INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AT HYDROLINE OY

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This thesis takes a comprehensive look at the internal communication at Hydroline Ltd. The objective of the thesis was to map out the current situation of internal communication and find out possible solutions and ideas for improving it in the future.

The theoretical framework of the thesis takes a look at what is internal communication in general and why do companies need it in their everyday operations. The theoretical framework creates the base for the analysis at the end of the thesis where the possible solutions for improvements are presented. Theoretical part also takes a look at what is digital communication and how has it evolved the way we communicate.

A questionnaire was made as a part of the thesis process. The questionnaire mapped out the current situation of internal communication from the personnel’s viewpoint and they were asked to give their own opinions and suggestions for the future regarding internal communication. The questionnaire was executed with SurveyMonkey tool and was sent by e-mail for Hydroline’s white collars and as a link via company’s intranet for the production employees. Altogether the questionnaire gathered 54 responses.

According to the theoretical sources and the questionnaire results, tips and suggestions were made for the future. The questionnaire brought up some pitfalls in the current methods of internal communication at Hydroline and the presented suggestions are focused on them.

Keywords
internal communication, communication, organization, corporate
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1 INTRODUCTION

Seth Godin (2009), an American author, entrepreneur and marketer has said “the less people know, the more they yell”. This quote quite perfectly ties up the idea of communication and why it is so vital for everyone. Communication is transforming information from one individual to another or one place to another and as Oxford Dictionary defines it, communication is “the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium. Information as in knowing something is vital for every single human being and in the absence of information, people will create their own truths which might not be true in any way. (Page, 2011.)

In the event of communication, there are a few things that can be separated: sender, message, channel, acceptation, interpretation, receiver, feedback and distractions. How well the message is understood and communicated is tied to both the sender’s and the receivers own background and experiences. In an ideal situation the sender and the receiver both understand the message in the same way and the meaning is not changed in during the communication. The distractions are also a part of the communication event and that is something the parties must take into consideration when the communication happens. With careful planning of the communication it is possible to reduce and delete the possible distractions and to maintain the effectiveness of the communication situation. (Ikaävalko, 1999, 11-12.)

People communicate every single day and the ways of communication differ from the place and time they are in as well as the people they are communicating with. Roughly, communication could be divided in two; verbal and non-verbal but in today’s world the technology has offered us even more ways of communication. Digitalization has brought the information right to our hands and the ways of digital communication are becoming even more normal part of our everyday life. We carry Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms built for communicating in our pocket and when it comes to e-mailing, approximately 269 billion e-mails are sent daily in 2017 and the amount is expected to grow at an annual rate of 4,4% by the end of 2021. (Radicati, 2017.)

The modern platforms of communication bring their own challenges to communication as well. When the non-verbal communication is completely left out it is quite hard for the sender to modify the message in a way that the receiver understands the content right. As stated in a previous paragraph, the receivers own background and experiences effect to their way of understanding the message. Plain written text does not have nuances that voices have and for example the use dots and exclamation points may differ between individuals and cultures. (Epley & Kruger, 2005.)

Communication is a requirement for a working business as well. In working life, when we talk about communication that is happening inside a company, we talk about internal communication. A company cannot work without effective internal communication because without internal communication the personnel does not know who does what and when is happening and what the company’s expectations are. Internal communication is an asset for the company and without it, the company cannot succeed. (Åberg, 2006, 96.)
1.1 Thesis objectives

The objective of this thesis is to provide information about the current situation of internal communication at Hydroline: how does the personnel feel about the internal communication and its current methods and what possible ways of improvement there are. The thesis is narrowed strictly only to the communication happening inside the company and leaves out the communication between the company and its interest groups such as stakeholders, customers and suppliers. The thesis aims to finding out the digital methods that are already in use at the company and the personnel’s willingness to use these platforms on a daily basis.

The questionnaire that was executed as part of the thesis process also takes a look at the popularity of different communication platforms and pursues to find out the personnel’s own effort to internal communication and their activeness as a part of communication strategies. The thesis maps out the effectiveness of internal communication and the platforms that may not offer the best possible solutions when it comes to informing the personnel.

The theoretical part of the thesis represents what is internal communication and why does it play such a big role in the business life. The internal communication section of the thesis explains the reasons for internal communication, the differences and similarities of external communication and internal communication as well as the communication between the management and personnel as well the communication happening inside the personnel. The methods of internal communication are also presented at the end of the internal communication section and also deepens the importance of digitalization as a part of internal communication. The case company, Hydroline, is presented in its own section.

The questionnaire part presents the research method, the way the data was gathered and the questionnaire as well as the results of the research whereas the conclusion section presents the conclusions of the research and the discussion presents the improvement ideas gathered from the personnel. This section also concludes together the main findings and own thoughts about the topic and about the internal communication at Hydroline in general.

The case company, Hydroline Oy, is going through a massive expansion project and therefore employee engagement and personnel satisfaction is an extremely important issue. Finding out about the current situation of internal communication will help the company on reaching its goals as internal communication is one of a successful company’s corner stones.
2 HYDROLINE OY

The case company of the thesis is Hydroline Ltd. Hydroline is a Finnish family company based in Vuorela, Siilinjärvi. The company is the leading manufacturer in the field of hydraulic cylinders in Finland and it has a wide international customer base: it serves multiple known companies such as Hiab, Normet, Sandvik, Junttan, Bronto Skylift and John Deere. Currently the company employees approximately 250 people in it’s Vuorela’s factory. (Hydroline, 2017.)

2.1 History

Hydroline was established in 1962 in Niirala, Kuopio and it was first started out as a one-man lathing shop by Helge Laakkonen under the name Metallisorvaamo H. Laakkonen. It was in the 1980’s after the first generation change when the company name was changed to Hydroline. The company has stayed as a family company until this day. After Helge stepped down from the CEO’s place, it was Helge’s son Pekka who took his position. In 2007 Jukka, Pekka’s oldest son took the place as a CEO and in 2014 the current CEO Mikko Laakkonen was named as the head of the company as Jukka was assigned as the Chairman of the Board to Hydroline’s board of directors.

Throughout the years the company started growing quite rapidly and twenty years after Hydroline was established, the company built the facilities to Vuorela where the company headquarters is still based today. In 2014, due to an even heavier demand in the field of business, Hydroline opened another factory in Stargard, Poland. In 2015 the company widened its business operations to remanufacturing and maintaining services.

In the 1990’s as the market was growing, Hydroline started manufacturing even more and the robotics became a bigger part of the company’s operations. The production needed to be more effective and fast and the digital solutions were the best possible solution and made it possible for Hydroline to widen its operations. (Lehikoinen, 2017.)

2.2 Internal communication at Hydroline

At Hydroline the main channels of internal communication are

- A company newspaper that is released every two months. It contains the main issues and topics that is happening inside the company at the moment and greetings from the CEO and plant manager. The newspaper also contains for example profiles of new employees or summer trainees, information about human resources issues and basically everything the employees needs to know at the moment. The newspaper reaches the whole personnel as it is delivered together with the payslip.

- Intranet contains all the information the staff needs to know about Hydroline.
- Info screens. There are five big info screens around the facilities of Hydroline. The information on info screens differs almost every day. The continuing information that the screens contain are lunch menu of the week and visitors of the week. Other information the screens contain vary quite much depending on what is the situation and what needs to be informed. The typical information could be for example about a raffle on KalPa tickets and who has won a ticket for the next match.

- Staff info is held every other Thursday at the staff cafeteria. Every other info is kept by the CEO and every other by the production director. In the info sessions held by the CEO, the topics contain information about the financial and administrative issues. The info sessions held by the production director, contain information about the situation of the factory; such as delivery times, reliability of deliveries etc.

- E-mail is very commonly used among the white collars. The main non-face-to-face communication is handled via e-mails. All of the Hydroline white collars are given an e-mail address with the company account.

- Skype for business is used for fast communication along with the e-mails.

- Small group meetings are held every Wednesday between the team leader and their employees. In these meetings the topics vary around the topics about the manufacturing operations and the overall processes in the company when it comes to the manufacturing side. Topics may be, for example, the delivery times and recruitment campaigns as well as the improvements that are to be done inside the factory. (Lehikoinen, 2017.)
Internal communication is the communication that is happening inside an organization or a company. Internal communication creates the core for the communication as a whole with external communication being built up around it (Isohookana, 2007, 222). The term also refers to the organisation’s communication system in which the staff or personnel is found as an internal public or stakeholder group (Vercic et al., 2012, 223-230).

Internal communication aims to increase the awareness and knowledge among the employees and its most important goals are flow of information, commitment and interaction. With good internal communication the company is able to increase working motivation, improve working environment, build up the company identity, increase the performance of co-operation and to make sure the employees have current information about what is happening inside the organization as well as outside the organization in cases which might affect the organization in some way. (Isohookana, 2007, 221-223.)

Company’s example of internal communication is mostly top-down as in from the management to the work force. When it comes to the management team and managers, they are the ones that form the atmosphere around the communication (Isohookana, 2007, 226-228). Still, it is also just as important to remember that the internal communication is not only information given by the management but also working interaction between the management and the work force. When the management listens to the work force and takes their opinions into consideration as well, it builds up a trust between them. The idea of internal communication has evolved during the 20th century and one of its goals is also to improve the satisfaction of the work force and the image of the company. (Wright, 2016, 2-5.)

The goal of a working internal communication strategy is to improve the company’s identity and its internal relations, as well as to be a necessary part of human resources strategy. Internal communication brings the company together as a whole and an ideal internal communication strategy does not leave anyone out and it also supports the external communications. When the internal communication work well inside the company it directly reflects on the external communication. A good internal communication supports the communication between the company and its customers and stakeholders and when the communication works it also improves the image of the company. (Isohookana, 2007, 222-223.) With good internal communication, a company is also able to engage its employees more (Verčič & Vokić, 2017). A well-organized internal communication that is interesting, pleasant and tells the employees everything they need to know also motivates them to work harder for the company (Kekäläinen, 2016).

3.1 The intent and means of internal communication

The most central missions of internal communication are procession of information, interaction and commitment. The mission of internal communication is to ensure that the procession of information
is effective enough that the personnel has the needed information they need in order to complete their tasks. The goal of communication is also to make sure that the employee understands the meaning of their own work as a part of the company's whole mission and goal. (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. 2008, 106.)

The important thing to remember in internal communication and an an internal communicator is that internal communication is not about what the management and the board wants to tell and do for the employees. As it was stated in the previous paragraph, the issue with internal communication is that also the employee level needs to communicate. In the everyday operations of a company, the employee level communication for the foremen and the management is an extremely important thing as well. The role of internal communicator relies on trust and insight as well as integrity and it should be seen on every level of a company. (Smith, 2008, 23.)

Interaction can be created with internal communication. Interaction aims to create and maintain team spirit, motivate the personnel and improve working inside the working community. Internal interaction happens for example in meetings, info sessions, e-mailings as well as in lunch hours and grapevine communication. Also, commitment is a mission of internal communication: to support the vision, mission and strategy as well as the values of the company. With internal communication the company is able to tell the personnel what these things mean in the company and what are the goals, future missions, changes and the results of the company. When these issues are brought to the knowledge of the whole personnel and they are communicated together, the personnel has a comprehensive image on where the company is going and how the personnel is able to help in the way. (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi, et al. 2008, 106-107.)

Heli Isohookana (2007) has explained that the corporate operations are continuous interaction ergo communication between the company and its working environment. By paying attention to the internal and external communication the corporate is able to build competitiveness that is hard to copy by others.

In other words, when a company invests to a well-working internal communicating system, it pays off in the future. When the communication inside the company is smooth and the information is available for everyone, the employees feel valued and like an important part of the team and the organization (Grossman, 2016). An employee that feels needed is a huge resource for a company and the employees are the most valuable asset a company has. (Amabile & Kramer, 2011.)

According to Smith and Mounter (2008, 6), Smythe (2007) states that in the past few decades the internal communication has been one the main concerns of CEO's and that is mainly for the reason that the businesses do not run without motivated and co-operative work force that is willing to give their best for the company. If company leaders were to forget the importance of communication and would hide the necessary information from employees, the final result would be anything but an industry leader with competitiveness.
Effective internal communication builds the trust between the personnel and the management. The first time a new employee gets in touch with the undertaking’s internal communication is at their first work day at the company. When the communication between the new employee and the company is effective, it is more likely for the new employee to feel welcome to the new workplace and does not feel left out on their own, so to say. (Isohookana, 2007, 226-228.)

Employees that feel empowered to participate in the decision making in the company are more likely to be satisfied and support the company to reach its goals. Company’s internal communication that actively participates the personnel’s opinions and ideas into consideration and listens to what they have to say are more likely to reach their goals in a long term. Altogether, the personnel appreciates an employer that respects diversity and different opinions at the workplace. When the personnel feels that no one is left out and no one feels unappreciated, the company is more likely to succeed and to be seen as an excellent company. (Gillis, 2006, 28.)

3.1.1 Act on co-operation within undertakings

Not only is internal communication important in order for a company to keep up with its operations but also it is written in the Finnish law. Act on Co-operation within Undertakings (334/2007) was composed to improve the interactive co-operation procedures between the undertakings and its personnel. It is based on timely given sufficient information to the personnel about the state of the undertaking and its future plans. The goal of the co-operation act is to improve the undertaking’s operations and the personnel’s possibilities to have an impact on the decisions made inside the company that have influence on the personnel’s work, working conditions and their status at the undertaking. Other goal of the co-operation act is to tighten the co-operation between the employer, the personnel and the work labour public officer in order to improve the status of the personnel and to support their employment in cases of any changes in the undertaking’s operations. (Finlex, 2014.)

At the co-operation negotiation the undertaking must decide the principles and customs of internal communication. When the decisions are made, the employer is obligated to inform them to the personnel within the guidelines that have been decided in the negotiation. (Finlex, 2014.)

3.2 The importance and content of internal communication

In order for a company to keep its operations running, the personnel needs to know at all times what needs to be done and when. Internal communication does not, however, only include the people inside the company but also the stakeholders outside the company as well as the clients and subcontractors. The communication between the company and them can also be included in the internal communication as the communication happening with them is vital for the company’s operations and decisions now and in the future (Juholin, 2013, 51-53). That being said, dividing the communication to external communication and internal communication is not necessarily agreeable as in the modern world also the stakeholders are communicating other and forming networks with
each other. For example, in a situation where a company faces an enormous operational change, it does not only affect the company itself but also the stakeholders, investors, clients, subcontractors etc. (Cornelissen, 2017, 66.)

Figure 1: Link between corporate and communication strategy (Cornelissen, 2017. Illustrated).

The company has the need and also responsibility to inform about its actions to interest groups and it also has the needs to hear what they have to say and comment. The interest groups may have the desire to also be involved with the decisions made inside the company and also the company’s personnel may have the desire to be involved in the decisions that the management is willing to do.

If a company fails to communicate, the worst-case scenario might be losing the stakeholders and interest groups around it. The future of a company does not only lie in the hands of the personnel but also in the hands of well working interest groups around it and that is why the daily communication between all these particles needs to flow well. (Juholin, 2013, 53.)

3.3 Daily communication and working life communication

Supporting the basic functions of the workplace is the most important mission of working life communication. Internal communication ways of working life communication are operative communication and internal marketing. (Åberg, 2006, 98.)

Daily communication is the transformation of information and conversations that are necessary in order to the personnel to keep up with their daily tasks. The operational tasks do not move ahead and proceed of the communication does not support the daily work inside the company. When the communication works freely and flows on a daily basis, the company can also avert the possible misunderstandings and pauses. Communication at workplace in general is a working community skill in which belongs the ability to not only transform the communication but also follow the way it is done and how effectively it is working. The circle of daily communication differs among the company and also depends on the status of the employee. The amount and quality of the necessary information that needs to be given an employee is tied to the daily objectives and tasks of the employee and also how much the employee is connected with the management. (Juholin, 2013, 56-57.)
The main forum of daily communication is the workplace or space that can be physical, virtual or a combination of these two. People in different sides of World are able to communicate around a virtual space when having a meeting. (Juholin, 2013, 148.)

Face-to-face communication is usually thought as the most versatile way of communicating as it makes the communicating more perfect than the technological communication. This, however, is always not the case as the technological way might be sometimes more pleasant than the traditional way. The traditional ways are still very highly valued. Phones can be used in oral, pictorial and literal communication and the pressed media such as newspapers are needed when the internet is not accessible for everyone. (Juholin, 2013, 148.)

However, graphic communicating is widely used in companies. Graphic communication is based on the literal communicating such as fact sheets, newspapers, letters and company newspapers. The digital era has brought the more effective ways for graphic communicating such as intranet and info screens. These can be already considered as electric communication which is more and more used at organizations. E-mails and internet are faster and cheaper ways of communicating than the traditional graphic channels. (Juholin, 2004, 77.)

It is common to use a combination of different channels to make sure the message will catch up its whole audience. However, unnecessary usage of multiple channels should be avoided because it takes time and also burdens the receiver. (Isohookana, 2007, 226.)

3.3.1 Communication of management and foremen

Management communication is managerial work because without communication, the managing cannot happen. Interpretation is highlighted in management communication along with interaction, organizing and monitoring. Interaction creates the sense of community and the need of motivation and encouragement is emphasized in managerial work. (Åberg, 2006, 93.)

The management usually hold the biggest responsibility of communication at a company. They set out the guidelines for the communication inside the company and how actively and what channels are used in the communication process. The management is also responsible for creating and planning the possible communication strategy at the workplace and chooses the ones who look after the strategy. (Juholin, 2013, 195-200.)

The management plays a huge role as they are the ones who know the most and choose the vital information that needs to be informed and communicated with the personnel, stakeholders and public. The management also sets out the needs for confidentiality as in what is allowed to say to the public and what is not. (Juholin, 2013, 195-200.)

The management and the way they communicate blows the spirit to their personnel: the organisation culture usually forms around the management’s habits and the personnel follows the
management’s guidelines even if they do not recognize it by themselves. The communication, as stated, is the backbone for company’s operations and the management has a great responsibility on creating a trustworthy and supportive environment for communicating. The management’s example of communicating should also represent the guidelines for interaction. Communication should not only be the management informing facts for the personnel but also interaction between the management and the personnel and the stakeholders. If the communication stays unilateral, quite easily the personnel also stops informing the management about critical issues. (Ramani, 1995, 66-75.)

The informing events are quite normal way of transferring information from the management for the personnel. These also hold a few critical spots as the informing should never be done in a rush nor should the material and the way the information is given should not seem like it has been done in a rush. The informing should be done in quite a relaxed way and not with a too much of a formal language and gestures. When the informing is handled in a relaxed and non-formal way, it as its best gives a possibility for a chat and questions after the information event is over. However, if the way is too formal and strict, the personnel might feel that they are not allowed to ask further questions. (Juholin, 2013, 201-202.)

The foremen, along with the management, play a big role in internal communication. The foremen are close to the employees in everyday work and the communication between the foremen and in its ideal situation would be real and confidential conversations. A foreman should be close to the employee but not too close: the situations where a foreman is emotionally too close to an employee is not a good situation as the communication system might change too radically. (Juholin, 2013, 202-203.) Foreman faces employees in a numesous different situations, such as:

- Recruiting ja starting the work
- Introduction and familiarization for the workplace and the unit as well as the working community
- Goals and outcome discussions along with career planning
- Strategic communicating in both individual and unit level
- Daily workplace communication
- Meetings, palavers along with developing events and development discussions (Juholin, 2013, 203)

The role of foremen is to lead and develop their own units, projects and teams, therefore they are responsible for their unit’s goals and results as well as th quality of work. The work of foremen is mainly work with other people since at the side of their own work, they help others to achieve their goals and make sure that they are doing things properly and right. A position of a foreman includes a significant amount of interaction with the personnel, colleagues and also management. (Isohookana, 2007, 228.)
Especially personal interaction, for example, introduction and development discussions are central channels in foremen communication. In these communication situations the most effective way of communicating is the face-to-face communication. As stated before, face-to-face communication is said to be the most effective way of communication. In this way of communicating, the amount of information the receiver gets from the sender is larger than in any other way of communicating. Along with these, the working community holds meetings, trainings and discussions and seminars that support the internal communication inside the company. The foremen play a big role in these face-to-face communicating situations. (Juholin, 2004, 77.)

3.3.2 Informal communication

The communication within an organization can be formal or informal. When it comes to the communication between two co-workers, the communication does not necessarily require a certain method or channel when talking about everyday things. The formal communication contains the reports, staff meetings, newspapers and office notices etc whereas informal communication is also known as grapevine communication. (Baird, 1977.) Lecher in Websters dictionary 2004 described grapevine with words: “unofficial network of communication by which gossip, or information are spread.

The term grapevine has been first said to be used during the American Civil War for the temporary telegraph wires and the information that was carried via this system was not always accurate and reliable. The grapevine communication can be consisted of rumours and the accuracy of the information does not necessarily even concern the recipient. This is interesting also for the reason that organisational communication specialist Susan Hellweg has noted that five out of six messages at the workplace are transmitted by the grapevine. Reasons for that vary. First of all, grapevine communication and informal communication in general transmits fast and also it does not contain all information but only the most interesting ones. Also, as the size of the company or organization increases, so does the amount of grapevine activity; the more people, the more rumours and informal talk. (Eunson & Baden, 2007, 91.)

Gossiping in communication in general seems to be a part of a human behaviour and it seems to fulfill some sort of need to strengthen the group solidarity and to manage the amount of anxiety and uncertainty. Gossiping is built around rumours and management theorist Richard Hodgetts has defined rumour as: interest x ambiguity. When the interest towards a certain topic has woken, the need to find out about it increases. When we desperately feel the need to know something about some specific thing, we rely on the information we are able to get and spread it along. (Eunson & Baden, 2007, 90-91.)

Depending on the organization and the workplace, the informal communication will either weaken or merge with the formal communication. The grapevine communication does also have its positive sides if it is allowed inside the organization. By allowing the grapevine and gossiping, the stress of workers may even reduce, and the workplace might even help the employees to get their work
done. When it comes to the formal communication channels, the transmitting of information might sometimes be extremely slow and when needed, the grapevine is a usable channel when something needs to get done fast. (Eunson & Baden, 2007, 94.)

3.4 Informing

Information (lat. Information) is any knowledge that can be transferred from one individual to another without the demand for it being real or not. Informing refers to all of the knowledge and knowhow that is being transferred inside the organisation and the more carefully the informing is planned, the more effortless it is to do. In the best internal communication strategies, the informing is handled so well that deep conversations are not even needed. (Juholin, 2013, 57.) The way of informing has also faced an evolution during the digital revolution and the way we inform each other has evolved in a great deal.

Informing, contrary to daily communicating, does not only affect the employees inside the organization but also the stakeholders. Informing is also more strictly tied to different norms and it is more formal referred to daily communication. Informing also does not require interaction between two or more individuals; informing something is simply telling someone something and no response is required (Juholin, 2013, 57). Informing is more commonly used in downward communication as in from management to the personnel. Personnel quite seldom informs anything to the management and it is not expected from them. However, the management is expected to inform the personnel about any possible changes in the operations that affects the personnel. (Cornelissen, 2017, 177.)

Informing the company’s personnel and also the stakeholders and public outside the company sometimes might need to be done in a situation when a communications professional is not available. Therefore, a functional plan for informing should be done and be taught for the whole company. For example, fact sheets in cases need to be send out at a short notice and therefore a guidance for drafting them would be in order. Instructed issues could be for example:

- The ones who decide that a fact sheet is drafted
- When does the fact sheet need to be sent forward
- A person on which level needs to sign the fact sheet
- Who will give further information
- The length of the fact sheet
- The graphical guidelines for the fact sheet
- Who approves the fact sheet (for example in a situation where the CEO is not available)

The instructions should be written down for the communications strategy and go through them for example in an introduction situation and also put the instructions available for the intranet. (Juholin, 2013, 159-160.)
3.5 Challenges of internal communication

According to Åberg (2006), there are four challenges in internal communication. The challenges might be related to, for example, language, concepts, reliability and understandability. Communication problems might appear in situations where a message from the management does not reach everyone and the message stops. Sometimes all of the receivers are not at the same place at the same time or an e-mail does not work or different receivers are not taken into account in the communication situation. (Åberg, 2002, 166.)

In many companies the moving of information creates challenges because in some cases the information does not reach the personnel. The void of news, as Åberg describes it, is born when the personnel knows something is happening, however, they are not informed about what it is. In these cases, the grapevine starts to take control. Different speculations about the situation are born. The best way to avoid the spreading of false information and speculation is to effectively communicate with the personnel and inform about the situation. Of course, every sort of information does not concern everyone but in order to fill the void of news and control the grapevine discussion, the personnel needs some bits of information. (Åberg, 2006, 111-112.)

Some of the information requires a place where it stays put but needs to be accessible for those who need it. Therefore, the second challenge are data warhouses and networks. Decentralized databases are places where the ones who need the information have access to. The main rule, according to Åberg, is to storage the information which contains individual needs of information. These are for example, information about the progress of a project, personnel benefits and procedures for getting sick. (Åberg, 2006, 112.)

Development propositions for the challenges exist. For example, in interactive situations, active listening and checking the facts help the progress or communication. Also, the sender of the message needs to confirm if the message has been received and understood. A good thing would be also to check if the given information led to preferred action. The sender of the message needs to take into account the understandability and argumentation of the message as well as the receiver itself. The message can be modified and accurated by clarifying what are the main points and what has been achieved since a previous message. Also, increasing the amount of information is sometimes vital as well as repeating the message. (Åberg, 2002, 167.)

3.6 Digital communication

Digital communication can be defined as transformation of information that happens mainly via digital apparatus, such as computers, mobile phones, tablets and digital monitors. The technological evolution has revolutionized in the past 50 years and the development has been rapid. The development of technology has been one of the key factors in the World of communication and major steps have been enabled with the help of modern digital tools. (Edosomwan, 2011, 16.)
Kaplan and Haenlein wrote already in 2010 that communication is living the era of technological revolution. Technology enables the formation of brand new ways of communicating and one of the most significant factors has been the creation of social media and its extremely fast evolution around the World. (Kaplan, Haelein, 2010, 59-68.)

In a digital World, the information can be transformed rapidly, easily and globally. The technology also enables the forming of different networks, such as intranets. Intranets have increased the necessity and position of websites, blogs and different discussion forums. The information that flows through these channels have a great influence on the image that is created about the company. Therefore, it is important for a company to map out the external figures and to create an interactive relationship with them. (Isohookana, 2007, 251.)

3.6.1 Culture of digital communication

Digitalization has created multiple and almost endless possibilities in the World of communication. In the beginning, the digital culture started to develop in the United States for the use of University scientists and defence forces. Quite fast, a worldwide network started to evolve and today almost everything can be done in the digital World. (Isohookana, 2007, 252.) According to the research by Statistics Finland, 73% of people between the age range of 16 to 89 in Finland use Internet usually multiple times a day (Statistics Finland, 2017).

In networks, the information is in digital shape and the contents can be downloaded and saved in the same mathematical form. The information is also easy to multiply and the multiplied version is always the same as the original version. Communications technology and its evolution has increased the ability to gain information and also it has increased the actual amount of information. Anyone can put information to the Internet and almost anyone can find it and use it. Internet is also a significant place to meet people: the real-time platforms for communication for individuals and large groups have strengthened their position in the past years. (Isohookana, 2007, 252.)

An excellent example of modern communication method is Skype, which was invented in 2003 by Niklas Zennström and Janus Friis. Skype enables a live communication across the World for free and with webcam, a motion picture can be added. The digitalization of communication brings the communication close to its users. (Isohookana, 2007, 253.)

3.7 Applying the theory in practice

Based on the tips given by Juholin (2013, 159-160) and Mauremotoo (2015), a cycle of communication was illustrated.
In the first section, context & need, the sender needs to answer to three questions: what, why and whom and also set the objective for the message. First of all; what does the sender needs to communicate about, as in what is the message. After that the sender needs to define why the message is needed and what does he or she want to achieve with the message. After that a definition needs to be done about who does to message concern; to whom do we need to send the message.

Moving on to the next section; audience & ways. As we can see, here too we have four steps. First, after the sender has defined the first steps, they need to know how the message needs to be sent and how to approach the audience of the message. After these have been defined, the sender needs to know when the communication should happen. The last step is to define where the communication should take place.

The last section describes the work plan for the actual message and its content. The sender needs to define who is responsible for the message. It could be someone else than the sender themselves and also someone else might be responsible for the communication. The decision needs to be made about who sends the message and from whom may the receivers ask for further information about
the issue presented in the message. The last step is to evaluate the communication situation: what can be improved in the future, what went well and what did we learn from this experience. A careful evaluation after every situation is important and that is how others could learn as well.
4 THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND IT’S BACKGROUND

This thesis pursues to find out the current condition of internal communication at Hydroline. A questionnaire was executed for the personnel in order to find out the current situation. The questionnaire results will then be compared to the theoretical sources and a conclusion will be made according to the results and theory. The questionnaire for the personnel was created by applying the theoretical sources as the most important parts of internal communication were identified. Hydroline is a model example of a company that’s communication is mostly top down; as it is in many companies. (Isohookana, 2007, 226-228.) This is why the questionnaire pursues to find out if there is any lack of communication inside the company and if some employees are left in the shadows when it comes to information.

As it has been stated before, a well-organized internal communication that is interesting, pleasant and tells the employees everything they need to know also motivates them to work harder for the company (Kekäläinen, 2016). This is why also the pleasantness of the communication was asked in the questionnaire. When identifying the most pleasant and useful channels of communication, they can be learnt to use more and leave out the more unnecessary channels. As it has been stated earlier, unnecessary usage of multiple channels should be avoided because it takes time and also burdens the receiver (Isohookana, 2007, 226.)

The questionnaire pursues to give the company extremely important information about Hydroline’s current situation and how the employees feel about communication. This questionnaire focuses on the top down communication as it plays the biggest role in the company when going from management level to the employee level. In order for the management to engage the employees, the communication needs to be in good shape. Hydroline can also use the questionnaire results on creating the company’s communication strategy which does not yet exist.

A digital theory was taken as a small part of the theory and the questionnaire as it was hoped from the company’s side that the employees would be asked about the possibility to increase the digital communication and find out the usefulness of them at the moment.

Although the theoretical part represents also the informal communication, it is left out from the questionnaire as at Hydroline the informal communication would be hard to measure because of the variety of different teams that somewhat work together but mostly do not.

4.1 The questionnaire

The next paragraphs will present the questionnaire method and how it was implemented. The questionnaire and the process of making the questionnaire will be presented. The reliability will also be explained and presented as well as the analyses of the research.
The questionnaire was created with the Survey Monkey research tool and it the link of the questionnaire was put to the company intranet and also sent by e-mail for the company white collars.

The topic of the research is one of the most important issues when creating a questionnaire for a research process. With a carefully planned questionnaire, it is able to bring out viewpoints that the maker of the questionnaire might not possible have taken into consideration at all. The most central types of questions are multiple choice questions, open questions and questions that are based on scales. (Hirsjärvi et al., 2007, 198-199.)

These types of questions were used in this questionnaire because they were most likely to bring out the best outcome. The questionnaire was also asked to be kept as short as possible as the employees are more likely to take part on questionnaires that do not take too long time of their working hours. The questionnaire contained 23 different questions: 13 multiple choice questions, five open questions and six questions based on scales and evaluation. 20 questions are presented in the research results section as they contain relevant information regarding this research.

The questions were composed according to the theoretical material that was gathered for the thesis process. The questionnaire has three actual parts: questions that cover the internal communication in general at Hydroline, informing at Hydroline and digital communication at hydroline. One of the objectives of the thesis was to find out the current situation of the internal communication at Hydroline. As stated before, a well working internal communication engages employees more, therefore is necessary to map out the current situation. For example the length of the career at Hydroline was asked because of the personnel engagement and if the internal communication had something to do with it as it has been stated by Verčič and Vokić (2017).

4.2 Collecting of the material

The research data was collected from Hydroline’s headquarters from Finland, Vuorela. Poland was left out from the research and the thesis since it is a whole different unit and its internal communication differs from Vuorela’s completely. Also, in order to keep the reliability of the thesis in a good level, it was important to divide these two units into two different ones and leave Poland out. The whole personnel of Vuorela’s unit was given a chance to answer for the questionnaire.
The questionnaire was created with the Survey Monkey research tool and it the link of the questionnaire was put to the company intranet and also sent by e-mail for the company white collars. The questionnaire was open for answers for two weeks.

The precise amount of how many employees the link of the questionnaire reached, cannot be measured as the amount of people reading the intrantes newsfeed cannot be measured. Alltogether, the questionnaire gathered 54 responses out of the total amount of 250 employees at Vuorela’s factory at the time. The complete answer rate was 21,6%.

4.3 Reliability and validity of the material

Mistakes are tried to avoid in the research process, however, the reliability is always variable. This is why the reliability of the research is important to measure. The realibilty of the research stands for the repeatability of the results. Realibility can be for example noted when two recipients come up with the same conclusion. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2007, 226.)

The questionnaire collected a total of 54 responses out of total amount of 250 employees at the time that the questionnaire was open. The complete answer rate for the questionnaire, therefore, was 21,6% as in more than one fifth of the whole personnel. Therefore, the research can be seen as reliable. If the research was executed again, the results would most likely be similar.

The validity of the research means the ability of the research to measure the exact thing what it is meant to measure. The measures and methods are not always what the researcher expects them to be and the personal viewpoints need to be left out. If the researcher handles the gathered results from the viewpoint of their own paradigm, the results cannot be kept as valid. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2007, 226-227.)

In this research the personal viewpoints were left out and the questions were kept as simple as possible. The similar kind of questions were asked a few times in the questionnaire in order to gather as valid data as possible.
5 QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

The questionnaire is reviewed in the following sub-chapters. Each question is gone through individually. The following chapter takes a look at every research question individually. The first questions contain information about the employees’ background and after that the questions are focused on the internal communication at Hydroline. The multiple choice questions and questions with scales have been illustrated with charts.

The activity for the questionnaire was quite successful. Hydroline currently employees approximately 250 fulltime employees and the questionnaire gathered a total 54 responds. The interest towards internal communication is clearly quite good and the quality of the answers was also reliable. The reliability of the questionnaire, therefore can be said to be altogether trustworthy as the amount of the answerers concluded approximately one fifth of the total amount of staff.

5.1 Background information of the recipients

The background questions asked information about the recipients’ age, length of career and their position at the company. The sex of the recipients was not concluded in this questionnaire as it was not seen as an important matter in this survey.

Almost half (44,23%) of the answerers were from age range between 26 to 35 and the second largest age group were people between 36 to 45 (28,85%).

The answerers of the questionnaire were quite half and half both from the manufacturing employees and quite collars. 47,92% of the answerers were manufacturing employees and 52,08% white collars. The age range was quite large from 18 up to 65-year olds.

However, when cross checking the answer rates according to recipients’ position at Hydroline, there is a clear difference between the amounts of answer rates. Of the total amount of white collars working at the time at Hydroline, a total of 47,17% took part on the questionnaire. Then again, out of the 197 production workers, only 11,68% took part on the questionnaire. This shows some difference of interest and engagement between the white collars and production workers.
40% of the recipients have been working at Hydroline for 10 to 19 years, 28% for 5 to 9 years and 24% for 1 to 4 years. Also, when it comes to interest towards this questionnaire and internal communication, the employees’ working history was percentially longer among the answered white collars.

5.2 Internal communication in general

This section goes through individually the questions about the internal communication in general.

From the bar chart below, we can see that the opinions about the pleasantness of internal communication methods varies quite much. Mostly it seems that the methods are pleasant and liked but unfortunately one recipient feels that the methods are not pleasant at all. Also, only one of the answerers feels that the channels are very pleasant.
When it comes to the accessibility of the information, a total of 35 (77.92%) of the recipients think that the information is easy to get as it is easy to access. 13 (27.08%) however, say that it is not easily available.

64.58% of the recipients feel that they are getting enough information about what is happening inside the company. 35.42% feel that they are getting too less of information about that matter. The recipients that feel are not getting enough information are mostly manufacturing employees. About 80% of the ones that answered no were manufacturing employees.

Most of the recipients (41.67%) answered that they see internal communication at Hydroline as somewhat functional. The “well functioning” option was chosen by 17 (35.42%) recipients and “I do not know” by 10 (20.83%). One recipient thinks that internal communication is not at all functional.
The nest question asked about the interest towards the information the employees are getting through internal communication. 44 of the recipients (90%) answered yes and 5 (10%) no. There was not much diversity in the interest towards internal communication when cross referencing with the recipients’ backgrounds. The no answers came from both white collars as well as production workers and from ages between 26 to 55. When we take a look at the median age and length of working history, we cannot make any clear assumptions by the given information based on the background and interest towards internal communication.

There were a lot of answers for the question about increasing the effectiveness of internal communication even though it was a free word section. A complete of 33 responses were gathered. Most of the improvement propositions clearly were from the production employees.

First going through the improvement propositions made by the production employees. A communication between the management and the production workers should be more effective. There seems to be a lack of small group meetings, especially in the tube-rod cell section where the small group meetings according to one recipient are missing completely in some cases. Also, more information about the situation of the production and its goals and successes should be communicated.

It seems that there also should be more communication between different departments inside the company. It was stated that there should be more systematic methods on communication and the channels of communication should be aligned more specifically.

It was mentioned by two recipients that there are problems with the working schedules and informing about the changes in them. Other thing which was mentioned two times was that the material from the staff infos should be put to the intranet. In most cases the material is put to the intranet but there seems to be a problem because the material from some infos does not reach the intranet.

According to one answer, there is too much information that needs to be known, as in the silent information. Also, according to this recipient, there should be more informing by the management of Hydroline in the daily operations.

Other propositions that were mentioned were also more utilization of the info screens and info letters at the production and also the mobile application for the mobile phone. The functionality of the intranet was also mentioned three times: it should be more easy to use since the information seems to be buried deep in some cases and it is not easy to find.

Moving on the white collars’ propositions. First of all, it was proposed that checking the information that is given seems to be one issue. This was mentioned by two different recipients. According to
them both, it should be agreed inside Hydroline that all information should be informed right away when it has been checked and is current.

Also, the communication between people working with separate tasks are communicating with completely different ways, therefore the informing is hard.

One recipient proposes that there should be more training for communicating and teaching what internal communication actually is. One recipient states that the people should learn to whom they are supposed to communicate and about what. The people inside Hydroline, according to this recipient, do not understand the big picture and the information usually does not reach the right people.

Putting the staff infos’ material to the intranet was mentioned by one white collar as well. Clearly this is an issue that should be taken into consideration.

5.3 Informing

This section contains questions about the informing process at Hydroline.

In the first question about informing, the recipients were asked to evaluate their feelings towards the informing inside the company. The complete data has been gathered to the following bar chart. Each claim will be individually examined.

As we can see from the chart below, the agree section rises up in the questions where the it can be considered as a positive answer. This tell us that all in all, that the channels of informing are quite functional inside Hydroline. In this question only one recipient has passed one claim, therefore this question especially gives a lot of information.

Informing and its current condition is one of the most important things to look at in these answers as we have learned from Juholin (2013), when the informing is handled well and it is clear, the employees feel more patient and comfortable even in times of change.
Out of the complete 49 answers over half of the recipients (24) answered agree and 10 clicked completely agree. According to this claim, the information at Hydroline is seen trustworthy in most cases. Only eight recipients do not know as disagree with this claim and one recipient completely disagrees. All in all, the information can be said to be trustworthy as more than half of the recipients clicked the positive answer for this claim.

This claim divided opinions a little bit. 17 of the recipients said that they agree with getting the information fast, however, 16 said that they somewhat disagree with this. 8 of the recipients say that they do not know, as in three completely agree and five completely disagree. Therefore, the positive answers gathered only 42,86% of the answers.

26 of the recipients agree that the information is current, four completely agree. 10 recipients do not know, whereas eight disagree and one completely disagree. This claim gathered 61,22% of positive answers (agree and completely agree). According to this claim, we can assume that in most cases the speed of information flow is functional and fast. However, there needs to be some changes in order to make the flow functional in all sectors.

A total of 24 recipients clicked the positive option in this claim. 21 agreed and thee completely agreed. This is little bit less than a half of the recipients, as the percentage is 48,98%. One quarter, 25,57% of the recipients, feel that the informing is not active enough as 10 disagree and four completely disagree. 11 of the recipients do not know.
55,10% of the recipients agree with the claim that the information accesses them, whereas nine recipients somewhat disagree with this. Only three completely agree and two recipients completely disagree. Eight recipients out of 49 cannot say. There seems to be a little information blackout somewhere inside Hydroline as 22,45% of the recipients feel that in some level the information does not access them through the informing.

This claim is giving somewhat alarming info as 16 recipients do not know if they are getting enough information. 19 of the recipients agree with this claim and three completely agree. However, eight somewhat disagree and three completely disagree. As we divide this claim to positive and negative values, 44,89% of the answers are positive, 32,65% cannot say and 22,44% are negative.

A total of 30 recipients feel that the information they get is clear (26 agree, four completely agree). Therefore, this claim has gathered 62,50% of positive responses. Eight of the recipients do not know whereas a complete of 10 recipients disagree (nine somewhat disagree, one completely disagrees). The information, according to this claim seems to be all in all clear, however, some changes need to be done to make sure the information is clear for everyone.

20 recipients (40,81%) agree that the information they get is detailed enough and only three recipients completely agree. 10 recipients do not know whereas 15 recipients somewhat disagree, and one recipient completely disagrees.

36 (73,46%) of the recipients either disagree (18) or completely disagree (18) with this claim. Eight recipients do not know and five of them feel that the information does confuse them.

18 recipients somewhat disagree with this claim and 16 completely disagree as in the information is relatively easy to get in Hydroline. However, eight recipients do not know and six agree with this claim as in they feel that the information is in some level hard to access. All in all, 69,39 % of the recipients clicked the positive answer for this claim.

In the next question, the recipients evaluated the functionality of the channels of informing at Hydroline. All in all, the answers were positive and looking at the big picture, the channels seem to be functional. Each channel of informing is individually taken a look at.
One recipient sees the company newspaper completely useless channel of informing and 10 somewhat functional. Four recipients cannot say whereas 21 think the company newspaper is functional and 12 extremely functional. All in all, 68.75% of the recipients see the company newspaper functional.

The paper infos, according to these answers, were actually seen as the least functional channel of informing. 21 recipients say that they see these infos as somewhat functional and five see them as not at all functional. 11 recipients do not know, 11 see them as functional and three extremely functional. Therefore, 53.06% of the recipients clicked a negative answer for this.

The info screens got the most amount of “functional” answers, 25 (51.02%) and also eight recipients (16.33%) clicked the extremely functional option. Therefore, 67.35% of the answers were positive and 6.12% (3) cannot say. 10 recipients feel that the info screens are somewhat functional and four not at all functional.

Seven recipients feel that the small group meetings are extremely functional and 23 feel they are functional. Six recipients cannot say, eight see them as somewhat functional and five as not at all functional.

Staff infos gained the most amount of extremely functional answers, 15 and this was seen functional by 24 recipients. Only two cannot say, six feel they are somewhat functional and only one does not think they are functional at all. Therefore, 81.25% of the recipients feel that the staff infos are functional or extremely functional.
This question about how to increase the effectiveness of informing was also a free word question. A total of 22 answers were gathered. The propositions that rose above others were activity, speed and accuracy.

The grammar of infos was mentioned in three answers: the spelling should be looked at more carefully as there seems to be a lot of spelling mistakes in the infos and this does not give a good image of professional communication. Also, the overall appearance of the infos in the info sessions and info screens should be more consistent: one answer stated that the infos should be done according to Hydroline’s graphical guidelines.

The informing should be more targeted for those who actually need the information. It seems that the information does not necessarily reach the right person through the actual channels but via multiple different turns. A proposition was made that the informing should be more targeted. Another recipient answered that there should be more discussion between the foremen and the employees in order for the information to reach the right people.

Board of directors was asked to be more involved in the small group meetings. It was proposed that at least one of the management group members was present one to two times monthly in the small group meetings and would inform about the current situation of Hydroline. It was stated that all in all the board of directors should inform more about the future perspective of the company and the overall situation at the markets and the industry. This would, according to the recipient, increase the attitude and working motivation if everyone knew which direction the industry and the company are going.

5.4 Digital channels of internal communication

This section goes through the questions about the digital channels of internal communication and their usefulness and functionality.

Clearly the digital channels of the internal communication are seen quite useful all in all. 15 (30,61%) of the recipients feel that the info screens are very useful and 21 (42,86%) feel that they are useful. Only nine recipients (18,37%) think that the info screens are somewhat useful, 1 (2,04%) sees them not at all useful and three recipients (6,12%) cannot say. The results about the intranet are almost the same: 12 recipients (24,49%) see intranet as very useful and 22 (44,90%) as useful. About intranet, three (6,12%) cannot say, 10 (20,41%) see it as somewhat useful and two (4,08%) recipients as not at all useful.

The percentages are quite the same in both questions. The current digital methods of internal communication are all in all useful and functional. The intranet is seen useful or very useful by 69,39% of the recipients and the info screens by 73,47% of the recipients.
In the next question the recipients were asked if they wished for more digital communication. 26 recipients (53%) wish that the communication inside the company would be more digital. 13 recipients (27%) do not know and 10 (20%) think that it should not be.

The recipients were asked if more communication via smartphones would be in order. The answers follow quite much the line of the previous question which measured the recipients’ willingness for more digital communication. A little bit over half, 27 recipients (56%), is telling that they would like more communication via smartphones. 15 (31%) is saying no and 6 recipients (13%) do not know.

When it comes to the recipients’ willingness to use a mobile application instead of the desktop version of intranet, the amount of answers to each answer are quite much the same amounts as for the previous two questions. 24 recipients (48%) answered yes and 13 (26%) answered both no and do not know.

Out of the total of 24 yes responses, 12 recipients (50%) were between the age range of 26 to 35, seven (29,17%) between the age range of 36 to 45, three (12,50%) between ages 46 to 55 and one (4,17) between both 18 to 25 and 56 to 65. As 23 of the total amount of recipients in the questionnaire were between the age range of 26 to 35, this question tells us that there is not a lot of diversity between ages when it comes to their willingness to use the mobile application instead of the desktop version.

In the next question the recipients were asked to evaluate the usefulness of the current digital methods: the info screens and the intranet.

![Usefulness of infoscreens and intranet](image)

**FIGURE 7: Usefulness of the infoscreens and intranet (own illustration)**

Both digital channels are seen mostly useful or extremely useful by the recipients. The info screens are only seen as slightly more useful than the intranet.

The recipients were asked about possible propositions about digital solutions for communicating in the future. This question had a free word section where the recipients were able to tell what kind of
solutions would improve the digital channels of internal communication. A total of 23 responses were given.

A mobile application was suggested by seven different recipients. According to the recipients a mobile application would increase the activity of communicating and it would also make it easier and more functional. One recipient proposed a comment section for the intranet and the possible mobile application: it would increase the interest towards information if there was an instant opportunity to comment on the infos and news.

Whatsapp groups were also proposed as a good way of communicating between co-workers and teams. This also would give a chance for instant messaging and commenting on different information and also the team leaders and foremen would have a fast channel on informing for the employees.

QR codes for the company newspaper were mentioned as a possible way of increasing the digital communication. A proposal was made that each article and the newspaper could be put to the intranet and the articles could be read from there whenever and there is no fear of losing the newspaper.

As Epley and Kruger (2005) have written, the modern ways of communicating bring their own challenge for communication as the non-verbal communication is completely left out. The info screens and intranet at Hydroline for example present the non-verbal internal communication. However, according to the results from the questionnaire, the content is understandable and at least mostly pleasantly presented.

5.5 Grading and improving the internal communication

The recipients were asked to grade the internal communication on a scale from 1 to 10. This question gained 48 answers and the average grade was 5.2.

The last free word question was about improving the internal communication in general. A total of 24 responses were gathered. Most of the recipients were hoping for improvements in general. For example, more training for communicating was proposed as well as more effectiveness from everyone inside the company. A suggestion was also made that the information should not be “hidden” at any level as it should be available instantly at all times. According to this answer, a lot of time is wasted when something is looked for.

Also, more accuracy and speed were hoped for internal communication. One answer asked if it would be possible to find out the changes that have something to do with the employees at least a month before it is executed. Also, visualising the production’s tasks could be improved. Altogether, improvements are wanted but actual means were not that much presented in the answers.
6 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The objective of this thesis was to find out the current condition of the internal communication at Hydroline in general and also find out possible solutions to improve it in the future as well as find out the possibilities in the digital communication channels. The questionnaire of the research focused on the personnel’s point of view about the functionality and accessibility of the information as well as the possibilities on communication inside the company in the big picture. The functionality of the current channels of internal communication was mapped out and the recipients were given the chance to describe the possible improvements and downsides in their own words.

6.1 Background of the recipients

In the questionnaire only the most important questions concerning this research were asked: age, position at Hydroline and the length of career at Hydroline. This background information was enough from the perspective of the questionnaire and also this information was able to be cross tabbed with the other answers according to what needed to be known.

As it can be seen from the results, 44,23% of the answerers were from age range between 26 to 35 and the second largest age group were people between 36 to 45 with 28,85%. This quite clearly tells that employees in the age range between 26 to 45 are most interested about the internal communication and they give it the most value. Of course, also we need to take into consideration the typical age range in the company: the average age is 39,5 years and the median age 40. As we can see, most of the answers were given around the average and median age. This result was expected.

52,08% of the recipients were white collars and 47,92% were production workers. The realibility of the data can be considered trustworthy as the answers are almost half and half. This also gives a better change to cross tab the results according to the position at Hydroline.

The length of the career at Hydroline had a quite large scale. 40% of the recipients have been working at Hydroline for 10 to 19 years, 28% for 5 to 9 years and 24% for 1 to 4 years. The activity of the recipients according to their length of career is clearly the biggest inside the long-time employees’ section. This is in relation to the results presented in Verčič and Vokič’s (2017) research and supports the fact that employee engagement and interest towards internal communication go hand in hand.

6.2 Interest towards internal communication

The overall interest towards internal communication and its information at Hydroline is very good. As it turned out from the answers, 90% of the recipients were interested about internal communication. Here, we should focus to the uninterested 10% of the personnel who are not interested about the information Hydroline shares. As it has been stated, information increases the
interest and motivation at workplace, therefore it is extremely vital that steps are taken towards increasing the interest towards internal communication among the personnel.

The idea of internal communication and its importance should be planted for the employees right from the start. It should be taught for everyone why it is so important and why do we need to communicate. The words “internal communication” do not even necessarily need to be used when talking about the issue. Communication in all levels is important and that it why it should be stated for the personnel why it is so important for the company. Increasing the interest, Hydroline may even be able to improve the overall processes of the company. As Isohookana has stated, internal communication is one the things to which by paying attention to, the company is able to build competitiveness that is hard to copy by others.

At the moment, there are some major changes going on in the company, especially at the production. Communicating and informing about these changes has clearly improved the atmosphere inside the company and the employees’ motivation towards work. It has been an extremely important step towards trust and respect that the situation the company is facing right now has been informed for the whole personnel. As the management informs the personnel and also listens to them and asks for their opinion, it increases the interest among the personnel and also gives the employees a possibility to talk about their concerns when it comes to the current situation. As the management gives the personnel the possibility to communicate with them, the situation turns more positive and the problems can be solved together. When a company faces more difficult times and major changes, it is extremely important to have the support of the whole personnel and with functional communication this can be reached.

Lastly, it is somewhat concerning from the internal communicator's point of view as there are employees that do not actually seem to care about what is happening inside the company. Some improvements for making employees more interested about the company and its operations as well as general information would be in order. The lack of interest towards issues generally tells about dissatisfaction and also lack of interest towards working. When the interest level is high, the quality of work also improves (Kekäläinen, 2016).

6.3 Functionality and pleasantness of the internal communication

Mainly, the information at Hydroline is quite easy to access. According to the answers, 77,92% of the recipients think that the information is easy to get as in it is easy to access and 27,08% say that it is not easily available. When the results are divided between the production workers and white collars, it is noticed that 17,39% of the production workers and 33,33% of the white collars feel that the information is not easy to access. This is quite a surprising thing to notice as the white collars have an extremely easier way of accessing the information as they work mostly with Internet where most of the information is.
The answers might have turned out like this since the amount of information a white collar needs to work everyday with is quite much more than a production employee and also, they work with outside information more. On some level, this might even take disturb their ability to focus on the internal information, therefore they are not so eager to find things out by themselves. The flow of information might need to flow a little bit smoother and even easier to access than it does at the moment.

When checking the answers of the question where the recipients were asked if they get enough information, 80% of the white collars and only 50% of the production workers say yes. There seems to be some contradiction in the answers in some level.

Moving on to the functionality of internal communication. According to the answers, the functionality of internal communication should be improved. As we can see from the pie chart illustrating the answers of the functionality, most of the answers about the functionality are in the somewhat functional section and almost as many recipients had clicked the functional section. Also, zero answers were given to the very functional option. Almost one fourth of the answers were “I do not know” which is quite concerning. According to this question, we can assume that the internal communication in a general level is quite working but on a deeper level it has issues and needs to be improved.

26,09% of the production workers and 45,83% of white collars feel that the internal communication is functional and had chosen the “functional” option for the question. Again, we see a gap between these two groups and this supports the claim about the stop of the information flow. It clearly seems that at some point the information accesses the white collars but for some reason it does not reach the production workers like it should.

6.4 Informing

Altogether, informing at Hydroline seems to be in mediocre shape. The results from the questions concerning informing were quite positive, even though a few alarming facts rose on sight. First of all, what caught the eye was that only 44,89% of the recipients feel that they get enough information. As the amount is less than half of the answerers, it is quite a bad result. This result itself tells that the amount of communication needs to be increased inside the company and informing needs to be more effective.

As stated in the functionality of internal communication section, there is a gap between the white collars and production employees when it comes to getting information. The same problem appears in the claims about informing: all the negative “completely disagree” answers were given by the production workers. Clearly, in informing as well, the production workers should be taken into account more carefully and also make the communication between the white collars and production workers more effective. The information does not access the production workers as well as the white collars and this needs to be repaired.
The quality of information seems to be mediocre. As we saw, 62.50% of the recipients feel that the given information is clear, however, only 40.81% feel that the information is detailed enough. Clearly, more detailed information is wanted. Even though the amount of information would be enough, and the information is clear, still, in order to keep the grapevine under control, the personnel would need more details and facts. In my opinion, if the information is too vague, it does not actually tell anything; on the contrary, it creates more questions. As Juholin (2013) and Cornelissen (2017) have stated, informing is mostly downward communication and does not require interaction. However, this does not lower the expectations towards the actual information that is expected to bring more knowledge.

However, even though the information could more clear, it does not confuse the personnel in most cases. As 73.46% of the recipients has answered that they either disagree or completely disagree with the claim ”information confuses me”, the overall situation is good. Still, the information confuses 10.20% if the recipients and 16.33% do not know. Therefore, the quality of information needs to be increased in order to avoid the possible upcoming problems.

When it comes to informing from the management level, the board was asked to be even more involved. Even though every two weeks there is a staff info and the information comes straight from the board, the personnel still asks for more involvement from the board. As it was stated, this might increase the motivation. It might also have some impact on the overall atmosphere if the board came closer to the personnel and would be not seen as “something above the others”. As Ramani (1996, 66-75) has stated that the example of the management blows the spirit to the personnel. The management creates the culture of communication and clearly, in this case, the personnel is asking for more active participation from the management.
DISCUSSION

Basically, when looking at the methods of internal communication at Hydroline, the traditional channels of communicating as well as the graphic communication tools that Juholin (2013, 144; 2004, 77) refers to are seen as functional methods at Hydroline. According to the results of the questionnaire, the methods themselves are functional; the problems lay in the senders of the information and maybe even the receivers. When I was going through the results, I found the following improvement areas.

First of all, the point where the flow of information stops needs to be found. As the results from the questionnaire showed, at some point between the white collars and the production employees the flow of information stops and the amount of information flowing from “top down” reduces. The first step on improving the communication at Hydroline and starting to build a new communication strategy is to eliminate the factors that might disturb the flow of information. As it has been mentioned, Ikävalko (1999, 11-12) has stated that with careful planning of communicating, the distractions can be reduced, and the effectiveness of the communication situation is able to be improved.

According to the questionnaire results, we can assume that the accessibility of the information is not as easy as it should be, however, most of the white collars take their time to find out the needed information. Also, the production workers mostly feel that the information is easy to access but according to this result, they do not seek it as half of them feel that they are not getting enough information.

Although, it might be the case that some of the information is only transformed for the white collars and the flow of information stops there: there is no one to transform the information for the production workers. Here rises a question: whose responsibility is it to transform the needed information? In order for the production workers to maintain their motivation for work and for the company, they need to be aware of what is happening. A systematic plan would be in order for this downside as the information seems not to reach everyone inside the company. There are plenty of ways to access the information, however, at some point do some employees just give up on searching? If an employee feels that the information is hidden for a reason, it might even stop them for searching it in the future. This problem can be noticed as one of the four challenges in internal communication that Åberg (2006, 111-112) has listed. The void of news can clearly be found from Hydroline.

According to the data gathered from the questionnaire, we can assume that the white collars clearly have an easier access for the information about the company, however, they do not use these channels as much as they could or maybe it is left aside as the amount of outside information is wider. Also, white collars generally work more with the issues that contain company information. Unfortunately, however, it seems that the information that the production employees feel would be valuable for them does not reach them as easily and effectively as it should. This is something that
should be taken into consideration when improving the internal communication as the flow of information should be smooth.

When remembering what Isohookana (2007) has stated about internal communication, an assumption can be made that when the information is easy to access and amount of knowledge the employees have is bigger, it improves the quality of work and also the wellbeing at workplace. If the information is hidden and only in the hands of certain workers, it might cause dissatisfaction and lack of quality. Therefore, the point where the flow of information stops should be found and fixed. Also, the reasons for this should be sought and solved together. Also, it might be that the foremen of Hydroline’s production should play a bigger role on giving more information to the workers. Foremen are the link between the production workers and the management, after all.

All in all, the channels of internal communication seem to be pleasant according to the answers. Most of the answers are on the pleasant section, therefore we can make a conclusion that all in all the channels are generally liked. However, improvements would be in order and the answers from the somewhat pleasant and I do not know section should be able to be transformed to the pleasant section. In the freeword question about improving the effectiveness of informing it was said that the infos could be done according to Hydroline’s visual guidelines. This could be tried when drafting other infos as well and it could be researched if the overall pleasantness of internal communication might even improve.

There is a need for improving the interest towards internal communication. As Grossman (2016) has stated, when the communication inside a company is smooth and working and people are interested about information, it also increases the employees’ motivation; as they feel like an important part of the team. One possible way to get everyone interested about internal communication would be to organize communicating trainings for the whole personnel, not only for the white collars. It would benefit the whole company if, for example, once or twice a year the personnel would be reminded about the importance of communication. It might also increase the interest towards information as well as the willingness to spread the information among the personnel through different channels.

A possibility should also be given for the production workers to communicate through the formal channels of internal communication at Hydroline. At the moment all of the channels are in hands of only a few white collars, therefore they mainly decide what is informed and when and the rest of the personnel does not have a possibility to communicate. If everyone had the same possibilities for communicating, it would most likely lower the step to start communicating through other channels than just grapevine which is an extremely active channel of communication at Hydroline. As Smith and Mounter (2008, 6) have said, a motivated employee feels empowered when the communication is effective and working. Therefore, the company could improve the possibilities on reaching its goals by just improving the level of communication.

The communicating training could be considered to be taken as a part of the introduction to work and also the communicating skills could be mapped out at the annual development discussion. If the
communication skills and the importance of them would be a part of daily routines, it would be easier to take communication as a part of normal work. This would not only include the grapevine communication but also the communication channels. As in, if someone would have something to say for everyone, they could simply put the word out for everyone. Also, for example, a weekly moment of free discussion of work with a coffee cup could work among the employees. If there was a set time and place for a discussion, it would most likely encourage employees to show up and tell about their concerns and praises.

Also, as it was proposed in the free word section of increasing the effectiveness of informing, the management group could take on a more active attitude on communicating on a floor level with the personnel. They could take part on the small group meetings as it was proposed. This might give the employees a better view for the management’s work and also lower the step on commenting about the issues and giving feedback. This might also motivate the employees more: if the management is easy to approach, it is more likely to feel comfortable at work – in my opinion. As the management shows the example in communicating (Ramani, 1995, 66-75), it would be more likely for the personnel to be motivated with work and communicating if the management was to show the example to the right direction.

As a little bit over half of recipients are saying that there should be more communication via smartphones, this is something that should be taken into consideration when making decisions about the internal communication. Smartphones are modern channels of everyday communication and there is no reason why they should not be a part of working life communication as well. The company’s intranet is working as a mobile application as well, not only in desktop version, however, it has some issues. The company could take into consideration an actual application where the newest information about the company’s operations and current topics would be available. Also, whenever a new info was to appear in the application, a push notification could be in order as well.

Internal WhatsApp groups inside the company could be an idea worth thinking about, as well. This was also one idea that appeared in the free word section. An employee from production was asking for a WhatsApp group conversation inside his own team where the information would easily available and easily transformed to everyone. If an ongoing conversation about the issues at the workplace would be constantly available, this might also increase the employees’ interest towards Hydroline’s operations. The grapevine communication via instant messages would also might work in a whole different level if there was a safe place without face to face communication.

What could also be considered is a Facebook group for the whole personnel. At the moment, Facebook has 2.5 million users in Finland and the amount is grooving annually, especially among the senior users (Pönkä, 2017). Communicating in social media is rapid and effective. Also, every user that is joined to a group gets an announcement if something is posted to the group. This would be an effective and fast way of communicating with the personnel that were joined for the group. In my opinion, it is worth a try.
The info screens at the production and in the cafeteria could be more widely used and the infos could change more. At times, the same infos stay on the screens for two weeks and it might get boring to look at the same infos for a long time. Even little things could be put on the screens. Also, it was suggested also by a recipient for the questionnaire: all the infos could be put to a same place at the intranet where they would easy to access.

Also, a clear communication strategy should be done by the person in charge of the internal communication. As Juholin (2013, 159-160) has stated, when it comes to informing, there should be a clear plan and strategy for who is giving the information, who gives further information as well as who approves the information that is given. It would be an important and effective addition for Hydroline's overall strategy to create guidelines for communicating and how to follow the instruction in the future.

The circle of communication that was presented in chapter three can be also modified according to the situation and the message itself, but the main idea should stay the same: these three steps are vital in every communicating situation when informing of sending any kind of important information. Based on the various theoretical sources that have been investigated during this thesis process, there is a strong feeling that this simple model could help the personnel of Hydroline towards a more effective communication strategy.

The circle of communication (Figure 2) could work as an example for communicating the message inside Hydroline. This could work as a tool when creating the communication strategy and thinking about the steps that are needed when creating one. The circle takes into consideration the pointed-out problems in communication at Hydroline. I presented three sections in the chart: Context & need, Audience & ways and Work plan. Based on the previous information that have been learned through my thesis process, these three big steps would be ideal for Hydroline's communication.

7.1 Follow-up research proposal

I would suggest for Hydroline to research the internal communication in general in the future. The suggestions that have been made could be taken into consideration and put to use as soon as possible. Extremely necessary and comprehensive feedback has been given by the personnel and the suggestions should be taken seriously. Even though in a big picture the internal communication is functional, there are some negative sides and they should be repaired.

In my opinion, the changes could be made and a research about possible improvement in situation could be executed on fall or winter 2019-2020. A short and effective questionnaire if a situation has changed and to which direction could be planned.

Annual follow-ups on internal communication could be made because the necessity of communication increases constantly and also the channels and ways of communication are changing rapidly. With follow-ups, Hydroline would have current information about the communication
situation and the company would make changes accordingly. Listening to the personnel in this matter is extremely important and it would help Hydroline with its growing operations.

7.2 Self evaluation

The objective of the thesis was to find out the current situation of internal communication at Hydroline and deepen the knowledge of internal communication in general and find out why it is so important for a company. These objectives, all in all, were achieved, although, in some level the learning process was left superficial. The questionnaire that was implemented as a part of the thesis process gave a comprehensive picture about the current situation of internal communication at Hydroline. One thing that should have been taken into consideration more carefully was how to reach the employees. As the answer rate among white collars was much more higher than among the production employees. The crucial thing here might have been that the questionnaire was sent out by e-mail for the white collars for their work e-mail but the information about the questionnaire reached the production employees only via intranet and the infoscreens. Therefore, the answer rate for production employees stayed extremely low, as it was only 11.68%.

Also, the questionnaire itself could have been planned a little bit more carefully. It concluded all the needed things, however, there was some information that was not vital for the results and the data was not used. The unnecessary questions made the questionnaire a little bit too long and by leaving out a few questions, the analyses could have been done more accurately.

The thesis process itself was started already in spring 2017 and the process was completed in March 2018. This time period is quite long and with more careful planning the time could have been shorter. Given that the time period was so long in the end, it might have even affected on the academic side of the thesis process itself. The theory part was mostly gathered during summer and fall of 2017 and when thinking about it now, it should have been done sooner. The questionnaire itself should have been made after the theory part was completely gathered and not the other way around.

The learning experience from the thesis process has been extremely productive as now that the process has come to an end, I look at my working habits in a whole new light. I know what to improve in the future and I also see what I did well. In my opinion, all in all the theory that was gathered for the paper is good and it taught me a lot. I gathered a lot of knowledge about internal communication in general and it really helps me in my working life in the future. My goal was to deepen my knowledge and as I said earlier, it was achieved. I also was able to make suggestions for Hydroline and I hope that these suggestions are put to use.

Also, the methods on gathering the data could have been done in a different way, but unfortunately there were some scheduling difficulties. The preferred method over the questionnaire would have been to set up workshops for the personnel, however, as the company and it’s processes in the
production need to run all the time, there was simply no possibilities for setting up the workshops. In my opinion, better results could have been achieved with them.
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Interviews

Lehikoinen, J. Vice President Business Development and Marketing, Hydroline Oy
Hei kaikki!

Teen tutkimusta Hydrolinen sisäisestä viestinnästä osana opinnäytetyötäni Savonia Ammattikorkeakoulun. Pyydän sinua vastaamaan nopeaan kyselyyn, jonka linkin löydät tämän ilmoituksen lopusta.

Opinnäytetyöni tutkimuksen tavoitteena on kartoittaa Hydrolinen sisäisen viestinnän tämänhetkistä tilannetta sekä saada tietoa, olisiko enemmän digitaalinen viestintä varteenotettava vaihtoehto.

Kyselyssä kysytään myös sisäisen viestinnän toimivuudesta ja miellyttävyydestä yleisellä tasolla. Kyselyyn vastaaminen vie noin viisi minuuttia ajastasi.

Kyselyn vastaukset tulevat ainoastaan minun käyttööni osana opinnäytetyötä, eikä niitä luovuteta muualle. Kyselyn tuloksien analyysi kuitenkin auttaa myös sisäisen viestinnän kehittämistä Hydrolinella tulevaisuudessa.


Kiitos ajastasi!

Terveisin, Riina Vovk, markkinointi- ja viestintäkoordinaattori

Linkki kyselyyn:
https://fi.surveymonkey.com/r/WZXTX6V
Hei!

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Voit halutessasi vastata kyselyyn joko anonyymisti tai nimellä. Kaikkien nimellä kyselyyn vastanneiden kesken arvon 50€:n arvoisen ravintolalahjakortin.

Kiitos ajastasi!

Linkki kyselyyn:
https://fi.surveymonkey.com/r/WZTX6V
1. Nimi / Name

2. Ikäsi / Your age
   a. 18-25
   b. 26-35
   c. 36-45
   d. 46-55
   e. 56-65
   f. 65+

3. Oletko / Are you
   a. Tuotannon työntekijä / Manufacturing employee
   b. Toimihenkilö / White collar

4. Kuinka kauan olet ollut Hydrolinella töissä? / For how long have you been working for Hydroline?
   a. Alle vuoden / Less than a year
   b. 1-4 vuotta / 1-4 years
   c. 5-9 vuotta / 5-9 years
   d. 10-19 vuotta / 10-19 years
   e. Yli 20 vuotta / More than 20 years

5. Koetko nykyiset sisäisen viestinnän keinot mielekkäinä? 1=en lainkaan mielekkäinä, 5=erittäin mielekkäinä / In your opinion, are the channels of internal communication pleasant? 1=Not pleasant at all, 5=extremely pleasant

6. Onko saatavillasi oleva tieto helposti saatavilla? / Is the information easy to get?
   a. Kyllä / Yes
   b. Ei / No

7. Koetko sisäisen viestinnän Hydrolinella toimivana? 1= en lainkaan toimivana, 5=erittäin toimivana / In your opinion, do you think the internal communication is working? 1=not at all, 5=extremely working

8. Koetko saavasi tarpeeksi tietoa siitä, mitä yrityksen sisällä tapahtuu? / In your opinion, do you get enough information about what is happening inside the company?
   a. Kyllä / Yes
   b. En / No

9. Kiinnostavatko sisäisen viestinnän tiedot sinua? / Are you interested about the information you are getting through internal communication?
   a. Kyllä / Yes
   b. Ei / No

10. Miten sisäisen viestinnän tehokkuutta voisi mielestäsi parantaa? Sana on vapaa. / In your opinion, how could the effectiveness of internal communication be increased? In your own words.

11. Koetko tiedottamisen kanavat toimivina? 1=en lainkaan toimivana, 5=erittäin toimivana. / IN your opinion, are the channels of informing working?
    a. Henkilöstöinfot / Staff infos
    b. Pienryhmäpalaverit / Small group meetings
    c. Infotaulut / Info screens
    d. Paperiset infot / Paper infos
    e. Henkilöstölehden / Company newspaper

12. Mitä mieltä olet seuraavista väittämistä, jotka liittyvät yleisesti sisäiseen tiedottamiseen yrityksessä? / What do you think about the following claims about the internal communication at Hydroline?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>luokka</th>
<th>Täysin eri mieltä / Completely disagree</th>
<th>Jokseenkin eri mieltä / Partly disagree</th>
<th>En osaa sanoa / I do not know</th>
<th>Samaa mieltä / Agree</th>
<th>Täysin samaa mieltä / Completely agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luotan saamaani tietoon / I trust the information I get</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saan tiedon nopeasti / I get the information fast</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saamani tieto on ajankohtaista / The information I get is current</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiedottaminen on tarpeeksi aktiivista / Informing is active enough</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saan riittävästi tietoa / I get enough information</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saamani tieto on selkeää / The information I get is clear</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saamani tiedot ovat riittävän yksityiskohtaisia / The information I get is detailed enough</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saamani tiedot hámmentävät minua / I get confused by the information I get</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koen tiedonsaannin vaikeana / I find it hard to get information</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Miten tiedottamista voisi mielletä parantaa? Sana on vapaa. / In your opinion, how could the informing be improved? In your own words

14. Toivoitko, että viestintä olisi enemmän digitaalista? / Do you wish that the communication was more digital?
   a. Kyllä / Yes
   b. Ei / No
   c. En osaa sanoa / I don't know

15. Ovatko nykyiset digitaaliset kanavat mielestäsi toimivia? / Do you find the current digital channels working?
   a. Kyllä / Yes
   b. Ei / No
   c. Osittain

16. Nykyisistä digitaalisista kanavista, koetko hyödylliseksi (1=en lainkaan hyödylliseksi, 5=Erittäin hyödylliseksi) / Of the current digital channels of internal communication, do you find useful (1=not useful at all, 5=extremely useful)
   a. Intranetin / Intranet
   b. Infotaulut / Infoscreens
17. Toivotko, että sisäistä viestintää voitaisiin siirtää enemmän älypuhelimiin? / Do you wish there was more internal communication via smartphones?
   a. Kyllä / Yes
   b. En / No
   c. En osaa sanoa / I don’t know

18. Jos Hydrolinen Intranetiin tulisi mobiilisovellus, käyttäisitkö sitä mieluummin tietokoneen sijaan? / If there was a mobile application for Hydroline Intranet, would you use it instead of the desktop version?
   a. Kyllä / Yes
   b. En / No
   c. En osaa sanoa / I don’t know

19. Millainen digitaalinen ratkaisu olisi sinun mielestäsi toimiva Hydrolinen sisäisen viestinnän parantamiseksi. Sana on vapaa. / In your opinion, what kind of a digital solution do you think would be suitable in order to improve the internal communication? In your own words.

20. Minkä arvosanan antaisit Hydrolinen sisäiselle viestinnälle asteikolla 1-10? Which grade would you give for the internal communication at Hydoroline on scale from 1 to 10?

21. Oliko tämä kysely mielestäsi hyödyllinen? / Was this questionnaire useful?
   a. Kyllä / Yes
   b. Ei / No

22. Toivoisitko parannusta sisäiseen viestintään Hydrolinella? Sana on vapaa. / Do you wish improvements for the internal communication at Hydroline?