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Bachelor's Degree in Industrial Management

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INFLUENCING WORK ENGAGEMENT IN GLOBAL CORPORATION ENVIRONMENT

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PREFACE

This thesis has been a long and a challenging process for me. As a result, I have learned a lot about the subject, but a lot about myself, too.

Thanks to the group that I had a possibility to work with. Thank You Laura, Jani, Joni, Tomi and Sampo. Thank you Marjatta for all the supportive commentary and guiding, You had a huge input for this work.

Special thanks to Merja Fischer, not only just for the possibility to be part of this study, but for your inspirational, enthusiastic and power giving role that gave energy to all of us.

Also I am very lucky to get such great support from home as well, thank you Katja and others, too.

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ABSTRACT

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<p>This thesis is a part of a Positive Organizational Scholarship study. The goal of this thesis is to understand the concept of work engagement, the benefits it creates, and how to influence it in the environment of a global corporation.</p> <p>This thesis initiated by describing the existing knowledge of work engagement, and Positive Organizational Scholarship. The understanding of both of the concepts enabled Nvivo8 research software assisted qualitative analysis of the interview data that was collected beforehand. The results of the analysis were supported and validated in a World Café discussion session.</p> <p>As a result of the study, a model of work engagement was created. This model shows the influencing factors of work engagement categorised to personal and work environment related factors. Based on this model, a clear list of actions was made to explain how to increase work engagement.</p> <p>As a conclusion of the results, a few important factors were brought up. The employee has to understand the meaning of what they do on a larger scale in order to feel significant. Another important factor is to emphasise career opportunities, which are based on and supported by the personal ideology of the employee. By doing so, the employee can grow and develop personally and more easily feel engaged to work and finds positive meaning.</p>	
Key words: Work Engagement, Positive Organizational Scholarship	

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Tämä insinöörityö tehtiin osana isompaa positiivisen organisaatiotieteen tutkimusta. Tämä työ esittelee työn imun käsitteen, sekä sen avulla saadut hyödyt. Työn pääpaino on keinojen esittelyssä, joilla työn imuun voidaan vaikuttaa kansainvälisessä työympäristössä.

Työ alkoi tutustumalla ja määrittämällä työn imun käsite aiheesta olevan vallitsevan tietämyksen pohjalta. Samoin keinoin tutustuttiin myös positiiviseen organisaatiotieteeseen. Kun ymmärrys aiheesta oltiin saatu, pystyttiin tietokoneohjelma avusteisesti analysoimaan ennalta kerätty haastattelumateriaali. Tämän analyysin tuloksia pyrittiin tukemaan World Café – keskustelumenetelmän avulla.

Työn lopputuloksena rakennettiin malli työn imusta. Malli kuvaa työn imuun vaikuttavia tekijöitä, sekä sen positiivisia ilmentymiä. Vaikuttavat tekijät on luokiteltu henkilökohtaisiin vaikuttimiin, sekä työympäristön vaikuttimiin. Näiden pohjalta laadittiin selkeitä ohjeita ja toimenpiteitä tehtäväksi työn imun kasvattamiseksi.

Työn tuloksena saatiin havainto merkittävistä tekijöistä, jotka vaikuttavat työn imuun. Työntekijän tulee nähdä laajassa kuvassa työnsä tulokset, jotta kokemus työn merkittävyydestä tulee ilmi. Lisäksi työntekijän ura mahdollisuuksia tulisi tukea, korostaen yksilön omia haluja ja tavoitteita. Tämän avulla työntekijä kokee kasvua ja jatkuvaa oppimista, jolloin työn imun mahdollisuus merkittävästi kasvaa.

Avainsanat: Työn imu, Positiivinen organisaatiotiede

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1 INTRODUCTION

The thesis studies one of the most significant current issues of work well-being and competence of companies by engaging employees. The relevance of work engagement comes from its proved effect on increasing the company's profitability and financial returns (e.g. Xanthopoulou et. al, 2009). One key to increasing profitability is to increase the productivity of employees. This is the area where work engagement steps in. Work engagement helps to release the true potential of an employee. One organization researching work engagement and offering consultation is Gallup. It has made researches for over 30 years and over 12 million employees have been part of the research. These studies have clearly shown a correlation between employee engagement and the company results, as Figure 1 shows.

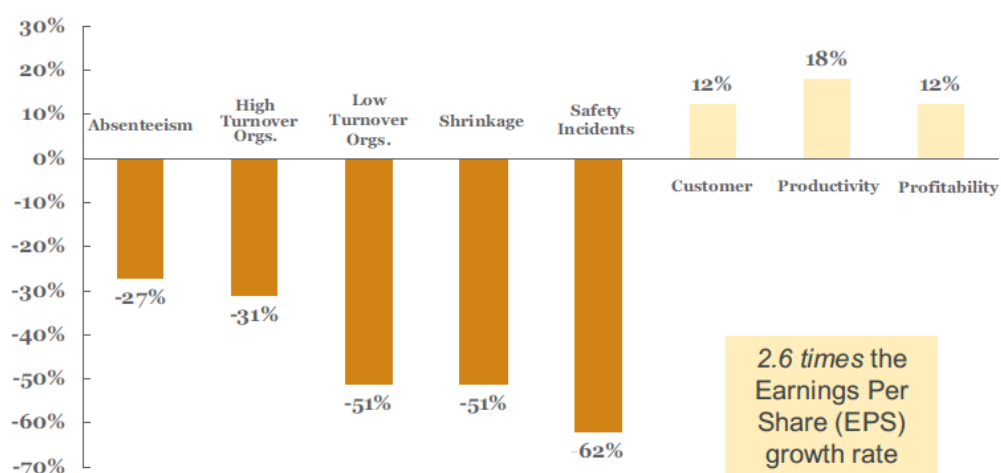


Figure 1: Employee Engagement and Critical Business Outcomes (Gallup, 2008)

These results show increased customer satisfaction, productivity and profitability and reduced absenteeism, too. Another reason indicating importance of this phenomenon to companies is that it can create competitive advantage. Competence of companies nowadays comes from individuals that create the organization and its climate, which is unique in every company and therefore cannot be copied like innovative products or processes. Work engagement has also proved to reduce employee turnover and therefore helps to keep the best performers and reduce costs of constantly training new employees.

Yet, the effect of positivity and work engagement does not limit only to companies' advantage but to flourishing power to make life generally better. It will also help to create a more positive view of work life to future's performers as well. Recently there was published a research studying how 15-30-year-old see their personal life, work life and the future (Helsingin Sanomat, 19.3.2010). What was interesting was that the respondents described their personal life with positive values, such as love and happiness, while work life and future was seen as frightening and uncertain. As work engagement and Positive Organizational Scholarship emphasise the positive resources at work, it is essential to help to reduce the negative views of work life and to see it as a supporting, or even energizing part of life where one can actualize oneself and feel importance. And yet, the impact is perceived to be even bigger. The engaged employees will want to work longer than employees in general. When facing age distribution where amount of retired people increases rapidly, as is the case in Finland, having people working longer becomes essential.

The first studies of work engagement concentrated on burnout and negative effects of work performance; therefore the foundation of research concentrated originally only on negative sides of engaged, (more like captivated), employees. The latest debate in this field is about what is the relationship of engagement to burnout, is it the opposite or a totally different, more complicated issue (Wefald & Downey, 2009). Though, according to Hakala (2009), development of work environments still focuses on fighting against burnout and negative demands, and therefore lack implementation of positive work psychology e.g. work engagement and Positive organizational scholarship, although studies show correlation with increased productivity. This kind of positive deviance, a positive way to look at things is currently missing in companies, as they are focused on treating the "ill", rather than supporting the "healthy" ones.

One brilliantly descriptive definition of an engaged employee is made by Seijts & Grim of Organizational Behavior at the Richard Ivey School of Business. Seijts & Crim find characteristics of an engaged employee "as a person who is *fully involved* in, and *enthusiastic* about, his or her work. Truly engaged employees are *attracted* to, and *inspired* by, their work ("I want to do this"), *committed* ("I am *dedicated* to the success of what I am doing"),

and *fascinated* (“I love what I am doing”). Engaged employees care about the future of the company and are willing to invest the discretionary effort – exceeding duty’s call – to see that the organization succeeds” (2006, 1). This point of view emphasises both the *energy* and *identification* aspect of work engagement and therefore describes in a simple manner what work engagement is about.

As can be seen, work engagement has positive effects on the work organization, but also on other parts of life as well. This research study seeks to explore work engagement, its components and influence in the work place. The description of work engagement is based on existing knowledge of the subject and analysis of data gathered from a global company. The findings are supported by the World Café discussion, which is a collective conversational method of finding new phenomena, as will be explained later on section 3.2. The aim is to characterize the influencing factors and create a model of work engagement and recommendations to implement the results of findings.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. At first, the existing data of work engagement and Positive Organizational Scholarship is presented. After that, the method and design of this research is introduced. The third section introduces the results, the next section sums up the findings and introduces the results of this study, the model of work engagement. The last section summarizes the thesis.

2 WORK ENGAGEMENT

Work engagement is a phenomenon concerning well being and satisfaction of employees. It is related to other motivational and well-being theories, but the concept of work engagement has emerged quite recently in the field of employee satisfaction and occupational health studies. One of the first definitions of work engagement was made by William A Kahn as early as 1990. He defines it as “harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” (Kahn 1990, 694). After Kahn’s first studies of work engagement, the subject has been widely studied in the 21st century. As there are various definitions of work engagement, there are two keywords that combine the two: *energy* and *identification* with one’s work. An engaged employee feels *enthusiasm* for work and *performs on a high level* in the work environment and is *committed* to the success of the company.

2.1 Defining Characteristics of Work Engagement

According to Soyars & Brusino (2009, 63) engaged employees “are *mentally* and *emotionally invested* in their work and contributing to their employer’s success, know that what they do at work contributes to their company’s success”. This definition highlights the role of *identification* to one’s work by knowing the contribution and *meaning* of one’s work, rather than highlighting the performance in a high energy level.

The present pioneering academic studies of work engagement have been made by Schaufeli & Bakker in the Occupational Health Psychology Unit of the University of Utrecht. Their research has also been the foundation of Finnish work engagement research. Formerly the engagement research had not been determined as well as it is now after Schaufeli & Bakker’s studies. The concept of work engagement in the early studies is described very similar to resources of work, which are to be presented in the section 2.2.1.

The definition by Schaufeli & Bakker describes work engagement as “a *positive, fulfilling, affective motivational state* of work-related well-being that is

characterized by *vigor*, *dedication*, and *absorption*" (Schaufeli et al. 2002, 74). By vigor, Schaufeli and Bakker mean energy and willingness to work, their *persistence* and their *will to exertion* experienced by employees, even when facing difficulties. Dedication means the *meaningfulness, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenges in the work*, experienced by employees. *Absorption* describes *deep concentration, focus on work* and enjoyment achieved from these factors. (Schaufeli et al. 2008)

According to Hakanen, work engagement does not mean, though, that the work itself has an engaging feature, but engagement is a *real and authentic state of well-being* in overall. He describes it as the employee's *active and identifiable* relationship to work. It is also important to notice that work engagement is a long-lasting state of mind and some variations of level of engagement in different days may appear. (Hakanen, 2009)

Motivation is an important part of employees' work *performance*. To describe an engaged employee's motivation, term *internal motivation* has become common. The opposite of that is external motivation. External motivation comes from an exterior source, e.g. being motivated by aiming for a price or just because the superior has given an order. Internal motivation comes from *satisfaction* and *success*, something that satisfies the person himself. The creation of *internal motivation* is supported by giving the employee the kind of work environment and opportunities to feel engaged. (Schaufeli et al. 2008, 191)

Despite of the name 'work engagement', the phenomenon can also be partially generated outside work and impacts other part of human life. Work engagement is a state of mind which makes all other sides of life better as well. Studies have shown that people experiencing work engagement tend to be active on other parts of life, too (Schauffeli et al., 2002).

2.2 Factors Influencing Work Engagement

As research of work engagement is still rather recent, the studies are not by any means exhaustive yet. According to Hakanen (2009), however, a few common characteristics supporting engagement have appeared in several studies. These are:

1. Job resources vs. demands

2. Contagion between individuals
3. Personal resources
4. Recovering after work day
5. Home resources

Job resources are the positive resources of work that support the employee for better results. The job resources are considered as positive factors of work, as the job demands are negative factors that complicate achieving the optimal performance of employees. It has also been proved that work engagement can spread around in human interaction. *Personal resources* mean personal characteristics, such as attitude, and have proved to affect the work engagement, as explained later. The psychological detachment and recovery after work also seem very important in avoiding burnout while performing on a high level. Some connections between employees' *home resources* and work engagement have been found as well. (Hakanen, 2009) These factors influencing work engagement will be introduced more thoroughly in the next sections.

2.2.1 Job Demands-Resources Model

The Job Demands-Resources model was introduced by Schaufeli & Bakker. This well being model differs from previous models by *emphasizing the positive aspects*, while other models usually just try to *avoid the negative aspects* (Hakanen 2009). This type of research was originally started by studies of positive psychology that emphasize the ways to improve mental wellness rather than only concentrate on treat mental illness (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

As mentioned earlier, studies have shown that the strongest factor affecting work engagement can be categorised as job resources. These resources can be described as “physical, psychological, social and organizational factors that *help reducing the demands* and ease to achieve the work goals and also *inspire personal growth, learning and professional development.*” (Demerouti et al., 2001)

Figure 2 presents the main factors of both job demands and resources.

Job Resources +	- Job Demands
- Autonomy	- Hurry
- Development	- High Level of Pressure
- Seeing the results	- Lack of Recovery
- Gained Feedback	- Work Load
- Support&recognition from Superior	- Problems of Work Environment
- Support&recognition from peers	- Lack of Sufficient Work Tools
	- Conflicts of Work and Other Life

Figure 2: Factors of Job Resources and Demands

In order to create possibilities where work engagement can appear, there have to be the elements of job resources. The job demands are the factors that are usually related to studies on burn out. They are the factors that burden employees and make them feel exhausted. As the work engagement studies emerged with the concept of *positive resources*, then the meaning and result of job demands became more complicated. This is because some studies have indicated that the presence of resources affects more positively to work engagement than negative affection to engagement of job demands (Mauno, Kinnunen & Ruokolainen, 2007). This means that the attention paid to negative aspects of work environment should be overstepped by support for the resources of work.

The *need of autonomy* is formed of people's free will and the will of feeling ownership of one self's actions. These factors show up not only in personal decision making but also when pressured from outside sources. The point is that autonomy is not just autonomy in work to make decisions, but understanding what is the purpose one's work and why one does something, i.e. meaning. (Hakanen, 2009)

Relatedness refers to the human need to be a part of social environment, to feel connection to people. Hakala (2006) gives an example, that when a person's work and effort get *recognition* by people around them in the work place, the employee truly gets a feeling of *appreciation*.

The result of positive engagement through job resources, and exhaustion from job demands, were also reported by studies made by Belgium researchers. Their research study took a little different angle by looking at job demands and resources from theories of basic need satisfaction and self-determination framework, but the results fully supported the findings of Schaufeli & Bakker's studies of job resources. (Van den Broeck et al., 2008)

2.2.2 Other Factors Influencing Engagement

The Job Demands-Resources model has a major impact on work engagement, as is predictable because it is strictly related to the environment where employees work and try to engage. But other factors outside the work environment affect as well. Some of these factors are presented next.

Studies have also shown that work engagement is also a *collective* and *social phenomenon*. The engagement on a team level correlates clearly on individual state as well. The employees that feel engagement spread it to other people around in social interaction by *positive attitude*, *energy* and *enthusiasm*. This is then reflected on the whole team and therefore employees' engagement level is very important for the performance of the whole team. (Bakker, van Emmerik & Eumewa, 2006)

Work engagement is also highly related to personal resources. Some of them correlating positively to engagement have been found to be: *optimism*, *self-confidence*, *self appreciation*, *extrovert character*, *customable* and *positive perfectionism*. In some cases, the resources of work support the personal resources as well. (Hakanen 2009)

To gain positive results with work engagement, the employees need opposite mind states of life. The positive correlation between *recovery after work* and work engagement has been found. The work should be left emotionally to where it belongs (i.e. work place) and get *psychological detachment* in personal time. If detachment does not take place, the burden may lead to burnout and other negative affects (Sonnentag et al., 2008). Home resources are also related to this and the support of family and partner are found to be related to high level of work engagement, although home resources did not forecast work engagement in a forward way, when resources and demands of work were taken into account (Bakker, Demerouti

& Schaufeli, 2005). However, engagement to work needs support of home to gain a proper balance of work and life outside work place.

The key point here is that organizations need to recognise the basic needs of human beings, and to offer support to these factors. When an employee has his basic needs fulfilled and can express oneself, he is more engaged and motivated to work.

As a conclusion to the definition and factors influencing work engagement, Figure 3 concludes the keywords and concepts.

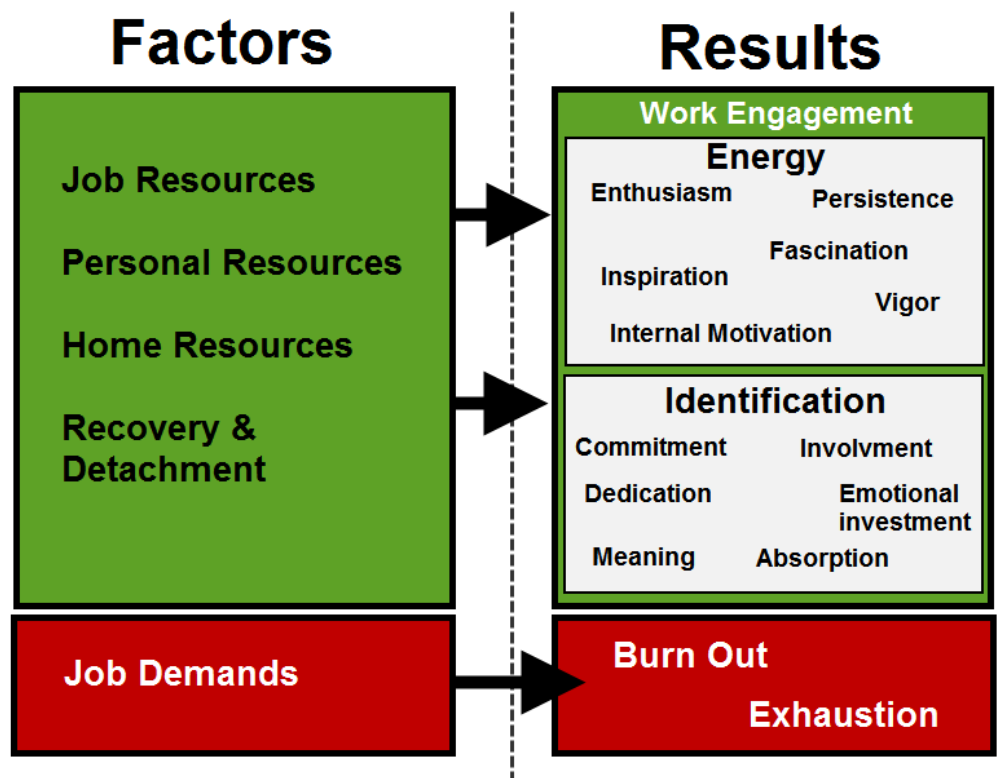


Figure 3: Keywords of Work Engagement

Factors that create positive impacts to increase employees' engagement, are job, home and personal resources. It is also important to have proper detachment and recovery after a day at work. These positive factors will lead to a high energy level and identification to one's work, i.e. positive results of work engagement. Job demands can be considered as negative impacts, which can result to exhaustion and burn out.

2.3 Measuring Work Engagement

As a complex phenomenon, work engagement can be measured in many different ways. As a simplest indicator of engagement the amount of new ideas presented by employees can be one way of measuring. McManus (2007) presents some ways to study the engagement rate of employees. His method and concept of engagement implementation is group work oriented and as his solution is to involve the employees participation in meetings for taking their opinion into account and increase the meaningfulness and identification in that way. Therefore his measuring systems emphasises the results of groups. These kinds of measures are percentage of people who have gained team skill certifications, the number of team projects implemented per year, and the amount of savings that have been gained through these team meetings. Though, the main indicator and measure, according to McManus, is the participation percentage to these meetings, as it will directly measure the actual possibility of employees influence to decision making and therefore measure the company's commitment to increase engagement. (McManus, 2007)

The academic work engagement research carried out by Bakker and Schaufeli has not only studied work engagement but developed a questionnaire to measure engagement, called UWES (Utrecht Work Engagement Scale). This questionnaire is widely used around the world, and for example the Finnish work engagement research made by Hakanen is based on this questionnaire. The questionnaire is simple and in form of multiple choice questions, and it measures three subcategories of engagement: vigor, dedication and absorption. When these three main subparts are analysed more closely and grouped into factors, more specific questions can be created. For this study, the UWES work engagement questionnaire was used as an orientating guidance to determine the type of questions, which will indicate work engagement.

2.4 Concept of Positive Organizational Scholarship

As the framework of this thesis is Positive Organizational Scholarship, as will be explained in detail in the next section, the principles of POS theory are introduced in this section.

Definition of POS by Kim Cameron:

POS is concerned primarily with the study of especially positive outcomes, processes, and attributes of organizations and their members. It focuses on dynamics that are typically described by words such as excellence, thriving, flourishing, abundance, resilience, or virtuousness. POS represents an expanded perspective that includes instrumental concerns but puts an increased emphasis on ideas of “goodness” and positive human potential. It encompasses attention to the enablers (e.g., processes, capabilities, structures, methods), the motivations (e.g., unselfish, altruistic, contribution without regard to self), and the outcomes or effects (e.g., vitality, meaning, exhilaration, high quality relationships) associated with positive phenomena. (Cameron 2003, 4)

Thus, positive organizational scholarship is a cross scientific theory about what is positive in organizations and what is the outcome of that. It does not represent just a single theory, but expanded perspective of various areas of studies, such as organization theory, psychology and sociology and therefore it is considered as a scholarship. All the studies and results are derived from scientific and theoretic basis to guarantee the credibility of results and findings.

In comparison to other organizational citizenship and behavioural studies, POS takes into account both humane values, and traditional hard values. This is presented in the next quote from Cameron: “POS does not exclude phenomena that are typically labelled positive in organizational studies—such as organizational improvement, goal achievement, or making a profit—but it has a bias toward life-giving, generative, and ennobling human conditions.” (Cameron 2003, 11)

The outcome of positive values in an organization can be categorized into four parts: climate, meaning, communication and relationships. These are

the key factors in order to create successful organization. Figure 4 represents these categories and ways to achieve them.

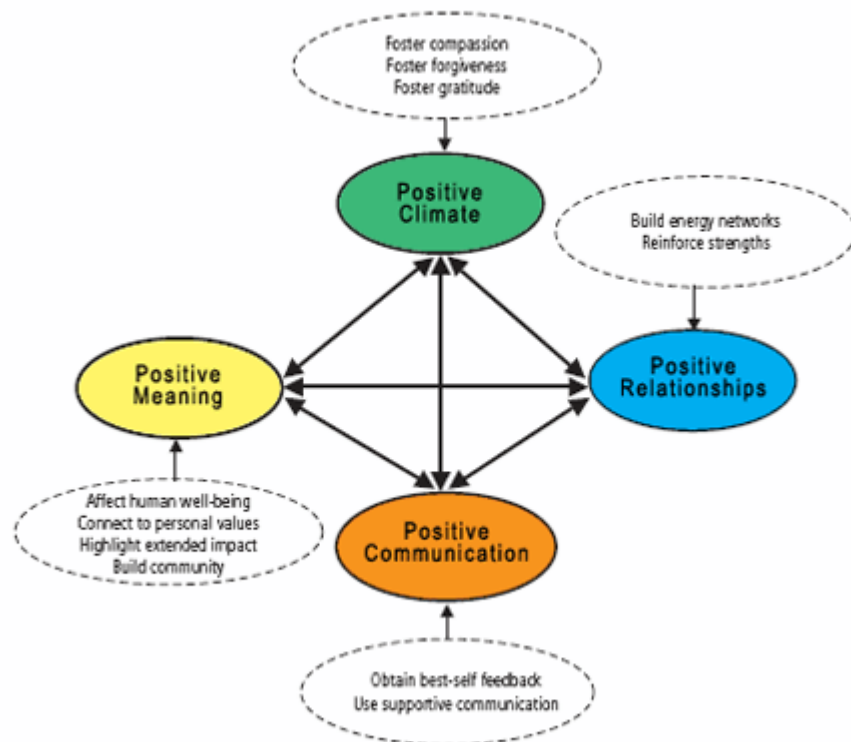


Figure 4: Strategies of Positive Organizational Scholarship (Leadership Now, 18.8.2008)

As can be seen in the figure, each of the main categories influences each of the other categories. The key to get positive climate is to create an atmosphere that fosters compassion, forgiveness and gratitude. For positive relationships support for building energy networks and reinforcing strengths are essential. Positive communication can be reached by obtaining best-self feedback and using supportive communication. The keys to fulfil positive meaning are community building, connection to personal values, highlighting extended impact and affecting human well-being. As each of these categories support each other, it is important to build a vortex of positivity in order fulfil all the categories by self feeding positive process. (Cameron, 2003)

This chapter explained the existing knowledge of both work engagement and Positive Organizational Scholarship. The next section introduces the methods and materials used on the study.

3 METHOD AND MATERIAL

This research is a part of a larger POS research project made by group of 6 Metropolia students (later referred as the POS group). The POS group analysed a comprehensive databank of the interviews collected from four countries in a major global company. The POS group studied the material from different point of views. The results of the different angles will be merged together on a higher level at a later stage. This meant that there had to be cooperation between the research team in different parts of the project. This also mean that the POS group had to set some standards and constants for concepts, as the software thus require. As this research was done with the POS group, it was important to apply the views of the group when validating the findings. This meant that during the research process there were several discussions about the different subjects. This helped to control the wider aspect of personal research projects so that group members observed others' views and inputs and thus also was able to avoid some negative effects of subjectivity. It was also a great benefit for the group to have collaborative members to consult, support and discuss with.

3.1 Research Design

Figure 5 shows an overview of the research design within the POS group and the project on work engagement:

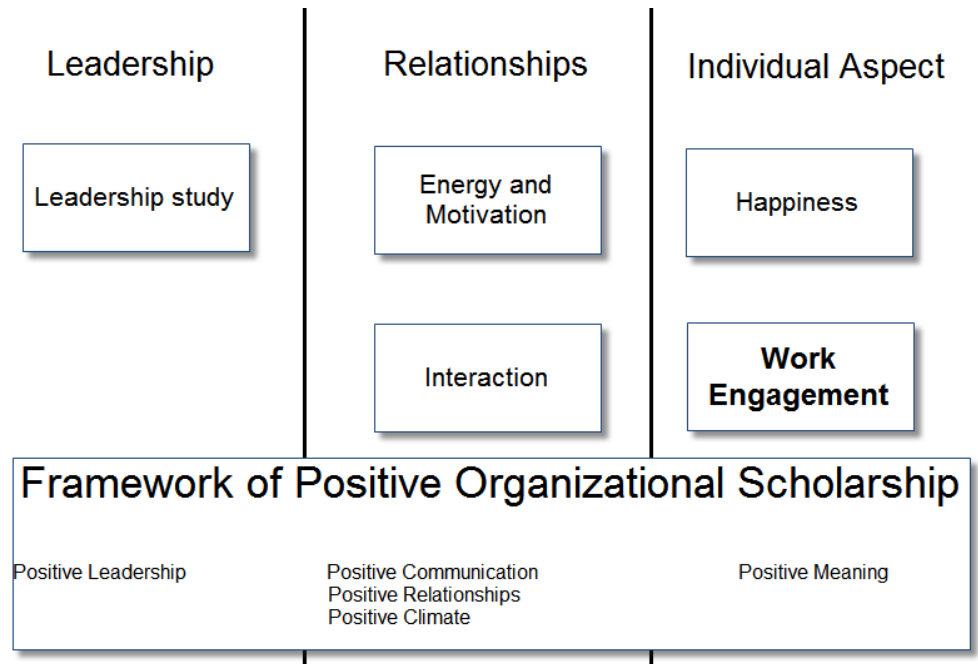


Figure 5: Research Design

Figure shows that the different points of views in the present research are divided into theme/ focus groups. Each target group: i.e. leadership, individuals and relationships. The topic in this specific study focuses mainly on the individual side, as work engagement is a highly individual issue, although the management and leadership styles can affect the engagement levels. The other aspects are the topic themselves: leadership study, work engagement, motivation and energy building etc. On a later stage of this research study, each project is merged to one big project using the Nvivo8 software. With this it is possible to find interesting common phenomena binding everything together. Because of schedule challenges this cannot take place before finishing this thesis.

3.2 Research Approach and Method

This study utilizes qualitative research methods: interviews and discussion groups technique, i.e. using the World Café method. As the material involves open interviews and discussion logs, the qualitative approach is a reasonable approach. The research was conducted inductively, i.e. allowing the data to lead to categorizations rather than searching for support to existing theories. There are, naturally, theories about work engagement, as reported earlier on, but in this research the goal was not to prove them right or wrong, but to make perceptions about engagement from the data: how did

the interviewees feel about their meaning, attachment and other engagement concepts in work. The main focus was on analysis of factors both indicating, and increasing work engagement. The challenge was, as generally is the case with qualitative research, to try to avoid over simplification of a real-world phenomenon. This was done by literature studies. At the end the findings were matched against the current theories of work engagement, and additions suggested.

The structure of this research is shown in Figure 6.

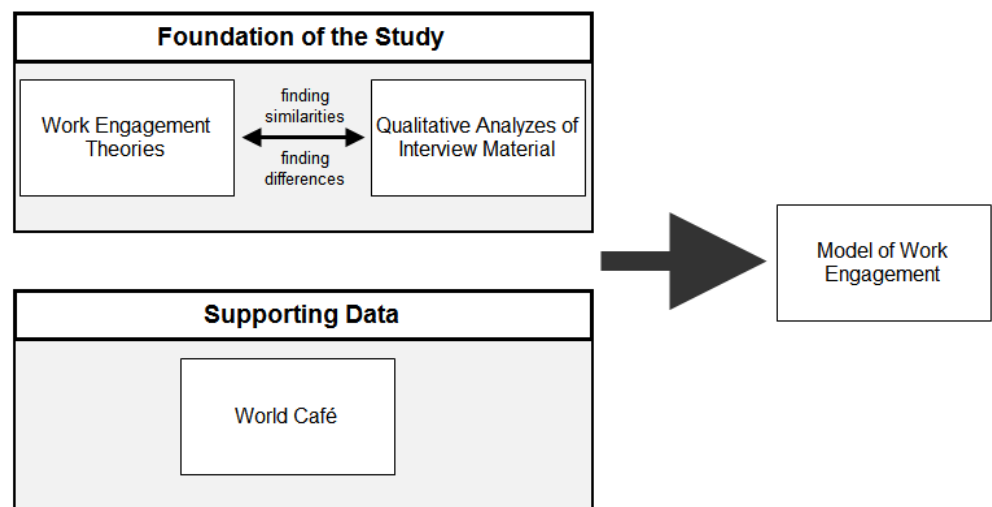


Figure 6: Research Structure of Work Engagement Study

The foundation of this study was the analysis and comparison of existing knowledge and analysis of interview material. This was supported by the World Café discussion data. This was condensed to a model of work engagement, where existing knowledge and findings are combined with the findings of the World Café discussion explained on the next segment. The parts of the study are described on a detailed level in the following section.

3.2.1 Interview Material Analyzed Using Nvivo8 Qualitative Analysis Tool

As material of this research, previously gathered interview material by a major globally operating company was used. The interviews were conducted in four different countries: Finland, Hungary, Italy and Sweden. The interviews were gathered for research concerning Positive Organizational Scholarship. This thesis thus analyzes the same interview material from another angle. Therefore there are certain frameworks and patterns, both in the structures, and nature of questions. The questions covered 5 major aspects of positivity

in working environment: leadership, communication, organizational climate, meaning and relationships. The questions are found in Appendix 1, as well as a listing of respondents and their positions and countries. As the research focuses on work engagement, it is safe to assume that most of the findings come from the 'meaning part' of the interviews. Therefore it was the major source of analysis. As a qualitative research, the aim was to gather everything related to work engagement from that interview, and then build up the relationships between the findings: what is a reason and what is the cause of something, what is the whole and what is the part? What is the entity and what are the factors? These types of questions were answered.

The inductive qualitative analysis was executed with help of Nvivo8 software, which is a tool for qualitative research. In the beginning of the process there was a training course on Nvivo8 and its application given by Professor Henrik Gahmberg from the University of Vaasa.

3.2.2 *World Café Discussion*

World Café is a conversational process based method to reveal integrated design principles of deeper, living network patterns (The World Café Community Foundation, 2003).

Discussions are held in a few groups where all the thoughts and conversation headlines are recorded in a paper that covers the whole table. This will enable everybody's contribution. After a certain amount of time, the group is split and divided into other tables where the discussion continues. In this World Café discussion, there were 3 groups with 4 persons each. Therefore there were 3 separate discussions per each question, when one member of the group stayed in the table as others divided to other tables. After this, a brief presentations of important findings of each table was given to conclude the topic.

There are seven design principles of World Café, which are important in order to have a successful discussion according to The World Café Community Foundation (2003):

1. Setting the context
2. Creating hospitable space

3. Exploring questions that matter
4. Encouraging everyone's contribution
5. Connecting diverse perspectives
6. Listening together for insights
7. Sharing collective discoveries

Setting the context is important, because it limits the discussion to a meaningful state, and the conversation does not reach out of the current topic. Creating hospitable space enables the participants to be in state where fertile thinking is possible. Exploring and finding questions that matter is important in order to create discussion of real-life phenomena and releasing the energy and insights of participants. Encouraging everyone's contribution will obviously lead to diverse outcome of the discussion, where everybody's thoughts are taken into account. Connecting diverse perspectives means, for example, that during a conversation in the group an image of different perspectives is drawn to paper used as a tablecloth. Listening together means authentic listening of one another as to create new connections between view points. Sharing collective discoveries means combining and concluding the conversations that have taken place in one table and then sharing the discoveries to others as well.

3.3 Reliability and Validity

The POS groups had the advantage of getting access to a broad database of conducted and tape scripted interviews collected in different countries. This facilitated the beginning of the research process, in order to sort out the useful material. Some of the interviews were discarded because of lack of background information. For example, some interviews did not even have the information about the interviewee, neither the country it was made.

Also, as the interview material was gathered beforehand, the questions could not be formulated to support the study of work engagement from all its angles. In this framework, the questions related to the subject of this study were limited to meaning of one's work, measuring mainly the dedication aspect of work engagement. What should have been asked in order to

get more reliable results would be for example how to increase one's energy level.

Some of the interview tape scripts (a total of 65) could not be used reliably because of the interviewer's biased comments. In some cases, the interviewer was leading the conversation in a guiding manner and prompting the respondent to agree with the interviewer. The following sample is an example of the case where the reliability of the response can be questioned (Q = interviewer's comment, A = respondent's answer):

Q: Do you think, for example, that meaningfulness could increase if people would get more money? Or, for example, if you get more responsibilities, or more respect, or more tasks, or you become a leader, you get promotion, or.. What kind of things do you think that could increase meaning?

A: (-) those things, yes, to some people, at least. Of course, everyone would like to be paid more, but.. [laughs] I'm sure. (interview 103, page 6)

In this case, the reliability of the respondent's answer is zero, because the interviewer had reflected his answer to the question and the responder only agreed to the interviewer's opinions.

Other important factors to increase credibility and solidity were the use of different sources and concepts for work engagement, as in line with the existing knowledge on the subject. Though, many sources refer to same previous studies in the field of work engagement.

Working with the POS group decreased the level of subjectivity and forced all group members to determine some of the concepts to avoid misunderstandings. This created solidity to the results of the whole groups' studies. To validate the results of the World Café discussion, this study used featured experts as well as other members of the POS-group. The participants of the discussion are listed in the Appendix 2.

4 FINDINGS OF WORK ENGAGEMENT

After a careful content analysis of the interview material, a few clear phenomena appeared. In line with appropriate reporting of qualitative material (Patton, 2002) these findings will be presented in the following.

The questions concerning meaning, in the framework of POS, were: 1. Do you see your work as job, career, or calling and why? and 2. How do you think you can increase meaning of your own work and the work of others? The first question measured employees' commitment and attitude to their current task in the company and the second question was more open to their opinions and suggestions as to how to increase meaning of their and their colleagues' work.

The answers given by the 35 respondents were categorised so that the key findings suited five major categories. The categories were chosen to describe the phenomenon respondent brought up. One major point was the meaning of one's work. Three other major points related to the visibility of a bigger picture and results of one's work, a possibility to learn new things and the ability to self expression and personal development. and thirdly, social aspects of work and attitude. Figure 7 presents the findings in categories and quantities of quotes in the subject.

Tree Nodes			
Name	Sources	References	
Interview Findings	0	0	
Meaning	0	0	
Career	15	15	
Job	8	8	
Mixture	6	6	
Calling	3	3	
Getting the Big Picture	10	12	
Personal Development	4	4	
Lifelong Learning	8	10	
Getting Feedback	5	6	
Breaking the Routine	5	6	
Self Actualization	4	6	
Attitude	2	2	
Positivity	1	1	
Empathy	2	2	
Social Recognition	3	3	

Figure 7: Screen Capture of Interview Findings from Nvivo8

Figure shows how the findings were organised into categories of significance. The appeared phenomenon has been divided into 5 categories: meaning, getting the big picture, personal development, attitude and last, social recognition. Also some of these are divided to smaller subcategories, which will be explained more thoroughly later under each category.

4.1 Meaning of Work

The first question analysed asked how the employees categorized their meaning of work; a calling, a career or a job. *Calling* presents the highest level of commitment where the employee is bonded to work in emotional attachment and really can express one self and do what he really wants. Seeing *work as a career* in this case presents a middle level commitment that is driven by personal motivators, a possibility to create a working career in the company etc. Seeing work just as a job is the lowest level of commitment, where the employee feels that one's meaning for work is just getting paid. Engaged employees feel a lot of meaning in their work, so the companies should aim to find more meaning for their employees' work.

To feel the meaning of one's work as a calling is something that is closely related to work engagement. Engaged employee has *vigor*, *dedication* and *absorption* which are more easily reached if one finds the meaning to be close to calling, something that really *inspires* and creates *enthusiasm*. One respondent that felt his meaning as a calling reflected his view in a following way:

Working for the sake of the work itself. Of course there are some things that you want to, maybe, I mean you don't want to do it but then this job makes you do it. And if you don't do it, then there's no job, like this achieving financial and material rewards, and there is no careers, like for personal growth and advancement and these things. So they are all there. Maybe this calling, it's, like it's forced to be there. That's how I, just, whatev-, like I'm saying, this thing that, first thing that comes to my mind. So that's, I think I mean, the calling is, should be there, without that you can't do anything. Maybe it has some small percentage of this whole thing, but anyhow. (interview 406, page 4, focus underlined by writer)

This response highlights working for the work itself. Another respondent felt the other way round:

The calling is a bad word if, I think this working for the sake of the work itself, I don't think that's, never important for me. I think the work should be done for the sake of, adding value to the world or to the society or whatsoever, but not just the sake of the work itself. I don't, recognize or see that as an important thing. (interview 1003, page 3, focus underlined by writer)

This example underlines the fact that the meaning of work is experienced personally, as is the source of the meaning. Therefore it is important to know the employees personally so that it can be recognized how to engage each individual employee.

One of the respondents expressing calling to his work also highlighted that success is related to one's *vision of the meaning*. This is important because to create success in work, engaging is a key element to get the best result out of an employee. Will to success and work engagement together create great results, and between these factors is the view of one's meaning of work as a calling, or close to it.

I could say that if someone is not working for the calling of the job, then he will be not so successful. I think it's always suc-

cess what moves. (interview 803, page 6, focus underlined by writer)

About half (15 of 31) of the respondents experienced *work as a career* although many answers described relatively strong, close to calling type of commitment. Some of the respondents found calling too strong a word to describe the meaning of their work, yet another respondent may categorize it otherwise. A typical example of experiencing work as a career is illustrated in the next sample:

At the moment I see my work as a career. That is because I see myself continuing in this job in the future. If I wouldn't think so I would consider this as a job, and I would consider this a calling if I would be religious, which I'm not. (interview 501, page 3, focus underlined by the writer)

Continuity is a keyword to describe the meaning of career. Respondents feeling career type of commitment for their work want to be a longer time period in the company. They are willing to give their effort for the job in hope of getting a better position in the organization after certain time.

One way to engage employees to the company is to offer *career opportunities* and organize *training*. This could raise the employees' motivation and feelings for the company. One response to the meaning question pointed out this kind of attachment, as this sample shows:

I think this training program I'm in, it's really helping to have it as a career because we are getting a lot of training and also within the project I've got quite a lot of training, that really helps in feeling that we are going somewhere and not just doing something to get money, but we have to get better and there are hopefully also opportunities to take steps in your career. (interview 101, page 6, focus underlined by writer)

Some respondents described their work as a career, but saw that their work in the company was just a small step in a way to bigger achievement and they would not probably making the career in the same job or company. The following sample is one of the many that indicates this:

I see it as a career. It's definitely not only a job but at least at this point yet I'm not able to see as a calling. I'm most definitely not doing this particular job for the rest of my life. So it's not a

calling. But more I see it as a career. (interview 1001, page 3, focus underlined by writer)

To see the work as a career, is combined in many responses to personal *growth* and *development*, as the next sample shows:

Well for me personally it's, maybe career, and then focus on personal growth. For me it's really important to continuously learn new things and develop as a person. (interview 102, page 7, focus underlined by writer)

Aspects of *personal development* are introduced more specifically in the next section, but it is important to understand at this point that people willing to create careers in a company also need supportive actions for their *personal growth*, and therefore the career opportunities are closely related to personal development.

Many respondents described the meaning of work as a mixture of the given categories. Usually these answers still had an understandable meaning in the scale i.e. combination was between calling and career, or career and job, but none between job and calling. Respondents found certain aspects of the meaning of their work in different categories. The following sample is a very typical answer in the line of combination:

I guess it [i.e. work] falls somewhere between career and calling, that there are things in this job that I really like, and would like to (--) of establishing this information sharing culture in the company. It might be bit too big task for one man. But as a career as well. But then again I don't, I don't know if this is something that I wanna do in twenty years or six years ahead. So let's see. But definitely work has to have a meaning other than just giving you the money. (interview 503, page 3, focus underlined by the writer)

To have work just as a job is the weakest level of engagement. One challenge for the companies is to create opportunities to increase the employees' meaning of work. This is what one of respondents had to say about this:

Well, most certainly it is not a calling. Maybe, at the moment, it is a job, because I have been here for such a short time. But I do believe and hope, that it will change to the career at some point. (interview 302, page 3, focus underlined by writer)

This respondent brought up that he may find the meaning as a career in the future. In this case the respondent had been working for the company for only a short time period. For the company it is important to recognize the willingness of an employee to engage themselves in the work and then react to that by supporting the employee, e.g. by offering career creating possibilities and tools.

To summarize, it is important to know how a person feels about the *meaning* of his job. *Meaning of work* is closely related to *commitment* to work and the company, so the goal should be to support *high-level commitment*, as well as support for committing more tightly by *career opportunities*.

4.2 Seeing the Wider Scale

The second questions asked the respondents' view of how to increase meaning of one's work. Many respondents pointed out how the visibility of the results of their work was important. Part of this is the actual *visibility of results* i.e. seeing that what the employee does has a meaning, as one of the respondents formulated her view:

For me the meaning comes from seeing the result. If you do something, what does it effect on or what's the impact of your work. If you do something and maybe you're not fully aware of why, it's of course important to first clear those things out. Then follow up on your own work. (interview 1002, page 3, focus underlined by writer)

Seeing the results helps people to concentrate on the essential things to do. It also makes the employee feel like he is doing something real, something that has *value for something*. It is also experienced that seeing the meaning of work in the big picture improves commitment. This will improve the feeling of *meaning* and help the employee to be more *engaged*, as is shown in the next sample:

Meaning. Well I think, often, getting a better understanding about the big picture is very important, at least for me. I want to understand how my working is affecting the bigger picture, and understand what kind of goals does the company have and what are the strategies there and how my, if I do something, how does this fit to that. And I think, at least I think that it's an important thing. And also, not just for our company, but also what does our work mean for our customers and other things, or other stakeholders also. So, sharing that information and that kind of things is very important, so that the work is not just

doing work for the sake of the work itself. (interview 1003, page 3, focus underlined by writer)

This example widens up the view of 'a big picture'. Most of the respondents mentioning big picture limited the view only to the company, but the previous sample makes a point about realizing the benefit of one's work to other associated groups as well, i.e. customers and stakeholders. This gives the employee an even wider scale to help to value the meaning of one's work.

One of the challenges is that when doing very detailed and specific tasks, the visibility of the big picture may be lost. One respondent felt that, and here is what he said:

In daily work it sometimes is very difficult to see the meaning when you're stuck in the details and you would like to see much wider picture, but the details are, you're spending too much time on them, so that's kind of killing the meaning, for me at least. So I think it's really important to take a step back every now and then and remember what are the goals of the project and what are we, probably able to achieve. (interview 101, page 6, focus underlined by writer)

Here the respondent noticed that sometimes it is necessary to "take a step back" and realize what one is actually doing. This reflection helps an individual to see his part of the whole picture. Also it is important to sometimes follow the headlines of project goals to understand the meaning of work, because most of the times the work is not straight seen on the big picture, but is enabling and *supporting other processes that are more visible*.

It appeared from some of the answers that getting the big picture in order increase meaning does relate to *personal values*. The next sample reflects upon one of respondent's view of the big picture:

Maybe it's the thing that I need to see the big picture that to what is my work actually contributing. And at the moment it's contributing probably in making savings for the company. And the thing is that if it's only money then it's not enough for me. Of course it's an important thing and it's probably enough for some people. But I need to see some kind of, I need some sort of bigger meaning for myself. Just maybe, at the moment in my tasks there isn't that kind of meaning. (interview 303, page 4, focus underlined by writer)

From this example it can be learned that hard values are not a proper way to increase a certain type of person's meaning. Saving the money was seen important by many, but sometimes money saving is not the right type of data. Therefore, saving money as such should be connected to something more crucial, e.g. being able to continue employ all the personnel.

To be able to implement the benefits from *recognition* of the value and the meaning of employees work, communication plays an important part. *Positive communication* can help the company people to share the appreciation of each employee's input and effort to results in the big picture. One of the respondents personally experienced and gave this type of feedback:

I guess positive feedback is a good way to really show that things that you do is meaningful. One example that I actually did today is for this my Indian worker. She does the data maintenance in our database, from which we calculate the market sales and everything so I showed her the annual report and showed okay, these are the figures here, and these figures are affected by your work, so this is why you need to keep up the quality and, showing that okay, this is not something, that your work is not just something that disappears somewhere, but that it really has an effect on pretty major things. (interview 503, page 3, focus underlined by writer)

This respondent emphasized not just getting feedback of one's role, but giving it as well. Every employee has an important role in the organization and therefore actively also pointing out the meaning of one's work simply increases the meaning the employees experiences. Also, the tone of the feedback should be supportive and emphasise the positive meaning. This will create more meaning throughout the organization.

4.3 Personal Development and Self Actualization

The third aspect arising from the interviews in the global company relate to self actualization and personal development. These topics were emerged in many responses in ways to increase the meaning of work.

4.3.1 Self Actualization

The most popular concept for self actualization was introduced by Maslow in the hierarchy of needs model. This is how Maslow defined self actualization: "Self-actualizing people are, *involved* in a cause outside their own skin, in something outside of themselves. They are *devoted working at something*

which is very precious to them -- some calling or vocation in the old sense. They are working at something which fate has called them to somehow and which they work at and which they love, so that work-joy dichotomy in them disappears. They are actualizing their ultimate values which are intrinsic, which cannot be reduced anything more ultimate." (Maslow 1971, 43-44)

Some of the respondents experienced that meaning comes together with the *ability to do what one feels important* (i.e. act based on personal ultimate values), as the next sample demonstrates:

I can increase the meaning of my work by doing the things I think are important. As for others, I can increase the meaning of their work by trying to make them to understand what is important. (interview 501, page 3, focus underlined by writer)

This sample relates to and supports the findings about seeing the importance of work in a bigger picture. This quote though accentuates the employee's own experience of important things in his point of view. That reflects the possibility *to actualize one self*, i.e. working enables existence of the person's *values* and *opinions* in work. The following samples are other examples of responses indicating typical self actualization as a source of increased meaning:

The job that I'm doing now, that I know that it's been done in the best practice, best way possible, and the most effective way. To the company of course then it's also saving, time and effort if everything's done correctly and well. So, (by) developing, in that spot, I want to do, so, I think that's something that drives me also. (interview 404, page 2, focus underlined by the writer)

Yeah, if it would be stronger aligned with my personal values for example. This could be a way of bringing more meaning to my work, or maybe it also, doing more meaningful tasks. But not necessarily. I mean you can also find meaning in small things, small details. It depends on you personally. (interview 301, page 4, focus underlined by writer)

On the other hand, some respondents felt that giving too much liberty can also reduce meaning, or at that they were at the level where they did not need more freedom. This side of self actualization was brought up by a respondent in the next sample:

I guess, not more freedom in any case, I think we do get to have a lot of personal freedoms in working style and working preferences. (interview 407, page 2, focus underlined by writer)

In this case the respondent felt that freedom to choose working styles and preferences was in the proper level to maximize meaning.

It occurs from the interview material that respondents found it important that *personal traits* and *strengths* were taken into account. It is a well known fact that different type of personalities values different kind of things. As one of the respondents said:

It depends on what kind of people we are. I am more a proactive person and not a productive. But those people who are more productive than they can say that the flat tasks are the most positive thing in their job but in my job I am a proactive so I try, I just want to get the goal and then I like to find out to, where we are and how to get there. So this means of the meaning of my job. (interview 801, page 6, focus underlined by writer)

As these personally highly valued things differ by the personality of the employee, it is a typical example of self actualization. Another typical example is that a person gets some freedom and responsibilities for the work he is doing. One respondent noticed the connection between this type of freedom and meaning, as the next sample proves:

I think that in my particular case, to make it more meaningful I have to work a lot and communicate a lot about what I'm doing and showing how this is useful and important to the company. And I guess that when this is understood, and I start to get to widen the project that I'm working for and take it into more important levels then I'm gaining meaning to it. (interview 502, page 3, focus underlined by writer)

The challenge for the companies is to recognise the people's limits both in the level of freedom and responsibilities that one can carry without negative effects.

4.3.2 *Breaking the Routine*

One aspect of self actualization pointed out by the respondents was to *break the routine*. Routine means the employee's feels *boredom* and lack of meaning when doing *flat tasks* day after day and unable to express and do what they really want, and are able, to do. The following sample describes clearly how one of the respondent found the relationship between self actualization and routines in work:

Well, I think it's [meaning of work] the development of the processes and the current daily work that we do. Because every day we see these things that could be improved, and just grabbing those things and making the development and making the improvement makes also the work, usually those are the very boring and time consuming tasks, and it makes it more meaningful when you find out that this can be done better, in, with better quality, and, in less time, and so on. And, that way you have more time for perhaps, more important tasks or something that is not completely routine, or, basically you have time to think when you don't have to do these sort of mechanical tasks. And I think that's one of the most important things in that sense. (interview 401, page 3, focus underlined by writer)

In this example, the respondent felt that the “more important task” was developing the processes instead of routine tasks. This is exactly what actualizing one self in working place means, when the employee is using his own skills and his opinions and suggestions are given value.

Respondents also pointed out that routine can be hard to break and therefore some of the respondents reported a lack of meaning in their work, as the following sample describes:

Right now, with the things I'm doing, I think there is not so much I can do to improve it [meaning], because it's like a routine work, and every (-), it works in this pattern or in the process, so I cannot do basically much about it. (interview 403, page 5, focus underlined by writer)

This respondent also felt that routines caused disability to influence the meaning of his work. Therefore breaking the routines will also enable more possibilities to experience the meaning of work for employees.

One respondent, that highlighted meaning and routine, was in a leading position in the company. He had better ability to choose what he did than most of the other respondents, so self actualization by breaking the routine was easier for him. The next quote indicates his opinion of the matter:

Well, my point of it, I try to, let's say avoid flat tasks. And try or if I have this kind of boring task I try to solve them immediately. And try to find the challenges of my job and new tasks and if I have to delegate some tasks to the colleagues, I always them whether they want it or not because if they don't want it then I try to make it myself. And yes, as a leader, the leader has to, my opinion is that that has to do the same, because if you, it's like if you got only this kind of flat and without challenging tasks then it's, can be boring and then you, the meaning is disappear

from your work. (interview 801, pages 5-6, focus underlined by writer)

4.3.3 *Life-long Learning*

Learning in work was mentioned in many responses. Learning may relate to knowledge, skills, competences or attitudes. Learning can be linked to routine breaking as well, as routines are something that one knows well and breaking those means new approaches to work tasks. Though in this section, routine breaking has been separated from learning new, because it is considered a much broader concept and an important part of personal development. One of the respondents emphasized personal development and self actualization in the following way:

I think an important aspect is also this personal growth, that I feel that I can develop myself and really get, also, things done. (interview 1003, page 3, focus underlined by writer)

Lifelong learning is part of personal development and many respondents highlighted it separately. The following samples reveal some of the respondents' appreciation of lifelong learning:

I think one is to be always open to new ideas, to new things. To open to learn all the time. That is the key point here. The more open you are, the more you see possibilities and opportunities and at least in that way I can increase the meaning. Of course it depends on a people. (interview 1001, page 3, focus underlined by writer)

[What could increase meaning?] To improve myself, my own knowledge, I could improve, really how, stuff works, and how certain things should be booked and why they should be booked like that and, this I could improve a lot, and also, some, I guess, in financial terms, everything, how to calculate things. What they do for the income statement and so on (interview 403, page 5, focus underlined by writer)

Meaning in my own work is increasing when I learn something new, and I find it important, and here is created possibilities to learn new. If you want to learn new you just had to say to your manager and he will organize it. (interview 902, pages 5-6, focus underlined by writer)

Maintaining the *knowledge* and *skills* of employees by lifelong learning is important for the case company and for all companies generally. Yet, one of the respondent expressed disappointment for the company's policy against the respondent's idea to use her time to learn new, and by that increase the meaning of work. The respondent felt that the company did not support the

employees' learning at all, though the company had some policies to support it:

Of course more, the opportunity to just, learn new things here at work more easily. I think I've asked about it, I've asked around, and I've tried to suggest that maybe, could we, arrange something that if I have a couple of hours of spare time, maybe I could go and sit with somebody doing invoices, and maybe at some stage when I think I've learned enough about that, maybe start helping that team from my desk. Even though I would be part of (a travel) team mainly, but such things. But, no, that's not possible because of different issues I do not understand and I, maybe don't wanna talk about it either. Things like, they say that we have all these things like job rotation and you get, wanna spread knowledge within the company and things, but I haven't really seen it that much. I've just more or l-, mostly seen that if you suggest something like that it's shot down quite quickly. Because it's some problems with, I don't know what. (interview 402, page 5, focus underlined by writer)

One challenge for the companies is to support lifelong learning. Sometimes it is not that easy, as the previous example brings up. In many cases the organizations are stiff units, where learning possibilities are arranged in a strict way, so informal and flexible arrangements may not be tolerated.

4.3.4 Importance of Feedback

One of the most important parts of personal development is receiving and giving feedback. This subject also appeared in the respondents answers. One of the respondents expressed that feedback between superior and employee should be honest and straight to support the meaning that an employee experiences. The formulation of this idea can be found in the next sample:

How can you make things more meaningful. To me, the essential things is, fair and open feedback. The worst things you can do for your superior is tell him a lie. Lie to him. Tell him something which is not true. Being open with your superiors, having a straight feedback with your superiors. (interview 702, page 10, focus underlined by writer)

Feedback and communication is not just between the superior and employee, but also between colleagues. The appreciation of one's work by other people is highly important to the employee's feeling of meaning. There-

fore feedback should be coming from peers as well. One of the respondent did this on a regular basis. Here is what he said about it:

Meaning can be your own understanding of what you do, but it can also be at the same time the understanding of another person. And if I give a positive interpretation of someone's work by giving feedback, then this can change the meaning of the work of this person. So it can have a positive effect on how to other person perceives his or her work. (interview 301, page 5, focus underlined by writer)

This example concentrated on the *positive feedback*. Similar aspects were explained in the work resources model, that it is *important to support positive aspects* rather than just fighting against negative things. Employees can resist negative feedback and handle it better, if the positive side is also there. The next sample is one of the respondent's views of decreasing others' meaning by giving bad feedback:

[how to increase others meaning] Probably of course recognizing the value of their work. That if you're always putting them down and saying like "You're just doing that and you're just on your computer. And you're easily replaceable" and stuff like that. Of course that's not coolest the thing. (interview 303, page 4, focus underlined by writer)

Feedback is the main tool in development discussions, which are the main source for an employee to get the company's support to personal development in a professional manner. Development discussions should consist of feedback and communication in two ways: the employee getting feedback of his results, and expressing the personal targets and motivation. With the discussions, an employee may get possibilities to learn new through company arranged/supported education, or diversity to their tasks by job rotations etc. In these discussions, feedback and communication can also be used as a helping tool to break the routine, as the following quotations reflects:

We had a development discussion about work diverse, if an employee wants to have different tasks. That everyone could have diverse and challenging tasks and also changes that they can improve things or learn new. (interview 901, page 5, focus underlined by writer)

As a conclusion, feedback is important and related to all areas of personal development. The importance of feedback is also presented earlier in the context of seeing the big picture, so it is a single factor that affects many subjects of increasing the meaning of work. Therefore it is a highly important single factor that should be paid special attention to if a company wishes to support work engagement.

4.4 Attitude

The fourth important point arising from the interviews is the attitude. As meaning of one's work is viewed subjective as are the ways to increase it, personal attitude of the individual plays a significant role. Positive attitude results to positive outcomes, and vice versa. One respondent found that meaning comes from an optimistic view point. The following sample is a quote from him:

I work for success and also I'm opportunistic person, I see everything as an opportunity and, optimistic person sees always the chance in a problem and the pessimistic sees always the problem in a chance. So I'm the optimistic one, it there's a problem, let's learn out of it and let's follow. So I try to take always the positive, the bright side. (interview 803, page 6, focus underlined by writer)

As we see, an optimistic view will lead to resolution-based thinking. An optimist sees that problems can be solved and those are a great opportunity to learn something new.

Employees may have attitudes about the meaning of work itself. Obviously this affects significantly how one feels about the meaning of work. The next sample is about what one respondent felt about that subject:

I am sure that if you really throw yourself into it. Then it will be, by force, more meaningful to you. But if you just don't care about it, then it is not so important anymore. (interview 302, page 3, focus underlined by writer)

One of the superiors, who brought up the subject of attitude and feelings, highlighted that his role was to feel *empathy* for his subordinates:

You need to understand everything about the people working for you. And you need to enter in their same wavelength. This is about empathy. (interview 702, page 10, focus underlined by writer)

Besides the empathy, the most important clause, though, concerns understanding everything about the subordinates. This is very important in order to improve engagement. This is because every employee is a person with personal values and personal philosophy, so by supporting what is important for that specific person will create the best results.

Attitude towards change and new things is obviously important in a dynamic work environment. To be open to new things is something that will create happiness to the person himself, when not fighting something that cannot be changed, and allow the management to create successful projects to change something. Open attitude can also improve the meaning of work, when it indicates passion to learn new and to adapt to new situations. One respondent valued openness with the following words:

The more open you are, the more you see possibilities and opportunities and at least in that way I can increase the meaning.
(interview 1001, page 3, focus underlined by writer)

The meaning of attitude is enormous for everything. The right attitude enables huge variety of positive things to happen. The last sample of respondent's view of an attitude is an example of attitude that will create positive affection to everything:

You have to have the right attitude. That's enough, I think, to say about that. It depends on what you're doing for your job; You have to see the positive things in your work. And also show that for other people that you're (positive) in your work.
(interview 201, page 2, focus underlined by writer)

Attitude is all the more vital, as the first reaction comes from the attitude. It was also brought up by the respondents that there are different types of attitude: attitude to work issues, like change, and attitude to other people. Positive attitude to both of them will create the best results.

4.5 Social Recognition

Individual has basic needs, which are formed from a few different factors. One of these factors is the social side of being human. Man needs other humans in order to feel meaningful, and this was brought up by one respondent. Here is a sample of his thinking:

I really enjoy the people I hang around with here at work, this is what makes me happy. If I wouldn't have a place to go to eight hours a day, I would be a really, like, start being really restless. It wouldn't feel normal to me anymore. This has become such a big part of my life that I have a place to go to, a place that I like to go to, and people I like to meet here. I think that's, maybe the way I am as a person, I think, makes me enjoy this because I like the people here. I've always liked to meet people, and always liked to talk to people, be around people, I hate being alone. It's really a nightmare. (interview 402, page 4, focus underlined by writer)

Some people find it highly important to work with other people. In the engagement point of view, it supports engagement when the employee's effort is recognized by other people. This is individually more important to some people than others. The following sample indicates another opinion of social aspect and group work in order to increase meaning

Also you could do it for others. Group work sometimes especially. And if you do a part of a process then try to familiarize yourself with other parts of the process and especially the people who relate to the same process. (interview 1002, page 3, focus underlined by writer)

4.6 Summary of Interview Findings

Based on the analysis above it is fair to say that several factors contribute to an employee's work engagement. The first issue is that feel of the meaning of one's work is seen individually. Some feel strongly committed to work, as the others are working just for money. In order to increase the level of commitment and engagement, the work place should support those who have a high level of commitment, as the individuals willing to bind more to their work. The second important finding is the visibility of the big picture. By seeing the result of one's work in a company level will resume to increased meaning that one feels for his work. Also, it should be recognized that sometimes it may be unnecessary to limit the visibility to just company level, the big picture is also other parties concerned, e.g. customers, shareholders etc.

The next major finding concerned the possibility to personal development and self actualization. In this category, a few clear subcategories appeared. These are, besides the actualization of one self (i.e. possibility to use one's true potential and taken account on personal interest and skills and values), breaking the routine, lifelong learning and importance of feedback.

Personal attitude also influences how one feels meaning of one's work. Optimistic attitude will lead to resolution-based thinking and more productive change processes in an organization. As a superior, attitude should be empathic for one's subordinates in order to understand and know them better.

The last finding is understanding the importance of social recognition. As a social human being, getting recognition from peers and superiors on what one does and results one creates will lead to feeling more meaning for one's work. Appreciation is vital when trying to engage employees.

4.7 World Café Results

There were all the POS group members present in the World Café discussion and additionally four experts as listed in Appendix 2. The topics discussed were as follows:

1. How can management and interaction improve profitability?
2. How an employee can improve profitability?

The following section breaks down the outcome of the session from the point of view of work engagement.

4.7.1 *Management and Interaction Improving Profitability*

The question about management and interaction resulted in a few important key ideas that were brought up. The single most important item appeared to be *trust*, which means a two-way trust between the superior and a subordinate and among peers as well. With trust the employee can work in more autonomy and in that way it releases the personal strengths and traits more, the true potential of the employee and in that sense the improvement of profitability becomes possible. In this World Café it was recognized highly important, but in real workplaces it is hard to create, though one reason for that is that the value and benefits of trust may not be visible enough.

The second important key issue was *interaction*. In this case, creating a *culture of interaction* where differences are tolerated. This can be affected in many ways by management for whom this is important to pay attention to. The culture of interaction will result in *authentic communication* and information exchange, as well as *transparency*. When implemented, managers can

trust subordinates and share responsibilities to subordinates and thus get better results.

The third important factor is climate. In this context it means a climate that values *respect* and *trustworthiness*. Also to create profitability, it is important to *understand the different characters* of people. This is enabled in a climate that supports and utilises the *richness of diversity*. The person in a managing role should have good knowledge of human nature to take the maximum advantage of diverse and unique subordinates. A proper type of climate will lead to another key issue found with World Café, which is *inner leadership*. This should take place on the subordinate's side as well, as to be a good member of the micro society in the work place and stand up for one's values and carry the given responsibilities.

The last big issue for this topic was development potential. Superiors should aim to recognise the real *potential of subordinates*. In the discussion it was brought up that the recognition should be in the deep level, understanding the true potential of that person, meaning not only what he does now, but *what he truly wants and is as a human being*. Supporting such things will lead to more satisfaction among employees and better utilization of one's potential. It was also brought up that superiors should sometimes break the subordinates' comfort zones with a view to create new kind of situations for subordinates. This should be done in order to identify the potential of persons.

4.7.2 *Employees Improving Profitability*

The topic of employees' input to add profitability ended up with a few clear key findings. The biggest single word brought up in the conversations was *courage*. This means, from this point of view, the courage of the subordinate to confess the mistakes that have been made. Though for this to happen, the contribution of the superior is to create the atmosphere to allow this type of behaviour. Courage also means that the subordinate *dares to disagree* and be *explicit* and *transparent*. This will allow the subordinate to make suggestions of improvement without the fear to be labelled negatively.

The second keyword of findings is *unselfishness*. In the bigger picture the meaning is to create a *culture of assistance and aid*, where employees act *unselfishly* and help voluntary with good will. This means that the subordi-

nate should accept different types of people, even on a personal level. Suspicion of different people and their motives (or what so ever) and culture of assistance do not go hand in hand, so it is important for individuals to check their *attitude* for creating a *climate of unselfishness*.

4.7.3 Recapping of Discussion Results

As a result, a figure to illustrate the context and connection of the findings was drawn. Figure 8 illustrates is the writer's view of the conclusion:

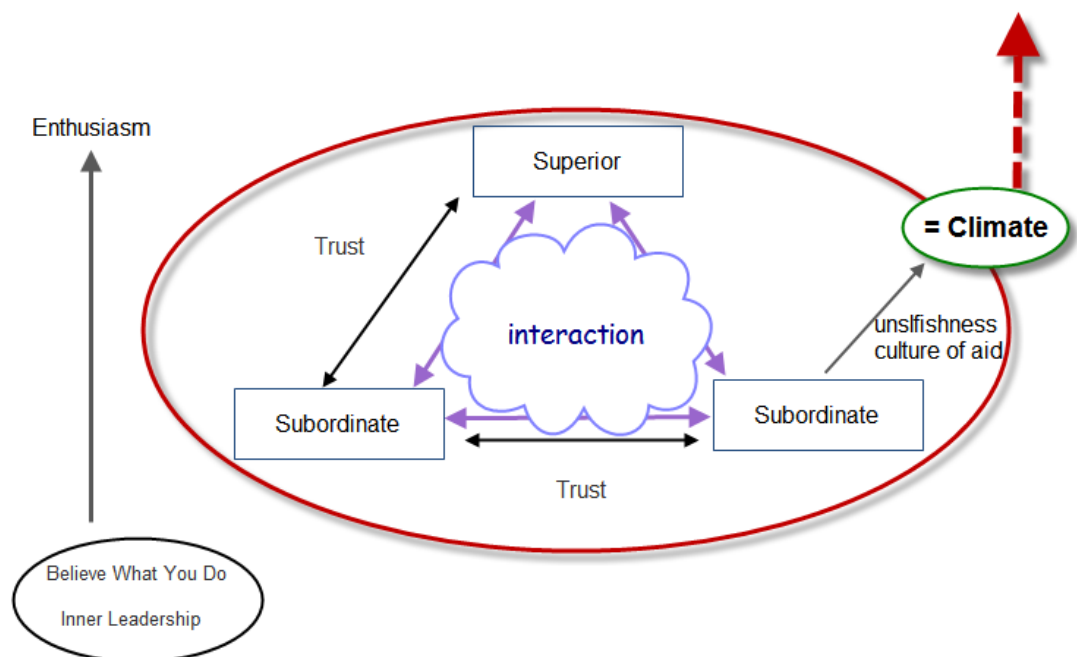


Figure 8 Key Findings of the World Café Discussion

The figure 8 visualizes the view formed from the risen aspects of the World Café. There must be *trust* between the subordinate and superior in order to create an atmosphere where the superior clearly aims to *unleash the potential* of subordinates. *Interaction* is something that is in between every member of a work society. It is the way to influence other via communication. For an employee's ability to gain *enthusiasm*, *believing* in what one does and *inner leadership* are needed. Also the employee's share to create *culture of assistance* has an important role in building up the climate, where excellent results of profitability is possible.

The main point of the World Café session was that *human beings are intellectual, emotional, social, creative and psychophysical individuals*, and they should be treated as such. By doing this, one can release the *full potential*, be *fruitfully engaged in the work* and thus gain *better productivity* and finally *profitability* to the company.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

To return to the research question of the present study, the existing knowledge has been now studied that earlier studies have revealed about work engagement, and how work engagement can be influenced in a global corporation environment. The concept of work engagement has also been defined. The data brought up the attributes that an engaged employee has as a worker, and also some attributes he has as an individual human being. The World Café discussion helped to better understand the topic and to collectively find new connections and meanings. The interview material collected from a major global company has also been thoroughly analysed.

What was discovered, were a few points to improve positive engagement. The existing knowledge indicated that positive resources of work have a straight connection to work engagement while simultaneously reducing risk of burn out by helping to reduce the consuming and exhausting demands. Also that data supported the understanding of the individual attributes, such as values and needs that one finds important, in order to improve well-being and one's meaning at work, because those have appeared to be successful in engaging employees to their work.

From the interview analysis a few issues were discovered that could increase the meaning that one feels about one's job. These findings included the visibility of one's meaning to the whole, in other words, seeing the big picture. Another discovery was to support possibilities for personal development and actualize oneself. Also the respondents found their attitude important, e.g. optimism was brought up. The last finding concerned the social recognition of one's work. Also, some people found it very important to be part of a group and work in one.

The World Café discussion revealed information on how an employee can increase profitability and how is it done with management and interaction. The results can be seen as guiding values to the ideal situation where work environment is inspirational and the climate that is supporting both the objective of the company and the employee as a human being. This section combines and presents the findings of the used sources.

5.1 Model of Work Engagement

As a conclusion of the interview analysis, theoretical data and World Café discussion, a model of work engagement is presented in the following. The model consists of parts that describe the factors that have a positive impact on work engagement, and the findings related to how work engagement manifests as a result of the influencing factors. The source of the finding is indicated by the colour of the box, where yellow means interview, red theory and blue World Café finding. Gray indicates that all sources supporting the finding. Explanations of colours can be also found in Figure 12, the model of work engagement.

5.1.1 *Personal Factors*

The first group of factors impacting work engagement in this model is titled personal factors. These factors consist of two types of subfactors. 'Personal ideology', and the attributes related to that, was found on the interview analysis and in the World Café discussion. The term 'personal resources' was used to illustrate factors that an employee possesses that can influence work engagement. Positive perfectionism was one issue brought up by the theory brought up, but was not confirmed by other research results, yet it is important because of its relatedness to productive outcome and therefore it is there in the model. Some factors in the ideology category are something that appear as resources, e.g. ideology of unselfishness and optimism may reflect in attitude in the personal resources category. The influencing positive factors are presented in Figure 9.

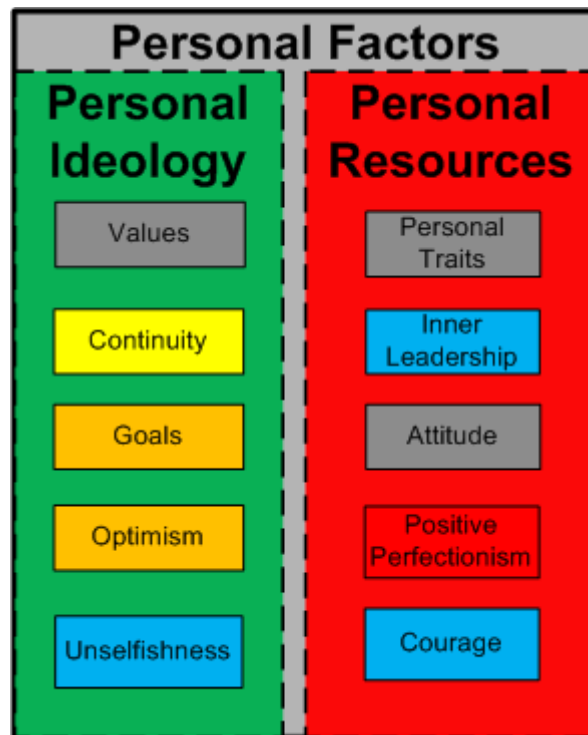


Figure 9: Personal Factors Influencing Work Engagement

Attitude plays the most important part, as it reflects how an individual reacts to each other and work related demands, e.g. changes. *Positive attitude*, which is related to *optimism*, will lead to *resolution-based thinking* as the challenges are seen as a possibility to learn. The importance of attitude was emphasised in all sources of this study. Other things that were brought by all data of this study were *personal traits* and *values*. Individuals have *values* that need to be taken into account, in order to increase the meaning of work by actualizing oneself. The ability to use *personal strengths* and *traits* in one's work is also important. One way how these values and traits reflect is also the *needs* and *goals* that an individual has, which can be supported in career opportunities. Continuity was one goal and need that a respondent brought up as an example of a link between career opportunities and personal goals and wills.

Some personal factors were brought up only in the World Café discussion. Unselfishness as a personal ideology will lead to a climate of aid, which was found important when creating a culture where profitability can increase. Courage was also seen as an important personal value, in order to work without limitations such as fear of failure. Courage was also linked to improvement and activity of an employee to make suggestions to improve the

organization's performance. Inner leadership was also mentioned as important, because it outcomes as a responsible and internally motivated behaviour, which is typical characteristics of an engaged employee.

5.1.2 Work Environment Factors

The other group of positively influencing factors in this model is called 'work environment factors'. It consists of job resources and leadership categories. Figure 10 presents the work environment factors:

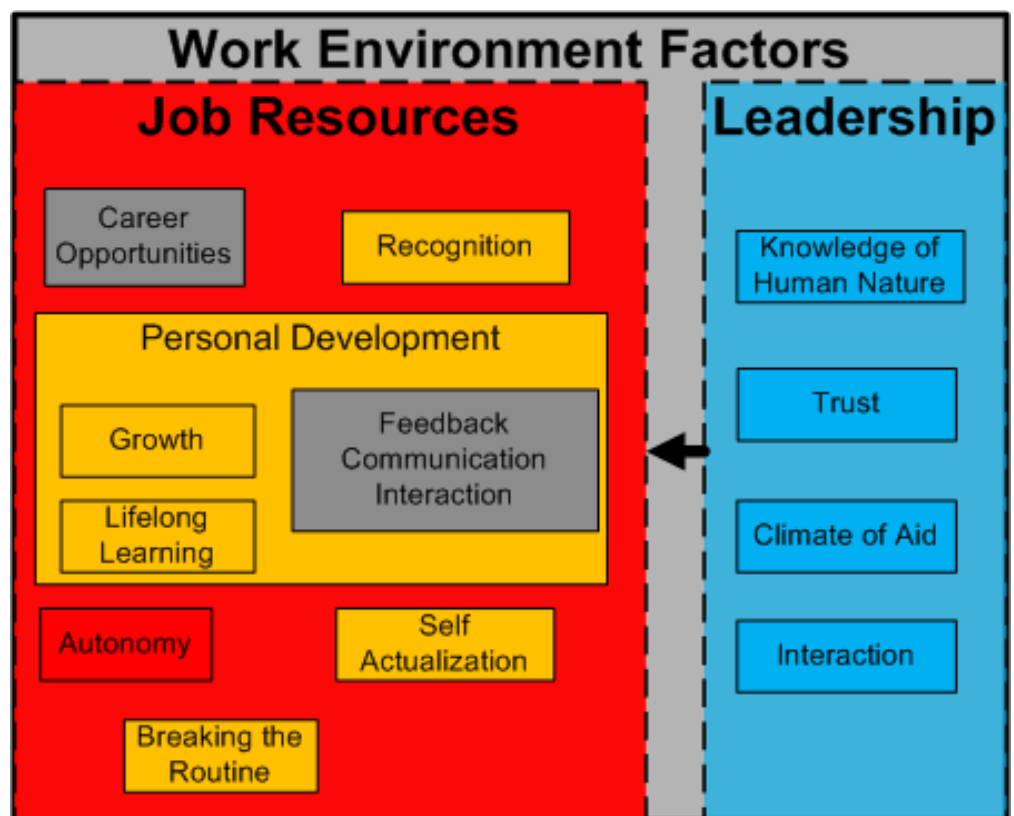


Figure 10: Work Environment Factors Influencing Work Engagement

Job resources as a term came from the theoretical framework of work engagement. An important result of this study was that the inductive analysis of the interview data and World Café discussion supported the theoretical framework of job resources. The important factors of personal development and recognition were present in all the source data. *Self actualization* and *autonomy*, which the theoretical framework introduced, were both confirmed by the other sources as well.

The leadership aspect of work environment factors comes from the World Café discussion, as leadership skills are used when creating a climate and

an atmosphere where job resources are supported. Trust is part of the climate as it will also enable self actualization.

Knowledge of human nature is an essential skill a superior to have in order to understand that everyone is unique and values things differently. Ways to improve one's meaning vary a lot, and therefore superiors need to know and understand employees personally to support the right ways to increase work engagement.

5.1.3 Outcome of Factors

The previously presented factors turn out in positive outcomes. These are presented in Figure 11.

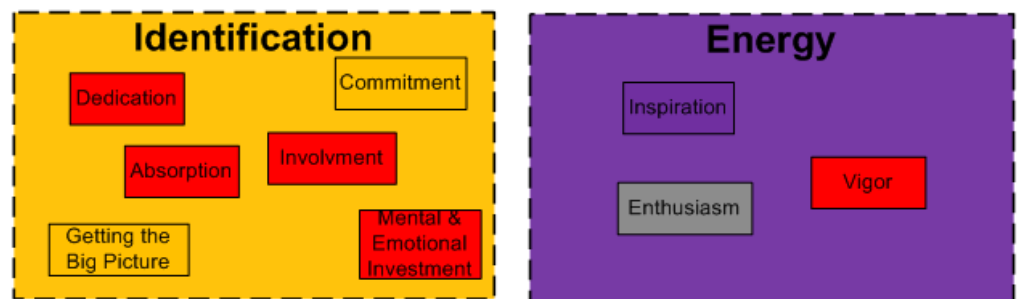


Figure 11: Positive Outcomes of Personal and Work Environment

As the interview data was collected for the POS study and the relevant questions for this study were about meaning and how to increase it, a limited amount of data was available to demonstrate the outcome of these factors. However, evidence of high-level energy and identification was found from the existing knowledge of work engagement. Addition and support for this phenomenon came from the World Café discussion results, which partially indicated high-level of energy, e.g. the feel of enthusiasm being related to improvement of productivity and profitability.

The importance of understanding the larger scale can be linked and related to identification to one's work by feeling of meaning. If an employee lacks a view of his importance in a bigger scale, it is harder to engage the individual to work. This point was emphasised especially by many respondents in the interview analyzes. Interview analyzes also brought up the commitment when describing the meaning of one's work, when describing the meaning of work as a calling highlights the high-level of commitment the employees had.

5.1.4 Summary of the Model of Engagement

The subparts of the model of work engagement were presented above. Figure 12 introduces the whole model:

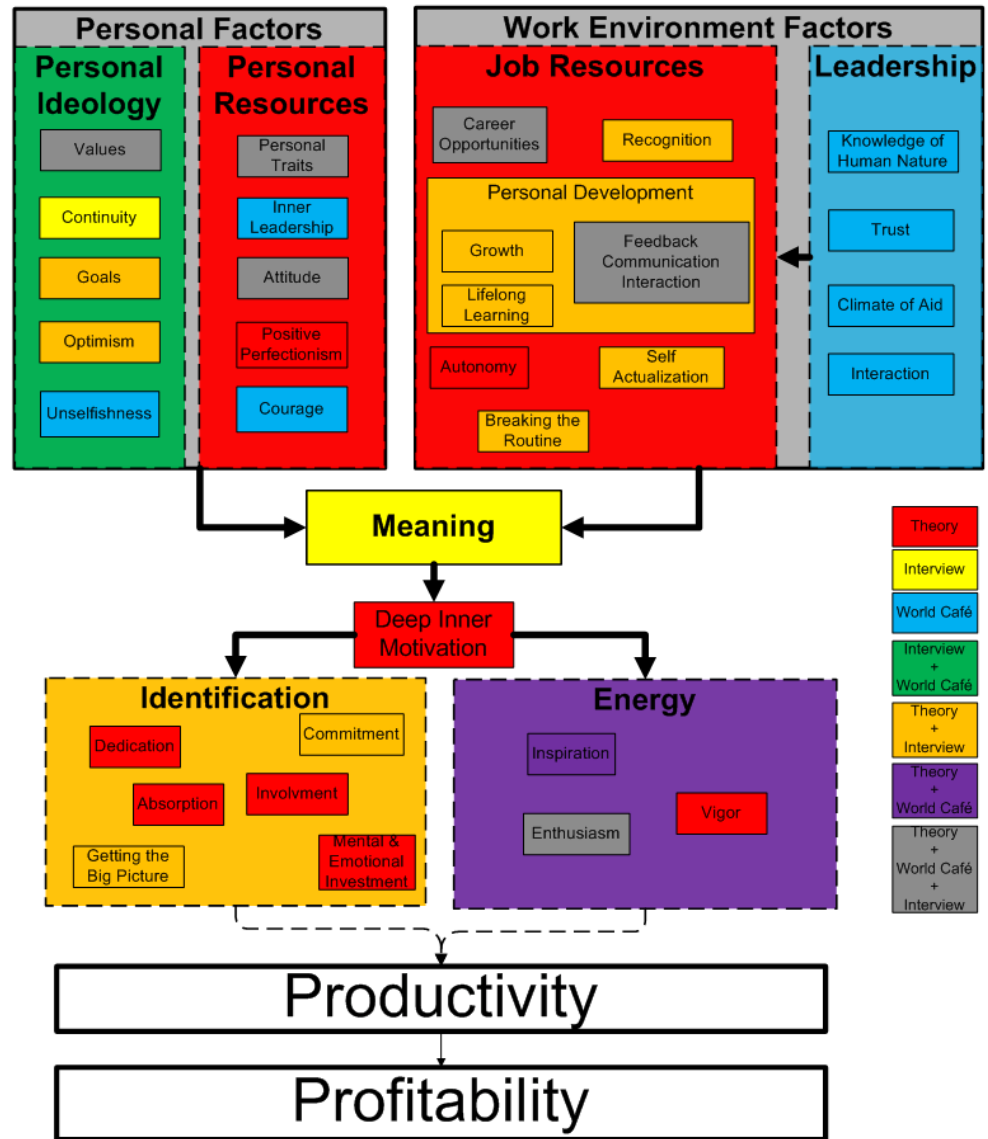


Figure 12: The Model of Work Engagement

The findings of this study supported the important roles of both personal and work environment factors in order to increase meaning, which is one of the most important part of work engagement, because as the results show, the factors increasing meaning are the same factors that have previously proved to support work engagement. As a result of the factors the energy-level of the employee increases due to inner motivation and it also enables the employee to identify with one's working role, because he understands the

meaning of his work. This model of work engagement consists of these factors and results.

5.2 Conformability to Existing Knowledge and POS

As an inductive research study, the aim was not to prove the existing knowledge of work engagement either right or wrong, but to interpret the data inductively and analyse what there was, on the respondents' condition. However, the results supported the existing knowledge.

The World Café discussion supported positive sides, as trust to employees which enables one to actualize one self and in that sense release the potential of an employee to the company's advance. Emphasising the positive sides is where engagement comes from, as theoretical studies have proved that positive resources of work have appeared more important to high-level of work engagement than negative work demands to reduced engagement and burnout.

As this study is part of a Positive Organizational Scholarship, some aspects of work engagement were not brought up. POS concentrates on the environment at work, the relationships, climate and communication. Thus it does not take into account personal factors from the same perspective as does the point of view of work engagement. Still, POS strategies are in connection with factors that the model describes as work environment factors. The positive outcomes of both POS and work engagement are interconnected, as the result is increased productivity and profitability by satisfied employees performing in a high energy level.

What this study did not take into account, is also the detachment and recovery aspects of work engagement, as well as the importance of home resources. The interview data concentrating to the meaning of one's work naturally did not reveal anything about the importance of factors outside the work, like recovery and detachment, and these parts did not get support nor disprove by the data. Therefore those factors are not present at the model of work engagement either. Also the contagion of work engagement cannot be found from the meaning of one's work, though social recognition can be related to that.

5.3 Managerial Implications

This section includes some recommendations for superiors to implement an environment that increases possibilities for flourishing engagement. These recommendations are free to implement, they are more related to the leadership style. In order to implement these, the only resource needed is will and a little effort and time. The recommendations are:

- Learn to know your subordinates and understand their needs and strengths
- Create a climate that emphasises positivity
- Underline the big picture
- Create possibilities for careers based on the employees' appreciations
- Recognise others and contribute others to recognize each other as well
- Check your own attitude, as positivity tend to spread around you
- Give employees their spare time, try to support the detachment
- Listen to the employees, they are a great source of ideas to improve everything

The most important thing is to understand the employees as individuals, who have many sides. And all those sides are unique, so try to learn to understand your subordinates and as well to recognize their potential. Have a chat every now and then to show that you are interested and care, and see the subordinates as human beings.

The second most important thing is to create an atmosphere and climate where engagement can take place. Support the growth of individuals, as no one is ready yet, thus people need room to make mistakes and learn constantly from their actions. Offer support for career opportunities. If a company wants to keep the best employees, they have to get committed by identification to their job and offer personal rewards in the form of lifelong learning and career making.

Try to reveal the importance of each person's work in a bigger context. Explain and emphasise how one's work affects, not only the company's benefit, but the broader perspective and e.g. for the whole supply chain. This also includes social recognition, by means of creating a climate where colleagues understand and recognizes each others' work. As studies have shown, engagement will also spread to people around.

One recommendation is to avoiding burnout by making it clear to the employees that it is important to detach the work and other life. Voluntary answering to phone at the time when not at work should be recognized by fair payment. Also it can be done other the way round, i.e. these kinds of calls are prohibited to answer.

5.4 Further Studies

This research study was in one hand broad, while introducing the World Café discussion and more traditional qualitative research and an theoretical review, and on the other hand narrow while the questions were formed beforehand and for a different scholarship framework. Therefore the results were strictly focused on the meaning of work. Therefore it revealed only answers for something that was strictly work oriented. As work engagement is work related, however, it has both influencing factors and positive results in life outside work as well. That is something that this research study did not take into account. Also detachment and the distance one needs to get when not working, was not handled at all. Further studies should therefore concentrate on those factors, as well as measure how well employees understand that.

The other thing that should be studied in more detail is the effect of understanding the big picture in order to improve engagement. In the existing knowledge it has not been widely brought up, while the results of the interview analysis emphasised the very important role of that in order to create more meaning to one's work.

6 SUMMARY

Work engagement is a new concept related to job satisfaction and people management that should be seriously taken into consideration when willing to find the company's competitive advantage. Engaged employees are more productive, innovative and independent. The evidence shows the increased performance numbers and satisfaction on both personal and company level and reflection to customers as well.

After understanding the concept and meaning of work engagement, the basic principles should not be too expensive or complicated to implement on a company's policies in managerial strategy. With only a few things taken into account employees could feel much more meaning of their work and get better results out of themselves and by that work more efficiently for the company's, and one self's benefit.

As this study indicated that the big picture should be visible when seeking meaning, a relevant thing is to put the whole concept of work engagement and meaning of that in the big picture as well. Work engagement is a positive mindset that reflects not just to work related life, but all the other parts as well. Feeling energetic, feeling important and actualizing oneself at work creates a powerful resource to the life of an individual, and therefore the meaning of work engagement should not be seen only as work related well-being, but well-being in general. As positivity and engagement spread to people around, it also flourishes and enriches persons close by. This kind of positive vortex can create a lot of happiness and joy.

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QUESTIONS RELATED TO POSITIVE LEADERSHIP:

Definition of a good leader

How would you define a good leader?

Values

Our core values are Excellence, Excitement and Energy. Is our leadership exposing continuously our corporate values?

Example of a good leader

An example of a good leader?

You as a leader

How would you evaluate yourself as a leader?

Positive Leadership

How do you understand the term 'Positive Leadership'?

Ratio between positive/negative feedback

How would you evaluate the ratio between positive/negative feedback in your daily work?

Mistakes

How are the mistakes regarded in Company?

Good way to motivate (leadership)

What do you consider as a good way to motivate others?

QUESTIONS RELATED TO POSITIVE CLIMATE:

Organizational Culture & Climate

How would you describe Company's organizational culture & climate?

"Climate reflects perceptions of how work environment impact employees own well-being. Culture is the norms, expectations, and way things are done in the organisation."

Example of company's organizational culture

Could you give positive and negative example of Company's organizational culture?

Expression of emotions

How freely people (you/colleagues) express emotions in Company? *

Positive/Negative

More positive than negative or vice versa?

Good way to motivate (climate)

What do you consider as a good way to motivate others? Leaders/bosses expressing their emotions? If so, what kind of (both positive and negative)? Are they promoting the expression of emotions? * (e.g. Compassion [sharing of personal feelings, and noticing and responding to another's pain]; forgiveness [letting go of feelings and looking forward after harmful events]; gratitude [expression of appreciation and gratitude])

QUESTIONS RELATED TO POSITIVE COMMUNICATION:

Positive communication

How is positive way of communicating facilitated at Company? Any use of certain techniques?

Connectivity

How does Company facilitate connectivity (e.g. information exchange, interpersonal interaction, positive emotions) among the employees?

QUESTIONS RELATED TO POSITIVE MEANING:

Job, Career or Calling

Do you see your work as job, career, or calling and why?

(Job [achieving financial & material rewards]; Career [achieving prestige, power, recognition, advancement, and personal growth]; Calling [working for the sake of the work itself])

Increasing meaningfulness

How do you think you can increase meaningfulness of your own work and the work of others? Please give some practical examples.

QUESTIONS RELATED TO POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

Satisfied employee

Do you consider yourself as a satisfied employee?

Quality of relationships

How would you describe the current quality of relationships in Company?

Atmosphere in meetings

How is the atmosphere in the team meetings?

Expressing opinions

Do people feel comfortable expressing their opinion?

Link between relationships and performance

Is there a connection between high quality relationships and performance opportunities of Company?

Example of a high quality relationship

Could you give an example of high quality relationship in your daily work?

Featuring experts:

Matti Willamo, Managing Director, Emeritus
Helia Antola-Crow PhD professor of education, Bradley University
Merja Fischer, PhD candidate,
Marjatta Huhta DSc, Principal Lecturer, Metropolia
Ville Kantola, Project Manager in LM Ericsson

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Laura Juutinen
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Iiro Varjela
Joni Vierimaa