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# Developing internal communication at Fitness24Seven

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## Developing internal communication at Fitness24Seven

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### Developing internal communication

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Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli kehittää sisäistä viestintää kuntosaliketju Fitness24Sevenillä. Yritys on viime vuosien aikana kasvanut kovaa vauhtia, mikä on luonut tarpeen sisäisen viestinnän kehittämiseksi. Työntekijöiden määrä on lähes tuplaantunut, minkä takia tarvitaan uusia menetelmiä, jotta työntekijät saavat kaiken tarpeellisen tiedon, jota tarvitaan päivittäisessä työssä. Opinnäytetyön tuotoksena oli tarkoitus luoda helposti käytettävä, selkeä ja muokattavissa oleva sisäinen informaatiopaketti työntekijöille ja pohtia viestintään sopivat kanavat ja foorumit.

Opinnäytetyön teoriaosuus käsittelee sisäisen viestinnän tärkeyttä yrityksessä. Esitellyt viestintämallit auttavat ymmärtämään viestintää osana organisaation strategista kokonaisuutta ja johtamista. Lopuksi teoriaosuudessa esitellään nykyinen lähestymistapa paremman sisäisen viestinnän saavuttamiseksi, jolloin painotetaan dialogia esimiehen sekä työntekijöiden välillä.

Informaatiopaketti tuotettiin opitun teorian sekä tutkimustulosten perusteella. Tutkimus toteutettiin konstruktivisena laadullisena tutkimuksena semi-strukturoidun haastattelun muodossa, jotka toteutettiin Fitness24Sevenin työntekijöille syksyn 2016 aikana. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli saada mahdollisimman tarkkaa tietoa työntekijöiden tyytyväisyydestä tämän hetkiseen yrityksen sisäiseen viestintään Fitness24Sevenillä, sekä siitä, miten sitä voi parantaa.

Kira Chydenius

**Developing internal communication**

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The purpose of this thesis was to develop the internal communication at a gym chain Fitness24Seven. While the company has grown rapidly, the need for better internal communication has become apparent. The number of employees has almost doubled in a few years, which creates a need for better and renewed methods for the employees to receive the necessary information at their daily work. The intended outcome of this thesis was to create an easy-to-use, clear and modifiable internal information package for the personnel and to think about the best channels and forums for internal communication.

The theory section of this thesis shows the importance of internal communication in a company. Different models of internal communication are presented to help to understand communication as a part of the organization's whole strategy and management. Eventually the theory leads on to the new aspect of approaching better internal communication, which is the dialogue between the employee and the employer.

The information package was created based on the reviewed theory and the outcome of the empirical study made. The empirical part was carried out as a constructive qualitative research implemented as a semi-structured interview for the employees at Fitness24Seven during the fall 2016. The aim of the research was to get accurate information about the satisfaction of the current internal communication at Fitness24Seven and how it could be improved.

Keywords: Internal communication, Qualitative research, Constructive research

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## 1. Introduction

Every company needs communication in order to function and develop their activities. In a quickly growing company internal communication becomes even more important. Lacking or confusing information leads to many inefficiencies, adds supervisor's workload and frustrates employees. The objective of this thesis is to improve internal communication and to create an internal information package for a fast growing fitness company with several locations in Finland.

The author of this thesis works in the company as a site responsible and has been assigned the development of the internal information package as a work duty. A research-based approach is necessary in order to ensure a good quality of the final output.

### 1.1 Purpose of the thesis

The need for better internal communication at Fitness24Seven has become apparent while the company has grown rapidly in the recent years. The amount of employees has increased substantially every year. The fast growth has led to lack of adequate and coordinated information. This changing situation creates a need for better and renewed methods for the employees to receive the needed information at their daily work.

The aim was to develop and support internal communication and improve daily work guidance from the management to the personnel. The purpose of this thesis was to create an easy-to-use, clear and modifiable information package for the personnel. The information package has been created based on the results of a semi-structured interview research. The aim of the interviews was to attain a clear view on employees' information needs. This was considered important in order to secure two-way and more dialogical way for the internal communication. Initially, the package was created for the company's Finnish units.

### 1.2 Research approach, questions and focus

The approach of the thesis is constructive research, which originates from the case company's need to develop its activities. The methodology is based on qualitative interviews with the aim to find answers to the following research questions:

1. Do the employees feel adequately informed about the company practices?
2. What kind of information would they need for the internal information package?
3. What would be the most efficient format, platform or channel for the information package?

The initial idea was to include practical work guidance and information about work conditions, the clear communication of which will motivate and make employees more committed towards their jobs and employer.

The focus on this thesis was in effective internal communication in a fast growing company. The research was conducted only with employees already familiar with the companies working practices and who were working at the company as a site responsible or extra worker. The research did not include the management department perspective as the management communication needs were already known and are being developed separately. Additionally, communication for work orientation for new employees was excluded from this thesis.

### 1.3 Structure of the study

This thesis is divided into six main areas: introduction, company introduction, theoretical foundation, methodology, research results and conclusions and suggestions. The second chapter will introduce the case organization followed by the third chapter laying out the theoretical foundation of organizations internal communication. The following chapter four describes the research design based on qualitative interviews. The results are presented in the chapter five and discussed further in the final chapter with suggestions for further research.

## 2. Company introduction

Fitness24Seven is the fastest growing gym chain in the Nordic countries. The company was founded in 2003 by the Swedish Christian Ask. The turnover in 2015 was 5 121 000 euros and the company employs about 150 people in Finland (Yrityshaku, Kaupalehti 2016.)

The first gyms were opened in Malmö and in Lund, Sweden. Quickly after the first openings, the company started to grow and more gyms were opened. At the moment there are about 140 gyms in Sweden. Fitness24Seven expanded to Finland in 2012 and operates also in Norway and in Poland. Norway has 7 gyms and Poland 5 gyms. In Finland there are currently 27 gyms and the company keeps growing every year. About half of the Finnish gyms are located in Helsinki and the rest of them are located elsewhere in Finland. The business has doubled in the past two years. Fitness24Seven is the fastest growing company in the fitness industry of Nordic countries. Christian Ask still works as the CEO of the company. (Fitness24seven.)

Fitness24Seven offers a possibility to work out at low prices any time of the day. All gyms are open 24/7 and they are located in the best possible locations in city centers with good public transportation possibilities. The company slogan is "health on your terms" which means that everyone is welcome to train at Fitness24Seven whenever they feel like it. The customer base

varies from 18 -year olds to older seniors, from beginners to more experienced trainers. Fitness24Seven values consist of three parts: AFF (availability, functionality, fresh).

All gyms provide the same equipment needed for all basic training. They have good spaces for workout and also a separated area for women only. Some of the gyms are called PLUS gyms, which means that there are group exercises included at the fixed monthly price. Most of the gyms also provide Personal Trainer services.

The company concept and profitability is based on a high volume. The gym pricing has been very lucrative in order to attract many kind of users. Other successful gyms in Finland are more expensive than Fitness24Seven, focusing in offering extra services such as massages, solariums, a place to leave the kids while training, breakfasts etc. Fitness24Seven offers a functional gym with fresh and clean space with basic equipment any time of the day. Fitness24Seven offers best option for people who simply want to enjoy their workouts without extra services in a safe environment.

The company is growing not only fast but also internationally. This creates a lot of new job opportunities and operating challenges. However the focus of this thesis is to make the internal communication effective locally in Finland and to make it streamlined.

### 3. Internal communication as glue of organization

An organization is actually a communication network. Weick (1979, see Shockley-Zalabak 2009, 41) claims that an organization as such does not exist but is rather in process of existing through ongoing human interaction. Internal communication glues together the various parts and activities of the organization. Leif Åberg, an emeritus professor of organizational communication, has created the concept of Total communications (see chapter 3.1) presenting a structured model of result driven communication applicable to all kinds of organizations. Although dating back to early 2000s, Åberg's model still reflects well the above statement of Weick. Åberg's Total communication model encompasses and covers all official communication activities taking place within and outwards an organization. Åberg's Total communication model will be presented more thoroughly in chapter 3.2.

#### 3.1 New agenda for communication

Elisa Juholin (2008, 62-63) complements Åberg's model by adding that communication takes place on forums (physical or virtual) with the purpose of creating conditions for working, creating and strengthening work communities, and providing opportunities for shared and indi-



vidual learning of the employees through dialogical interaction. The foundations of her “New agenda” for organizational communication are:

1. Big and important issues are dealt with in interaction with the whole work community
2. Current and timely information are available for everybody.
3. The workplace feeling is positive and casual, encouraging everybody to pose questions and give feedback
4. Participation and influencing are made possible and encouraged.
5. Joint learning and competence sharing supports the organization and its individuals. This includes constant feedback.
6. Every employee is responsible for maintaining the good employer company reputation.

Several studies (e.g. Pincus & Redfield 1989, Juholinin 1999, 75) have shown that the more open, reliable and employee-oriented communication there is within the company, the more satisfied the employees are in their jobs, with their managers and the whole organization. Good internal communication supports the motivation of the employees and therefore helps them to work towards the company goals and has a direct effect on profit making.

Internal communication is planned, structured and organized management to support the company goals. Communication is not only information passing and receiving, it also influences the overall work environment and the feeling of an employee of belonging to a certain community. Inefficient communication slows down the working speed. An effective communication supports efficient work and the motivation of an employee. It also supports the goals of a working community and is a direct indicator of making profit. (Åberg 2006, 96.)

Changes are happening all the time in any organization so the need for good orientation and communication is constant. Nowadays jobs, jobs descriptions and ways of working are changing quickly. It has been discovered that an efficient internal communication has a positive influence to a general job satisfaction and motivation of the employees. The manager has the responsibility for the working team to achieve the goals. A manager is in a key role of ensuring the framework in which the work can be done in an enjoyable way. (Åberg 2006, 83-91.) This research activity manifests a similar goal and will at Fitness24Seven: more effective and efficient internal communication will make everybody’s work easier and the company has better chances to reach its business goals.

### 3.2 Total communication

According to Åberg’s Total Communication model (2000, 2006) there are four sections of communication in an organization (see Figure 1). The goal of the model is to illustrate the different forms and sections of the overall communication of an organization. The model also

sheds light on various communication purposes in the organization: support to the core organization, profiling, informing and socializing. The communication forms include both external and internal dimensions as well as communication concerning the whole organization or its tasks, products and services. Åberg acknowledges that his model does not include unofficial communication, which is not directly manageable by the company. Nevertheless he considers that unofficial communication is also important and can be influenced by managing well the other sections of his result driven communication. The four different communication sections of the model are discussed separately below.

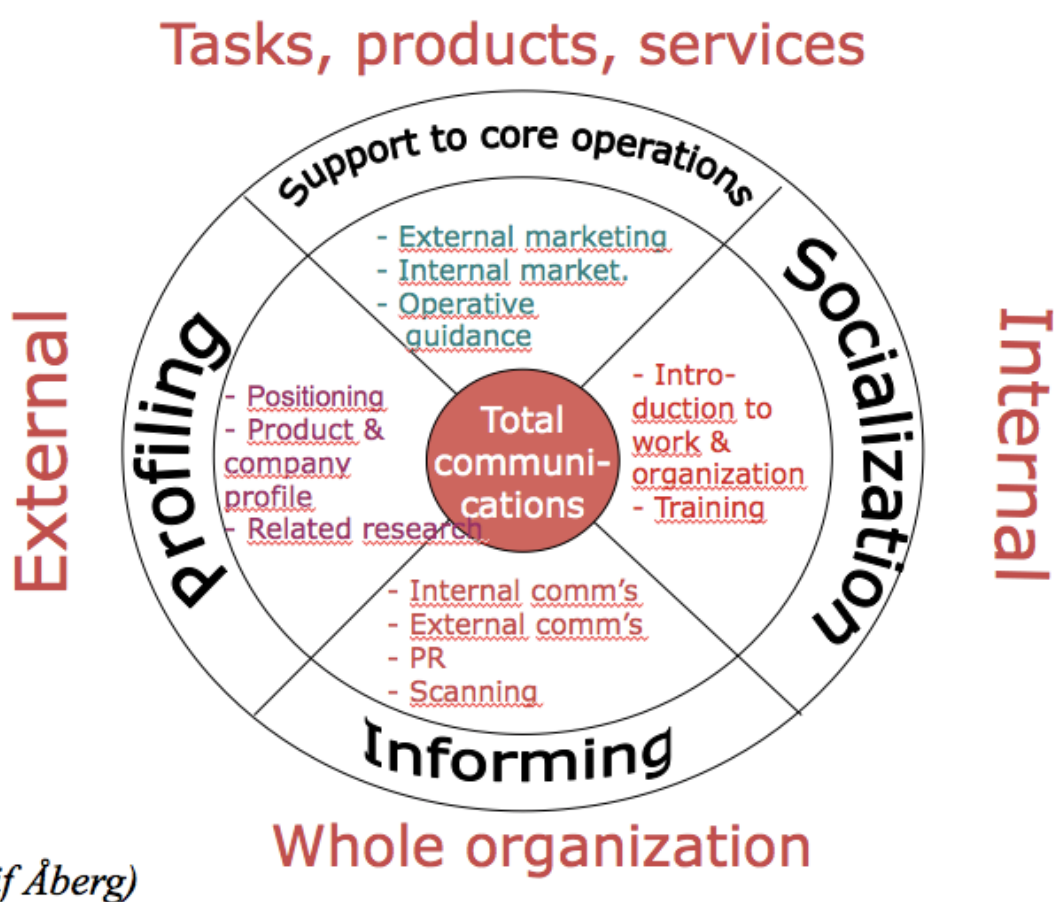


Figure 1: Åberg's Total Communication model (translated and modified by the author of this thesis)

### 3.2.1 Support to core operations

According to Åberg, the support of the core operations is the most important part of the company's communication. Communication supporting the core operations is divided into external and internal communication with the purpose of increasing sales and profitability. External communications are for example marketing, partnership work and other external connections. Internal communication can be seen as the support for external communication.

The manager needs to ensure that the employees have the right tools for efficient communication (Åberg 2006, 96-100.) This section also includes the operative guidance type of communication, which is one of the core content of the internal communication package to be developed in this thesis project.

### 3.2.2 Socialization

Another important section for Fitness24Seven's information package is socialization type of communication. It is usually predominantly internal but can start with external recruitment communication. The goal of socialization type of communication is to get the personnel to commit to the organization. Socialization is not only focusing on new employees but also on the existing employees when certain practices are changing or when taking new working methods in to use. If this section is well managed the employees are more likely to be focused and motivated. (Åberg 2006, 103.)

### 3.2.3 Informing

Informing is divided in internal and external communication that concerns the whole organization. The focus can be internal news and on what is happening in the organization. By using different communication channels the news and information on events and other activities are also shared with external target groups. This section also includes the traditional PR, management of relations and networks. Scanning means that the organization constantly follows its environment: industry happening, activities in the market, changing in competition situation, current trends etc. (Åberg 2006, 108-109.) Especially the internal communication activities are of interest for this research.

### 3.2.4 Profiling

Profiling is a part of strategic communication. The goal of profiling communication is to create a long-term community, leadership and service profile. With profiling the company is aiming to create a certain image of the company based on its mission and vision: what do we do, how do we do it, what do we say and how do we look like. The history of the company has a big influence on giving answers where has the company started and what is it and where is it heading. (Åberg 2006, 100-101.) Profiling type of communication is mainly external communication, but the personnel also need's to understand the company positioning and profile. This is especially important as all staff members serve as ambassadors for the company.

### 3.3 Organizational communication strategy

Another model of organizational communication strategy created by Åberg (2000, 227) is viewed from the operative, tactical and strategic perspectives. The organizational communication strategy is developed to support the goals of the whole strategy of an organization. According to Åberg (2000, 226) the strategic level of organizational communication plan includes planning long-term organizational activities without taking resources in consideration. The tactical planning is about planning the resources needed for a certain period of time for implementing the strategic activities. The operative level is short time planning for organizational activities with certain resources (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Different timely approaches of organizational communication based on Åberg (2000)

Both above models of Åberg serve different strategic purposes. The first one (Total communication model) covers the scope of various forms and sections. The second covers the timely importance and communication priority. These models are thus complementing each other. Neither one handles the choice of channels or forums directly which are sometimes rapidly changing. Overall, these models provide a good structure for the research interview and understanding the existing challenges in organizational communication.

### 3.4 Overall communication at Fitness24Seven

Based on Åberg's Total Communication and the organizations strategy models the author of this thesis has created the Table 1. It provides examples of the communication activities at Fitness24Seven. The table consists of the four main areas of total communication followed by examples of organizational communication from operative, tactical and strategic point of view.

	<b>Strategic</b>	<b>Tactical</b>	<b>Operative</b>
<b><i>Support to core operations</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic communication plan, (internal communication and marketing)</li> <li>• Main messages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support of the supervisor</li> <li>• Yearly meetings</li> <li>• Creating communication channels</li> <li>• Clear goals for the employees</li> <li>• Marketing planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyday work guidance</li> <li>• Forwarded information</li> <li>• Supervisor-employee-communication</li> <li>• Feedback</li> <li>• Work instructions</li> </ul>
<b><i>Informing</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core organizational information</li> <li>• Stakeholder planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication competence</li> <li>• Channel and forum planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal announcements and external releases</li> <li>• Maintenance and updating of information channels, such as website</li> </ul>
<b><i>Socialization</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuous improvement (Kai-zen)</li> <li>• Motivation of the work community</li> <li>• Improvement of dialogs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee training</li> <li>• HR communication</li> <li>• Orientation guidance</li> <li>• Development discussions</li> <li>• Recruitment planning</li> <li>• Team communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Events</li> <li>• Orientational communication (new employees)</li> <li>• Daily communication activities</li> </ul>
<b><i>Profiling</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand promise</li> <li>• Strategic controlling of the organizational image</li> <li>• Positioning communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Product- and service research and development</li> <li>• Networking control</li> <li>• Creating organizational image</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsors</li> <li>• Brand visibility</li> </ul>

Table 1: Examples of overall communication at Fitness24Seven

The concept of organizational communication is wide and everything is connected to everything. Thus the categorization is sometimes difficult. The outcome of this thesis is the internal information package, which is focused on the areas of the support to core areas, informing and to some extent socializing type of communication. The focus area of this thesis is highlighted in the table of examples of organizational communication at Fitness24Seven with grey shading.

### 3.5 Strategic employee communication (SEC)

Åberg's communication models from the early 2000's present a very organization driven perspective. The new era of communication and modern organizations have acknowledged a need for more interactive communication also within organizations. Juholin already set foundations for that in her new agenda for organizational communication (see chapter 3.1). The SEC (strategic employee communication) model complements the previous knowledge. In their most recent joint article "Towards responsible dialogue" (2014) Åberg, Juholin and Aula discuss the principles of internal communication, which is based on employee management dialogue. Even though the models of organizational communication are still applicable to the organizations communication strategy, the SEC strategy brings a new point of view to these previously created models. The SEC (strategic employee communication) strategy focuses on the point of view of employees. Before, the role of top management was emphasized and the role of employees was undermined. The key for today's successful organizations internal communication is the dialogical aspect that can be used together with the total communication model.

SEC can be defined as "strategic employee communication as a responsible dialogue takes place among all organizational members. Its aim is to create energy for the success of the organization." The purpose of the dialogical aspect is to encourage employees question things happening in the organization and understanding them. It encourages to bring up any kind of solution suggestion and development ideas rather than just quietly observing. This forces people to communicate more with each other and it has an effect on the work environment and community. (Juholin, Åberg, & Aula 2014, 7.)

The new approach for communication is defining the core messages and communicating them to a grass root level with different communication channels. Communication is seen as a continuous building of effective communication systems and channels inside the organization. As the organization is growing, it makes it more and more difficult to control different communication channels as a manager. But also at the same time it gives a lot of potential to enrich and develop the organizations concept on internal communication. (Juholin, Åberg, & Aula 2014, 13.)

According to the article (Juholin, Åberg & Aula 2014) every organization needs a clear system for communication. Still, every employee is also responsible for the workplace communication and the efficiency of it. For example if an employee is lacking information or detects errors or faults in guidance they also have the responsibility to inform their superiors or team members. A modern organization is built on a active two-way interaction. The modern way of for internal communication strategy is to shift towards more active employee role in the organization. Dialogue as a part of communication gives the employees an opportunity to ask, challenge and question the methods used. Some ways of working are easier to understand by asking why, not just blindly following the instructions without the understanding of a bigger picture. Finally this creates an appreciation of others' and engages people to commit. For example conveying the strategic messages after the strategy has been formed, or emergence of common understanding among the employees. This demands dialogues. Two-way communication also creates wellbeing, creativeness and creates the possibility to new ideas and innovations. (Juholin, Åberg & Aula 2014, 4.)

The models created in the beginning of 2000 such as Åberg's Total communication -model for organizational communication have a perspective of one-way communication, from the management to the employees. Even though the theories are still very applicable, the newest key approach to internal communication is the dialogical aspect. Communication needs to be more both ways, from the management to the employee and from the employee to the management. It can be assumed the employees have great improvement ideas that they gain from customers. Especially at Fitness24Seven, the feedback from customers and daily day work experiences from the employees are the key factors for keeping customers and employees motivated.

The same idea is applicable when it comes to work guidance. The management cannot always take all aspects of the employees' daily work into consideration and the best ideas might come from employees. This is why the research was done before the implementing the internal information package.

### 3.6 Leadership vs. management communication

An additional aspect of communication concerns the leadership and management approaches. A good company needs both leadership and management communication. The difference between leadership communication and management communication can be defined as follows: Leaders guide individuals, groups and the whole organization in a bigger scale than a manager. Managers have specific tasks designed to evaluate and manage the work of others. Manager communication tends to be more face-to-face communication as the employees gets to meet their managers more often than the leaders. In fact Shockley-Zalabak (2009, 216) claims

that leadership communication can be only virtual from someone at the company. (Shockley-Zalabak 2009, 216.)

Åberg also sees a difference between management and leadership communication. Managing is about delegating, coordinating and result and development driven communication managing issues and processes. Leadership communication is about leading people. It emphasizes interactivity, motivation and commitments of employees (2006, 94). The internal information package is more about management communication. His total communication model is a part of management communication. The aim of the research was to create a information package based on the previously mentioned models and knowledge.

#### 4. Research approach

The aim of this research was to create an internal information package supporting the employees' daily work. The daily work practices need, of course, be in line with the strategic goals of the organization. Some of the information needed for the development case was already available but there was a need for more specific, qualitative and renewed information. According to Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti (2014, 65-70) a constructive research is a justified approach when solving practical work life development challenges and developing new knowledge constructions based on existing information. Overall, a qualitative approach seemed most suitable as the problem called for "the identification of factors that influenced the outcome", in this case, the internal information package (Creswell 2014, 20).

The goal of a constructive research approach is to create a concrete output based on theory and the research information. The communication of the research creator and the participants of the study are important when the aim is to create something concrete for the participants. (Creswell 2014, 8 ; Ojasalo & al. 2014, 65-69.) A constructive approach is also a flexible approach allowing the use of several different research methods. In this case, the research data was collected by semi-structured interviews.

##### 4.1 Research method

Interviews are an effective method to get deeper, qualitative and more precise information about the researched subject (Ojasalo & al. 2014, 106). Rubin & Rubin (2012, 3) state that as a research method interviews have many strengths as a research approach: "Through interviews the researchers can explore in details the experiences, motives and opinions of the other and learn to see the world from perspectives other than their own."



Interviews are interaction situations that are planned beforehand. They are initiated and controlled by the interviewer. There needs to be a mutual trust between the interviewer and the interviewee in order to get valid information about the research subject. Also the motivation of the interviewee is important for the outcome. Later on in the results of the interview can be seen whether the motivation of the employee has affected the opinion of the researched questions. (Ojasalo & al. 2014, 106.)

Interviews can last from ten minutes to many hours. The longer the interview is, the more the role of the interviewer changes from a passive question asker to an active discussion role with the interviewee. The interview can either be fully structured or semi-structured. In a fully structured interview all the questions have been carefully planned beforehand and are asked in a specific order. In a semi-structured interview the questions are also planned beforehand, but the question order can change according to the interview. Questions are commonly open-ended questions in a qualitative research (Silverman 2011, 163). Both Silverman and Rubin & Rubin recommend running test interviews in order to detect and development needs for the interview questions.

## 4.2 Research process

The research process started with planning the questions for the interview. The aim of the interview was to find as accurate information as possible for creating the internal information package. The questions were planned based on the research questions presented previously (See chapter 2.1). All questions are presented in attachment 1.

### 4.2.1 Selection of the interviewees

The interviews were conducted with 9 employees that were chosen based on the idea of getting a lot of diversity between the interviewees (Table 2). The factors affecting the selection were: the location of gym/work place, working hours per week and the time that the employee had been working at Fitness24Seven.

	Location	Working hours/week	Length of employment
Interviewee 1	Helsinki	0h/week*	1-2 years
Interviewee 2	Helsinki	20h/week	1-2 years
Interviewee 3	Helsinki	40h/week	1-2 years
Interviewee 4	Vantaa	40h/week	1-2 years

Interviewee 5	Lahti	30h/week	6 months - 1 year
Interviewee 6	Turku	40h/week	1-2 years
Interviewee 7	Hämeenlinna	30h/week	1-2 years
Interviewee 8	Jyväskylä	30h/week	1-2 years
Interviewee 9	Kuopio	30h/week	1-6 months

Table 2: Criteria for selecting the interviewees

\*0 working hours per week means that the person is called to work when needed. The working hours can in fact, vary between 0 hours/week to 40h/week. These kind of employees are called extra workers.

#### 4.2.2 Interviews

The first interview was held as a test interview. The aim of it was to see, if there was a need for modification of the questions asked. After the test interview there were a few changes made such as the order of questions and some of them were made more specific. Results of the test interview are not included in the results of this study.

The actual interviews included eight semi-structured open-ended questions and one scaled quantitative question. The interviewees were informed about the interview in advance to give the interviewees some time to think about the topic. The interviewer informed the interviewees through email with explaining briefly the idea of the information package and the purpose of this thesis. The interviews were held over the phone. Each interview lasted from 15 minutes to 40 minutes. As the interviews were semi-structured the role of the interviewer took also part in the thinking process in the interview. All interviews were held in Finnish and the results were documented in writing (Interview questions, attachment 1). The actual interview questions were complemented by probing questions, which allowed to clarify or to elaborate some answers in detail.

#### 4.2.3 Analysis of the data

Each response for the questions were gathered together and analyzed per interview question. The answers were compared and contrasted to identify main topics and themes. The nine questions followed the three main topics in synchrony with the research questions and are as follows:

1. Employees' satisfaction with current internal communication
2. Employees' wish for the content of the information package
3. The most efficient format, platform or channel for the information package.

According to Guest, MacQueen & Namey (2012, 34) there are three types of basic analytic approach objectives: exploratory, explanatory or confirmatory. In this case the research purpose was mostly confirmatory as the writer of this thesis already had a fairly clear understanding of the existing situation, but also exploratory to find out possible other perspectives. The outcomes of the interviews are collected in a table, which presents the outcomes of the three main question topics that supported the vision for the information package the writer of this thesis had. The table is presented in the next chapter.

## 5. Research results

Below the interview questions leading up for the outcome of these three main topic areas are presented in a table 3.

Topics	Interview questions	Main themes emerging from the interview
1. Employees' satisfaction on current internal communication at Fitness24Seven	The length of employment at Fitness24Seven?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average satisfaction on current internal communication = 7,25</li> <li>• Average job satisfaction = 8,95</li> <li>• Information should be more clear</li> <li>• Information should come from one same channel</li> <li>• Generally more information</li> </ul>
	How satisfied are you at the current internal information on a scale 1-10 and why?	
	What is your general satisfaction towards your job on a scale 1-10?	
	What kind of information would you want to have more? What information would you like to be included in the information package?	
	How do you feel the two-way communication is working? Can you pass on information for your employer?	

	What development ideas do you have for a better internal communication?	
2. Employees' wish for the content of the information package	What kind of problems do you think there currently in internal communication?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manuals are outdated and contains a lot of outdated information</li> <li>• Information comes from many different channels, mostly through email and the information gets lost easily</li> <li>• Information about daily administration matters, such as paid vacations, overtime work salary, daily allowance, explanation for bonus calculation system etc.</li> </ul>
	What information would you like to be included in the information package?	
3. Employees' wish for the channel of the information package	Through which channel do you mostly get the needed information?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently most of the information received via email or Intranet</li> <li>• Wishes for the information channel: Manual Other digital platform Video guidance</li> </ul>
	Through which channel would you like to get information from?	

Table 3: Main themes of the interviews

### 5.1 Employees satisfaction on current internal communication at Fitness24Seven

The first question of the interviews was a background question about the length of the employment at Fitness24Seven. The last question was a quantitative question about the general satisfaction of the work on a scale 1-10. The second question was the satisfaction of current internal information on scale from 1-10. The purpose of this was to see whether there is a correlation between the general job satisfaction, satisfaction on the current internal information and the length of employment.

The lowest score on a scale 1-10 on current satisfaction of internal communication was 6, the highest was 8 and the average was 7,25. The lowest score on a scale from 1-10 on the general satisfaction of the work was 8, the highest was 9,5 and the average of these was 8,95. The result was that no matter how long the employee had been working at Fitness24Seven, the general job satisfaction was really high but there are some improvement possibilities on internal communication.

## 5.2 Employees' wish on the content of the information package

The writer of this thesis had a clear vision of the content of the information package. The interview proved that the employees had also similar ideas in mind on what to include in the information package. The third question was: what are the problems in current internal information? The interview answers gave good insight on which areas of their work the employees feel are lacking information. The sixth question was a direct question of the employees' wish on the content of the information package. The answers can be seen in whole in table 3. It seemed that the employees feel poorly informed about administrative information and about the working roles in the organization.

## 5.3 The most efficient format, platform or channel for the information package

Currently, the main information channel for the employees is through email. Most of the employees were hoping to get the information through an intranet or from a manual before the intranet will be launched. Email was found to be a quite an inefficient way of communication since the information does not follow a logical structuring of information (in relationship to other announcements) and it is difficult to find the needed information afterwards. People also seemed to have very different practices in filing and reading their emails. This makes the company's communication management challenging.

## 5.4 Practical implications

The practical implication of the research was to create an information package for the employees. Based to the working experience in the organization, the writer of this thesis already had a clear idea of the content that should be included in the information package. The aim of the research was to find out, whether the employees had similar ideas as the writer of this thesis but also to find out possible other perspectives. The results confirmed that the company should get rid of mainly email communication. For the time being, the manual is created

as a word document that can easily be modified and later on transferred to the intranet that will be launched in the future.

The process of creating the information package started with presenting the ideas of the content for the employer and going through the existing material. There was already a manual made a few years ago, which had a lot of irrelevant and outdated information but also some useful content after some changes were made to them. The existing information, the writer's own ideas and the vision of the employer created the basic frame for the information package, which were supported by the interview results. After the content page was made, there was a check up with the employer to see that the content was relevant, necessary, in a logical order and easy to find. The information package will be handed to each employee either on a digital form or as a printer version.

The content page of the information package can be seen in attachment 2. The whole document isn't published since it contains precise and confidential information about the company, its personnel and its practices. As can be seen from the content page, the internal information package contains information that employees' need at their daily work. The idea of the internal package was also to reduce the work of the Area Manager by adding information to the internal information package, which will reduce the amount of emails sent. The content of the manual will be updated frequently. After the intranet is launched the information will be moved to the intranet, which is a more modern and efficient platform for employees to receive information.

## 6. Conclusions and suggestions

No organization works without communication. This idea has been supported in this thesis through different author's communication models and theories. A good communication strategy supports the motivation of the employees and therefore helps them to work towards the company goals and has a direct effect on profit making.

The organization's growth at Fitness24Seven has been fast in recent years. As the company grows, the personnel grow and this creates a need for better internal communication. As an employee at Fitness24Seven I had a fairly good understanding of the existing situation, which was a clear need for renewed internal communication practices. In this case one of the renewed practices was the information package created for all employees in the Finnish unit to help them in their daily work.

The research was made as a constructive qualitative research through semi-structured interviews. According to Dorsten & Hotchkiss (2005, 135) it has been criticized that "qualitative

research methods can't be verified, they aren't objective, and they aren't repeatable. In short, the criticism is that qualitative observations are neither reliable nor valid."

A research can be defined as reliable if the results are the same regardless of the time or circumstances of its implementation (Krippendorff, 2004, 2011). This research was implemented as a semi-structured interview, which was held for nine employees. In conclusion, each response had the same message: there is a need for better internal communication at Fitness24Seven. A suggestion in order to prove the research as reliable, would be to do the same interview again but to employees, who didn't participate in the interview made for this thesis.

Even though all interviewees seemed to have the same idea of the situation, there are other factors effecting on the reliability of the research. One of the major factors is objectivity. In this case, the interviewer was an employee and a colleague of the employees who the interview was held for. When the interviews are semi-structured open-ended discussion type of interviews the objectivity of the interviewer is always questionable, even if the interviewer tries to stay in an objective role. There needs to be a mutual trust between the interviewer and the interviewees in order to get honest and valid information.

Validity of the research determines weather the research really measures the intended subject. The aim of this research was to improve the internal communication at Fitness24Seven by creating a information package for all employees for them to get information easier and reduce the so called silence information inside the company. The main research questions of this thesis were:

1. Do the employees feel adequately informed about the company practices?
2. What kind of information would they need for the internal information package?
3. What would be the most efficient format, platform or channel for the information package?

Based on the outcome of the interview these above mentioned research questions were clearly answered during the interviews. In conclusion, the validity and reliability can always be questioned but in the end, in my opinion the research can be defined as valid since the research results are convincing, corresponding the initial "gut feeling" of an experienced employee and are improving the initial development target, which was in this case the internal communication at Fitness24Seven.

The idea for the information package was to keep it simple and easily modifiable. The content of it was created for the Finnish unit. However, the company is growing also in other

countries. The importance of good internal communication should be emphasized in each country. As a suggestion the information package could be taken into use in each country by modifying the content to match the local needs.

The new aspect of successful internal communication is the dialogue between employees and employer as can be seen from the latest creation from Juholin, Åberg & Aula (see chapter 3.5). It is important to create a culture to the organization where the employees feel they can question the methods used and give development ideas and have an impact on the company practices. This is a method to make the employees feel more as part of the bigger picture and make them motivated towards their jobs. This method was tested during the interviews where the employees got to be a part of the research and have an impact on the outcome. What I noticed as an interviewer was that employees felt appreciated by the fact that the communication practices are being improved in order to make their daily work more efficient. All of the interviewees seemed to be excited about being a part of the development process and they had great ideas for the improvement of the internal communication. To promote and develop the dialogical aspect at Fitness24Seven, I added a part at the end of the information package for suggestions, feedback and development ideas.

What makes the research successful? Can it be measured in some way? The original idea was to improve and develop the internal communication at Fitness24Seven by creating the information package for employees, which included practical work guidance and information about work conditions. Based on the theory presented in this thesis good internal communication motivates and makes employees more committed towards their jobs and employer. This has a direct influence on the profit making for example if retention of employees is reduced. In my opinion the research can be considered as a successful research, if the employees feel the company has an interest in supporting their daily work by creating the right tools to operate with.



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## Attachment 1: Interview questions

### Haastattelukysymykset

#### Taustatiedot

1. Työsuhteen pituus Fitness24Sevenillä:  
-----
  2. Kuinka tyytyväinen olet tämänhetkiseen yrityksen sisäiseen viestintään asteikolla 1-10?
  3. Minkälaisia ongelmia yrityksen sisäisessä viestinnässä on tällä hetkellä mielestäsi?
  4. Mitä kautta olet saanut eniten tietoa käytännön asioista?
  5. Mitä kautta haluaisit saada tietoa?
  6. Minkälaista tietoa haluaisit saada enemmän? Mitä tietoja haluaisit lisättävän uuteen työntekijöiden tietopakettiin?
  7. Miten koet kahdensuuntaisen viestinnän toimivan yrityksessä? Pystytkö itse välittämään tietoa esimiehellesi?
  8. Mitä kehitysehdotuksia tai muita huomioita sinulla on yrityksen sisäisen viestinnän parantamiseksi?
- 
9. Tämänhetkinen yleinen työtyytyväisyys asteikolla 1-10:

Interview questions

Background information

1. The length of employment at Fitness24Seven:  
.....
2. How satisfied are you at the current internal information on a scale from 1-10?
3. What kind of issues do you think there is currently in internal information?
4. Where have you gotten the most information?
5. From where would you like to receive information?
6. What kind of information would you like to get more? What information would you like to be included in the information package?
7. How do you feel the two-way communication is working? Do you feel like you can forward information to your employer?
8. What development ideas or other observations do you have in order to improve the internal information??

- 
9. What is your current satisfaction on your job from a scale 1-10?

Attachment 2: Cover page of the Information package



- 1 Henkilöstön yhteystiedot
- 2 Organisaatiokaavio
- 3 Työnkuvat/vastuualueet
- 4 Palkka
  - 4.1 Verokortti
  - 4.2 Netposti
- 5 Quinyx
  - 5.1 Vuorojen hyväksyntä
  - 5.2 Vuoron lisäys
  - 5.3 Sairaspoissaolo
  - 5.4 Poissaolopyyntö
  - 5.5 Matka-aika
  - 5.6 Plus-salit
- 6 Päivärahat
- 7 Sairaspoissaolot
- 8 Kulukorvaukset
- 9 Työhyvinvointi
- 10 Työsuojelu
- 11 Työtapaturma
- 12 Bonuslaskelma
- 13 Lomat
- 14 Koulutukset
- 15 Etuudet
- 16 Whatsapp
- 17 Pyhäpäivät
- 18 Toimitilavinkit
- 19 Kehitysehdotukset