are as follows: 1) improvement methods; 2) elimination of waste, paper work, spoilage, or work duplication; 3) reduction in costs, time, rejected work, hazards, accidents, maintenance, transportation and material handling; 4) conservation of supplies, materials, or equipment; 5) increase in production, efficiency or cooperation; 6) prevention of machinery wear. (Del Bueno and Bridges 1985: 213)

To submit the initiatives, employees need to have a standardized form to use in order for the company to be able to capture the facts they need in handling and evaluating the

initiative. El Sherniby and Abdel Aziz Hadia (2014: 283) consider the following aspects to be taken into account when creating a form: 1) simple to use but versatile in a sense that all important aspects are filled out; 2) challenges the employee so that every aspect of the initiative is thought carefully and even the self-explanatory items are written down; 3) the form must make the handling procedure simple. Durmaz (2013) on the other hand suggests that the form includes an option to stay anonymous, presents the initiative only briefly to make it clear, and includes categories from which the employee to choose appropriate and to help determining whether the idea is considered as an initiative. The problem of generating a submission form that captures plenty of data with a little trouble to the submitter is a tricky one to solve but extremely important part of the initiative capturing process. In case the submission form becomes too heavy to use, it will reduce the motivation of the employee to submit initiatives and thus act as a negative factor to the overall initiative process.

The submitting of initiatives should not focus on only the big items. As a matter of fact, as stated by Wood (2006: 26), the small initiatives are the ones that make the difference between the successful and less successful companies. Wood justifies the argument by stating that the implementation of major improvements will quickly be copied by competitors thus the benefit is lost while the many small initiatives are usually not spotted and together create a major competitive advantage. This emphasizes the need of creating a system that focuses on capturing the small ideas rather than focusing on just the major improvements.

#### 4.2.2 Quick Initiative Handling Process

To allow quick handling of initiatives, the organization should have a software or other electronic database in which the initiatives are held. By having the initiatives in electronic format, it is easier to avoid duplicate ideas being handled and evaluated which saves time from both the handlers and evaluators. Additionally, by having an open electronic database, each and every employee can see the statuses of the initiatives without the need for asking the information elsewhere. The initiatives may also be commented by the colleagues and over departmental borders to enhance them before making the decision whether to implement or not. (Wood, 2003: 24)

Lloyd (1996a: 27) argues that one of the problems with initiative processes is the high amount of bureaucracy that causes the entire process to be slow. The fewer steps there

are from generation to implementation the better. Lloyd (1996a: 27) further argues that the organizational structure will also have an effect by giving an example from the British Gas:

*“The layering of the management hierarchy will give fewer levels of reporting within the new structure, with greater responsibility being pushed down to field operatives who will report to a first-line manager. This layering gives greater empowerment to lower-echelon managers and will enable us to improve the response time between management levels”.*

The layering of the management hierarchy will also enable the correct individuals to be able to evaluate the initiatives. Lloyd (1999: 872) raises a problem that when the initiatives are routed to a senior management who does not have the required knowledge to make the decision nor do they necessarily are fully committed to the issue, the process becomes inefficient and causes the employees not to participate. This further empathizes the requirement of giving the decision making power to the closest managers or supervisors.

The lower level managers can usually evaluate most of the initiatives but not all. Therefore the limits in which the managers can work need to be clear. To tackle the issue, Wood (2003: 24) introduces a concept where the initiatives are distributed into four categories: 1) initiatives that the manager/supervisor can implement within his/her authority; 2) initiatives that should be evaluated by a working group; 3) initiatives that need senior management approval; and 4) initiatives that have corporate-wide implications. Each of these categories can set to have certain limits. By setting the limits, the first person to receive the initiative can check whether the decision can be made by a manager or does it required the attention of the top management, or if a group of managers is required in the evaluation. This may be the case if the initiative suggests a change in a process that has a major impact throughout the organization.

Furthermore, one crucial factor for a successful handling of initiatives is the feedback to the employee. According to El Sherniby and Abdel Aziz Hadia (2014: 283), studies have shown that the main reason unsuccessful initiative processes is the slow response time. Therefore, they suggest the following communication methods for the idea submitters. First, an acknowledgement of receiving the initiative need to be sent immediately. Second, time table and steps of the handling process should be visible. Third, feedback from each stage of the process should be given. Fourth, a general update of all initiatives being evaluated should be sent out to all employees with certain interval. By following these steps, the company makes it clear for the employees to see the status of each

initiative. At the same time, they are actively marketing the process to ensure high visibility.

Finally, it is important to have the handling process defined before the actual evaluation takes place. The purpose of having a handling process is to check that the initiative can be taken forward as is and also to forward it to the correct individuals for evaluation. This may reduce the time of the entire process as the initiative is not forwarded to a person that cannot make the implementation decision. Additionally, the first feedback to be provided to the submitter can already be given at this stage to ensure the submitter is aware of the initiative being received by the handler.

#### 4.2.3 Effective Initiative Evaluation Process

The initiative processes often fail due to inefficient evaluation system. The evaluation systems fail due to the following five factors: First, the evaluators do not benefit from the system by any way. Second, the evaluators' managers are not acting as good role models. Third, the evaluators are not trained to their role. Fourth, the evaluators do not have the courage to make decision but are afraid of failure and negative feedback from their managers. Fifth, the evaluators state they do not have time for the initiatives but this is usually caused by some of the other four factors. (Wood, 2003: 25)

Ahmed (2009: 157-158) gives an example from DUBAL where they tackled the evaluation issue by involving the evaluators to the end result. This was done by routing the initiatives to the evaluator first who was supposed to further enhance the initiative before it was taken to the next level. At DUBAL, the submitter of the initiative and the evaluator both received an incentive if the initiative was implemented. Another way of improving the evaluation process introduced by Wood (2003: 25) is to make it part of the managers' performance review by measuring the effectiveness of initiative evaluation. The implementation rate is not the measured variable but the effectiveness of the evaluation and feedback.

In the above cases, the crucial factors of the successful evaluation is seen to be on the managerial level. This empathizes the requirement of training the managers to understand their role in the overall process and also following up their performance with the initiatives by setting targets for them.



#### 4.2.4 Proper Implementation Process

Lloyd (1999: 871) argues that it is worthless to create a process for initiative handling if the company is not fully committed and willing to implement the initiatives, even the ones that may form the existing procedures to a totally new way. The actual implementation of the initiatives is hence the most crucial step where the entire process proves its necessity. Wood (2003: 25) states an alarming factor that the bigger the idea the more probably it is not implemented. The down side of this is not only the possibly lost cost savings but also the lowered motivation of the employees. Wood (2003: 25) continues that *“Saying yes and doing nothing is one of the biggest turnoffs that a manager can give”*.

As discussed in the evaluation section, the performance review of the managers should include the effective evaluation of the initiatives but also the effective implementation need to be included. Wood (2003: 25) states that the evaluators need to feel pressure in getting the initiatives implemented and that they are followed in the software in use. Also, there need to be an individual who after some period audits the implemented initiatives to see that they actually are in use and the change is trained to the employees.

To be able to follow the initiatives, the company need to have at least one individual responsible of the entire initiative program. Ahmed (2009: 160) gives an example from DUBAL where a designated individual follows the number of initiatives and the rate of implemented initiatives together with the performance of the evaluators. If a negative trend is observed, it is the task of the designated individual to speak with the employees or manager to find the cause of the negative trend. Buech et al. (2010: 513) also give an example of a company where one of the measured values is actually the number of generated initiatives per month. This figure does not directly relate to the implementation rates but certainly without effective marketing and follow up of the initiative program, the number of implemented initiatives will be lower.

Finally, an initiative process can be created with minor financial investments when the amount of bureaucracy and administration is kept at minimum at the process design stage (Lloyd, 1996b: 37). The benefits of the initiative process need to be brought clearly visible to the employees, for example by using the intranet, company magazine or in the senior management speeches (Buech et al., 2010: 519).

#### 4.3 Motivational Factors for Employees to Submit Initiatives

Mastering the building blocks of an initiative process by themselves does not ensure high initiative numbers; thus, there is a need to understand what motivates employees to submit initiatives. In their study, Buech et al. (2010: 508) note that *“surprisingly, there is little research on employees’ motivation to get involved with suggestion systems”* and continue by emphasizing that *“motivation is the basis for involvement with a suggestion system”*.

Various studies about the motivation have been made. Figure 3 below illustrates the results of a study of Lloyd (1999: 874) that included over 3000 employees in around 85 companies.



Figure 3. Reasons for submitting initiatives.

In his study, Lloyd (1999: 873) discusses that *“it has long been thought that high financial and payment for suggestions is needed to motivate and encourage the submission of ideas. This is not the case”*. This can be confirmed from the results presented in Figure 3 above. Where money and gifts cover only 10% of the motivation to submit initiatives, almost 60% are covered by frustration towards the current processes and willingness to help the organizational success without any monetary requirements. Many of the employees simply want to make their own work easier. Yasuda (1991: 14) introduces the Toyota’s system that is actually built around the concept of *“I want to make my work*

*easier to do*". This concept fits well to the results of the study shown in Figure 3 although a combination between the rewards and encouragement of the employees to participate to make their own job easier may have the best end result.

Buech et al. (2010: 508) identify three factors of work environment, features of the initiative system, and individual characteristics that are affecting to the motivation of the employees to submit initiatives. To be more specific, first, work environment focuses on the job specifications, the overall culture and climate of the work place, and behavior of the managers. Second, features of the initiative system focus on the top management support, feedback and rewards. Third, individual characteristics focuses on the personality features such as proactivity and self-efficacy. All of the three factors that were identified need to be discussed. While the factors affecting the work environment are discussed in Section 4.4, the focus here is on the features of the initiative system and individual characteristics.

Buech et al. (2010: 508) divide features of the initiative system into two parameters of interactional justice and valence of the initiative system where the first refers to *"the relationship between employees and the suggestion system. Specifically, it describes the communication between employees submitting suggestions and those who evaluate suggestions, and the way these persons provide feedback"*, and the latter *"represents employees' positive attitudes toward the suggestion system and the suggestion system's benefits"*. Communication and feedback have a vital role in keeping employees motivated in submitting initiatives. In their research, Buech et al. (2010: 513-517) find that interactional justice has an important role in the motivation to submit initiatives. They recommend that the feedback to the employees should include in detail information about the decision whether the initiative is implemented or not. It is especially important to give detailed feedback when the initiative is not implemented. Also, training of managers to communicate with the employees in a respectful manner to encourage them to submit initiatives is seen to have a positive results. The other feature parameter, valence of the initiative system, is seen to have a supporting role in the motivation to submit initiatives (Buech et al., 2010: 517). In other words, if the employees find the initiative system beneficial for themselves and see the benefit to the entire organization, they are more likely to be motivated to submit initiatives. The individual characteristics were also taken into the picture and observed that the higher the wellbeing the stronger the relationship between the interactional justice and valence of the initiative system (Buech et al., 2010: 517).

The above discussion clearly shows that the communication between the employees who submit initiatives and the evaluators has an important role as a motivating factor. The communication does not by itself ensure high motivation but the employees need also to see the initiative program beneficial for themselves. This is linked back to the fifth required process of recognition/rewarding method for those involved as a part of an overall initiative process (Wood, 2003: 23). Wood (2003: 25-26) emphasizes that companies with values including innovation should recognize innovative employees even if their initiatives were usually not implemented. Recognizing of innovative employees is seen far more important than rewarding. Rewarding may be an option as well but monetary rewards should be avoided and large rewards should be forbidden as they channel employees' initiatives to look for only the ones that return the highest rewards (Wood, 2003: 25-26).

One major part of the motivation is the attitudes of the managers and especially the top management. If the top management does not enjoy the trust of the employees and the organization is not seen to aim for the common good, the motivation of the employees to submit initiatives will also suffer (Buech et al., 2010: 511). The following section looks into the details of the managers' role in the initiative process.

#### 4.4 The Role of Managers in an Initiative Process

Wood (2003: 22) identifies four common categories of where the implemented initiatives come from. The categories are top management, managers or the research and development department, all employees but handling is illogical, and a formal process exists and everyone can participate. Wood (2003: 22) continues by stating that "*Sadly, the fourth answer is given infrequently event though having a structured approach is an important aspect of being an innovative organization*". Instead of implementing just the ideas of managers and top management, the focus of the managers should be redirected to motivating the employees to submit initiatives.

The closest, first-line manager has the most important role in acting as an inspiring example for his/her subordinates. When receiving an initiative, the manager need to respond with a first feedback within 72 hours to show his/her respect towards the submitter (Lloyd, 1996a: 27). Yasuda (1991: 19) emphasizes that the given feedback need to create a positive atmosphere even though the initiative may not be implemented and gives

an example from Toyota where certain responses such as *"I know it will not work"* and *Let us talk about this some other time*" are always forbidden. The quality of feedback can thus be said to have a major role in an initiative process. Submitters need to be provided a meaningful feedback to keep their motivation high and to show respect.

As important it is to train employees to understand which counts as an initiative and how to evolve them, even more important is to train the managers to encourage, remind and help the employees to get the best out of them (Wood, 2003: 24). Coleman (2007: 27) argues that some managers may not encourage employees in submitting initiatives due to being afraid of losing control and that they should have come up with the same initiative already before. To reduce the risk, Lloyd (1996b: 38) emphasizes the role of top management support where they openly make it clear that the aim of the initiative program is to make the organization to function better together. Recognizing the well performing employees and their managers is in important role.

The organizational culture plays a big role in achieving what has been discussed above. Wood (2003: 23) states that after launching the initiative process, managers should prepare to receive poor results at first where many of the submitted initiatives may contain complaints rather than anything constructive. At this stage the role of managers is, however, even more important in channelling the behaviour of the employees into the right direction to achieve better results and that the program is seen as valuable.

As discussed in the previous sections, to motivate the managers, the performance of them need to be followed by setting up supporting metrics. The time frame of each step must be clearly visible for the employees and met by the managers in order to boost the motivation of the employees to submit initiatives. Lengacher (2009: 18) argues that by avoiding the three common mistakes of having too many metrics, having wrong metrics, or allowing data misuse, a company may create a meaningful performance measures. From the initiative perspective, the important parts to measure are the average handling and evaluation time, and percentage of initiatives implementation within the set schedule. By meeting these three simple metrics, the motivation of the employees increase as they receive quick feedback and see concrete results from their initiatives.

To help the managers to perform well with the handling, evaluation and implementation of the initiatives, the company is required to take them part of the meeting agendas. Lloyd (1996a: 27) introduces an example where managers are discussing about submitted and

implemented initiatives as a part of their daily activities and meetings to ensure effective handling and short feedback times. Lloyd (1996a: 27) continues by stating that *“the whole purpose of submitting ideas is to bring them into the business and share that knowledge as quickly as possible”*. The knowledge sharing between the departments should hence not be forgotten as many of the implemented initiatives may well be taken into use in other departments. This knowledge sharing is best achieved by taking the initiatives as a part of management meetings.

It will certainly take time but with the active role of the top management and managers, a culture of active submitting and handling of initiatives can be formed. As absurd as it sounds, the ultimate goal of an initiative process is to make it useless. This goal is received when managers and employees have together formed a culture where the submitting, handling and implementation of initiatives happens automatically without the need for anyone to follow up the performance. (Lloyd, 1999: 871)

So far the discussion has related to general aspects of an effective initiative process. But there are some industry specific aspects that need to be taken into account when planning the initiative process. These aspects are discussed in the next section.

#### 4.5 Industry Specific Aspects for Initiative Process

In the airline industry, MRO organizations are serving their customers either by directly selling services to an airline or then selling their services to a leasing company who then further leases the products to an airline. Therefore it is logical to refer to the airline industry to see what type of trends have there been. Additionally, the airline industry has gone through major changes in recent years, some more successful than other, hence there is plenty to learn.

Figure 4 below illustrates the available seat miles per employee between years 2000-2006 when comparing U.S. legacy airlines and new-entrants. U.S. legacy airlines include American, Continental, Delta, Northwest, United, and US Airways while new-entrants include AirTran, ATA Airlines, Frontier, JetBlue Airways, Southwest, and Spirit.

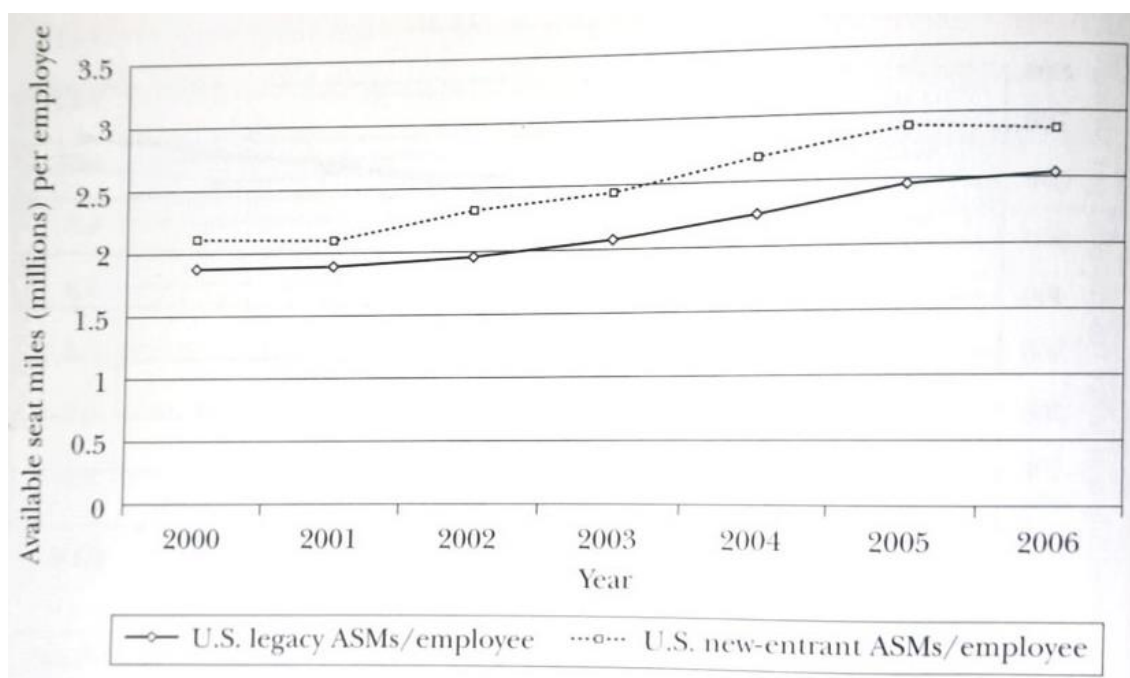


Figure 4. Available seat miles per employee for U.S. legacy versus new-entrant airlines. Source: Bamber, et al. (2009: 74).

As seen from Figure 4, the labor productivity of the airlines has increased remarkably. When combining the results of legacy and new-entrants, the productivity increase has been 35% but the way the increase has been achieved is different between the two categories. Where legacy airlines have achieved the productivity growth by reducing manpower and weakening the terms of employment, new-entrants have actually increased the manpower to expand their business. (Bamber et al., 2009: 72-75)

Bamber et al. (2009: 64) argue that reasons for legacy airlines reducing their staff may be that it is seen as an easy way of achieving visible cost reduction or then the employees are seen purely as a cost factor rather than value generating source. As seen from the new-entrants' path, there is another way to tackle the cost reduction pressure. Bamber et al. (2009: 78) also raise out an interesting fact that in each sector, the airlines with highest labor costs have the lowest total costs and continue by arguing that *“one potential interpretation is that these airlines are building employee commitment to reduce total costs rather than adopting a narrower focus on reducing labor costs”*. This suggests that reductions on labor costs may well not be the correct strategy to boost profitability (Bamber et al., 2009: 83).

MRO's may learn from the example of new-entrants and the airlines with highest labor costs that there is actually more value in employees than costs. Initiative program is an efficient way of increasing employee commitment. One specific way to exploit employees is to have them to think solutions to certain problem areas for example on how to reduce time from an engine disassembly. This way the employees would actively think of ways reducing costs involved and by doing that ensure the future of their jobs. Management plays a big role in these campaigns and with initiatives in general so that there is no fear of the employees to make themselves unnecessary or outsourced.

Apart from the lesson learned from the airlines, one case company specific requirement needs attention. By being a part-145 maintenance organization as set by the European Union commission regulation (EC) No 2042/2003, there are certain obligations the case company need to fulfill. One of these obligations that defines the rules for occurrence reporting, is closely linked to initiatives. The EC 145.A.60 (No 2042/2003: 56) defining occurrence reporting states that *"the organisation shall report to the competent authority, the state of registry and the organisation responsible for the design of the aircraft or component any condition of the aircraft or component identified by the organisation that has resulted or may result in an unsafe condition that hazards seriously the flight safety"* and continues that *"the organisation shall establish an internal occurrence reporting system as detailed in the exposition to enable the collection and evaluation of such reports"*. The description means that the maintenance organization is obliged to define in their internal maintenance organization exposition (MOE) on how they will report any maintenance discrepancies to the competent authority. The purpose of the occurrence reporting is to prevent the same occurring elsewhere and again, and as stated in the case company MOE (GA Telesis Engine Services, 2014 Part 2: 50) *"find out both active and latent failure in maintenance operations"*.

Summing up, a maintenance organization cannot risk the occurrences not to be reported hence it need to ensure that every discrepancy is filed. Some of the submitted initiatives may well come up from a situation that includes also a requirement for filling out an occurrence report. The initiative process thus needs to ensure that the requirement for an occurrence report has been investigated. This evaluation may be done by the submitter but it should also be made by the evaluator i.e. manager who has a better knowledge of the part-145 regulations.



#### 4.6 Conceptual Framework

In this study, the building blocks, motivational aspects and role of the managers have been identified and discussed based on required elements of an effective initiative process and received findings from Section 3. The conceptual framework of this study includes eight major categories of 1) submitting and documenting; 2) handling and implementation; 3) recognition; 4) communication; 5) training; 6) company specific; 7) encouragement; and 8) performance measuring. The detailed conceptual framework of this study is illustrated in Figure 5 below.

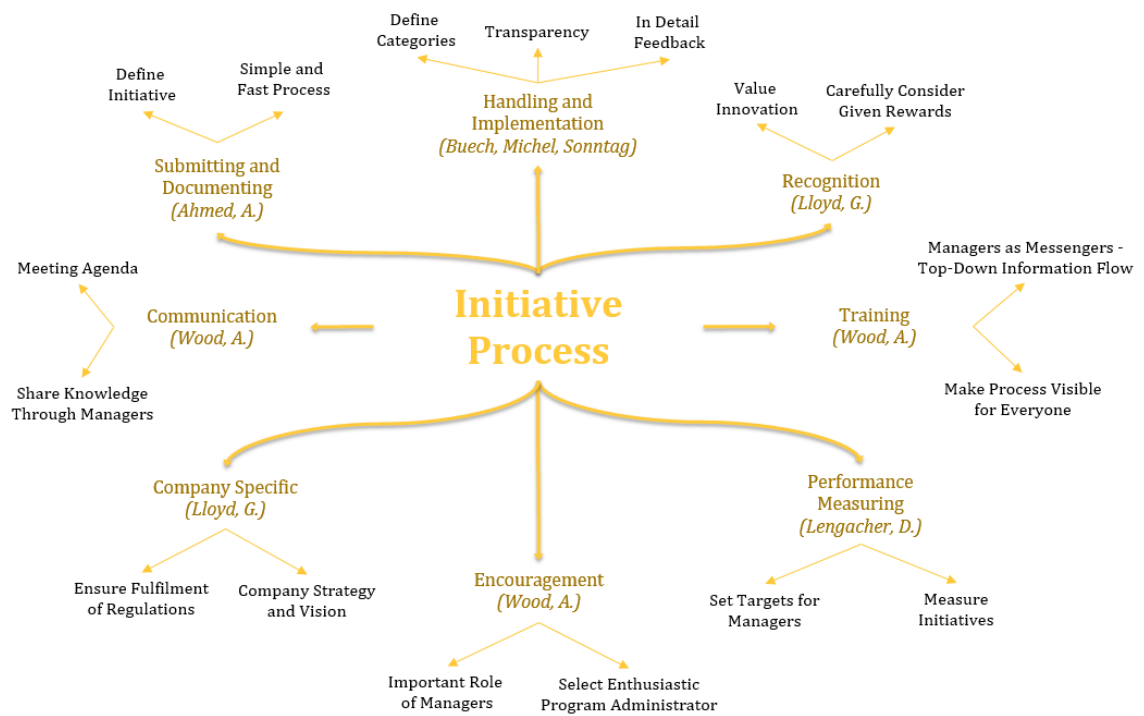


Figure 5. Conceptual framework of this study.

As seen from Figure 5, the conceptual framework is presented in a mind map format. This is to illustrate that none of the elements is more important than another but in order to have a truly effective initiative process, all this need to work seamlessly together. The major categories are further divided into smaller subcategories to provide an understanding of the factors affecting each. Table 8 below illustrates the same conceptual framework in other format.

Table 8. Conceptual framework of this study.

<b>Major Category</b>	<b>Subcategories</b>
<b>Submitting and Documenting</b>	Define Initiative Simple and Fast Process
<b>Handling and Implementation</b>	Define Categories Transparency In-Detail Feedback
<b>Recognition</b>	Value Innovation Carefully Consider Given Rewards
<b>Communication</b>	Meeting Agenda Share Knowledge Through Managers
<b>Training</b>	Managers as Messengers – Top-Down Information Flow Make Process Visible for Everyone
<b>Company Specific</b>	Ensure Fulfillment of Regulations Company Strategy and Vision
<b>Encouragement</b>	Important Role of Managers Select Enthusiastic Program Administrator
<b>Performance Measuring</b>	Set Targets for Managers Measure Initiatives

None of the subcategories shown in Table 8 function by themselves but need others to assist. For example, the detailed feedback from managers will not be received without a proper training of them by the enthusiastic program administrator. Additionally, defining what an initiative is for the case company cannot be performed without consulting the company strategy and vision and creating categories of initiative types and levels. Furthermore, managers are not able to work as a messenger for the employees if they are not aware of the targets they should receive and if the initiatives are not part of the general weekly meeting agenda. Thus, this approach strengthens the picture that everything is linked to each other which makes it a really complicated task to create an effective initiative process for the case company.

The next section formulates a process draft for the case company in cooperation with the employees before taking the final step of seeking a top management approval.

## 5 Building Process Proposal for the Case Company

This section presents the initial proposal for the initiative process in the case company. In the next section, this proposal is taken forward to the top management for final approval.

### 5.1 Overview of the Proposal Building

In this study, the proposal is built by merging the results from the interviews held during the current state analysis and the conceptual framework, and introducing a process proposal to be taken forward to the top management for final approval. On a more detailed level, the proposal building was conducted in three parts. First, a preliminary draft of the process was built according to the findings of CSA and literature (Section 5.2). Second, the preliminary draft was presented to the employees of the case company to receive feedback (Section 5.3). Third, the process proposal was revised according to the received feedback (Section 5.4).

In the first part, a preliminary process draft is built based on the CSA and literature. The conceptual framework illustrated in Section 4.6 acts as a foundation for the process draft. The issues from the CSA and concepts from the literature have been taken into account and a process most suitable for the entire company is formed. As the preliminary draft is an output of one individual, two workshops have been held with the case company employees to form the process most suitable for the entire company.

In the second part, the preliminary process draft is presented to the employees as discussed in Section 2.3. The employees are distributed in two groups with mixed departments to gain broad feedback from the employees on how they would develop the process to lower the threshold of submitting initiatives and increase the user-friendliness.

In the third part, the feedback received from the workshops is taken into account to improve the process proposal to its final form. The purpose is to fit to the process as much of the feedback as possible from the workshops as they the end process need to be as convenient to the end users as possible. This proposal will then be taken forward to the top management approval in Section 6.

## 5.2 Preliminary Process Draft

The first task for the process is to define the initiative for the case company. In order to do that, the case company strategy and vision need to be examined. Table 9 below illustrates the main concepts from the case company strategy and vision.

Table 9. Case company strategy and vision.

Strategy	Vision
We actively seek ways to solve our customer's problems	Innovative
We concentrate on essentials	Open Minded
We respect and value our fellow workers	Target Oriented
We focus our energy on achieving the targets	Efficient
We actively renew if necessary	Customer Driven

Given the case company strategy and vision, the proposed definition for the initiatives is as follows:

*English definition: Initiative illustrates an insight, a problem, or development area with a proposed solution that either improves workflow or processes, or offers an economical factor.*

*Finnish definition: Aloite esittää oivalluksen, ongelman tai kehitysalueen, yhdessä mahdollisen ratkaisun kanssa, joka joko parantaa työn sujuvuutta tai prosesseja, tai tarjoaa taloudellisen edun.*

In addition to the definition, three other general requirements should be met before the process can be defined. First, a form for submitting the initiative need to be created. Keeping in mind the recommended elements of being simple yet versatile, including an option to stay anonymous and possibility to select categories, the proposed initiative submission form for the case company is presented in Appendix 4. The form is divided into three sections: one for the submitter, one for the evaluator, and one for the initiative program administrator. The selected categories are formed from the initiative definition

Second, to ensure effective process handling, an enthusiastic program administrator and his/her deputy needs to be selected. In the proposed process, the program administrator is a vital link between the submitters, evaluators and top management. Given that the case company is a rather small company employing less than 100 employees, the initiative program can be controlled by two individuals in addition to their normal daily work.

This is based referring to Section 1 where in 2012, the average amount of initiatives per 100 employees was 113. In the case company context, this equals to approximately two initiative per week. For the employees, on the other hand, it is easier to have only one point of contact with initiatives, regardless of the department they are working in. Additionally, it is also easier to have a program administrator for controlling and measuring of the initiatives and the evaluators' performance.

Third, a mechanism for measuring both the performance of the evaluators, i.e. the managers, and the performance of the program administrator need to be established. This is to ensure that initiatives become the part of their yearly targets and thus enhance the effective handling of initiatives. The required level of performance will ultimately be defined yearly in cooperation with the top management. It is, however, suggested that the indicators are connected to the average handling and evaluation time of the initiatives, and the percentage of initiatives implemented within the agreed schedule. This gives three advantages. First, by measuring the average initiative handling and evaluation time, the evaluators and administrator remain under pressure also after the due date. If a percentage of initiatives handled and evaluated with time frame would be measured instead, the risk of having cases remaining uninvestigated after the due date would increase. Second, by measuring both the program administrator and evaluators, a fast process is ensured to the point of implementation decision and feedback to the submitter. The sooner the submitters received the feedback the better they feel about the process as they have visible results. Third, by measuring the percentage of initiatives implemented within the set schedule, the evaluators are encouraged to set themselves reachable targets.

After setting these three general prerequisites, the actual process with initiatives may now be defined. Figure 6 below illustrates the parts of the processes from which the total process is formed.

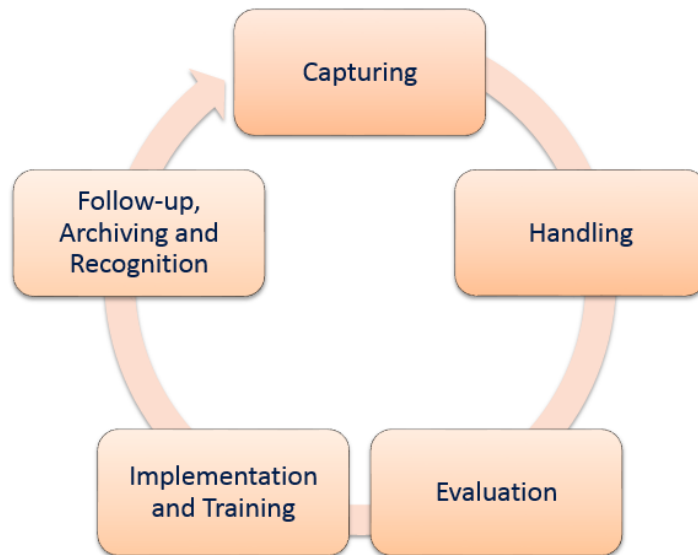


Figure 6. Overview of proposed initiative process.

As seen from the figure above, the entire process is split into five sub-processes of 1) initiative capturing; 2) initiative handling; 3) initiative evaluation; 4) implementation and training; and 5) follow-up, archiving and recognition. The entire process is easier to understand when looking at the different sub-processes separately before integrating them with each other.

### 5.2.1 Initiative Capturing Sub-process

Arguably the most important part of the entire process is the first sub-process where the initiative is captured from the employees. The process of capturing an initiative is presented in Figure 7 below.

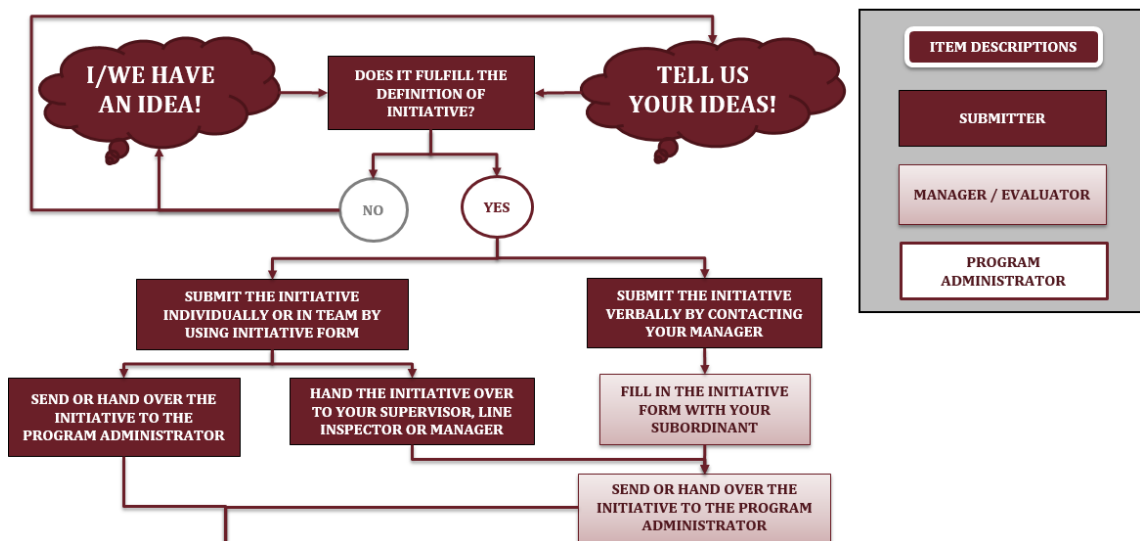


Figure 7. Proposed initiative capturing process.

As seen from Figure 7, the initiative may either be submitted individually or in teams. There is no maximum limit in how many employees may participate in submitting an initiative. Ideas from which initiatives are created may come from two sources: 1) any category item that comes to the mind of the employees or 2) specific ideas related to area for which the employer would like to receive initiatives. The idea of the latter is to promote the initiative process through managers who 1-2 times per year launch a campaign to capture certain type of initiatives for areas requiring improvement.

The first step for the submitter after having an idea is to consider the validity, i.e. checking if the submission fulfills the definition of an initiative. In case it does not fulfill the definition, the idea needs to be revised so that it fulfills the definition of an initiative. Additionally, the submitters are encouraged to check the database whether a similar initiative has already been submitted to avoid duplicates. This step is, however, not obligatory as the validity determining will be performed in the next sub-process as discussed in Section 5.2.2.

When having an initiative that fulfills the definition, it may be submitted by two ways, either directly by using the initiative submission form or by contacting the own manager with whom the initiative form is filled out. The reason for having two ways is to allow an option to submit initiatives also verbally which was found as to be widely used and wished during the current state analysis. The option to submit verbally is only through employees own manager to ensure that every initiative is properly submitted and documented.

In case the form is used directly by the submitter, they may either send or hand it over directly to the attention of the program administrator, or then hand it over to their own supervisor, line inspector or manager who will then deliver the initiative to the program administrator. The option to hand it over to the supervisor or line inspector is given to ensure initiatives to become submitted also in outside-of-office hours or in other times when the managers and program administrator may not be available. For most of the shop floor employees, the supervisor or line inspector is the easiest person to contact. Thus, the proposed process for initiative capturing includes many options for the employees to submit which makes it easy for them thus created a good foundation for high initiative numbers.

### 5.2.2 Initiative Handling Sub-process

In this sub-process, it is the responsibility of the program administrator to review the received initiative, determining its validity and assign evaluators. Additionally, a case number is assigned to help the tracking, and the archive is checked to determine whether the initiative is new or duplicate. Figure 8 below illustrates the steps included in this sub-process which should be completed within 2 working days after receiving the initiative.

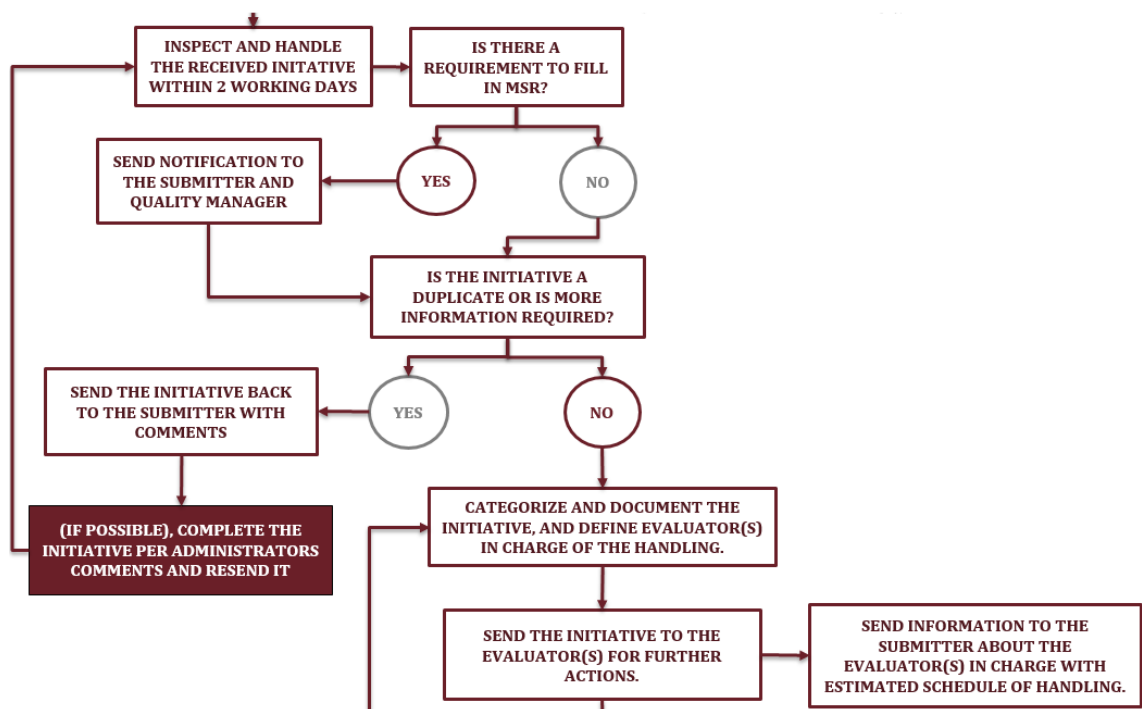


Figure 8. Proposed initiative handling process.

The first step in the sub-process shown in Figure 8 is to look at the initiative form and determine whether there is a need for a maintenance safety report (MSR) which is the case company's occurrence reporting tool. This step is added to spot the initiatives that are raised from a potential safety risk and need to be reported to the quality manager. If there is a need for an MSR, the program administrator will contact the submitter and quality manager to ensure that the MSR is opened. The MSR requirement does not stop the handling of the initiative.

After reviewing the requirement for an MSR, the program administrator will evaluate whether all possible information to determine the validity and evaluators is available. If



not, the administrator will contact the submitters with his/her comments to either complete the form or think of ways to revise the initiative so that it is not a duplicate. The administrator will at this point help the submitters as much as possible to make the initiative valid.

When all the required information is available, the program administrator will assign the initiative a case number, document the case and determine the evaluators. When determining the evaluators, the program administrator will need to categorize the initiative in one of the three categories of 1) initiatives that the department manager is able to evaluate and implement; 2) initiatives requiring attendance from several departments i.e. a working group is defined; and 3) initiatives that influence the entire company thus require senior management approval prior to proceeding.

After this step is completed, the initiative will be sent to the evaluators for further actions and information is sent to the submitters about who is in charge of the evaluation and what are the next steps and estimated schedule of each. Additionally, it is the responsibility of the program administrator to send once a month a summary for all employees including the status of each open initiative with the schedule included. This will increase transparency and build pressure for the evaluators to get open initiatives evaluated.

### 5.2.3 Initiative Evaluation Sub-process

In this sub-process, the determined evaluators will review the initiative and decide whether to implement or not, or if a deeper research is required before the decision can be made. Figure 9 below illustrates the steps included in this sub-process which should be completed within 5 working days after receiving the initiative.

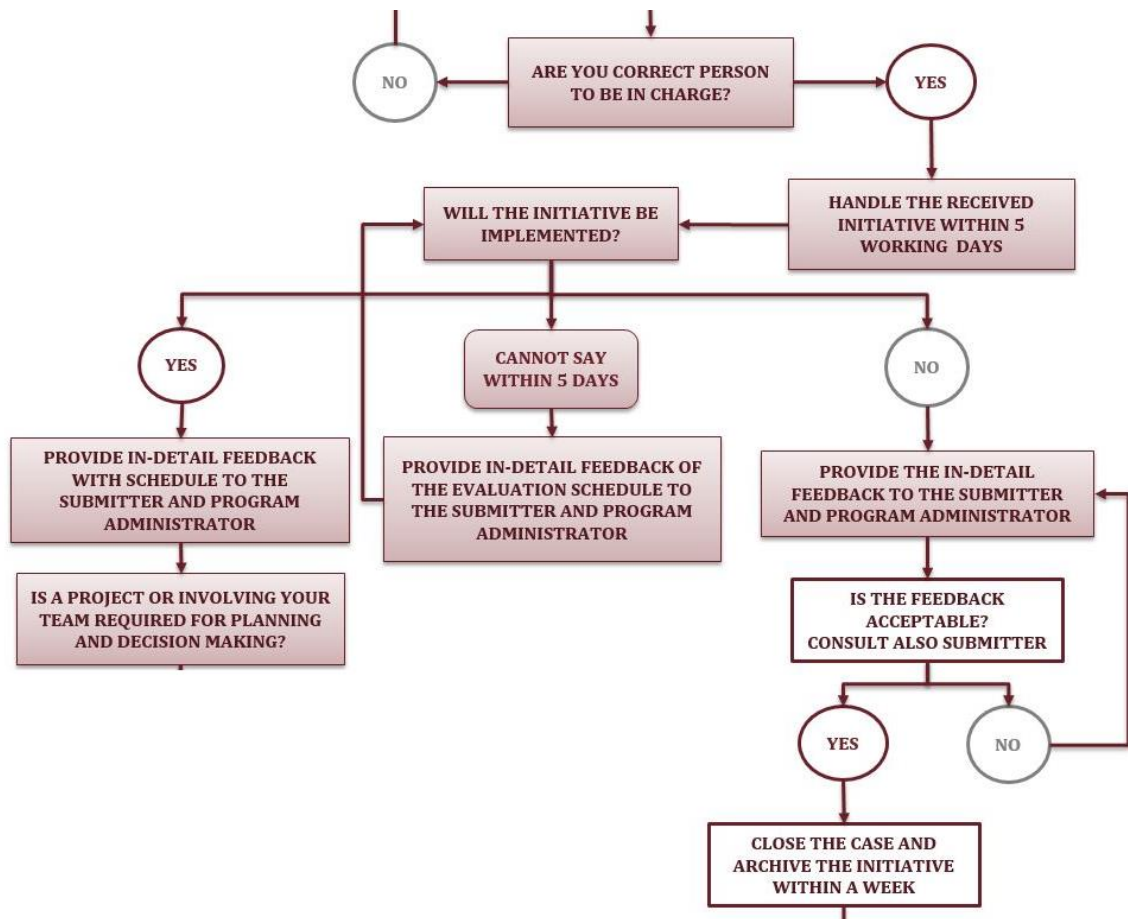


Figure 9. Proposed initiative evaluation process.

The first step in the sub-process shown in Figure 9 is for the evaluator to double check whether he/she is the correct person to be in charge of the handling. This is done to avoid initiatives being on hold due to an incorrect person being assigned to evaluate the initiative. In case an incorrect person is assigned, the initiative needs to be sent back to the program administrator who will then determine the evaluators again as discussed in Section 5.2.2.

When a correct person receives the initiative, he/she has 5 days to determine whether to implement the initiative or not together with an in-detail feedback. In case the decision whether to implement or not cannot be made within 5 days but it requires deeper research, the evaluators need to determine a schedule in which it will be determined and send the schedule to the program administrator and submitters.

In case the initiative is not going to be implemented, it is the responsibility of the program administrator to review the received feedback together with the submitters. If the submitters or program administrator are not satisfied with the feedback, the initiative will be sent

back to the evaluators for feedback improvement. Additionally, a discussion including the program administrator, submitters and evaluators may be held if seen as appropriate. After approving the feedback, it is the responsibility of the program leader to close and archive the case, and to provide a managerial summary as discussed in Section 5.2.5.

If the initiative is likely to be implemented, a feedback for the submitters and program administrator will be sent together with the estimated schedule of the implementation by using the same form as the submitter. It is the responsibility of the program administrator to follow-up the implementation schedule and remind the evaluators in case the schedule will not hold. The implementation is performed discussed in the next Section 5.2.4.

#### 5.2.4 Implementation and Training Sub-process

In this sub-process, the evaluators will make the required actions to get the initiative implemented and any changes trained to the employees. Additionally, the evaluators are required to present the implemented initiative in weekly manager meeting and inform also the program administrator. Figure 10 below illustrates the steps included in this sub-process which should be completed in accordance with the provided implementation schedule as discussed in Section 5.2.3.

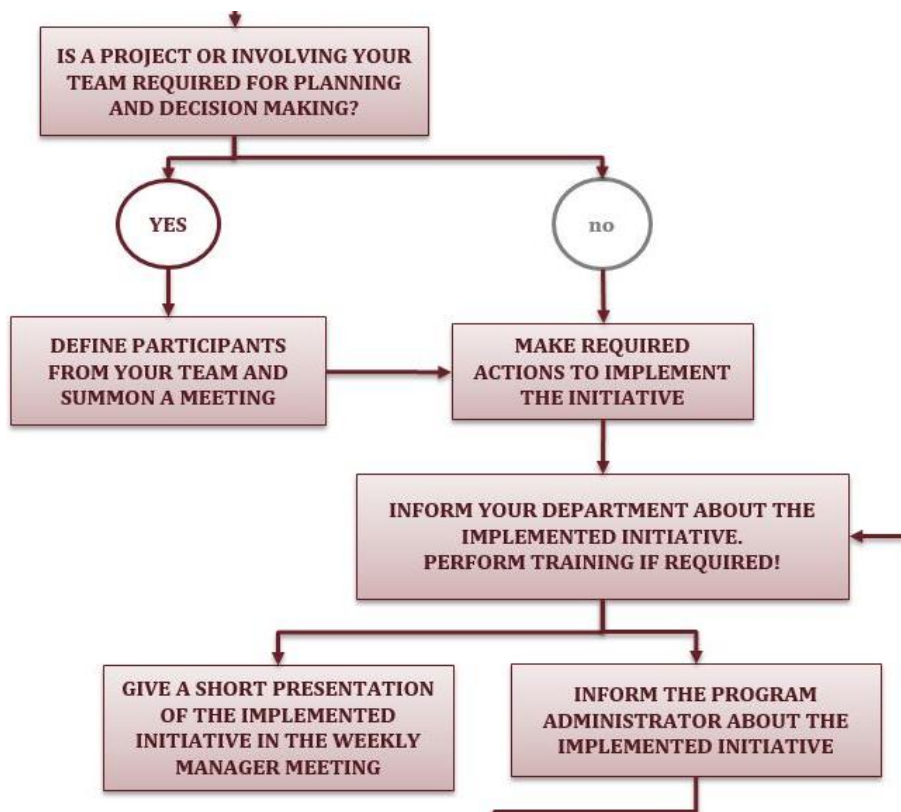


Figure 10. Proposed implementation and training process.

The first step in the sub-process shown in Figure 10 is to determine whether a project or wider attendance is required to implement the initiative. The evaluators may for example set a team of employees to prepare the required changes to get the initiative implemented. After all required steps are done in order to launch the implementation, the entire department will be informed about the change in a meeting. Informing through an email alone is not allowed to avoid misunderstanding of information. Training of employees is preferred in all cases, although there may be simple cases where only a meeting is required.

After the implementation has been done, the evaluators will inform the program administrator whose responsibility is to follow-up the implementation as discussed in Section 5.2.5. Additionally, the responsibility of the evaluators is to give a short presentation about the implemented initiative in the weekly manager meeting. This is done to ensure knowledge sharing over the departmental borders and to remind all managers in encouraging their employees in submitting initiatives. The weekly manager meeting will have a slot for the initiatives every week where the status of each initiative will be updated.

#### 5.2.5 Follow-up, Archiving and Recognition Sub-process

In this sub-process, the program administrator will perform a follow-up of the implemented initiative to ensure the proper implementation. Additionally, the case will be closed and archived, and a managerial report is created to enable knowledge sharing and opportunity for deciding recognition and rewarding actions. Figure 11 below illustrates the steps included in this sub-process which will be completed after the follow-up of the implementation is performed satisfactorily.

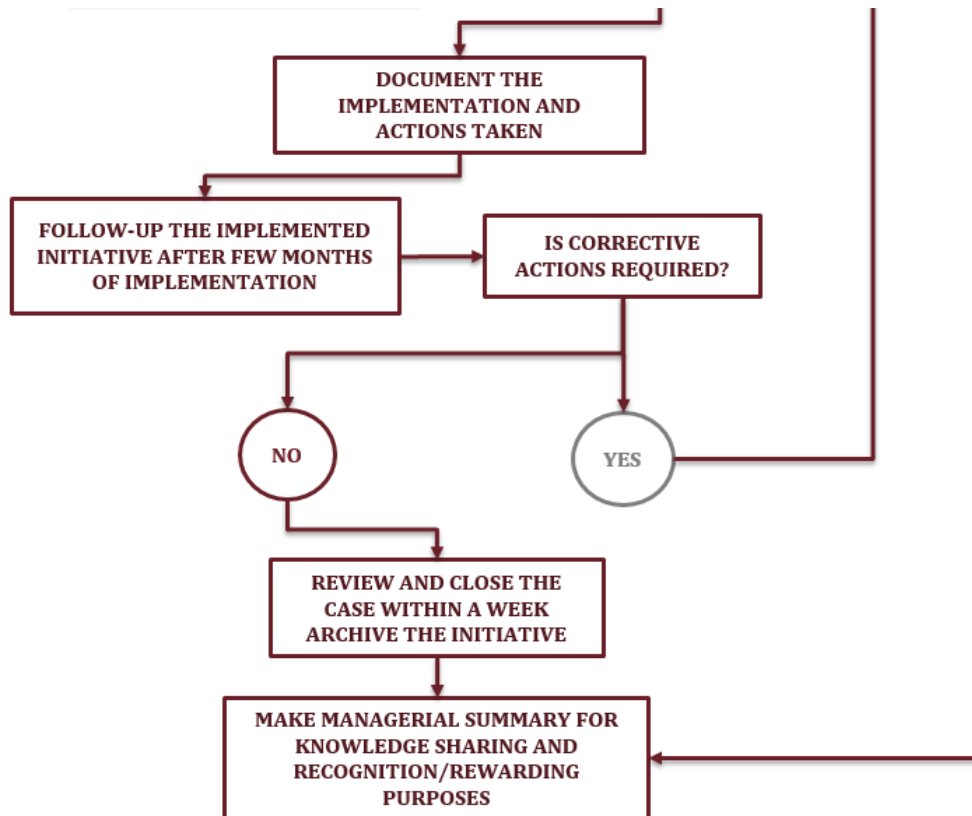


Figure 11. Proposed follow-up, archiving and recognition process.

The first step in the sub-process shown in Figure 11 is to document the implemented initiative by using the initiative submission form. In this way, all the documentation from one initiative is in the same file and accessible for reading to everyone allowing full transparency to whoever is interested in reading the initiatives. At this stage, a follow-up date is defined based on the implementation date. The follow-up will be performed after two months of implementation. The purpose of the follow-up inspection is to ensure that the employees of the department are aware of the implemented initiative and that it is in use at the department. In case discrepancies are found, the initiative will be sent back to the evaluators whose responsibility is to communicate and train it again as discussed in Section 5.2.4.

After the follow-up of the implemented initiative is performed satisfactorily, the case will be closed and archived. A managerial report is prepared and sent to the top and middle management both for knowledge sharing and recognition and rewarding purposes. It is up to the top management to decide the case-by-case recognition and rewarding methods but the closed initiatives will be gone through in the quarterly staff meetings with all employees. The case closing and reporting is performed within a week after the follow-up has been performed satisfactorily.

The proposed initiative process has now been discussed in detail. The next section will go through the findings from the workshops held with the case company employees.

### 5.3 Requesting Feedback from the End Users

Two workshops were held at the case company in April 2015. The agenda of the workshops is illustrated in Appendix 3 and the proposed initiative submission form in Appendix 4. All the material was provided to the employees at least a day before the workshop in order to allow them time to make themselves familiar with the process proposal. The database including the findings from the workshops is illustrated in Appendix 5. The workshop agenda requested feedback for the following four categories: 1) initiative definition; 2) initiative submission form; 3) initiative process proposal including all sub-processes and the way of using program administrator as a link; and 4) performance indicators of managers. The following sections introduce the feedback from each workshop and finally combines the data from both before proceeding to the final process proposal to be introduced to the top management.

#### 5.3.1 Feedback from the First Workshop

The feedback received from the first workshop is divided into the four categories following the logic of workshop agenda discussed in the previous section.

##### *Initiative definition*

The definition of the initiative was seen as good and understandable. All employees said that it would be easy for them to decide whether the idea they have is considered as an initiative or not. A debate occurred whether a customer should somehow be mentioned in the definition as one of the main strategies of the case company is to find the best solutions for the customer. It was concluded, however, that the customer reference should not be mentioned in the definition but to be added in the initiative submission form instead.

##### *Initiative submission form*

It was suggested that the category *other* is removed from the submission form as it might lead to a situation where the ideas which are not considered as initiatives are submitted, and also the items that do not benefit the company might occur. Instead, the category

*other* should be replaced by the category *customer specific* to allow initiatives to be submitted which may not affect the case company but rather find a customer specific solution that more or less benefits only the customer.

It was also suggested that the note of *tick the box if you would like to stay anonymous during the process* is reformed to *tick the box if proceeding with the initiative with your name is acceptable*. This would forbid the possibility of having the submitters name visible by mistake. Additionally, it was seen that the purpose of the initiatives is not to have your name visible but to make the company to function better. The name field is more or less required only for the program administrator to know who to contact in case more information is required.

While going through the evaluator's page, it was suggested that the feedback field is distributed into two separate fields of feedback and detail description of taken actions. The first would include the personal feedback to the initiative and the latter would go through the details which were investigated to reach the decision whether to implement or not. The details would include information about possible quotations that were asked, cost calculations, and interviews or other discussions that were held to reach the end result.

A debate was held if the process should take into account a situation where an employee notices something that is not working as it should but he/she does not have a solution to fix it. It was concluded, however, that this case does not fulfil the definition of an initiative; hence it is in the person's responsibility to discuss with the colleagues and manager to find a solution for the problem before submitting the initiative.

#### *Initiative process proposal*

The initiative capturing sub-process was seen as more complex than it should. The employees concluded that the option of having a verbal way of submitting initiatives is not required, although it was seen as important during the current state analysis. The employees grounded their message by saying that the initiative submission form is standardized and simple to use; hence every person is capable of filling it out by themselves or with the help of colleagues, thus making the verbal submission option unnecessary. Therefore, the process would be simpler with just one option of filling out the form and sending it to the program administrator.

The handling and evaluation sub-processes were both seen as easy to understand and follow. The set time limits of 2 working days for handling and 5 working days for evaluation were seen more than enough. It was also mentioned that the time limits could even be extended. According to the employees, even a total of two weeks of handling and evaluation time would be okay. The most important part is that the managers meet the set time limits.

The implementation and training sub-process was seen as clear and simple. In addition to the training requirement, the employees raised out an important part of updating the company manuals. It was suggested that the process is modified to also include a step where the procedure manual or whatever other manuals there may be are updated before the initiative is implemented. This step would be bypassed if the initiative does not require a process alteration.

The follow-up, archiving and recognition sub-process was seen as excellent. The follow-up of the implemented initiative was also stressed as important as the case company currently has an issue with implementation of changes. Some managers have a habit of stating the changes being implemented but the situation may look different if asked from the employees' side who may not even be aware of the change.

All in all, the proposed process received good feedback from the employees. The idea of using a program administrator is good and should be preferred in the final process. Without that link, the process would be in jeopardy as each and every manager would easily treat the process differently even with training and also a proper neutral assessment of the initiative evaluation and feedback would be missing.

#### *Performance indicators of managers*

The proposed performance measurements for the managers also received positive feedback. The employees emphasized that these need to be there together with the process to guide the behaviour of the managers to a correct direction.

#### 5.3.2 Feedback from the Second Workshop

The feedback received from the second workshop is divided into the same four categories following the logic of workshop agenda discussed in the previous section.



### *Initiative definition*

The definition was discussed in detail and it raised plenty of thoughts within the workshop attendees. The overall description received positive feedback. One of the first comments received was that the definition does not include the word *safety* but it should. The grounding for this is that safety related initiatives do not necessarily improve workflow or processes but rather make them more complicated, nor does it necessarily have a positive economical factor; yet safety especially in the aviation industry plays a significant role and thus should be included in the definition.

Other thoughts related to the initiative definition related to involving the customer aspect in it, but after discussion it was concluded that the correct place for that is in the submission form, as concluded during the first workshop.

### *Initiative submission form*

It was suggested by the workshop that the category *other* is removed from the form to avoid confusing initiatives being submitted. The category *other* would be replaced by the category *customer specific* that better reflects to the company strategy and vision. This change is the same as suggested by the first workshop.

Another discussed area was related to the option of staying anonymous during the process. An idea was given that instead of having just one option, the form could allow the submitter to choose from three different options where the first would allow complete anonymity, the second would allow publishing the submitter's name in case the initiative is implemented, and the third option would be selected when the anonymity is not required. The third option could also be removed from the form when if none is selected the anonymity is not required.

### *Initiative process proposal*

The process received good feedback. The received comments were more of a question of how each of the sub-process function and how the transparency is achieved. The transparency was explained to the employees by having an open database at the company shared drive where the initiatives may be reviewed and comments given to the program administrator if required. This part is important to include in the training that employees are aware of the accessibility of the initiatives and that they may comment on them through the program administrator if they have good ideas that further develop the initiative.

Then, the discussion was held whether the verbal option of submitting initiatives in the initiative capturing sub-process need to be available or not. The workshop concluded that the verbal option is important as without it, some of the initiatives of shop floor employees may never be submitted. The role of a manager is important as some of the employees may not even realize that their thought may be considered as an initiative. In these cases, the manager need to notify the employee to either fill out the initiative submission form or to verbally submit the initiative through the manager who will then fill out the submission form. In case a form is filled out directly by them employee, there is no requirement of being able to hand it over to the supervisor but the form may directly be taken to the program administrator.

The handling and evaluation sub-processes received good feedback. The idea of having a program administrator received positive feedback and was seen as important to boost the implementation and evaluation of the initiatives. The fact of having an extra step of handling was not seen as crucial compared to the advantages it provides. The handling times of two working days with the initiative handling and five working days with the initiative evaluation received positive comments. It was noted that the times could even be longer if required.

During the implementation and training sub-process, a requirement for an intranet was raised whether process flow chart together with all the required documentation would be available. At this stage, this discussion did not affect the sub-process as the company does not have an intranet in use. It was, however, encouraged the individuals to submit an initiative regarding the use of an intranet once the process is in place.

While discussing the follow-up, archiving and recognition sub-process, an idea from the American police series was raised once in a while to go through the unsolved cases to see if any of them could be raised back under the investigation. The same method could be implemented with the initiative process as the world changes over the time. It means that an initiative that has been submitted already some time ago and received “not to be implemented” decision could still be checked once again to see if anything has changed during the time. It was suggested by the workshop that the program administrator would check once a year the not-implemented initiatives to see if there is anything in particular that could be re-evaluated.

### *Performance indicators of managers*

The suggested performance indicators of the managers received positive feedback and were seen as essential in the overall picture of the initiative process. Without measuring the performance of the managers and requiring them to reach the agreed time limits, the process would not function as it should.

### 5.3.3 Changes to the Process Proposal from Workshops

The feedback from the two workshops have now been discussed in detail. This section will discuss the suggested changes from both workshops and decide the changes towards the final process proposal. Table 10 illustrates the main thoughts from the workshops.

Table 10. Summary of the data from the workshops.

<b>Area of Discussion</b>	<b>Workshop 1</b>	<b>Workshop 2</b>
<b>Initiative Definition</b>	Good, no changes required	Add safety
<b>Initiative Submission Form</b>	1) Remove category other. 2) Add category customer specific 3) Change the wording of the anonymity tick box 4) Add field for actions taken to reach the implementation decision	1) Remove category other 2) Add category customer specific 3) Include three different options for anonymity: full, partial, none.
<b>Capturing Sub-process</b>	Too complex, include only the option to use the form and send it to the program administrator. No verbal option required.	Keep verbal and form options in submitting. The option of handing the form over to the supervisor is not required.
<b>Handling Sub-process</b>	Good, no changes required. The requirement of two working days can be extended.	Good, no changes required. Important to have the program administrator who will handle and follow-up the initiatives. Two working days is good but can be extended.
<b>Evaluation Sub-process</b>	Good, no changes required. The requirement of five working days can be extended.	Good, no changes required. The requirement of five working days can be extended.
<b>Implementation and Training Sub-process</b>	Add step of updating all the applicable manuals before implementation.	In case an intranet is at some point in use, the training and other material could be available through that.

<b>Follow-up, Archiving and Recognition Sub-process</b>	Good, no changes required	Add a step where the program administrator will evaluate once a year the not implemented initiatives to see whether anything has changed.
<b>Performance Indicators</b>	Good, no changes required	Good, no changes required

As seen from the table above, some important suggestion for changes were given. The initiative definition should have safety mentioned in it. In addition, three changes for the submission form could be made. First, the category *other* should be replaced by *customer specific* to guide the submitted initiatives into better direction. Second, the box of staying anonymous is either reformed from *tick the box if you would like to stay anonymous during the process* to *tick the box if proceeding with the initiative with your name is acceptable* or then three options of full, partial or no anonymity are included. Third, the evaluator's page should include a field for the detailed description of taken actions.

The process proposal itself received some suggestion how to further improve it. First, the initiative capturing sub-process could be made simpler by allowing only two options of either filling out the form and sending it to the program administrator or verbally submitting the initiative through one's own manager. Second, the implementation and training sub-process should include a phase where all applicable manuals are updated prior to implementation. Third, the follow-up, archiving and recognition sub-process could have a step where all the initiatives that have not been implemented are once a year skimmed through by the program administrator to see whether the situation have changed and some could be brought back to evaluation.

The final process proposal is presented in the next section where both the initial process proposal and suggested changes from the workshops are combined and included.

#### 5.4 Final Process Proposal for Top Management Approval

Starting from the prerequisites before moving to the initiative process flow chart, the final proposed initiative definition for the case company is included with the word *safety*:

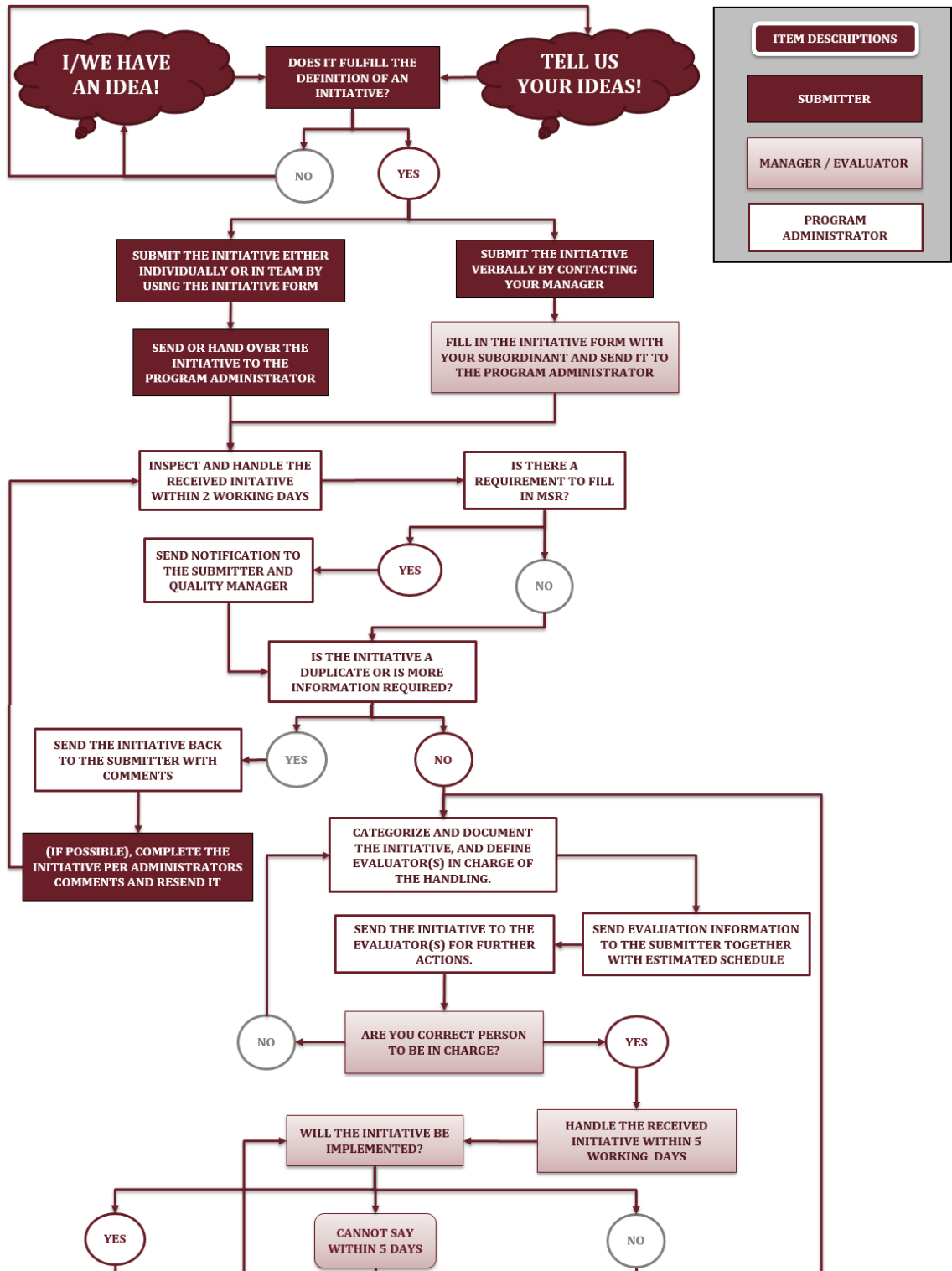
*English definition: Initiative illustrates an insight, a problem, or development area with a proposed solution that improves safety, workflow or processes, or offers an economical factor.*

*Finnish definition: Aloite esittää oivalluksen, ongelman tai kehitysalueen, yhdessä mahdollisen ratkaisun kanssa, joka parantaa turvallisuutta, työn sujuvuutta tai prosesseja, tai tarjoaa taloudellisen edun.*

Three changes to the submission form presented in Appendix 4 have been made. First, the category *other* is removed and replaced with category *customer specific* which better reflects to the company strategy and vision. Second, the tick box of *tick the box if you would like to stay anonymous during the process* is removed and replaced with three boxes of full, partial and no anonymity where the first reflects to full anonymity where the name of the submitter will not be revealed at any stage, second to partial anonymity where the name of the submitter will only be revealed if the initiative is implemented, and third to no anonymity where the name of the submitter will be visible to all throughout the process. The submitter is required to select one of the three options to ensure that he/she is aware of the visibility of his/her name. Third, the second page for evaluator is modified to include a separate field for the detailed description of taken actions to ensure that every aspects that have been consider during the decision making are written down.

The performance indicators of the managers and the program administrator did not change from the initial proposal. The performance indicator for the program administrator is the average handling time which is set to be two working days in the initiative handling sub-process. The performance indicators for the managers are the average evaluation time which is set to be five working days in the evaluation sub-process, and percentage of initiatives implemented within the set schedule. The target for each performance indicator is determined yearly by the case company top management as a part of the overall performance indicator package.

The overall process is built around a program administrator whose main responsibility is to determine the evaluators, ensure high quality of submitted initiatives, follow-up that the initiatives are evaluated and implemented as per the agreed schedule, and to make reports to the company employees, managers and top management. The more detailed descriptions of the responsibilities are discussed in each process stages. The final proposed process flow chart to be taken to the top management approval is illustrated in Figure 12 below.



ITEM DESCRIPTIONS
SUBMITTER
MANAGER / EVALUATOR
PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

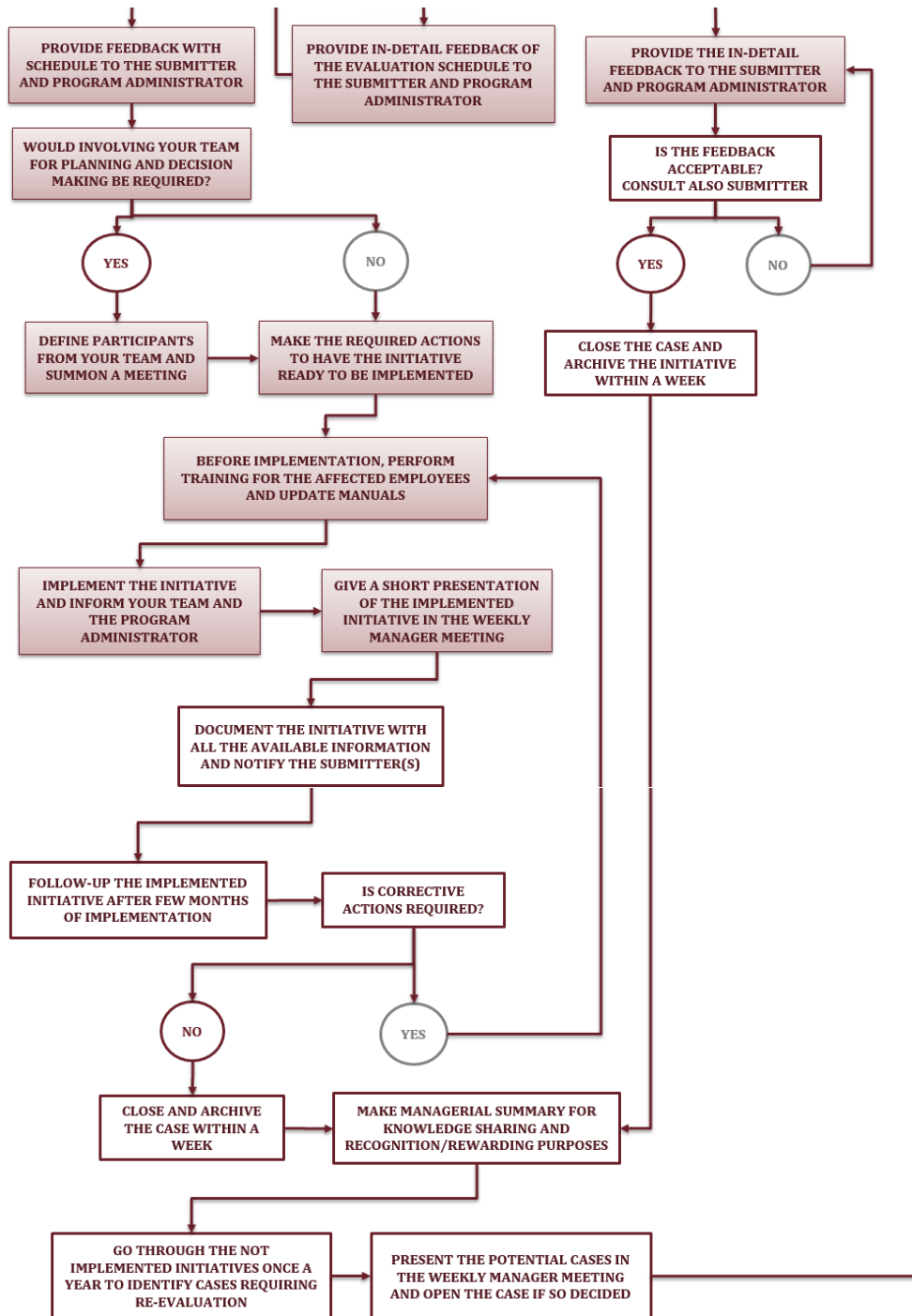


Figure 12. Final process proposal

In the initiative capturing sub-process, either the management will launch a campaign to collect only certain type of initiatives, or it can be initiated by any category idea that comes to the mind of the employees. After checking that the idea fulfills the definition of an initiative, the employees may either submit it verbally through their managers who will then send the initiative to the program administrator or by using the submission form and

sending it to the program administrator. After this has been done the initiative reaches the next sub-process of initiative handling.

In the initiative handling sub-process, the program administrator has two working days to handle the initiative and determine the evaluator. The program administrator will check if there is a requirement to fill out an MSR and if so, inform the submitter and quality manager. Additionally, the administrator will review the initiative to see if it is a duplicate or if some of the required information is missing. If so, the administrator will contact the submitter to either reform or complete the initiative. If it is not possible to alter the initiative so that it could be taken forward, the administrator will delete it and discuss with the submitter. At this point, the initiative is being assigned a case number and categorized by the administrator depending on the initiative nature to initiatives that the department manager may evaluate, initiatives that require a working group of managers from several departments, and initiatives that require top management approval prior to proceeding. After the evaluator has been determined, the information together with the evaluation schedule is sent to the submitter and evaluator. The program administrator is responsible of providing once a month a summary report for all employees including the status of each and every open initiative and the closed initiatives within the last month. After this has been completed, the initiative reaches the next sub-process of initiative evaluation.

In the initiative evaluation sub-process, the assigned evaluator will determine in five working days whether the initiative will be implemented or not, or if more time is required to reach the decision. In case the initiative is not implemented, the evaluator will provide an in-detail feedback to the initiative which is then evaluated by the program administrator and submitter to see that it is acceptable. If not, the evaluator will need to make it better so that the submitter agrees with the decision. If the feedback is acceptable, the case will be archived and closed within a week. If, for some reason, the evaluator is not capable of making the implementation decision within five working days, a feedback and schedule need to be provided to the administrator of when the decision can be made. If the initiative will be implemented, a feedback will need to be given together with a schedule of implementation. After this has been completed, the initiative reaches the next sub-process of initiative implementation and training.

In the initiative implementation and training sub-process, the evaluator will make the required actions to get the initiative implemented and trained within the agreed schedule. The first step is to determine whether a working group from the own team should be



formed. It is highly recommended that a group from the team is formed who will then think of the best way of getting the initiative implemented. This is to increase employee involvement and to further develop the initiative. After all the required actions are done and the initiative is then ready to be implemented, the evaluator shall make a training for the affected employees and also update all the applicable manuals. It is only after the training has been performed and manuals have been updated that the initiative may be implemented and the program administrator will be informed. The evaluator is responsible for preparing a short presentation to be held in the weekly manager meeting regarding the implemented initiative. This is to share knowledge over the departmental borders and to get the good initiatives implemented also in other departments. After this has been completed, the initiative reaches the next sub-process of initiative follow-up, archiving and recognition.

In the initiative follow-up, archiving and recognition sub-process, the program administrator will make a follow-up inspection of the implemented initiative and archive the case. The program administrator will inform the submitter about the implementation date and document all the available information to the submission form to get make it as informative as possible to whoever views it afterwards. After few months of implementation, the program administrator shall make an audit at the affected department to see if the implemented initiative is in use and known by the employees. If corrective actions are required, the initiative is taken back to the evaluator whose responsibility is to make corrective actions to either re-train the employees or by removing it from use and manuals if the initiative was not seen as usable in practice. Once the follow-up is performed satisfactorily, the program administrator shall close and archive the case and prepare a short managerial report for knowledge sharing, rewarding and recognition purposes. The program administrator's responsibility is once a year to review the initiatives that were not implemented to see if there is changes in some of them that could be taken into re-evaluation. These cases will be handled in the weekly manager meeting and decide whether some of them will be re-evaluated. If so, the program administrator shall determine the evaluator and inform the submitter about the re-evaluation.

The final process proposal has now been discussed in detail. The next section will introduce the final process proposal to the top management and seek the approval to reach the final process.

## 6 Seeking for Top Management Approval

In this section, the top management of the case company is interviewed and asked to provide feedback for the final process proposal, and ultimately presents the final initiative process for the case company.

### 6.1 Overview of the Top Management Approval

In this study, the final approval for the process is sought from the managing director of the case company. The way towards the final process is in two parts. First, an open interview was carried out as discussed in Section 2. The interview form with the summarized feedback is shown in Appendix 6. Second, the findings from the interview are reviewed and listed to obligatory changes and things to consider. The obligatory changes are brought in to the process while the things to consider are reflected to the views of the employees in sections 3 and 5, and applied if seen as important by the end users of the process. After completing the changes, the final process is presented.

### 6.2 Feedback from the Top Management

The feedback from the top management is divided into six categories of 1) initiative definition; 2) initiative submission form; 3) initiative process proposal; 4) program administrator; 5) performance indicators of managers; and 6) other aspects to consider regarding the initiative process. The feedback from the above categories is discussed in detail under this section while the summarized results are shown in Section 6.3.

#### *Initiative definition*

The definition does not need to be changed at all. It is clear and understandable, and definitely not too long for the reader. The fact that a solution for the initiative is required is seen as a really important factor to get the employees to actually submit initiatives rather than complaints. The managing director would like to emphasize that at first, the employees may test the process and submit all kind of things that are not considered initiatives per the definition. The program administrator has a vital role in this phase to guide the behaviour of the employees to the correct direction so that they understand that only initiatives that fulfil the definition are accepted.

### *Initiative submission form*

The selected categories are good and the submitter is definitely able to select one of them for the initiative. A discussion about the anonymity was held that is an employee able to submit an initiative without anyone knowing the name of the submitter. It was explained by the researcher that the name must be there when submitting an initiative. If a full or partial level of anonymity is chosen it is the program administrator who will remove the name from the submission form before sending it forward to the evaluator. This solution was agreed to be the most suitable for the process.

As having only one program administrator would simply not be enough to ensure effective process administration, and the administrators may change during the years, a suggestion was made to include the administrator's name who handled the initiative to the submission form. By doing this, the history becomes better and more importantly, the performance measuring of the administrator is easier when the name of the individual who handled the initiative is visible directly through the initiative submission form.

An obligatory addition to the submission form is fields for listing the true value of the initiative to the case company. This is done first, by creating and adding value categories for the evaluator to choose from, and second, a field for listing the measured true value of the initiative. This is important as the case company is continuously reporting to the headquarters about the results of the initiative program e.g. how much time or money have been saved, or what actions were made to improve safety. Currently, the submission form does not require this which makes it vulnerable to forgetting to include this vital step of information.

Otherwise, the pdf format of the submission form was seen as a good foundation to start with. The company is able to elaborate the submission form once the process is trained and running. Additionally, once the true value of the process is revealed, it is easier to invest money to improve it.

### *Initiative process proposal*

The capturing sub-process received good feedback and the campaigns may definitely be used. A discussion was held that is an employee able to submit any campaign related idea without a solution or not. It was explained by the researcher that even with the campaign items, a proposed solution must be given to fulfil the definition of an initiative.

With the campaigns, the idea is not for the employees to try to fix the entire bigger problem but rather finding small adjustments to the problem that together make it to work better. This may need to be better described in the process description that the employees understand that every little bit counts.

The handling sub-process requires no changes. It was agreed that the MSR step is vital to the company. Currently the process ensures that based on an initiative an MSR may need to be filled out as well. As noted by the managing director it could, however, be the other way around as well meaning that based on an MSR an initiative is submitted. No matter how the MSR is created, the link between the initiative and MSR is good to be there. The categorization at this stage to get the initiative forwarded to the correct individuals is supported and seen as a good idea.

The evaluation sub-process requires one change and one addition based on the feedback. The change to the process is that the implementation schedule should not be defined by the evaluator alone but together with the evaluator's manager. This is important so that the evaluator is not setting the schedule too easy to achieve in order to boost his/her performance indicators. Additionally, the manager of the evaluator may at this stage still shoot down the initiative if it does not support the company long term strategy or goals which the evaluator may not be aware of. This double check is a must and need to be brought into the process. The addition to the evaluation sub-process is for the evaluator to define the initiative value category which is to be measured after the implementation i.e. does it increase safety, save money or time, or increase for example customer satisfaction as it might be the case with customer specific initiatives. The selected value category will then be measured during the follow-up to define the true value of the initiative to the case company.

The implementation and training sub-process also requires few changes. First, as including the short presentation in the weekly manager meeting is an extremely important part of the process, it must be ensured that there is enough time for it. For this reason, the evaluator need to notify the program administrator about a week before the implementation is going to take place to book a date for the presentation together with the required time for the presentation. The program administrator will collect the time required for the presentations together and inform the person in charge of the weekly manager meeting to book the time required for the presentations. Second, the evaluator needs at this stage to define if the true value of the implemented initiative can be seen and measured after

two months of the implementation when the follow-up is held, or if it requires a longer period before the actual results are seen and can be measured. In case a longer period is required, the initiative will remain partially open until the value can be measured trustworthy and be included to the submission form.

The follow-up, archiving and recognition sub-process requires on addition that is derived from the previous sub-process. This addition takes into account the feedback from the evaluator regarding the time the initiative requires to reveal its true value to the case company. The program administrator will, of course, make the follow-up check of the implementation after the two months but in addition to that the program administrator will need to ensure that the true value of the implemented initiative is investigated based on the time frame received from the evaluator during the implementation and training sub-process. It is the evaluator's responsibility to provide the calculations for defining the true value of the initiative but in the end, it is the program administrator who will ensure that these calculations have been made and reported to the submission form.

#### *Program Administrator*

The use of a program administrator is seen as the only way for the case company to have a truly functioning initiative process. In addition to the responsibilities listed in the proposal, the program administrator's responsibilities will need to include ensuring the defining of true values of the initiatives to the case company as discussed during the process feedback phase. It has not been decided at this stage who the individuals taking over the program administrator's responsibilities at the case company would be but that problem is not to be tackled now but later when proceeding to the training and implementation phase.

#### *Performance indicators of managers*

The performance indicators are acceptable although it was suggested that the measurement for the implementation percentage could be thought again. It was discussed that the fix for this may well be to include the process phase where the schedule for the implementation is not only defined by the evaluator but together with the evaluator's manager. This way the performance indicator would better serve the purpose as the evaluators would be forced to set tighter schedules that are more challenging to achieve. The suggested performance indicators receive the full support from the top management and will certainly be included in the managers' indicator portfolio.

### *Other aspects to consider*

A suggestion was made that a tool for summarizing the initiatives could be created as a part of this study. This tool would be accessible to all employees and the management, and include all the initiatives that have been placed over the years. As a part of creating the tool, the data visible in it would need to be defined. The tool needs to include enough data but not too much to avoid it being difficult to read. By using this tool, the employees would be able to see if a similar initiative has already been submitted, and management and program administrator could run reports for certain categories they want to.

Additionally, it was discussed whether the process could be adopted in the entire group. The managing director of the case company is eager to present the process to the group's president and senior directors who could then decide whether to implement it in other group facilities or not. It was explained that the process is suitable to be implemented in all the group's facilities although some minor company related adjustments may need to be taken. These adjustments, however, only reflect to the local aviation regulations as the group's strategy and vision are more or less the same.

The feedback from the top management is now discussed in detail. The next section will summarize the findings and list the obligatory changes and additions, and things to consider.

### 6.3 Summary of the Top Management Feedback

Table 11 below illustrates the feedback from the top management and is divided to obligatory changes and additions, and things to consider.

Table 11. Summary of the top management interview.

<b>Area of Discussion</b>	<b>Feedback</b> <b>Bold = Obligatory change / addition; <i>Italic = Things to consider</i></b>
<b>Initiative Definition</b>	Good, no changes required
<b>Initiative Submission Form</b>	1) Add field for the administrator's name <b>2) Add categories for initiative value definition</b>
<b>Capturing Sub-process</b>	Good, no changes required
<b>Handling Sub-process</b>	Good, no changes required
<b>Evaluation Sub-process</b>	<b>1) Implementation schedule to be defined in co-operation with the evaluator's manager</b> <b>2) Select category for measuring initiative value</b>

<b>Implementation and Training Sub-process</b>	<b>1) Evaluator to book a time for the short presentation in the weekly manager meeting to ensure enough timing</b> <b>2) Evaluator to define a date when the true value of the initiative can be measured</b>
<b>Follow-up, Archiving and Recognition Sub-process</b>	<b>Add a process step where the true value is defined in co-operation between the evaluator and program administrator</b>
<b>Program Administrator</b>	<b>The follow-up of the created value of the initiatives will need to be brought into the responsibilities</b>
<b>Managers' Performance Indicators</b>	<i>Rethink the formulation of the managers' indicator regarding percentage of initiatives implemented within the set schedule</i>
<b>Other Aspects</b>	<i>Create a tool for summarizing the initiatives and reporting</i>

As seen from the above table, there are only few adjustments to the process where the most crucial is adding initiative value categories and a step to measure the true value of the initiatives. The top management considers the initiative process a very important for the case company and they want to show the positive results to the entire group. By having a measured results, the case company also enables the possibility of providing recognition or rewards to the employees who have submitted the initiatives.

The submission form is revised to include the name of the program administrator who handled the initiative as well as initiative value categories. The value categories are derived from the initiative categories where workflow and process improvement are mostly time related, increase in revenue and reduction in costs money related, safety is not necessarily either money or time related so it is considered as an own category, and customer specific and campaign may relate to time, money or safety. A category *other* is also included for cases in which some other category e.g. customer satisfaction is increased. The four categories to value measuring are hence time, money, safety, and other.

A tool for summarizing the initiative data was asked to be created by the top management for reporting, analysing and general visibility purposes. The importance of having the tool is evident but due to the scope of the study it was decided not to create the tool as a part of this study but rather keep it as a separate project and include it in the next steps which are presented in Section 7.2. The grounding for the decision is that the process would function without the tool although it would benefit the company to have a quick reference point where to see submitted initiatives, and to also create reports. The true need for the tool and the categories needed to be included are seen after the process has been in use for some time.

All the data for the initiative process has now been collected and analysed thus the next section will formulate the final initiative process for the case company.

#### 6.4 Final Initiative Process

The initiative definition did not change during the top management approval hence the final form of the definition is as follows:

*English definition: Initiative illustrates an insight, a problem, or development area with a proposed solution that improves safety, workflow or processes, or offers an economical factor.*

*Finnish definition: Aloite esittää oivalluksen, ongelman tai kehitysalueen, yhdessä mahdollisen ratkaisun kanssa, joka parantaa turvallisuutta, työn sujuvuutta tai prosesseja, tai tarjoaa taloudellisen edun.*

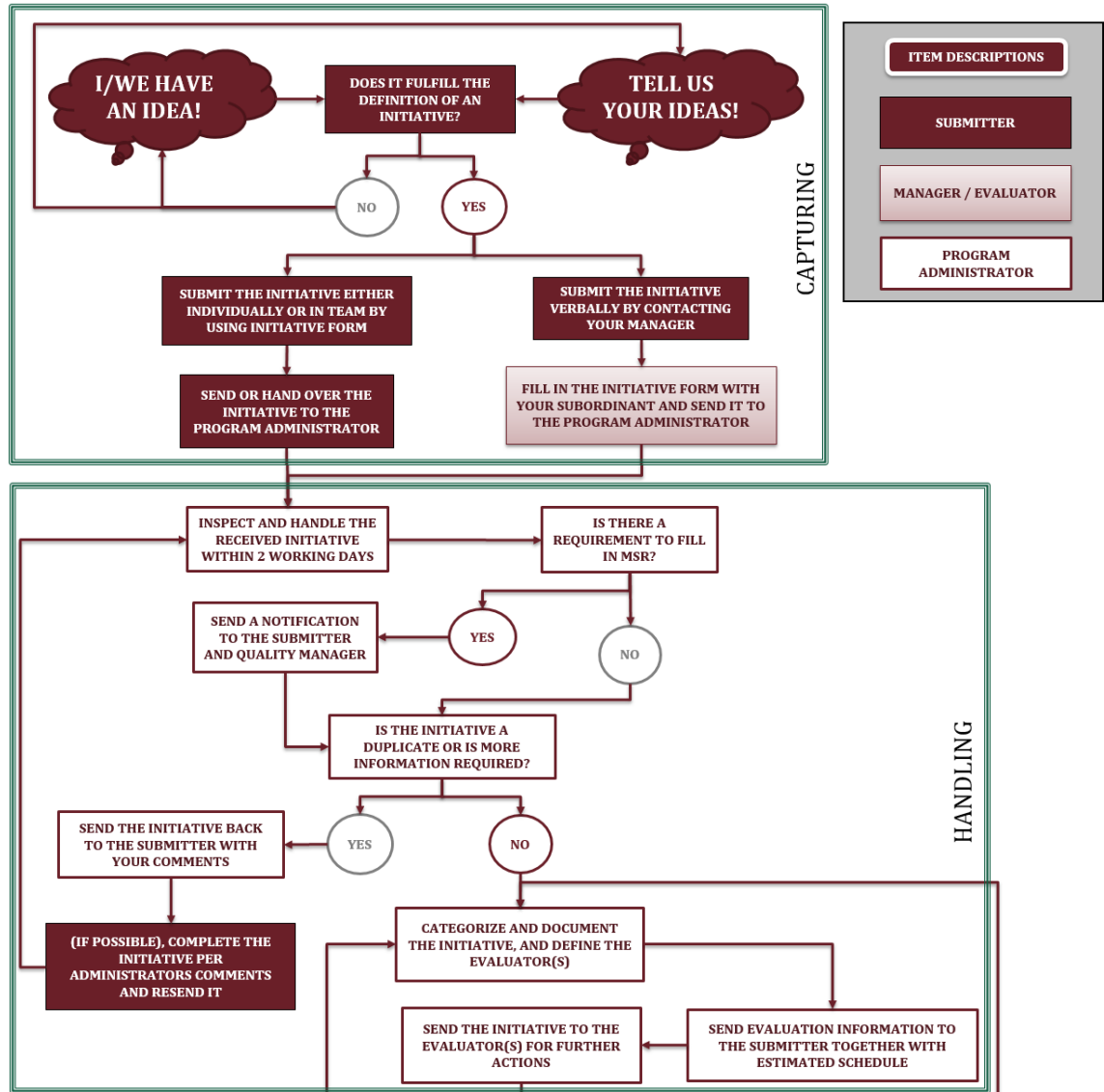
The submission form has been revised both in Sections 5 and 6 and the final form is presented in Appendix 7. Most of the changes were minor but during the top management approval, defining the value of the initiatives was added to the submission form which also had an impact on the process itself. By defining the value, be it time, money, safety, or other, the management of the case company may provide visible results of the program to the headquarters. The submission form is used by the submitter, program administrator, and evaluator, who all bring their own input to the form to make it as informative as possible to whoever reads it through.

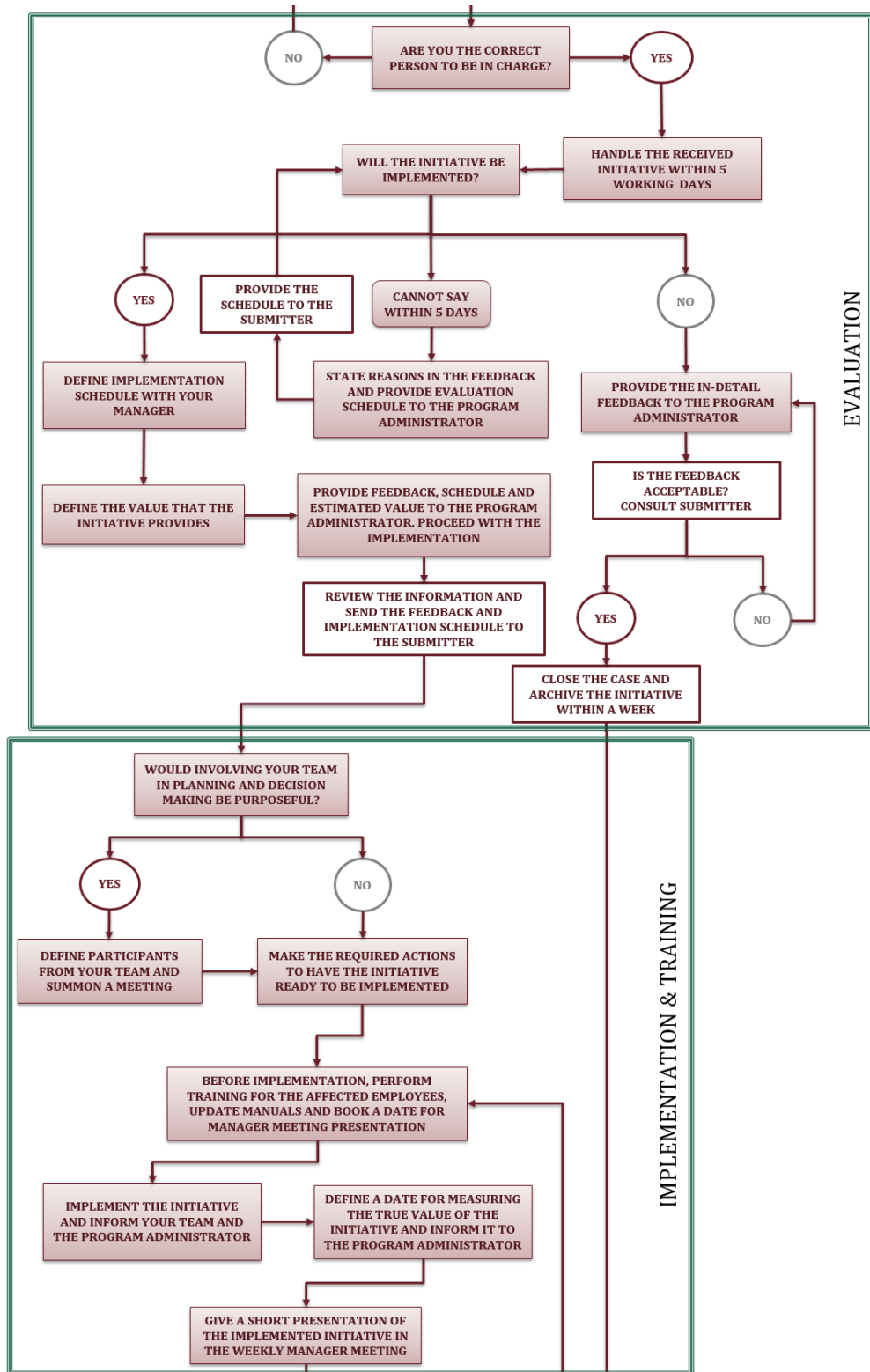
The performance indicators of the program administrator and managers were not changed from the initial proposal. The final performance indicator for the program administrator is the average handling time which is set to be two working days in the initiative handling sub-process while the final performance indicators for the managers are the average evaluation time which is set to be five working days in the evaluation sub-process, and percentage of initiatives implemented within the schedule which is set in the evaluation sub-process. The top management fully supports the above indicators.

The idea of using a program administrator did not change during the feedback sections but some changes to the responsibilities were made. The main responsibilities include the overall responsibility of the handling sub-process, ensuring high quality of submitted initiatives, following-up that the initiatives are evaluated and implemented as per the agreed schedule, and creating reports to the company employees, managers and top



management. The more detailed descriptions of the responsibilities are discussed in each process stages. The final process flow chart for the case company is illustrated in Figure 13 below.





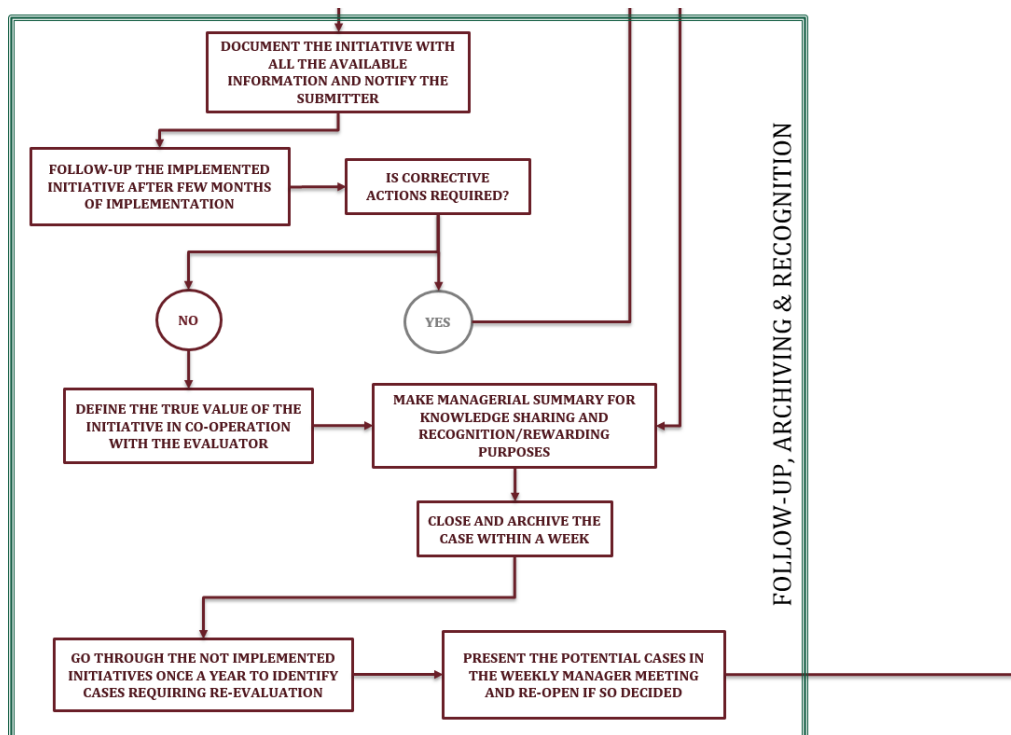


Figure 13. Final initiative process.

The initiative capturing sub-process was not changed during the top management approval although certain steps were better specified. In the initiative capturing sub-process, either the management will launch a campaign to collect only certain type of initiatives, or it can be initiated by any category idea that comes to the mind of the employees. The campaign initiatives do not need to try to tackle the entire problem but rather find the small adjustments that combined make a better end result to overcome the bigger problem. In both cases, be it campaign related or not, the initiative must fulfill the definition and it is the responsibility of the submitter to verify it. The employees may either submit initiatives verbally through their managers who will then send the initiative to the program administrator or by using the submission form and sending it to the program administrator. After this has been done the initiative reaches the next sub-process of initiative handling.

The initiative handling sub-process was not changed during the top management approval. In the initiative handling sub-process, the program administrator has two working days to handle the initiative and determine the evaluators. The program administrator will check if there is a requirement to fill out an MSR and if so, inform the submitter and quality manager to ensure that it will be done. Additionally, the administrator will review the initiative to see if it is a duplicate or if some of the required information is missing or unclear. If so, the administrator will contact the submitter to either reform or complete the

initiative. If it is not possible to alter the initiative so that it could be taken forward, the administrator will delete it and discuss with the submitter. At this point, the initiative is being assigned with a case number and categorized by the administrator depending on the initiative nature to initiatives that the department manager may evaluate, initiatives that require a working group of managers from several departments, and initiatives that require top management approval prior to proceeding. After the evaluators have been determined, the information together with the evaluation schedule is sent to the submitter and evaluators. The program administrator is responsible of providing once a month a summary report for all employees including the status of each and every open initiative and the closed initiatives within the last month. After this has been completed, the initiative reaches the next sub-process of initiative evaluation.

The evaluation sub-process was modified during the top management approval to include defining the initiative value category and setting the implementation schedule together with the evaluator's manager. In the initiative evaluation sub-process, the evaluator will first check that he/she is capable of evaluating the initiative. If not, the initiative can be returned with comments to the administrator who will then re-route the initiative to the correct person. After passing this check, the assigned evaluator has five working days to determine whether the initiative will be implemented or not, or if more time is required to reach the decision. In case the initiative is not implemented, the evaluator will provide an in-detail feedback to the initiative which is then evaluated by the program administrator and submitter to see that it is acceptable. If not, the program administrator will contact the evaluator who will need to make re-formulate it so that it passes the check. When the feedback is acceptable, the case will be archived and closed within a week. If the evaluator is not capable of making the implementation decision within five working days, a feedback stating the reasons and schedule for the decision making will need to be provided to the administrator who will then notify the submitter. A reason for not being able to make a decision in five working days would for example be quotations being sent to the suppliers but not yet received back.

After the evaluator has decided to proceed with the implementation of the initiative, he/she will first need to define the implementation schedule together with his/her manager. At this point, the evaluator's manager will check that it does not violate the company's future plans or long term strategy, and that he/she agrees with the implementation decision. After setting the implementation schedule, the evaluator will define the initiative value category, be it time, money, safety, or other, and estimate the benefits that the

implementation of the initiative will bring to the case company. The initiative will then be provided to the program administrator together with a feedback who will then inform the submitter. After this has been completed, the initiative reaches the next sub-process of initiative implementation and training.

The implementation and training sub-process was modified during the top management approval to include booking a date for the presentation and defining an interval after which the true value of the initiative can be seen and measured. In the initiative implementation and training sub-process, the evaluator's responsibility is to make all the required actions to get the initiative implemented and trained within the agreed schedule. The first step is to determine whether a working group from the own team should be formed. It is highly recommended that a group from the team is formed who will then think of the best way of getting the initiative implemented. This is to reduce the workload of the managers by delegating the works task, and to increase employee involvement and further develop the initiative. The employees will also be more committed to the implementation of the initiative as they have been involved in the planning and listened during the process.

After all the required actions have been made and the initiative is ready for implementation, the evaluator shall first train the affected employees and update all the applicable manuals. At this point, the evaluator shall also inform the program administrator to book a time for the presentation in the weekly manager meeting. This is to ensure that the required time to make the presentation is booked. After the training has been performed and manuals have been updated, the initiative can be implemented. The evaluator is responsible of determining a period after which the true value of the initiative can be seen and measured, and inform it to the program administrator. This is to ensure that the time to measure the value of the initiative is correct as in some cases the true value of the initiative can only be measured after a year or so of the implementation. As a last step, the evaluator is responsible of preparing a short presentation to be held in the weekly manager meeting regarding the implemented initiative. This is to share knowledge over the departmental borders and to get the good initiatives implemented also in other departments. After this has been completed, the initiative reaches the next sub-process of initiative follow-up, archiving and recognition.

The follow-up, archiving and recognition sub-process was modified during the top management approval to include the measuring of the true value of the initiative to the case

company. In the initiative follow-up, archiving and recognition sub-process, the program administrator will make a follow-up inspection of the implemented initiative, define the true value of it to the case company and archive the case. The program administrator will first check the documentation and update it to include all the available information to make it as informative as possible to whoever reads it through in the future. This documentation is also provided to the submitter. After few months of the implementation, the program administrator shall make an audit at the affected department to see if the implemented initiative is in use and known by the employees. If corrective actions are required, the initiative is taken back to the evaluator whose responsibility is to make corrective actions to re-train the employees, re-forming the initiative so that it better supports the department, or remove it from use and manuals if the initiative was not seen as usable in practice.

Once the follow-up is performed satisfactorily, the next step is to determine the true value of the initiative. This may be done at the same time with the follow-up inspection after two months of the implementation but in some cases the true value of the initiative is seen only after a longer period. This period is determined by the evaluator during the implementation and training sub-process. Providing the calculations of the true value to the case company is in the responsibility of the evaluator but the program administrator's responsibility is to go and seek the data and documenting it to the submission form. After the true value for the case company has been determined and documented, the program administrator shall prepare a managerial report for knowledge sharing, rewarding and recognition purposes. At this point, the program administrator shall close and archive the case within a week.

Furthermore, the program administrator's responsibility is once a year to review the initiatives that were not implemented to see if the situation with some of them has changed that could be taken into re-evaluation. The cases that the program administrator selects will be handled in the weekly manager meeting and decided whether or not to re-evaluate some of them. If so, the program administrator shall determine the evaluator and inform the submitter and evaluator about the re-evaluation. The case for re-evaluation will return from here to the evaluation sub-process and is treated as any other initiative according to the process flow chart.

## 7 Discussion and Conclusions

This section summarizes the results of this study and provides suggestions as next steps in the case company.

### 7.1 Summary

This study established a process for capturing, evaluating, documenting and implementing initiatives in the case company context. The case company currently had no process in place although the employees were full of ideas that would benefit the entire organization. The employees were already committed and eager to submit initiatives but the evaluation of those greatly varied and only the easy ones were implemented. Some of the implementation were also based on feelings rather than facts which caused a good environment for poor decisions. It was crucial to get the process established before the motivation of the employees is lost due to inefficient evaluation and implementation, and poor communication and feedback. Due to the nature of the study, a wide range of employees from several different departments were involved. In total, approximately 10% of the case company employees participated the study.

This study was conducted in several steps where first the current state analysis (CSA) was conducted by having several one-to-one interviews with employees from the (dis)assembly, inspection, repair shop, logistics, and technical support. The CSA resulted in strengths and weaknesses of the current state. Second, based on the CSA, the best practice was explored to find general models for capturing initiatives as well as company specific views that would need to be taken into account when formulating the process. Third, a process proposal was built based on the findings from the CSA and best practice, and was presented to the same case company employees that were involved in the CSA interviews. Two workshops were held to formulate the final process proposal. Finally, the process proposal was presented to the top management of the case company to receive final feedback and improvement ideas to the process. The final process for the case company was then formulated based on the feedback from the top management and company employees.

The study resulted in a process that is ready to be implemented. The final process was formed from five sub-processes of capturing, handling, evaluation, implementation and training, and follow-up, archiving and recognition. In the final process, the submitter will receive a feedback for the initiative latest after 7 working days of submission whether the

initiative will be implemented or not, and what are the underlying reasons for the decision. Special attention is paid to the feedback given by the evaluators to the submitters due to the alarming findings during the CSA. Additionally, the implementations are followed-up to ensure that the good initiatives are actually taken into use and trained to the employees. The process also considers cases where the implemented initiatives are found out to be impractical after taken into use. In these cases, the process encourages the evaluators to either re-form the solution so that it becomes practical or have the courage to make a decision and go back to the old system if needed. Finally, the process is integrated with a step to analyze the true value of the initiatives which allows the management to find out the true value of the process to the case company.

In addition to the process itself, an initiative submission form and managers' performance indicators were formed to support the process. The first is crucial to capture as many of the initiatives as possible and latter to ensure the timely handling, evaluation and implementation of the initiatives. The process focuses on transparency and high level of communication and reporting thus a position of a program administrator was formed whose responsibilities and tasks were specified in the study.

This study received excellent feedback from both the case company top management and shop floor employees. The process will be presented to the group's president to have its implementation analyzed in all the group's facilities around the world to obtain standardized procedures regardless of the area of operation.

## 7.2 Next Steps

This study was conducted to create a process for capturing, evaluating and implementing initiatives in the case company context. The process was created in co-operation with the case company employees from many different departments. Due to the scope of the study, several items remain unsolved. This study by itself could be considered as an initiative and should hence follow the created process. The study is now in the stage of ready to implement hence the following actions should be taken.

*Training* of employees is an obligatory step before proceeding with the implementation of the initiative process. The training of employees was not conducted due to the time constraints. First, the managers of each department will need to receive an extensive collaborative training to the initiative process. Second, after the training of the managers



has been done and everyone are on the same line, the department managers shall flow-down the training to their subordinates.

*Updating of manuals* has not been performed at this stage. Before the implementation is done, the procedure manual need to be updated to include the initiative process. The procedure manual is visible to all employees thus allowing them to check the process whenever needed.

*Follow-up* of the process need to be performed after few months of implementation. In this study, the process was not piloted due to a time constraint. The follow-up of the process need to be extensive including several comments from each department and is done by the selected program administrator. It is important to have the courage to revise the process in accordance with the received feedback from the employees as the purpose of the process is to serve the employees as well as it can.

*Recognition and rewarding methods* were not part of this study although they were mentioned in the final process. A project where the company specific ways of recognizing and rewarding the innovative employees and good initiatives should be launched. As discussed in this study, the recognition and rewarding methods have a motivating factor for employees to submit initiatives.

*Software* to be used with the initiatives was not a part of the scope of this study. The process was built to function even with or without a software. To reduce the requirement of manual labor and to improve the reporting and archiving tools, a project for selecting a software to be used with the initiatives is suggested. When selecting the software, an important field of study is to investigate whether the occurrence reporting and initiatives could be handled in the same system.

*Tool* for reporting, analyzing and visibility purposes should be created. This tool was requested by the top management to be used by the entire staff. For the employees, the tool would include all the initiatives to see the status and due dates of each, if a similar initiative has already been submitted, and who has the initiative been assigned to. For the management, the tool would include data required for performance indicators, measured value of the initiatives, and data for creating reports. For the program administrator, whose responsibility the updating is, the tool would include all this that is required for effective follow-up and reporting.

*Implementation in other group facilities* can also be executed once the implementation at the case company has been finalized. The process has been tailored to the case company but as the group's strategy and vision are aiming for the same goal regardless of the facility, only minor changes regarding the local aviation regulations would need to be changed in the process. The case company top management was eager to present the created process to the group's president.

### 7.3 Evaluation of the Thesis

This section first evaluates the outcome of the study by comparing it to the objective, and finally reflects the achieved generalization, reliability and validity of the study to the defined plan in Section 2.4.

#### 7.3.1 Objective and Outcome

The objective of this study was to create a process to use for capturing, evaluating, documenting and implementing employee initiatives. Additionally, the objective was to have a process that encourages the employees to submit initiatives and by increasing the employee involvement, the process would help to create a proactive culture in developing the company and its operations. The final process is an end result of interviews and workshops of several volunteers from the case company that were closely involved in the process creation. The process itself encourages employee participation and is focusing on the collaboration, communication and transparency through all stages without forgetting the documented way of capturing and implementing the initiatives. In addition to the process itself, this study formulated an initiative submission form and performance indicators for managers. The initiative submission form enables a high level of documentation while the performance indicators ensure timely evaluation and implementation of the initiatives. Due to these facts it can be concluded that the objective is achieved.

The outcome of this study was defined to be a documented, top management approved process for the case company use that is ready to be implemented. The created process received approval from the top management with slight adjustments that enabled following-up the true value of the process to the case company. With the addition of an initiative submission form, the process is ready to be implemented once it has been trained to the employees and a company manual is updated based on this study. The training and updating of manuals could not have been done prior to finishing the study and receiving

the top management approval. However, the process could be implemented as is without training and updating of manuals hence it can be concluded that the outcome is achieved although it would not make sense to implement the process without a proper training and fully updated manuals.

To conclude, both, objective and outcome of this study have been achieved. This study provides a documented, top management approved process for the case company to capture, evaluate, implement, and document employee initiatives.

### 7.3.2 Reliability and Validity

The Section 2.4 discussed the reliability and validity plan of this study where first internal and external validity were discussed. The internal validity in this study was achieved first through structured one-to-one interviews that included volunteers from all departments within the case company, second through workshops including a cross-departmental mix to ensure different perspectives being used widely, and third by seeking top management approval in a semi-structure interview. Although the level of internal validity can be considered to be high, it could have been further improved by sending a questionnaire to the all of the case company employees to verify the findings from the CSA.

The external validity in this study was achieved by finding the best practice solutions from several industries to gain an insight of how an initiative process is created in general. The external validity could have been improved by conducting interviews in other companies that have an implemented initiative process. The generalization from this study is challenging due to the process being tailored to a specific, rather small MRO. The concepts of external validity and generalization are not, however, seen as important in this study as the internal validity, due to the purpose of creating a company specific process that do not need to be applied in other companies as is.

The reliability of this study was achieved through semi-structured and open interviews that were all tape recorded and field notes were collected. In the current state analysis, the use of semi-structured interviews was used to allow comparability of the replies while in the top management approval an open interview was used to obtain as much data as possible that was not yet thought of. Additionally, database from the interviews and workshops were built and were included in the appendices of this study. The databases were built to reduce the problem of qualitative studies including interviews as people are not

static and may respond differently depending on the occasion and interviewer. Finally, it can be concluded that although the results of this study may not be generalized, other companies facing similar challenges should learn from this case.

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## Current State Analysis Interview Form

**Master's Thesis Interview**

TOPIC: Current State Analysis of the Case Company

**Information about the informant**

Table 1

Details	
<b>Name (code) of the informant</b>	
<b>Position in the case company</b>	
<b>Date of the interview</b>	
<b>Duration of the interview</b>	
<b>Document</b>	Field notes + Tape Recording

**Field notes**

Table 2

	Topic(s) of the interview	QUESTIONS	FIELD NOTES
<b>1</b>	Participant details:	<i>What is your position in the company?</i>	
		<i>Have you had other positions in the company?</i>	
		<i>Are you experienced with initiative processes from other companies and how were they like?</i>	
<b>2</b>	Submitting of initiatives	<i>What type of initiatives have you submitted in the last year or so?</i>	
		<i>How frequently you submit initiatives in average?</i>	
		<i>Who did you approach with the initiatives?</i>	
		<i>How did that person handle the initiative?</i>	
		<i>Was it clear who to approach?</i>	
		<i>If not, how did you solve the situation?</i>	
		<i>What methods do you use to submit initiatives (email, written, verbal)?</i>	
<b>3</b>	Identify strengths & problems	<i>How you see the handling of initiatives today at GATES in general?</i>	
		<i>How has the situation developed in recent years?</i>	

		<i>What you think are the main reasons for this?</i>	
		<i>How do you currently see the role of the managers?</i>	
<b>4</b>	Motivation	<i>Do you see it worth the trouble to submit initiatives?</i>	
		<i>What are the main reasons for this?</i>	
		<i>What kind of atmosphere there is for submitting initiatives amongst colleagues?</i>	
		<i>What is the main driver for you to submit initiatives?</i>	
<b>5</b>	Feedback	<i>In general, were you given feedback about the initiatives you submitted?</i>	
		<i>Do you know how many of the initiatives were implemented?</i>	
		<i>What type of initiatives were implemented?</i>	
		<i>What type were not or remains unknown?</i>	
		<i>Were you given credit about the initiatives you submitted?</i>	
<b>6</b>	Other	<i>Has something remained undiscussed about the current state that you would like to bring up?</i>	
		<i>Is there anything you would like to recommend to take into account when formulating the process proposal?</i>	



## Current State Analysis Interview Database

Interview Question	(Dis)assembly 1	(Dis)assembly 2	Repair Shop 1	Repair Shop 2	Inspection 1	Inspection 2	Technical Support 1	Logistics 1
1a	Engine Mechanic	NDT inspector but the official title in work contract says engine mechanic.	Process worker at cleaning. Also thermal coating and heat treatments.	I am a craftsman. I do tasks related to plating, peening, painting and helping with too manufacturing etc.	Inspector	Engine inspector.	Working as a test cell engineer. Responsible of the upkeep of test cell and other activities related to that area.	Inspector. I am working in logistics.
1b	No, I recently joined the company in May 2014.	I have been in CF6 and CFM lines as an engine mechanic and also in cleaning to do wet blasting of parts.	Engine Mechanic for few years.	Yes, I was an engine mechanic for few months while the company still had the job rotation function.	Engine mechanic but that was long time ago	I have been working as an engine mechanic.	I started as an electrician and moved then to the technical support assisting the electricians. From that position I took over the vacancy I currently have.	I was hired here as an engine mechanic where I worked between 87-99. At first I was working in blade shop after which I moved forward to CF6 line. I have also been working in cleaning.
1c	In my previous work place we had visibility over the tasks to be done that were considered as initiatives. We could effect on the decisions made for our field. We had white boards with information on them that was frequently updated. Every two weeks a development engineer went through the current status of each task with us.	Finnair had a system. I kind of worked but was slow and not all things were handled at all.	In my past experience at Finnair employees were given incentives based on the initiatives. On the down side, the company's supervisor did not take seriously enough the given initiatives. Or then the supervisors said yes to the ideas but nothing happened afterwards.	At Finnair, they had a board that handled these ideas. They also counted the monetary value of each initiative and made the decision based on that.	At Finnair, they had a process but frankly it did not work well as it was not treated as should.	Finnair had a system. It was interesting. For example when one guy retired, we found placed initiatives from his desk that never went forward.	During the Finnair years we had a process which was quite okay.  It was well instructed and the instructions were in the intranet.	From Finnair I have. The Finnair's system was quite ok. They had also possibilities for gaining monetary benefits from the initiatives. At the end the system started to collapse either because it was purposely driven down or then the individual who managed it just did not have time for it. You had the option to make initiatives during your working hours which was good. It was not a collective in a sense that everyone did their initiatives individually and others could not comment on those.
2a	Some small practical stuffs like how the workstation is arranged and how it would better serve our work.	I have mostly given recommendations that this and that should be done. Initiatives have concerned about arrangement of work stations, acquisition of tools and such, for example repairs. I have	Initiatives regarding general cleanliness and order of work stations.	Some tool acquisition proposals and things that make everything work better and easier.	Process development related things such as how disposition shop orders are handled. Some of these are long projects that are hard to implement very quickly.	Some improvements to the current processes like how things could be done better.	It is hard to say what an initiative is and what is not. I have, for example, given initiatives to change the electronic documents and own libraries into html format. We current have some files in office format, some in open office format and people are complaining how	It is hard to say as I cannot really tell which counts as an initiative.  The ones I can say are things related to the ways of working at the receiving inspection. For example the way we handle customs activities has changed after I took the initiative to change it. I have also

		not submitted any major initiatives.					these different formats do not function seamlessly causing difficulties and poor documents being produced. In my opinion that is really stupid as these issues could be fixed by having an html format on all documentation. I have also introduced the idea of having an intranet.	given initiatives regarding the general layout of our office. Some of these are still ongoing as we just moved to a new location and one of our staff is still to join us. Also, adding another label printer was my idea. Now we only have one working printer which is located in totally different place than where we are.
2b	Approximately once a month	It depends of how big fault or what is needed and how often.	Currently approximately three times a year	At least once per month	Currently approximately 2 times a year	once per two months	Once in a while. It is really hard to say exactly any number.	Again, really hard to tell. Possibly one for every six months.
2c	Line Inspectors	Our supervisors, manager or then our NDT specialists. Three persons there usually are available.	Colleagues first and supervisor if needed.	Supervisor.	Production manager. This was before we got a manager for our department.	My manager.	Mostly colleagues. These ideas usually come during discussions on the aisles. The colleagues then can instantly say if it sounds a good idea or not. I will also approach the manager responsible of the area that my idea is concerning. Our company is rather small meaning we all know each other and can openly discuss.	My manager. We of course discuss about these with our colleagues first to avoid pushing forward any stupid ideas.
2d	Some are handled instantly, some forgotten because none of the line inspectors writes down anything.	Well, our specialists seems to forget all kind of things and he needs some kicking to get things done. Otherwise everything works ok as the supervisor gets things done.	Pretty well if the issue was critical.	Quite freely, they take it but do not write it down.	Quite well. After one development idea we actually got our own boss.	Usually listens and forgets what I said. As we do not have any system in use it either goes forward to get forgotten.	If the initiative is easy to do then it will usually be handled quite soon and efficiently.  If it requires any additional effort or is a tricky one to implement, then is usually is forgotten and not implemented.	It really varies a lot. Time is not available for him quite often which causes some of the initiatives to be on hold. He has a good attitude towards the initiatives as he does not crush any ideas but takes them all positively and gives them the time.
2e	No, the line inspectors were the easiest option as they are always there.	It currently is with the new structure. Now we really know who our supervisor is. Before it used to be that go and	Not necessarily.	Not really. It is a bit unclear whether we need to contact the supervisor or not and where the limits	Not really. You need to think whose responsibility area it might be and take the item to that person.	No in any way.	In one sense no, but on other hand yes as we still are a small company hence we know each other well. But as said, due to the lack	We do not have any individual responsible of the initiatives hence for me as our manager is the only logical

		ask this person, he/she might know and be able to help you.		are. Do I need to tell or can I just do it?			of the process, we do not have any appointed person who to contact.	option. What I have understood is that he takes the initiatives forward to another departments to have a chat with them.
2f	The line inspectors just are the logical option.	<b>Not discussed</b>	I just told to the first person who came to the department.	Depends on the amount of work required. If it is an easy fix, then it is probably just easier to go and do it. With more complex tasks, a confirmation is first required.	-	It is the easiest way to say it to my manager. It is really hard to go anywhere else to say it.	<b>Not discussed – see above</b>	<b>Not Discussed</b>
2g	I tell my ideas for the line inspectors. Speaking is the easiest way for me.	It depends, I usually prefer verbal way. If that is does not possible, I either send a sms or an email. I however try to avoid email as those are usually not read until three weeks later or so.	Verbally.	Verbally.	Email	Verbally and by email.	Verbally or by email. I prefer email when it is more complex so that everything is written own and the one who receives the initiative can familiarize himself with it.	I give them verbally but it is because of the person who I am giving the initiatives. He is usually available so it is easy to give these.
3a	Extremely poor. Silly decisions are made without asking anything from the employees. For example the AGB assembly line was moved to a new location without asking any comments from the employees. The new location is not the best and could have been taken elsewhere if just the employees would have been aware of the change	Pretty poor at lease what I have seen and given the initiatives. No actions really have been made.	Quite poor. Employees are not encouraged to give initiatives. Also, they are not made aware frequently enough that initiatives could be given. The attitude of "give us ideas" is missing.	Can't say. Is there such thing at all?	There should be a process in place that would allow us giving initiatives also anonymously. Currently it is not an option.  Some ideas are hard to give as there is a group pressure.	There is no current way of handling. Initiatives and development suggestions are both not handled by any way.	We do not have any official process in place hence it is hard to say. At least it is not good.	We do not have any existing way of doing these. In the informative meetings considering the entire company I have not seen anyone to tell you not giving initiatives. For me that is the sign that everything is good and keep on pushing. For some that might not be enough but they might require a clear sign for thinking and submitting initiatives.
3b	The situation is probably even worse than year ago	I have not really seen any improvement as there has not been any system in place.	It has been developing to a better direction	Not really.	Not to any direction	No I has not as we do not have any process in place.	At least I have not spotted any development.	I really have not seen it developing to any direction.

3c	The change of the manager. We got a new manager late last year. Before that we had a manager that listened us more and took actions based on our comments. Our new manager is not as easily approachable	Due to not having any system in place.	I feel like employees are listened more carefully and things are actually processed and implemented.	Because there is no process in place.	Because there is no process.	There is no nominated person to handle the initiatives.	We are just beginning the life with the new owner so that might be the reason why no one has not focused on this aspect.	Because everyone are really busy. Our manager really does all kind of things he should not be doing. We have said him about this that he should be focusing on other, more managerial issues but he still does some of our jobs.
3d	They would need to make sure that initiatives are implemented and shown to the employees.	I personally have not met anyone to come and say that good job, please keep placing initiatives. It is really on your own responsibility to stay active.	Vital. They have more power in making decisions, better network and wider understanding of the big picture. They also get support from other departments.	They currently a good, supportive role. The supervisors are listening to us and taking action.	They would need to implement the ideas. They need to motivate and remind us about the development ideas and if we have them.	Their role is poor. They do not have tools to help employees.	I have not really spotted any efforts from the managers to motivate us. They do listen which is a good thing so in that sense they can be seen to motivate.	It is really important. As I said, the heavy work load causes issues and these things tend to stay in the background.
4a	If it is something that is quick and easy to make that makes my job easier, then I will submit it. If it something complex or heavy, I see no benefit for submitting it.	Sometimes I do and sometimes I get so frustrated that I could not care less. With something that I clearly see can be implemented, I see it worth the trouble.	Yes.	Yes.	Yes I do.	Yes I do.	I definitely do.	Yes I do as it has impact on my own working conditions.
4b	The complex ideas are usually not listened careful enough and even if something is made, the credit is taken by the one who actually implemented it, not me, who had the idea.	Mainly due to nothing happens no matter how many times it is said. Nothing happens for the initiatives.	It is not a big thing to give initiatives. But important factor is that the initiatives are listened.	To make my job easier and to remove all the unnecessary items.	I would like to make my job easier.	To make my own work easier. Of course it is nice if I get an incentive but the most important reason is to help myself.	The one who places the initiative benefits from that and also the company might get financial benefits.	I would be stupid to make everything the hard way, right. The impact on my own working is important.
4c	Some are eager the submit initiatives, these are mostly younger employees although there are exceptions. The older employees are happy and used with the current way of doing the job.	We really do not discuss with the colleagues about these. All of us know the issue that nothing happens if you go and say about these.	Good atmosphere	Positive attitude. We think these together.	We openly discuss with each other about the ideas we have. Most of these are coffee break discussions and decisions are then either forgotten or not obeyed by everyone.	They are waiting to get a process. No one really wants to do any initiatives unless if it is really important.	We really do not speak about initiatives with the colleagues.	Good. I have a good relationship with my colleagues so we can openly share our ideas. I have also seen the other guys who have worked there for long time being active in submitting initiatives.

4d	To make my job easier	It makes my own life easier. Being a lazy guy I want to get everything done as easy as possible.	Makes me feel better in my job. To protect parts and people. To care from myself and others.	Just to make my job and life easier.	Make my job easier and to avoid blame. For example the WAIT-shelf for parts that are awaiting engineering action are now taken off from our tables to a separate shelf. This way it can be seen that it is not our fault that it is waiting. But the system still shows it as being in our work center.	<b>Not Discussed – See 4b</b>	If I just feel like there is a better way to do this. Of course, an incentive plays a role if I can get a reward for giving good ideas.	Because it makes sense to do so. It makes my own work easier. My initiatives nowadays affect also other departments than just us. I try to look at the big picture and think which might be the best way for us all.
5a	No	Well, it depends. I have given some feedback about the things that do not go forward but not really received any myself.	No	Quite little.	Yes I have.	Sometimes. Maybe in one out of five. Someone comes to tell me that this has gone forward and what has been done. Our managers have changed quite often meaning we really do not have a stable situation.	Someone might have said the yes, this is a good idea. But that really is it, nothing more feedback is being given.	Yes I have been given feedback. The feedback is verbal feedback like good idea, let's do that. It really is unofficial feedback
5b	Few, less than 1/10.	Do not really know. The amount of initiatives is a rather small and I have not really paid any attention to that.	Yes I do. That is because I have given only few initiatives in the last year or so.	At least majority of them. I can't remember that any would have been remained mystery.	I mostly do.	I cannot tell.	As I said before, it is hard to say which counts as an initiative. But the ideas which I have given are usually not implemented meaning that I kind of know the status.	Yes I mostly do. The types of initiatives I have placed are such that it is easy to see whether those have been implemented or not.
5c	Workstation improvements.	Some general workstation order related things. Really easy stuff.	<b>Not discussed – see above</b>	<b>Not discussed – see above</b>	<b>Not discussed – see part 2</b>	Mostly process improvements. Moving shelves, arranging work environment. A good example is when we arranged the MRB area to a better way. This was our own initiative as	<b>Not discussed</b>	The customs activities and layout things.

						no one really said anything to that, we just went and rearranged it.		
5d	Some re-arrangements in the layout of the work areas	Some of those that do not feel good but it is hard to say.	<i>Not discussed – see above</i>	<i>Not discussed – see above</i>	The process manual is still a bit mystery. It was said half a year ago that it is coming. I still have not seen it.	I can't say.	<i>Not discussed</i>	Some smaller stuff that possibly are not even considered initiatives.
5e	No	Not really. I do not see it important. Or maybe if it is a really big thing that saves lives etc., then it could be worthwhile.	Colleagues have given positive feedback about the initiatives. Supportive atmosphere.	No, not really.	No.	Not in this company. It really has two sides and I do not see it important.	No I have not. During the Finnair years the method was to give the incentive. I think it would be good to get some credit if the idea is really a big one and benefits the company a lot.	Not really much than having my boss being happy and to say about that. All it has been really unofficial.
6a	A good idea would be to record the ideas given to you	Umm, not really. Nothing big at least. Most of it has been discussed already.	Give information to employees that please give us your ideas. Reminders and support from managers all around the company.	About the current situation, the atmosphere is quite open. We can give ideas and those will be implemented.	We need to have a process. The current way is not good.	We should have a process that would help us to examine and fix things. Also, feedback should be given and a reason for yes or no.	Not really, it would be good to have this done and a process in place.	Not really.
6b	A simple way of recording the given ideas, for example a white board would be great. Not necessarily a software needed. Going through the state on each idea in a regular basis is needed. Clear, formal channel is required.	If some software is used in the future, it should not be complex in any way. The submitting of initiatives should be as easy as possible to get them done.	Not really.	The process should be easy to use and simple. All unnecessary steps should be taken off.	The feedback should be given to all ideas whether those are implemented or not. Also reasons for the decision should be given. Incentive system could also be in place although it does not matter from my perspective that much.	There should be a place where to see what types of initiatives have already been given to avoid giving same things many times again.	For the future process I would like it to be as easy to use as possible. If it becomes too hard, then the ideas will not be placed.	Not really. We will discuss about this later on so it is easier to say then.

## Process Proposal Workshop Agenda




**Intelligently Defining Aviation**

### CAPTURING INITIATIVES IN AN MRO ORGANIZATION

17.4.2015 & 21.4.2015  
Tommi Karlsson


1



### Content

- Current State Analysis
- Conceptual Framework
- Initiative Definition
- Program Administrator
- Measuring the Performance of Managers
- Proposed Initiative Process
- Feedback for the Proposed Process


2




### Findings from the Current State Analysis

Weaknesses	Strengths
Lack of initiative definition	Managers and supervisors do listen and are open to new ideas
No responsible person for initiatives	Feedback is received from colleagues which is seen important
Somewhat unclear who to contact → Managers do not encourage to submit initiatives	Rather small company where all know each other → Open communication opportunities
Lack of Documentation	
Only easy ones are implemented, more complex ones are not	
No measurements for initiatives and implementation exists	
Lack of communication and knowledge sharing. No proper feedback is received	


3



### Conceptual Framework




4



### Initiative Definition

- *English definition: Initiative illustrates an insight, a problem, or development area with a proposed solution that either improves workflow or processes, or offers an economical factor.*
- *Suomeksi: Aloite esittää oivalluksen, ongelman tai kehitysalueen, yhdessä mahdollisen ratkaisun kanssa, joka joko parantaa työn sujuvuutta tai prosesseja, tai tarjoaa taloudellisen edun.*


5



### Program Administrator

- The basic idea of the proposed process is to build it around a program administrator and his/her deputy whose responsibility is to handle the initiatives and document the initiatives and act as a vital link between the submitters, managers and top management
  - The administrators need to be enthusiastic individuals who have good contacts throughout the organizations

6




### Measuring the Performance of Managers

- Proposed process defines time limits in which each step need to be completed
  - Managers and program administrators are measured on two things
  - Average handling and evaluation time of initiatives
  - Percentage of initiatives implemented within the set schedule
  - The target levels of each will be determined yearly by the top management

7



### Process Proposal - Subprocesses



8

### Capturing an Initiative 1/2

- Either individually or in teams. No maximum limit.
- Either purely own idea or then a specific idea based on the campaign determined by the top management and managers.
- Check if definition is fulfilled.
- Either verbally or in written format
  - Using initiative for is preferred
  - Verbal way of submitting initiatives is seen important during the current state analysis
  - Can be filled out together with the manager

### Capturing an Initiative 2/2

### Initiative Submission Form

- Includes three categories:
  - Submitters
  - Evaluator
  - Program Administrator
- All documentation will be in one file
- PDF-form thus allowing an easy handling through all computers

### Initiative Handling 1/2 (2 working days)

- Determining validity & assigning evaluators
- Check MSR requirement, determine validity and availability of all required information.
  - More information is requested from submitter if required
- Assigning a case number and filing the initiative to a place where all employees have access
- Assigning evaluator(s) and categorizing in one of the three:
  - Manager can evaluate and approve
  - Working group needs to be assigned
  - Requires top management approval before proceeding
- Will be sent to the evaluator(s) and schedule is provided to the submitter(s)
- Once a month an email is sent with updated status of each initiative
  - This is to build up pressure to the managers to get the initiatives handled.

### Initiative Handling 2/2

### Initiative Evaluation 1/2 (5 working days)

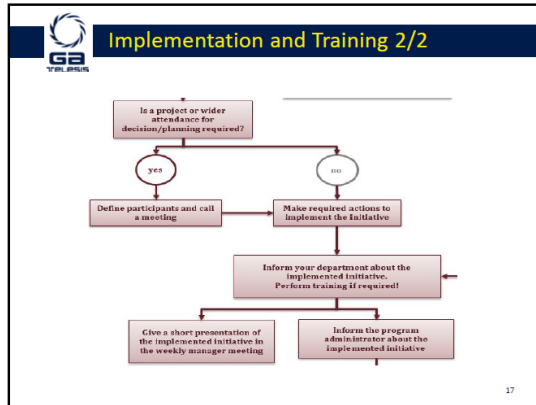
- Decision whether to implement or not.
  - If the decision cannot be made within 5 working days, a precise schedule is provided when the decision will be made
- In all cases, a detailed feedback is provided
- In case the initiative will not be implemented, the feedback is checked by the program administrator together with the submitter(s) before closing and archiving the initiative
  - In case the feedback is not understood or otherwise approved by either the submitter(s) or program administrator, it will be taken back to the evaluator(s) for re-evaluation
  - Additionally, tripartite-discussion is an option including submitter(s), program administrator and evaluator(s)
- If the initiative will be implemented, a schedule of the implementation is provided

### Initiative Evaluation 2/2

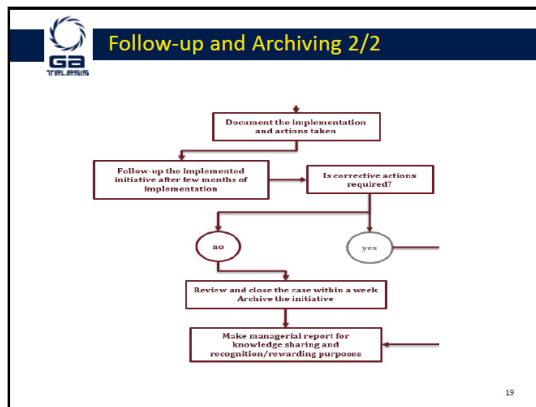
### Implementation and Training 1/2

- According to the set schedule
- Evaluator need to review the requirement of setting up a working group from his/her department
  - This is to increase the co-creation inside the department
- After the initiative is ready to be implemented, the department must be informed
  - An email by itself is not adequate but also a meeting is required
  - Training is always preferred although some extremely simple things may be implemented without training.
- After implementation, the program administrator is informed
- The manager will also give a short presentation at the weekly manager meeting about the implemented initiative
  - This is to share knowledge over departmental borders and keep the initiatives visible every week





- ### Follow-up and Archiving 1/2
- Program administrator will perform after two months of implementation date
    - In case the implementation is not successful for whatever reason, the initiative remains open and is handled back to the manager for corrective actions
  - After completing the follow-up satisfactorily, the initiative will be closed and archived
  - The managers and top management will be provided a report including the details of the implemented initiative
    - The recognition / rewarding will be determined based on this report
  - Implemented initiatives will be handled in quarterly staff meetings
- 18



- ### Feedback for the Process Proposal
- Initiative Definition
  - Initiative Submission Form
  - Initiative Process Proposal
    - Each Subprocess
    - Program Administrator
  - Performance measuring of managers
- 20

## Proposed Initiative Submission Form

Part 1:

{ 1 }



## GA Telesis Engine Services

Initiative Submission Form

CASE No.

### Employee Information

Employee Name:	Date:
Employee ID:	Job Title:
Manager:	Department:
Tick the box if you would like to stay anonymous during the process: <input type="checkbox"/>	

### Initiative Category

<input type="checkbox"/> Workflow Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Process Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety	<input type="checkbox"/> Campaign
<input type="checkbox"/> Increase in Revenue	<input type="checkbox"/> Reduction in Costs	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<i>At least one category need to be selected. See examples of each category in procedure manual.</i>			

### Details of the initiative

Have You Discussed With Your Colleagues Before Submitting the Initiative?  Yes  No

Description of the Initiative:

Proposed Solution:

Attachments:

Part 2:

{ 2 }

Evaluators Feedback to Submitter			
Will the initiative be implemented?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs Further Evaluation
Schedule of the Implementation OR evaluation:			
<u>Feedback to the submitter:</u>			

Part 3:

{ 3 }

Initiative Administrator			
Initiative Received: Date			
Is there a requirement to fill in an MSR?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	MSR No.	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Initiative Assigned to:			
Evaluated Initiative Received: Date			
Feedback Reviewed and Approved: Date			
Initiative Implemented:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Date	<input type="checkbox"/> No:
Follow-up of implementation performed satisfactorily: Date			
Other:			

### Process Proposal Workshop Feedback Database

Feedback Item	Workshop 1	Workshop 2
<p><b>Initiative Definition</b></p>	<p>The definition is clear and understandable. All the participants would be able to determine whether their idea would be considered as an initiative or not, and what should be done to develop the idea so that it fulfills the definition.</p> <p>A discussion was held whether a customer orientation should be mentioned in the definition as it is a part of the company's strategy and vision. It was concluded that the definition is not the correct place to have it as it would make the definition more complex than it should. The customer orientation can be done visible in the submission form.</p>	<p>The proposed definition is good but it should also contain the word safety. This is because safety has the highest priority in the aviation industry but it does not necessarily improve the workflow or processes, or does it necessarily offer any economical factor. The employees should however, be aware that that safety related initiatives are more than welcome.</p> <p>It was also discussed whether the customer aspect should be brought up in the definition but the conclusion was that the correct place for it is in the initiative submission form categories.</p>
<p><b>Initiative Submission Form</b></p>	<p>It was suggested that the category other is replaced with category customer specific. This way the employees do not start submitting initiatives with category other but actually need to put it in one of the given categories. The customer specific category then reflects to the company strategy and vision.</p> <p>The check box for staying anonymous was suggested to change the other way around so that instead of checking if the submitter wants to stay anonymous, the box will be checked if it is okay for the submitter to have his/her name visible. It was suggested that the evaluator's page where feedback is given is added with a field that includes the detailed steps which were taken to reach the end result, be it decision to implement or not. The field could include references to quotations from suppliers or any other cost calculation etc.</p>	<p>During the discussion of the initiative definition, an idea was stated that the initiative categories should include customer specific category which is used for initiatives that are submitted to improve any customer specific areas which do not change the procedures with all. Therefore, the category other should be removed and replaced with customer specific.</p> <p>A debate was held whether the option to stay anonymous should somehow be modified. The idea from the first workshop was presented. The participants went even further and suggested a three way solution where the submitter could choose from full, partial, and no anonymity. By choosing the full anonymity, the name of the submitter would not be visible at any stage. By choosing the partial anonymity, the name of the submitter would only be visible in case the initiative is implemented. By choosing the no anonymity, the name of the submitter is visible throughout the process. By having these three categories, the submitter would have several option to choose increasing the trust towards the process.</p>

<p><b>Initiative Capturing Sub-process</b></p>	<p>The capturing process was a bit too complex for the employees. They suggested that the sub-process is reformed so that the only option is to submit the initiative by using the form and sending it directly to the program administrator. The verbal option was not seen important anymore as the process and submission form were good.</p>	<p>The received feedback was good. A discussion was held whether the option of submitting initiatives verbally is required or not. The workshop came to a conclusion that it is an important part and should not be removed from the process. The reason for this is that for many of the employees, a computer is not available nor they are that familiar with using computers. In these cases, there is a risk of losing valuable initiatives in case there is no verbal option of submitting initiatives. Additionally, the managers have an important role in spotting the ideas that fulfill the definition of an initiative. In these cases, the managers may ask if they can put it in the format of an initiative and send it forward to the program administrator.</p> <p>The workshop participants concluded that in case of filling out a submission form, there is no requirement of having an option to send the submission form to the program administrator through own manager, supervisor or line inspector.</p>
<p><b>Initiative Handling Sub-process</b></p>	<p>The handling process received good feedback. The two working days handling time was more than enough. It was said that the handling time could even be a week, the important part is that it is handled on time without stretching the schedule.</p>	<p>The workshop concluded that the two working days handling time is more than enough and could even be longer if required. The process was seen as clear and simple to follow.</p>
<p><b>Initiative Evaluation Sub-process</b></p>	<p>Evaluation process is clear and easy to follow. The five working days evaluation time is okay but the same applies to this as with handling. The schedule need to be met in order to keep the employees motivated in submitting initiatives.</p>	<p>The same feedback applies to this as with the handling sub-process. The five days evaluation time is more than enough and could even be longer. The participants were happy to see that from the submission of an initiative, it would take a maximum of seven working days to get the first feedback regarding the initiative. It is not important whether the decision to implement or not is done already after seven working days, but the important thing is just to receive a feedback after seven working days and to know that someone is taking actions regarding the initiative.</p>
<p><b>Implementation and Training Sub-process</b></p>	<p>It was suggested that the implementation and training process is modified so that updating the applicable manuals is performed before the implementation takes place so that the new information is already available from the manuals when the new thing comes to use.</p>	<p>An idea was raised during the workshop that an intranet would be a great tool to use with the initiatives. The process and all the documentation could be available through the intranet. The case company currently does not have an intranet in use hence this idea could be one of the first ideas submitted through the new process. The idea from the first workshop of adding the updating</p>

		of the manuals during this step was presented to the workshop attendees and received support.
<b>Follow-up, Archiving and Recognition Sub-process</b>	This process received good feedback. The follow-up especially is seen important as the company currently has an issue with the proper implementation of anything new. Many of the managers just take new processes or ways of working into use but do not tell those to the employees. By following this process it is ensured that everything is actually functioning as should.	An idea from the American police series was presented where the old cases that have not been solved, are once in a while brought back up to see if anything has changed since. The idea could be taken into use with the initiatives as well where the not-implemented initiatives could be investigated once a year by the program administrator and put back to re-evaluation if the situation has changed.
<b>Program Administrator</b>	The idea to link the process by using an administrator was a good option. This way the employees have only one person to contact and staying anonymous is easier than it would be if the own manager would be contacted directly. It was also discussed whether the administrators are able to handle the initiatives together with their daily routines. It is estimated that around 100-150 initiatives is received per 100 employees in a year. This equals to around one initiative in 2-3 days which is manageable by two administrators. If the amount of initiatives is rising and the benefits of the program are clearly visible, it need to be decided whether an individual only dealing with initiatives is required.	The idea of having a program administrator received good feedback. The participants felt that currently it is the only available option to have the initiatives handled, evaluated and implemented in time. The same estimations as with the first workshop about the initiative numbers were presented to the second workshop.
<b>Managers' Performance Measurements</b>	The performance measurements were seen vital to have a good initiative program. The suggested performance indicators were good and no ideas how to boost them were observed.	No additions of changes to the performance indicators were presented during the workshop. The idea of having them is excellent and must be a part of the process.

## Top Management Approval Interview Form and Feedback

### Master's Thesis Interview

TOPIC: Seeking for Top Management Approval

#### Information about the informant

Table 1

Details	
Name (code) of the informant	Top Management
Position in the case company	Managing Director
Date of the interview	30.4.2015
Duration of the interview	1,5h
Document	Field notes + Tape Recording

#### Field notes

Table 2

	Topic(s) of the interview	QUESTIONS & THEIR DEFINITIONS: <b>Predefined question</b> <i>Question raised during the interview</i> I = Interviewer MD = Managing Director	FIELD NOTES
		<i>MD: First of all, have you built the process so that it could be used in the entire group? So far what I have seen, I would very much like to present this to our headquarters.</i>	Yes it has. There may be some minor adjustments that would need to be made but those are only the company specific aspects related to the local aviation regulations, and possibly to the strategy, vision but not that much as the group's strategy and vision somewhat follows the case company.
<b>1</b>	<b>Initiative Definition:</b>	<b>I: How do you find the initiative definition?</b>	Good definition, I have nothing to add.
<b>2</b>	<b>Initiative Submission Form:</b>	<b>I: Does the submission form in your opinion contain all the required aspects or would you add or remove something?</b>	The categories are good. All initiatives can be submitted under some of the categories.
		<i>MD: How the level of anonymity actually functions i.e. if full anonymity is chosen, will anyone know how submitted the initiative?</i>	The name is mandatory field even if the submitter wants to stay anonymous. The name must be known by the program administrator in order to be able to handle the initiative. In case no name is inserted, the initiative will not be handled.
		<b>I: Are there any obligatory changes to the submission form? If so, what are the underlying reason(s) for this?</b>	The administrator's page need to include a field for measuring the true value of the initiative. <i>(see also section 3 of this interview)</i>  I would also consider adding the name of the individual who handled the initiative on the third page. This is to know which of the administrator's handled the initiative.

		<i>I: What do you think of the pdf format?</i>	It is a good to start with. We can of course elaborate the submission form once we have got the process up and running. There are many options to this.
<b>3</b>	<b>Proposed Initiative Process:</b>	<b>I: Any ideas to the capturing subprocess?</b>	Not really, seems good and logical.
		<i>MD: Regarding the capturing process, what do you mean with the campaign that can people submit just any ideas without a solution or not?</i>	No, the ideas need to fulfill the definition of an initiative. The purpose of the campaign is to channel the employees to give initiatives to certain areas where development is required. The purpose of the campaign is not that they will fix the entire area but rather finding small bits and pieces that together make the entire area to function better. This may be better explained in the process description.
		<b>I: Any ideas to the handling subprocess?</b>	No, the MSR step is of course important and good to see it has been taken into account. I trust you if you think that the 2 working days is enough. The categorization is also a good idea before proceeding with the initiative.
		<b>I: Any ideas to the evaluation subprocess?</b>	<p>I feel that the implementation schedule should not be defined purely by the evaluator but it should be done together with the evaluator's manager. Otherwise the evaluator may extend the implementation too much to make sure that he/she reaches the set date to improve the performance indicators. The manager of the evaluator would then check that the set date is tight enough.</p> <p>Additionally, manager of the evaluator may at this point shoot down the initiative in case if does not fit to the company's long term strategy or if he/she sees any other obstacles for the implementation.</p>
		<b>I: Any ideas to the implementation and training subprocess?</b>	<p>The evaluator should about week before the implementation to notify the program administrator who will then book a time for the short presentation to be held in the weekly manager meeting. This is to make sure that there is enough time reserved for the initiatives.</p> <p>During the implementation phase the evaluator should also note if the two months after the implementation is enough to measure the true value of the implemented initiative. If it cannot be measured after the two months mark, a date for measuring the true value of the initiative should be defined at this stage. The follow-up in the last subprocess will of course be done after the two months thus this date is just an additional to measure the true value be it time of money.</p>



		<b>I: Any ideas to the follow-up archiving and recognition subprocess?</b>	The follow up would need to include a step for defining the value of the initiative where it is calculated how much time or money it actually saved or how it improved safety or added value to the customer. These measurements should be defined and are easy to do based on the well-defined categories. The follow-up will be performed in accordance with the date defined in the implementation stage.
<b>4</b>	Program Administrator:	<b>Do you find it a good idea to use a program administrator as a link between the submitters, managers and top management?</b>	I think its mandatory in our company. A good idea indeed.
		<b>Process-wise, are there any tasks you would like to add or remove from the program administrators' responsibility area?</b>	Like discussed earlier, the true value of the initiatives should somehow be measured and brought into the process description so that it will be done in all cases.
		<b><i>I: Are there any other things regarding the program administrator you would like to bring up?</i></b>	No. I am just thinking who these persons could be. But that is really not what we need to think at this point.
<b>5</b>	Managers' Performance Indicators:	<b>Are the suggested indicators to be used acceptable or would you like to modify them somehow?</b>	Yes they are but I would maybe consider another way of measuring the implementation. The decision may well be that the implementation date is set together with the evaluator's manager meaning that the implementation is tougher to reach. Otherwise the performance indicator may be fooled by setting target dates for too long periods.
		<b>Do you fully support the use of the performance indicators and are committed to adding those as a part of the managers' PI's?</b>	I really do and see these are a must. I am more than happy including these to the managers' performance indicators.
<b>6</b>	Other	<b>Are there any other aspects that should be taken into account?</b>	I would like you to create an excel or other suitable tool in which the initiatives will be archived so that it is easy to read and through which the submitted initiatives may be accessed

## Final Initiative Submission Form

{ 1 }

SUBMIT

PRINT

CLEAR



### GA Telesis Engine Services

Initiative Submission Form

CASE No.

#### Employee Information

Employee Name:	<input type="text"/>	Date:	<input type="text"/>
Employee ID:	<input type="text"/>	Job Title:	<input type="text"/>
Manager:	<input type="text"/>	Department:	<input type="text"/>
Level of Anonymity:	<input type="checkbox"/> Full <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> None	<i>Full: Name of the submitter will not be published.                  Partial: Name of the submitter will only be published if the initiative is implemented.</i>	

#### Initiative Category

<input type="checkbox"/> Workflow Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Process Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety	<input type="checkbox"/> Campaign
<input type="checkbox"/> Increase in Revenue	<input type="checkbox"/> Reduction in Costs	<input type="checkbox"/> Customer Specific	
<i>At least one category need to be selected.</i>			

#### Details of the initiative

Have You Discussed With Your Colleagues Before Submitting the Initiative?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>Prefer discussing with your colleagues before submitting the initiative.</i>		

#### Description of the Initiative:

#### Proposed Solution:

#### Attachments:

Initiative Evaluation				
To be Implemented:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs Further Evaluation	
Implementation Schedule:			Schedule Defined With:	
Initiative Value Category:	<input type="checkbox"/> Money	<input type="checkbox"/> Time	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
Estimated Time Period Required to Measure the Initiative Value:				
<u>Feedback to the submitter:</u>				
<u>Detailed Description of Taken Actions:</u>				

**Initiative Handling (For Administrator's Use)**

Initiative Received:			
Initiative Handled by:			
Related to an MSR?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	MSR No.:	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Initiative Evaluation Assigned to:			
Evaluated Initiative Received:			
Feedback Approved:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Date:	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Initiative Implemented:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Date:	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Follow-up performed satisfactorily:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Date:	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Measured Initiative Value:			
<u>Details of Measured Initiative Value:</u>			
<u>Other:</u>			