

Finnish game industry and employee engagement

Glance at the themes impacting commitment

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>Employee engagement has been on the surface in human resources management during last few years. Its importance and effects on company success have been thoroughly researched as well as employee engagement on its own. These studies have already proved a link between engaged employees and company productivity as well as the permanence of employees.</p> <p>The Finnish game industry is a relatively young domain and there is a lack of research relating to it. Despite a small national population, the Finnish game industry has, with multiple success stories, risen to become one of the major game producer countries in Europe. The number of established game companies has grown during the last few years and the field employs more people each year. This is why it is important to consider the views and experiences of the employees that makes the success possible.</p> <p>The aim of the research was to become acquainted with human resources management in the Finnish game industry and examine the success of employee engagement. Due to the lack of prior studies, the main goal was to gather more information about the subject and offer a background for future studies. Qualitative research was executed by using semi-structured interview method as the data gathering tool and findings were analyzed using required methods provided by the used literature. These interviews were compared to each other in order to find similarities that rose from them, finally proceeding to compare them to existing studies and publications about employee engagement to have support for the findings and conclusions. Three of Finland's game companies participated in the research. A small start-up company was represented as well as an international success story.</p>		
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Tiivistelmä <p>Työntekijöiden sitoutuminen on ollut viime vuosina pinnalla henkilöstöjohtamisen saralla. Sen tärkeyttä ja vaikutuksia yritysten menestykseen on tutkittu laajasti, kuten myös työntekijöiden sitoutumista itsessään. Nämä tutkimukset ovat jo osoittaneet yhteyden sitoutuneen henkilöstön ja yrityksen tuottavuuden sekä työntekijöiden pysyvyyden kannalta.</p> <p>Suomen peliteollisuus on suhteellisen nuori ala, ja siihen liittyvät tutkimukset ovat vielä toistaiseksi harvassa. Pienen maamme koosta huolimatta suomalainen peliteollisuus on kiivennyt menestystarinoillaan yhdeksi Euroopan isoimmaksi pelien tuottajamaaksi. Peliyritysten määrä on kasvanut huimasti viime vuosien aikana, ja peliteollisuus työllistää jatkuvasti enemmän väkeä. Onkin tämän vuoksi tärkeää kurkistaa tämän mahdollistavan henkilöstön näkemyksiin ja kokemuksiin.</p> <p>Työn tavoitteeksi nousi Suomen pelialaan sekä sen henkilöstöjohtamiseen perehtyminen ja sen selvittäminen, kuinka peliyhtiöt Suomessa onnistuvat sitouttamaan työntekijöitään. Koska aiempia tutkimuksia ei asiasta ole tehty, päämääränä oli saada lisää tietoa aiheesta ja tarjota tulevaisuuden tutkimuksille taustaa. Laadullinen tutkimus suoritettiin käyttämällä puolistrukturoitua haastattelumetodia tiedonkeruuvälineenä. Tulokset analysoitiin käyttämällä vaadittavia metodeja. Haastatteluiden sisältöä verrattiin toisiinsa samanlaisuuksien löytämiseksi ja näitä tuloksia verrattiin olemassa oleviin tutkimuksiin sekä julkaisuihin työntekijän sitoutumisesta löydösten tukemiseksi. Tutkimukseen osallistuivat kolme suomalaista peliyhtiötä, joiden suuruus vaihteli pienestä start up -yrityksestä aina kansainväliseen menestyjään asti.</p>		
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1 Introduction

During the last few years the game industry in Finland has been enjoying stable growth both in company revenue and by number of established companies. This means that the need for skilled employees has also grown and number of employed people by companies has grown as well since business size has increased. Although most of Finnish game companies are still mostly smaller teams, companies employing more than 50 people have increased during last few years (Neogames, 2016). In 2017 game industry in Finland employed almost 3000 people (Neogames.fi, 2018).

This rapid growth in the industry has resulted in demand for skilled workers in the field. Education of game development in Finland has increased in form of more schools offering game developing courses and in general game-related curricula are offered in multiple universities and universities of applied sciences around the country (Neogames.fi). This also raises interest towards human resources management in the industry. In game industry where companies consist from few individuals working on projects to bigger global companies with international presence employing a hundred people, matter of human resources management's importance is part of modern game industry. Specifically, it raises interest towards employee engagement in Finnish game industry and how it is fulfilled.

Employee engagement in growing field of game production and development is interesting topic of research because of the nature of game industry which is very employee intensive business. This raises questions about how companies of different sizes view employees, their level of engagement and its importance. Finland is one of the biggest game-developing countries in Europe (Neogames.fi, 2018) and desire to keep this status is strong. This can only be achieved by having successful games exported from Finland, also in addition to have educated and talented people to make them. To keep these people in their work force, companies need to pay attention to their engagement. This research was conducted for the purpose of finding elements which enforce engagement in the game industry and offer insight on the subject for industry professionals.

At the time of writing this report, there is a lack of academic research of the topic in Finnish context. Finnish game companies are relatively young and due to the rapidly changing nature of game industry they are in constant search for good management practices. Employees and their engagement therefore become item of interest in companies that aim to compete in a field that is highly competitive. Which is why this research assumed to aim to search for and provide with themes that have been experienced to work. Author aims to gather, recognize and introduce variables and themes that the professionals in the game industry have found important and have seen as elements in engaging employees. In this thesis, three companies operating in the Finnish game industry were chosen for participation and their representatives were interviewed relating to the subject of employee engagement. All participants are, at the time of reporting, in management positions and have been working in the industry for number of years.

Using earlier research, topical articles and literature the phenomenon of employee engagement is elaborated with the aim of proving new insights and knowledge for Finnish game companies. The goal is to identify the characteristics and factors impacting the employee engagement in Finnish game companies. This qualitative approach to the topic will provide insight to well researched topic in under-researched field.

When framework for this research was constructed and the structure was defined, two research questions were formed which will be answered in latter part of the thesis:

1. What actions/measures are taken to increase employee engagement?
2. Where companies have succeeded or failed in terms of employee engagement?

These questions are used as guidance to navigate research into desired path and theoretical framework as well as gathered primary data aim to provide answers. In addition, research aims to provide new information and knowledge about the field of games in terms of employee engagement. These findings could provide assistance and insight for future studies.

2 Theoretical framework

Human resources management is defined as strategic and coherent approach to managing company's employees, who are responsible on contributing as a mass to organization success in reaching their goals (Armstrong, 2006, 3). While HRM includes, but is not limited to, everything from recruitment, training, resourcing, reward management and employee relations (Armstrong, 2006, 4), this thesis covers the matter of employee engagement. For purposes of the size of this research, the study objective was narrowed the study objective to concern only employee engagement as it is the central point as the subject. This was done to reach necessary proportion of this thesis.

2.1 Dimensions of employee engagement

Initially employee engagement was thought of as something that reflected on only to the individual and their personal tie to their employing company, (Kumar&Pansari, 2015). Views on old perceptions of employee engagement were changed when William A. Kahn in 1990 published his research about the topic. He stated that the previous thought of employee engagement to only be how people thought about their work, should instead be how people feel (Kahn, 1990). He argued that for an employee to be engaged to their work and employer, they should feel meaningfulness in their work, psychological safety as well as availability. Kahn stressed that relationships in the workplace are highly important, as when colleagues are not just workers, but people, they start to make choices about brining themselves fully to the work (Kahn, 1990).

Employee engagement as a matter has been defined multiple times and ways through the years the subject has been under research. Commonly it is often mistaken for just satisfaction and happiness that employee feels towards their work (Aon Hewitt, 2017). Employee engagement has multiple dimensions that include employee satisfaction, identification, commitment, loyalty and performance (Kumar&Pansari, 2015), when these dimensions are met and being realized, it is highly

possible that employee is engaged. They also have positive reflections to the company, since for example loyal employee is more likely to have positive attitude towards the company and this causes ripple-effect to their work by employee going extra mile and finally to for example customer in service industry (Kumar&Pansari, 2015). Engagement of the employee therefore has direct link to effectiveness of what the company is trying to achieve. Employee does not have to be engaged in every dimension in order to be engaged. They can be emotionally engaged to their co-workers and/or be very aware of their role and status in their work environment, making them cognitively engaged. The more engaged in multiple dimensions employee is, however, influences positively on their overall engagement (Luthans&Peterson, 2002).

When employee engagement and its dimensions are discussed, attitude, behavior and outcomes are strongly tied to it (MacLeod&Clarke, 2009). Employees that feel pride (attitude) towards their workplace are more likely to advocate their company to clients, put extra effort in their work (behavior) and cause less accidents as well as cause less conflicts and encourage innovation (MacLeod&Clarke, 2009). Engagement is not born just from the employee – companies must work to engage their employees which then gives the employee choice of the level they are willing to give. Each strengthens the other (MacLeod&Clarke, 2009).

2.2 Employee engagement and company performance

Engaged employees are important to any business, industry and operator. The percentage of those engaged workers in companies however is in the minority. In USA only 29% of the workers are actively engaged in their work (Sejits&Crim, 2006).

These employees work with enthusiasm and feel connected to their employer and the company they work for. Most of the work force, 54%, in companies are not engaged to their work. This is the share that are executing their tasks but do not put in extra effort, so they are only doing the minimum. Term “sleepwalking” can be used as a description of this level of disengagement as these individuals seem to passively perform in their work. Last share of 17% are those who are actively disengaged and spend work hours to complain about their situation and undermine what their active

colleagues are doing (Sejts&Crim, 2006). Employee that is not engaged is not as effective in their work as their engaged counter parts are and they also drain resources. Non-engaged or actively disengaged employees cost the U.S. \$450-\$550 billion dollars every year and is part of the reason for slowing down economic growth (Sorenson&Garman, 2013). When this is put into Finland's perspective, it means the cost of EUR 6-8 billion in a year (LMI.fi, 2018).

There are also generational differences in the current workforce. Baby boomers, born between 1940's and 1960's, are retiring and Millennials, born between 1980's and 1990's are entering further to the workforce. Baby boomers identify optimism, willingness for long work hours and organizational memory to be their strengths (Gilbert, 2011). This generation group up with large companies with strong hierarchy structure instead of flat management structure and team-based assignments (Gilbert, 2011). Millennials differ from their predecessors in this regard. Millennials are well-educated, familiar with technology from a young age and are more likely to be willing to work in teams and seek challenges. However, millennials hold work-life balance in high regard (Gilbert, 2011) and these differences influence employee engagement between generations. What is different is the social mindset which influences millennials. They hold feedback for their work as a key factor and especially getting that feedback instantly instead of semi-annual reviews (Gilbert, 2011).

Employers should invest into making more engaged employees. Developing skills of their employees for example, companies can not only make their employees more valuable to themselves, but this also acts as a stimulus for the employee to stay (Woodruffe, 2006). Although this is also risky for the companies since these trained employees might leave and take their knowhow with them, it is better to do so, since companies that do not develop their staff cause them to have little motivation to stay (Woodruffe, 2006). Companies who offer training and possible advancement opportunities in their structure, have more engaged employees because staff feels obligated to perform well and they are given right tools and skills for that purpose (Kumar&Pansari, 2015).

Since salary cannot be the only motivator for the employee to stay, companies must take actions and provide their employees with what satisfies their cravings when it comes to work. Independence to work freely promotes trust in the employees' skills,

fair treatment from for example managers reduces recruitment costs as people do not resign as much, commitment from employer to their goals inspires and feeds trust towards the company in employees. It is also stated that employees value support given to them from companies (Woodruffe, 2006). As mentioned before, company actions have effect on whether they enforce or deteriorate engagement of their employees. One way to dilute engagement is not acknowledging the impact employees work effort has on the company performance or strategy (Forbes.com, 2018). Lack of recognition from the board, management or peers has a negative effect on engagement but this could be as easily mended as with a system to nominate workers on their good performance, according to Forbes.com.

According to a study in 2018 conducted by Aon, 2018 saw an all-time high in employee engagement, driven largely from Asian markets. Highly engaged employee share enjoyed growth from 24% to 27% which meant that larger number of the workforce was ready to commit themselves more to the work (Aon, 2018). When compared to previous year, dimensions of employee engagement which had the most influence remained the same: Rewards & recognition, Senior leadership, career & development and finally Employee value proposition and enabling infrastructure (Aon, 2018). What came as a surprise this year, was the importance of “the future.” This meant that employees required more exposure to senior leadership and strategy (Aon, 2018). Study revealed that economies in China and India continued their growth in 2016-2017 and engagement levels in these countries were increased by +2 points each in the year of 2018. When compared to global measure, Europe scored lowest of the regions but in handful of countries improvement could be detected (Aon, 2018). Four of the top rising countries, France, The Netherlands, Austria and Sweden all are located in Europe and in 2018 all of them enjoyed engagement level growth. These improvements may be influenced partly by the economic recovery of multiple previously struggling markets. (Aon, 2018).

It is clear that employee engagement is something that is recognized in the field of human resources management to be important subject of research and beneficial for companies to acknowledge. Globally employee engagement has seen an increase and generation gaps influence engagement strategies so companies must modify

them in order to accommodate new workforce and engage them as much as possible. Not only does engagement level of the employee have direct impact to their work performance and how they approach their duties, it also reflects back to the company they work for as possible business success.

2.3 Finnish corporate culture

Finnish people are characterized commonly as honest, reliable and modest (BusinessCulture.org) and this is reflected in their business world. According to Keith Warburton on WorldBusinessCulture.com, it is beneficial for business seekers to have some understanding of the country in order to gain appreciation from Finns, since they are interested in people who are interested in Finland. Finns are circumspect and quiet which leads to their expectations that contribution to business conversations are done only with something of importance (WorldBusinessCulture.com).

In October 2017 Duunitori.fi, the biggest job recruitment and search platform in Finnish web servers (Duunitori.fi) executed research on job applicants which was answered by 1130 people on their job searching site. Agenda of this survey research was to gather information about habits of job applicants as well as elements affecting job search. Employee engagement came up as one of the aspects in survey answers. According to the survey, employees in Finland value interesting job tasks, good supervisors and enjoyable work environment. The job description rises as one of the key reasons why they want to be engaged to a certain company as that was one of the most emphasized answers given in the survey (Duunitori.fi, 2017). Job description is very important reason to gravitate towards new work places, says 67% of the respondents. Importance of money is not nearly as important to the Finnish workforce, when it comes to changing companies or workplace, as only 29% thinks of it as most important reason (Duunitori.fi, 2017). However, salary can be important reason for commitment to the current employer, says 98% of responders, but only 38% holds it as very important. The majority of responders, 65%, think the content of the work to be important reason for staying in their current company. Nature of management is also brought up in the survey. Bad management and poor work atmosphere are mentioned as key factors when it comes to changing jobs, says 97% of the re-

sponders (Duunitori.fi, 2017). Finnish workforce appreciates good working environment as it was brought up as the most important factor for engagement (Duunitori.fi, 2017).

2.4 Development of Finnish game industry

Video games were introduced to the major public in 1972 as Atari's *Pong* was released to the arcades and later on home consoles due to its popularity. Atari 2600 was one of the earliest game consoles sold for home use and in 1978 *Space Invaders* was launched in arcades which added to the U.S arcade cabinets with 60 000 units (Forbes.com). These arcade games, now considered as grandfathers of modern video games, attracted children to game establishments and hooked them sometimes for a whole day (DailyInfographic.com).

Over the years, video gaming increased in popularity and in 1980 the seed for Finnish game industry was planted (Neogames, 2016, 7). Exited hobbyists made a firm base for the industry to slowly grow when quickly advancing technology provided even more and variations of games and different platforms. Over the years, Finnish gaming scene experienced ups-and-downs with the hype of emphasis on mobile games due to success of Nokia and the fall of it (Neogames, 2016, 11). Due to this, Finnish game industry has a strong author and focus on mobile games which is still present today (Neogames, 2016, 11). In early 2010's this was shown exceptionally as *Angry Birds* which was launched in 2009 began a global phenomenon and the boom of game start-up companies in Finland reached its height with 55 new studios being formed on the year of 2012 (Neogames, 2016, 12). 200 studios were formed during years of 2011-2015 (Neogames, 2016, 12) and in 2017 there were 260 game developing companies operating in Finland (Neogames.fi). 2010's also saw a rise in international investments as the success of Finnish games attracted attention globally. Mobile games were seen as good investment as smartphones were gaining popularity (The Guardian, 2012) and F2P (free-to-play) games were becoming popular (Neogames, 2016, 13). *Angry Birds* was the first Finnish game to make a break to the Asian markets. Supercell and Chinese Tencent as a combination became a strong influencer in both Western and Asian markets, due to growing Asian interest towards Finnish game industry (Neogames, 2016, 14-15).

It seems that growth has slowed down in the industry, studios have not been established at the same rate as in hype years and part of the slowing down was the intense competition in the field, since companies struggled to find knowledgeable employees (Neogames, 2016, 17). Despite this, Finnish game industry has been performing well. Business turnover in 2016 was EUR 2,5 billion and while 2017 did not reach same numbers, it was the same as in 2015, EUR 2,36 billion (Neogames.fi). Finland as a game developer country is one of the three biggest in Europe (Neogames.fi, 2018) and has shown strong ability in marketing their products. Because Finland itself as a market ground is relatively small, 95% of the products are exported and this has influenced marketing strategies, especially for the bigger companies. Supercell has advertised during the Super Bowl (Yle.fi, 2017). In addition, Supercell and Rovio have successfully taken on licensing their known brands and expanded revenue sources in this way (Yle.fi, 2017).

The stagnation of the industry growth in the country is partly caused by the lack of skilled workers, problem which is shared by rest of software business (Tekniikkatalous.fi, 2017). Even with workers coming from abroad, the immigration and work permit process is too slow to be able to fix this issue fast. Finnish game industry is now subsiding to moderate growth and getting steady after the hyper growth years and sudden boom of expansion of the industry in Finland (Tekniikkatalous.fi, 2017).

2.5 Company introductions

Unicorn Pirates Studio is a young start-up game company with their headquarters in Helsinki, Finland and was founded in 2018 (Asiakastieto.fi). According to their information, games are currently being developed at the time of conducting this research. Company is mainly female run (Unicorn Pirates Studio LinkedIn, 2019) and they employ around 20 people at the start of 2019. Interview was scheduled to be held via Skype and was conducted in English.

Rovio Entertainment, known commonly as simply **Rovio**, was founded in 2003 and is one of the biggest game companies in Finland both in employed people which in 2017 was 391 and in revenue which was EUR 71.8 million (Rovio Entertainment, 2018). Rovio is best known for creating their global brand *Angry Birds*, which started

as a mobile game for smartphones and gained popularity resulting in expanding to additional games, animated series, *The Angry Birds Movie* and various other products (Rovio Annual Report 2017, 2018). Interview with Rovio was scheduled to be held in their headquarters in Espoo, Finland and was conducted face-to-face in Finnish because language was shared by both interviewee and interviewer which would allow for more precise answers in comfortable language.

Nitro Games was established in Kotka, Finland in 2007 (Asiakastieto.fi) and employs 51 people (Nitro Games End of year report, 2019). In 2018 their revenue was EUR 2 204 249,35 (Nitro Games End of year report, 2019) and they also state in their most recent end of year report that they operate globally both as an operator and game developer. Nitro Games has over the years released 10 games, most recent and most known are their *Heroes of Warland* (2018) for mobile platforms and *Medals of War* (2017) (Nitrogames.com). In 2017 Nitro Games entered the stock market by registering in First North Stockholm market (Nitrogames.com). Interview with Nitro Games HR manager was conducted via Skype in Finnish.

3 Research methodology

At the start of this research, *Business research methods* by Bryman and Bell (2015) was utilized in order to find correct approach for this study. Qualitative research method was chosen because of the humane-nature of the subject. Interview was chosen as the data gathering method not only because it is “probably the most widely employed method in qualitative research” (Bryman&Bell, 2015, 479) but also because interview seemed the most logical way to explore this subject. This way, depending on the structure of the interview, participants could provide data with their answers directly to the researcher, who would also conduct the interview.

As qualitative approach to the on-coming research is to ask descriptive questions and think about the problem or subject in particular ways (Hesse-Biber&Leavy, 2011, 3), questions tend to start with for example *how*, *why* or *what*. These words lead to questions that are not closed ended and force the responder to be more descriptive with their answers. According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy, qualitative researchers are after meaning (Hesse-Biber&Leavy. 2011, 4). A semi-structured interview style was

chosen as the approach by the author demanded it. Qualitative interview where interviews were actually encouraged to ramble on, would give insight of the subject for the research in a way that closed ended questions could not provide (Bryman&Bell, 2015, 480). Before researcher could move on to forming interview questions, research questions would have to be formed in order to have the core for this research. Interview questions would then try and get answers to those core questions, which were

1. What actions/measures are taken to increase employee engagement?
2. Where companies have succeeded or failed in terms of employee engagement?

After this, author proceeded to list down interview questions fairly spontaneously. This allowed questions to flow in their own pace and absence of filtering allowed the researcher to write questions that would lead to one another. After this stage, researcher filtered the questions according to their usability for the research. Among the list of questions, three were chosen to act as an interview guide (Bryman&Bell, 2015, 481) where interviewees would have freedom to answer as broadly as they could. These were the questions that were sent beforehand for the participants, so they could prepare for the interview.

To meet the qualitative interview standards, remaining questions by the researcher were listed down under the three main questions, to act as a guide for the interviewer (Bryman&Bell, 2015, 481) for picking up on things that interviewees would answer. This way, deeper understanding on interviewee statements could be made and possibly move interview to the correct track if necessary. Questions were written in both Finnish and English, since both languages were used in the interviews, according to possible shared native language or what was most conveniently shared by both interviewer and interviewee. Emphasis on the interview process was flexibility (Bryman&Bell, 2015, 481) and to promote what the interviewee views as important. Still, it was important to remember that while interviewees were to be human resources managers or other persons of responsibility in the company, interviewer has to establish an atmosphere where participants would feel safe and free to talk about the interview topic (Kvale, 1996, 125).

Qualitative research purposes can be sectioned into three different kinds: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory (Hesse-Biber&Leavy, 2011, 10-11) and from these, author examined which would serve best for this specific research. In the end, not one was specifically chosen as the subject could strongly be related to each one. However, exploratory purpose had a big influence since it investigates a field that is under-researched currently and with primary data would serve as help for future studies (Hesse-Biber&Leavy, 2011, 10).

3.1 Data collection

Data collection for the research was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Like mentioned before, semi-structured interview was chosen to be used as collection method for primary data. Additional support for the research was searched from articles, journals, reports, books and other publications that could be used in assistance in analysis and findings. As research on directly about this subject has not been made, assistance from these publications were used as a briefing tool and finding supporting elements to be used in this thesis.

Since previous Finnish academic studies about employee engagement in game industry could not be found, secondary data could not be retrieved from publications directly researching the subject. Therefore, publications researching and addressing themes, elements and other similar characteristics of the subject were accessed. These included studies on employee engagement itself, Finnish game industry and effects of employee engagement to companies. These publications and their findings could be used as a comparison tool for the primary data and their analysis. The research has exploratory purpose for this reason as mentioned before.

Before interviews were conducted, researcher focused on gathering necessary theoretical framework from beforementioned sources. Articles and journal publications were, at this point, in main focus since they could be easily accessed from online on the internet. Online search tools were used in order to find necessary documents and researcher focused on finding as new publications as possible. This would ensure that information would be as current to the topic as possible. Older researches were

used as well, but for example, annual reports and other data concerning participant company's economic and business data, were to be as current as possible. Business data was to be gathered and examined by the researcher for them to have understanding and knowledge on the participant companies.

3.2 Interviews

As mentioned before, interview method was chosen as the way to collect primary data. Advantage of face-to-face interview is its human approach. It would be much easier to catch social cues, changes in voice or posture when facing the interviewee (Opdenakker, 2006). This was offered as a primary alternative to participants in case schedules could be matched. While face-to-face interview has many benefits, it would not be detrimental for the research, if other means had to be utilized. In modern world, where communication is made easier with phones, computers and email, these are becoming more common mediums in interviewing. Advantages in email or Skype interviews is that the effort in scheduling is decreased, since interviewee and the interviewer do not have to find common space (Lo Iacono et al. 2016, 7). This also eliminates the need to travel, since research participants in this case are located across the country. With this, time and technology become key factors. With Skype as a possibility, it allowed more freedom for the interviewees to schedule the interview according to their schedules. Only one interview (with Rovio) could be scheduled as face-to-face interview, since both researcher and the interviewee could agree on a date that fit their schedules.

In order to find participating companies for this research, social media was heavily used as a searchtool. Considering that research field in question is game industry, it was safe to assume that they have social media presense and employees using social media like Facebook. This site was searched and two big game industry groups were found where game company employees gather to share articles and discuss industry developments, Play Finland and IGDA Finland. This was deemed as the best platform to cast a net among the industry professionals, as contact with other platform admins could not be made. Announcements of this thesis research were posted on

both group walls on Facebook describing the agenda of this thesis, schedule, confidentiality and research method, so word would spread and interested parties could contact the researcher either directly via the posting Facebook profile or via the provided email address. In addition general announcements of the thesis project were sent as emails to individual companies in Finnish game industry to explain the research and to attract them for participation. This was done to widen the coverage in searching, since groups on Facebook cannot be trusted to reach every company in Finland, especially since Play Finland and IGDA Finland are not hosted by individual game companies.

Contacts were made with three companies by using fore mentioned methods and interviews with all of them were scheduled. Interviewees were representatives from the companies, including personnel from human resources management and other management positions. As many Finnish game companies tend to be rather small in staff size, not all companies have appointed HR managers in their company. It was therefore important that author had access to right personnel in the interviewed company. These representatives were all, during the time of this research, in positions where they managed human resources matters and were all aware of the status of staff influence in the firm. All participants have been working in the game industry for at least two years and have been part of the industry's lifecycle in various ways.

Questions were sent beforehand after interview date was set, so participants could think about their answers and feelings about the questions preceding the interview itself. Both Skype and face-to-face interviews were conducted according to scheduling possibilities and what was most comfortable for both parties. All interviews were audio recorded with interviewee consent and transcribed by the interviewer afterwards to be used in the findings and analysis sections for this research. Transcriptions of these interviews were translated from Finnish to English in two cases in order for them to be correctly analysed and used for this English written research. Translation was done by the researcher in order to prevent computer based errors and to connect correct sentences and words if similarities were shared in answers. Comparisons between the transcripts were made to find

similarities and ultimately gain findings which will be discussed in an upcoming section.

Benefits and harms of providing interviewees with questions before can be debated but the pros were deemed as helpful for this research. Advantages of sending interview questions beforehand include decreasing of anxiety of the participants, they have time to ponder on each question and decide whether they have anything to say about them and prepare much more inclusive and well-rounded answers (ResearchSalad.com, 2011). Remaining support questions were asked according to the flow of each individual interview and following what matters were brought up and discussed. Interviewees had the freedom to answer openly and ramble on as they wished, this was encouraged by the set questions and semi-structured style chosen for purposed of this thesis.

In order to keep the participating company identities secret when findings were discussed to protect their confidentiality, list of their names were inserted into online randomizer, which sorted them to an arbitrary order. After this code names "Company/Interviewee A, B and C" were assigned to each one according to the order randomizer produced, which will be used when addressing the companies in research findings section of this report.

3.3 Analysis

At the start of the analysis process, content analysis method was chosen as the appropriate approach because it is the most commonly used method for qualitative data analysis (Elo et al., 2014) and suited for this researches' purposes. In qualitative research content analysis can be both inductive and deductive (Elo et al., 2014) and in this case inductive approach was more in the study's nature as research was started from a research question which lead to observation, onward to data and finally qualitative findings (Miessler, 2018). In the analysis of the transcripts, author made observations from them, formed common patterns and was able to from a conclusion this way. As game industry and employee engagement in the field has not seemingly been academically researched in Finland, inductive analysis method was suitable because using this author studied documents, recording and publications in

order to recognize common elements (Chron.com). Through this author was able to use inductive reasoning in analysis and findings were driven from the raw data (Chron.com) which was gathered from comparing interview transcripts.

According to the nature of qualitative research, author both analyzes the data and interprets it as the process advances (Hesse-Biber&Leavy, 2011, 301). This process invited author to be open to their findings and visit them multiple times in order to gain complete results from the analysis (Hesse-Biber&Leavy, 2011, 301). In the core of this analysis stage were obviously the conducted interviews which were primary source for usable data. Transcriptions were made from the interviews in simple manner, since the need for example, audio cues and tones weren't necessary in this thesis scale. Instead, audio recordings were logged as close to word to word as possible. This was chosen in order to get every detail from the interviews in writing, so important details could be preserved for further examination. This method also made it possible for the author to continuously and actively listen to the material and already start the analysis stage, although only roughly. According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy, transcription of the research data allows researcher to interact with their data and engages them in "deep listening, analysis and interpretation" (2011, 304). As it was, researcher had to actively focus on listening to the audio recording and possibly re-wind multiple times in order to catch the correctly used word. This ensured that author processed the information actively and ensured its relevancy as well as accuracy.

After this, author read through the transcriptions one by one and made notes. It was important to focus on what, if any, themes were mentioned again and again, what they were and gathered notes. These were certainly important for the interviewee to mention time and time again, so notes were made of them in order to remember them later. In addition, it was important to focus on description of the data in use. Hesse-Biber and Leavy at this point emphasis on the thinking process that happens in researchers mind at this stage and writing down memos about what ideas come up while reading through the transcriptions (2011, 305). These memos aided the author to find similarities in interviewee answers as well as served as reminders of certain thought that might be forgotten otherwise.

Summaries of all three conducted interviews were written down on a same document using interview questions as guide lines. As there were three main questions that were asked and answered by all participants, it was logical to start summarizing those answers in order first. Summaries of the answers were written so they would include important matters mentioned by interviewees and exclude any filler words such as “um” and “hmm”, so text was in a form that was easier to read and analyze. When it came to the support questions that the author had constructed for guidance, not all of them were used in every interview. This was due to the nature of the interview structure which had been constructed to encourage rambling, which in turn could lead interviews in multiple different directions. Therefore, not every theme was brought up in interviews but since emphasis in semi-structured interview is in the (in this researches case) three big questions, it is natural.

Notes were made on each frequently mentioned words or themes that interviews brought to attention. At first the author underlined and bolded these similar mentions and gathered them on same document for further inspection. These reminiscent themes served as important elements in analysis. At first not a particular theme or word was used, instead it was searched whether any would rise from the transcripts. Interviewees had a lot to say about the subject, so it was important to recognize those elements that were brought up the most in order to identify most important issues. Slowly themes were morphing and could be used in analyzing of the transcripts further.

Although not every smaller question was asked directly from the interviewees, most of the time those themes were brought up in the answers given when addressing main questions. Few times participant would get side tracked, which in turn would answer a question researcher had kept in mind in case interviewee would not go there, but they did on their own accord. There were also moments where interviewee would get side tracked enough to tell a story or an example on a situation regarding the interview topic, which proved that the interview questions functioned as they were designed to.

Summaries were ultimately made to be used as a tool by the author. By having all summaries on one document, it was easier to read through the summaries, analyze and find similarities as well as possible discrepancies when all the data to be used

were on one piece of document. This allowed the data to be handled more conveniently and results could be drawn from them. Findings are introduced in the next section of this thesis but for them to be correctly introduced analysis was done in order to find possible patterns and find appropriate way of presenting them.

In last stages of analyzing, results were compared to Kvale (1996) checklist in order to see whether the research had generated valid and sufficient results. Three-part model that Hesse-Biber and Leavy introduce is derived from Kvale and includes validity of craftsmanship, communicative elements and pragmatic validity. What stood up were the questions of “what are some major themes in the gathered data”, and whether the data is internally consistent. When transcriptions were consulted, many similar themes and agreements were distinct. Interviewees brought up themes consistent with the research questions and each had thoughts alike. They were also consistent with each other without having provided with answers by other participants, which proved that structured questions were enough to gain desired knowledge. This proved that the methods were suited for this research and concluded to a valid report and reporting phase of the thesis could be therefore started.

Participating companies were disguised at this point behind their assigned code names “Company/Interviewee A, B and C” and will from this point on only be address by them.

4 Research findings

4.1 Perceptions and descriptions of an engaged employee

At the beginning of the interview question formulation, it became clear that the starting point would be in the definition of engaged employee from participant company angle. This drew a picture of what each company thought of the core subject that this research is aiming to accomplish. It would also reveal possible differences in views towards the subject and therefore could be acknowledged in further parts of the interview and analysis process.

All participants agreed that engaged employee is someone who has trust on their company's values and goals. By Company C it was also thought that as staff in the industry consists of younger people in big portion, visibility in employee's personal social media profiles is a sign of engagement. This was referred to as willingness to only state and promote their workplace in social media if they were engaged to that company. All interviewees also stated that taking initiative in their own work, such as executing responsibilities according to a schedule, taking responsibility in their work and pursuing to improve themselves in their abilities and skills in the work field, are seen as signs of engagement. Company A representative stated that they support staff education and are vocal in informing employees of this possibility but the initiative for more training must come from the employee themselves. Company C also brought up that it is seen as engagement if a certain type of project has been green lit and the employee takes the necessary steps to better themselves to be able to perform at the expected level. The fact that employees are willing to make this effort is seen as a sign of engagement.

Game industry in Finland has seen some big waves of change over last few years and this has had an effect on employment in the industry. All companies agree that this reflects on employee engagement as willingness to view change as a possible good, maybe preferably even as a challenge, instead of immediate negative. A person that has stayed even after difficult times or multiple hurdles, is viewed as engaged to the company. All companies state that in their opinion employee engagement is best reflected in employee's actions. If they are engaged that reflects to their performance and work ethic. Company C representative also pondered that game industry at this moment is so highly competitive in some job descriptions that those employees can almost choose their workplace if they are skilled and experienced enough in their field. In C's opinion "employees in game industry tend to be more engaged to a certain project instead of a company", a statement which has to be taken into account when discussing how companies manage to keep employees around and engaged. While this kind of culture of moving around is brought up Companies B and C both stated that employees can and will become engaged to their work environment and colleagues. Company B stated that they are a tight community which has in turn increased engagement and in Company C good work environment and ties between

employees are held as important. In all company's interviews it sounds apparent that people in game industry hold work environment, game product and their fellow workers as important. Where they feel most comfortable, becomes clear in each interview, employee's engagement seems to hold longer.

When asked if companies were conducting surveys or had any way of tracking employee engagement two companies expressed to conduct smaller surveys and one does not conduct any kind of survey. Company C said they hold regular development discussions and Company B, while does not conduct any structured discussions, views talking with employees about their work and feelings still as high priority. If confidential discussions need to be held, they are possible if employees need them. Both companies A and C hold regular surveys, one every week and other every financial quarter. Employee's views of the future (5-year-plan), enthusiasm towards work, willingness to work in said company and views on work performance are all covered in employee survey conducted by Company A and similar themes are also covered in Company C's surveys as well as held performance appraisals with employees. This is also a way for the employees share their views on where they think the company is heading and whether undergoing projects are future successes.

4.2 Manifestation of employee engagement

When asked how employee engagement is visible in the company's daily life, all companies brought up the clear initiative that employees take. Company B representative stated that most evident exhibit of employees engagement comes from their actions; the passion that employee feels for their field of work is shown clearly but interviewee B also emphasized that while passion and lighthearted attitude towards work can be positives work must always be treated as such, not as a hobby. Company C echoed their earlier statement about the ease of leaving and changing companies as decision to stay from these individuals is in itself evidence of engagement to the company. Company C also brought up the changing work culture between generations. While past generations had the tendency to favor staying in one company from young age to retirement, it does not seem to be the norm in modern time. Modern generations seem to favor working in a company where they enjoy their jobs, this is huge motivation for engaging to one company at a time. When there becomes offers

to experience, gain new skills and interests, this generation will move on in order to continue with their work to new companies. Interviewee C said that it is easier and more encouraged nowadays to hop from company to company or even between industries. This is evident in the game industry in their opinion.

Companies A and C brought up that employee engagement and the lack of it manifests in times of trouble. When the “company tree” is shaken, those who might have already been distancing themselves in terms of work from their company might take these hard times as an escape route and find a new work placement. This is not entirely seen as an ultimate negative to the company, since the willingness to stay and take on challenges change brings, is more evident in staying employees. Company A told in the interview that their company offers advancing opportunities for certain job assignments. This possibility is seen as an important way from the employer to offer growing paths for their employees, therefore if they feel stuck or unable to grow in their current position, moving to different unit is possible. This growing path has been described as one important reason for employee engagement in their company as it reduces the feeling of need to leave in order to pursue something new.

Interviewees were asked how they think companies could affect employee engagement and what they could do to produce more committed staff. Companies B and C mentioned the importance that work place, environment and culture have on an employee. Company B representative stated that absence of micromanaging in their company has proven as important plus in eyes of employees and the staff has voiced this clearly. Interviewee B acknowledged that for some companies, employees and business structures such managing might be essential, but it is not the case with them. Employees have verbalized how this in their view is a proof of trust to them and their abilities from the management and that they are competent in making decisions as well as perform well.

What becomes apparent in all interviews, company and management treatment towards staff is a major element in engagement. When trust has been established between the company and an employee, engagement can be formed. Engagement does not however only manifest in positive manner, according to Company A. While engagement is shown clearly as enthusiastic attitude towards work and assignments,

it can also be shown as some way of resistance. Interviewee A pondered that sometimes when employees are in fact so passionate and devoted to their craft as well as to the company, they might show negative thoughts for example in times of great change precisely because they feel such intense passion towards their work. Management methods are also brought by Company B and how they view employee treatment has a crucial effect on engagement levels. Trust between employer and employee is important and employees should be able to know what values does the company promote, and are they in fact pursuing to uphold them. Employees need to feel that not only are they trusted, but they are viewed as important resource for the company and company goals. If management does not view staff as an important part of the organization, engagement will not follow. Interviewee B shared an example of this:

I was feeling very miserable in my work and went to the HR. I talked to one of the managers and told them how I wanted to feel like I wasn't easily replaceable. The manager said to me immediately: "But you are, you are very easily replaceable."

I never forgot that, because I got very angry. I looked at them and said:

"I know, but I want to feel like I'm not." -Interviewee B

This exchange used as an example shows that attitude from management and even the corporation as a whole has an effect on employees. Once again how the employee feels towards their employer plays a major part when engagement is formed or dissolved. If employee does not feel appreciated by their employer, why would any human want their success, asks Company B. They also stated that after fore quoted encounter with this HR manager, their level of engagement disappeared and motivation towards work became near zero. It was mused at this point that business should want to make their staff crave for the business's success, and therefore companies should focus on having engaged staff since it has a link to economic performance.

Moving ahead with the interview, question of money was brought up by both companies B and C. Especially company B emphasized on the view that in game industry, money should not be a motivation for any employee to engage themselves into a specific company. Interviewee B viewed that "money itself is not a goal, money is a

means to a goal.” Money in the industry seems not to be a main motivation for employment according to what all interviewees have said about the subject. Company C stated that if employee or huddle of employees suddenly ask for a raise, when their duties and job descriptions have not changed, might be a tell of decreasing level of engagement. Company C acknowledged that sufficient and competitive pay for work is important but this kind of sudden insistent for a raise is a sign for changed mind-set. When employee does this they most of the time feel that their work is not appreciated and they are doing meaningless work for insufficient pay which again comes from dissolving engagement, according to Interviewee C. Lack of investment was brought up when discussing start-ups in the game industry and how this can be manifestation of engagement: even when economic status of a starting company is rough and people choose to stay, they are heavily engaged. Company B called out common goals and values to be the main engaging elements in such situations. Supporting and good work culture is something that Company C said to be attractive qualities in a company over money. They said that while competitive pay is a good hook and raising wages might prolong engagement, it is short-lived and in few months the employee asking for the raise will be back in the starting point because money was never the core issue. Because one of the industry characteristics seems to be migrating in some levels pay is not a way to compete with other game companies, although it is still important element. Company C emphasized again the importance of work culture, people and the flexible work environment above all when discussing terms of engaging employees. Of course, not always is the employee able to stay in a company even if they are engaged to it. Company C brought up that it is understandable that employees have different situations in their lives that might force them to make career choices that move them away from their company because it is best for them individually. It is present mainly when economic status of the company might be unstable or they are experiencing co-operation negotiations, which will naturally induce uncertainty to the work force. In these situations, it is necessary for employees with for example families and other life circumstances to seek other employment if changes in their current company would damage their life and/or quality of it. In such cases engagement is not their priority.

4.3 Key factors in game industry in terms of employee engagement

Last segment of the interview focused on what themes or concrete elements participants viewed to be key factors in engaging employees. What had become apparent during the interviews how highly work environment and all in all company values and goals were held. Companies B and C agreed that being open with goals the company wants to pursue they are messaging openness to their employees and upholding presented values also increases engagement. When values of company and employee meet it is easier for the employee to form engagement and believe in its mission to achieve set goals. Company C added to the list the faith in products company is producing. If the company is manufacturing products that make employees excited and enthusiastic about their work, it upholds engagement in employees when they can work with products which they believe in. Game industry is still fairly young in Finland and is still settling down because during industry's young history it has experienced both great successes and stagnation. While education in game development and its availability is being improved in Finland currently, it is still on immature stage. Competition for skilled workers in the field is ongoing and companies must be able to meet standards of this.

Key factor that Company A has in their firm is the presence of HR in corporate ladder. Their structure has been made so that human resources have strong presence in corporate lead and therefore HR matters are brought closely to attention when discussing company agenda. What all participant companies share was their views on transparency. It was held important that employees were being open with about company directions and goals they would be aiming towards in the future. This was seen as being motivational for the employee as this way they would have clear understanding of the link their concrete work would have on the company strategy. This sort of tangible evidence of significance establishes engagement. Transparency also increases trust between employer and employee as latter would not feel led in darkness.

Sharing of knowledge and skills became a topic of discussion as well. Company A told that their employees have opportunity to once a week share their work to their colleagues. Doing this gives an opening for everyone in the company to see for themselves what everyone is working on. Sharing current projects gives an opportunity to

criticism and therefore learning and growth but also if ever employees feel they have a problem with certain issue, these presentations could provide them with an idea on who might have the skills and knowledge to seek advice from.

There were various elements that seemed to be especially relevant in game industry. Company A stated that not just in game industry but in all young fields, the importance of transparency seems to be very visible. The fact that employees have a clear vision on how they are being managed and led is a factor that in their view is relevant in young fields employing younger people when compared to more conservative industries. They also bring up the culture of learning and teaching by colleagues as becoming more normal when compared to traditional work culture. Companies B and C both agreed that since game industry is very creative and fun industry, it attracts certain type of people. In company B in particular, they mentioned that everyone in their company is a “some level of a geek” which is why many of them, but not everyone in game industry in general, have migrated towards the field in the first place. Because the field is so competitive, it might be hard for young starting professional to penetrate the competition wall. Especially artists were mentioned to have this sort of hurdle ahead of them since so many are seeking employment in the industry.

Passion for games was mentioned as one key element that is differentiates game industry from many others. Companies B and C especially both stated that in their experience employees that come to the industry have been passionate about games and gaming, many from young age, and are engaged to the products they want to make. Since education for the field is still under improvement, the skills are usually learned on the job which makes initial access to the industry difficult. But when individual has learned certain amount of skills and knowledge, gained experience in various techniques and games, it is like real estate business according to Company C. Just like buying a house can be buyers-market so becomes game industry for the more skilled since they then gain advantage on the job market. This was seen as something unique for the game industry where employee seeking of work placement has the advantage to state demands for the potential employer in some degree. Since engagement in game industry focuses on the product in the making companies are

therefore forced to focus on their products even firmer since they have such direct link to their employee's level of devotion.

Flexibility in work methods and freedom in them was brought up by both companies A and C. They said that game industry performs well when it comes to giving room for employees to explore their creativity and to choose work methods that increase their individual productivity. For example, many have the option to work remotely from home if necessary and they have the opportunity to gain requested tools and technology from the company in order to work more efficiently and produce better results. Company B also echoed that in this industry stifling creativity would be damaging for the company considering that producing games requires ability to think of new ideas. Encouraging employees and giving them opportunities to present ideas was seen as crucial. The chance to have influence on what the company decides to move to production on the other hand improves employee trust and value which in turn has an effect on their engagement. In addition to have control over the place where employees are working, some have the freedom to have influence on their work schedules in co-operation with the employer. Company A sees that many younger employees visibly value their leisure time and for them to be able to have influence on their work habits and schedules is huge admission by the employer which returns as engagement and positive feedback.

"Because there is certain level of freedom of will in this industry and what you can do. Freedom in work in general is seen as a positive and you can choose what projects to be part of. That freedom of choice works as an advantage in engaging our employees as well." -Interviewee C

Rotation in game industry had at this point been brought up multiple time. This was covered at the end of the interview by two companies as they pondered about the key engagement factors. Companies B and C both shared a view that this phenomenon has always been present in the game industry and that migration of workers is always been part of the field. Since most Finnish game companies operate in Helsinki and its immediate areas, moving to a different company does not face many logistical obstacles. Rotation in workforce in Company A's mind is sometimes good since talents are needed for different things. Game developers are able to practice their

craft in various places, so when they settle in certain place it is something to be recognized. It is a sign that the company in question has succeeded in creating an environment and place where employee wants to return and work for a longer period of time. In Company B's opinion, this might be sub-consciously made decision. If the game is the only factor that motivates the employee, it is not enough since after finishing the product they are more likely to move on to the next interesting production in some other company. If employees feel that nothing is attaching them to a specific company, they are more likely to change companies. But if company's values and goals are intriguing enough followed by functioning work environment, it will enforce engagement of that employee to the company. This was voiced verbally by Company B employees stating: "I've never been happy to go to work and speak to my colleagues before." This sort of community that has been created engages employees not only to their work but creates family like structure around them which enforces feeling of engagement, stated by both Company B and C.

5 Conclusions

When transcripts and the findings driven from them were examined it became apparent that the participant companies had multiple common thoughts about employee engagement in game industry in Finland. Most brought up themes were rotary nature in the industry's core, feeling of belonging by the employees, lack of influence by money as an engagement tool and weight that transparency, sharing common values and goals have on engagement. When comparing these findings to the framework done for this thesis, similarities and support for the findings can be seen. What was slightly surprising was that when interviewees were asked to describe an engaged employee, no one listed adjectives. Instead the participants chose to give their answers with concrete examples on how engagement is evident in employee's behavior. Each interviewed person said that sharing common goals and trust are in nature of an engaged employee. Instead of describing with adjectives, participants chose to point out actions that engagement would produce such as interest in one's work, enthusiasm, willingness to improve skills and interest towards the company success. Lack of straightforward descriptions by no means is a negative as it provided

much deeper conversation about the subject. In turn it meant that the author would have to keep closer focus on what was said by the interviewees. Because during these interviews multiple similar themes were brought up in different manner, it presented the absence of a standard which to be used to address these elements but still showed that all participants had enough experience in the field to have deep understanding of what it consists of and share them with the author.

Rotary nature of game industry in Finland is brought up heavily and it is present multiple times in different ways during all interviews, especially those with companies B and C. When it comes to the issue of employee engagement, it is evident both in gathered data and individual statements from each interviewee that engagement in game industry is more focused on the products and current project. As the interview materials state, if employee is only engaged to the current game in production it is not enough motivation to keep them around longer than for development of that game. This certainly is a major positive for the employees as individuals since this type of freedom gives them the edge of having the liberty to move with work and obtain flexibility in their work life. Not in all industries are employees able to move around for work as much as it is described in game industry. Naturally, this causes issues for companies since they have to think about this aspect when discussing strategy in terms of employee engagement. While game industry in the interviews is described as heavily competitive, this is not hinderance for all employees in the field. This type of pressure and challenge provides people of certain characteristics to be attracted to the industry. Some of these characteristics are mentioned by the interviewees to be for example creative, persistent, passionate and “geeky”.

What adds to the freedom of a rotary field is the ability to choose projects to work on. This certainly is not the case for everyone, but it was mentioned by the interviewees multiple times saying that this has been experienced time after another. Given that the game industry in many ways is creative business it attracts people adapt in its requirements. This is brought up in the interviews mentioning how artists struggle with finding work because of the high competition. If an artist is looking a way to penetrate the business, it is in their interest that companies would have vacancies at any time. Then it is only a matter of timing and experience needed. This indicates

that game industry requires job applicants to have strong initiative and be active when pursuing entrance to the field.

The companies have to battle employee engagement to the product and pursue shifting this engagement towards the company as a whole. As recruitment, training and briefing among other things are big expenses to the company each time new employees enter the firm it is also an economic benefit to decrease employee turnover. Going back to the theoretical background for this thesis, economic advantages of engaged employees cannot be ignored. It was discussed by Sorenson and Garman that engaged employees have direct link to the revenue produced by companies. Elements in favor of engaging employees to the company were similar in all interviewee's descriptions.

When companies manage to recruit competent and autonomous employees that have good work relations with each other it leads to tight work community which in turn makes employees to be engaged to their employing company. Staff relations are held as a major variable when discussing matters that companies could have an influence on when engaging is concerned. What we can draw from this is that when the employees have a community to be part of, they are more likely to become engaged. As game industry attracts people with common interest in games and their making in many cases not just from professional viewpoint, it helps creating environment where employees have ways to connect with each other and form relationships. While this is something that the company can have influence on by recruitment it cannot be guaranteed. When companies have succeeded in forming a family unit and supports this by offering sufficient work tools and environment, engagement is likely to follow. This is an indication that employees value their work environment and hold comfort, both emotional and physical, in high regard.

While this thesis limits gathered data from only representatives of the companies and not from the employees themselves it is evident that the interviewees have solid understanding about the subject from employee's point of view. This is apparent as participants characterize their work schedules and how mingling with co-workers is part of daily work. As many game companies are small and those participating for this research had employees ranging from 20 to over 300, employees in management positions are likely to have strong interactions with mundane employees. This

gives managers opportunity to spectate alternating shifts in employee moods and attitudes. It seems that “we”-mentality is present in these game companies and employees feel that they are part of a bigger team and not just working for a company name. This is backed up by the way interviewees described their work communities like the aforementioned family unit. This might be reason why engaging to colleagues has such an effect on employee engagement in game industry.

One key element which was discussed was the trust between employer and employee. In addition to employees sharing common values and motivation to reach company set goals, it is stated that when employees feel trust from their business it makes them feel depended. This is supported by employees expressing that they work more efficiently without constant micromanaging. When company trusts the employee, they are free to work in their own terms and utilize their talents as they feel most comfortable. Trust is a two-way street, however. As it is pointed out employees hold transparency in great value. In this age employees know to demand transparent guidance and to know what is happening in the company and strategies they wish to follow. Companies can acquire trust from their employees by being transparent with their plans for the company’s future and upholding values they have stated earlier. This enforces the initial trust formed in employees and supports further growth.

Money is brought up as well multiple times as a theme in the interviews, or the lack of it as an engagement tool. Two of the interviewees agree that in the game industry money is not pursued as much, or as clearly, by the industry professionals so companies do not have to use payment as a motivational tool. As game industry is mentioned to be heavily competitive field companies have to offer sufficient payment for the job recruitments they offer, in order to gain professional workers. Seeing increase in asking for pay raise may indicate that something in employee’s mentality towards work has changed. Regardless employees in the game industry do not generally view money as a main motivational tool for engagement. The lack of money as a motivator of engagement does not necessarily mean it is not held in some regard but indicates that many other factors rise above it on the importance list. Good work environment is seen in higher relevance compared to high pay. What is apparent is

the nature of workers in the game industry: they view comfort and sensibility as important elements.

What can be concluded is that employees in game industry highlight similar elements as any other employee operating in different business. Independence is seen as a major positive and professionals in the field value freedom in their work. When companies are successful in providing environment, tools and circumstances where employees can utilize their talents most effectively, they are more likely to gain engaged employees. The word “freedom” is likely the one that encapsulates the core of an engaged employee in the game industry as is also the liberty to move if circumstances allow it. While game companies cannot battle rotary nature of the industry completely, they should take it into consideration when they think about their engagement levels and strategies. Number of employment years is not of course directly linked to engagement as simply as it seems, and this is recognized by participant companies. How this can be done is stated by the participants: companies should listen to what projects employees want to work on, nurture them and pursue for a successful game. As passion was heavily emphasized as one key factor when engagement was discussed game companies should aim to make games that their makers want to play. This will lead to employees working on projects that they have passion towards and encourage engagement further.

While this thesis did not necessarily provide any concrete ways to enhance employee engagement, it introduced multiple reasons for companies to monitor their situation when it comes to engagement of their employees and highlighted the positives elements already present. To answer the research questions and identify the elements that influence engagement, they could be summarized as such: to enforce formation of engagement companies should provide **work environment** which inspires not just creative work but also supports employee’s projects. Having proper tools, environment, training and work colleagues engages employees not just to the product but with forming relationships inside the company as well. The social engagement which is strongly brought up companies should focus on their **transparency** policies as well as company **values and goals**. Having open communication with the staff forms trust between the company and employees which in turn influences engagement levels positively when succeeding. When company has transparency about their goals and

future strategy of the organization it helps forming trust as employees are able to see what their company is trying to pursue which in turn strengthens the feeling of mutual trust. Additionally, when employees share same values with the company they have something in common which they hold important and this leads to pursuing to enforce these values and reach organization goals as they are seen as valuable. Finally, **social engagement** is one of the major factors that seemingly influence game industry professionals to engage themselves to a certain company. When the work environment and people working in said space and atmosphere have similar passion towards their work, share common interests and get along well, they are able to form a tight community as was described in the interviews. Having strong engagement to the people and not just to the employing company makes engagement more personal to the employee and therefore enforces their desire to work for that company and invest themselves more into the work.

Many benefits of having as engaged employees as possible have been studied both in articles, books and publications used for the purposes of this research and in the thesis findings themselves which support the notion of importance of engagement. As game industry in Finland has a strong rotary nature at this point in time engagement is something that companies should focus on. As benefits of engaged employees were discussed at the beginning of this thesis from both economic and social perspectives companies should recognize the importance that engaged employee has.

5.1 Discussion

It must be recognized that with larger participant quantity research would have been more extensive and more data could have possibly emerged from additional interviews. Regardless this study reached the goal that was made and offered insight to game industry in Finland and how employee engagement is seen in operating companies, how they manage to enforce engagement and what elements do the employees value when discussing engagement to the workplace.

Looking back to the initial research questions answers for them were achieved. As measures taken by the companies have been identified previously such as providing

tools, environment, flexibility and communication between employees and management, author has identified through them what elements influence engagement. Reflecting on the supporting literature many similar themes were identified between findings of this report and referred studies. Going back to Kahn's argument in the beginning how employee engagement as a concept is not what the employee thinks but feels authors findings are supported by this notion. This was evident as game industry employees engage themselves on projects which they feel strongly towards. Similarly, those who choose to engage themselves to companies indicated that they do so because they feel comfort, trust and security in that company. As mentioned before, game industry professionals value feelings of comfort and this reflects back to the studies about employee engagement.

Finnish work culture and its themes are also brought up heavily in the findings. As was discussed in the theoretical section money was not regarded as an important engagement tool when it came to changing companies and this notion is supported by the findings of this research. Employees in the game industry bring up many other elements that they hold important in engaging before money is mentioned. This has a link to the previous statements about the concept of feeling. What employees feel towards the company and product is more important to the employees than pursuing certain career in a specific company just in order to gain money. Sufficient payment must not be ignored but this find must be recognized as it is such a major factor when discussing engaging elements.

The spectrum and sampling were minimal for this thesis, but sufficient data could still be extracted from the participants as interviewees were able to provide information with their knowledge of the industry. As game industry currently lacks a standard to which data could be referred to, this study succeeded in providing some themes that could prove to be useful in different organizations. These findings were able to be made by having solid research structure and method which were used effectively. Theoretical framework provided sufficient background to the themes of employee engagement and dimensions it includes, and author was able to reach primary data sources with best means considering modern communication channels which utilized social media, email and Skype in the interviewing stage.

5.2 Suggestions for further considerations

The aim of this thesis was reached as it has shed light to a subject that has not been researched at the time of writing this report. Author has gathered information and analyzed the provided data which in turn has given deeper learning of the subject. Interview as a research tool allowed the author to gain humane approach to the subject and cover the subject from that perspective. This in turn has given opportunity to the possible future studies to gain qualitative and human related approach to the subject and offer perspective from this point of view.

Findings of this research could open room for more discussion about employee engagement in companies that do not have human resources management structure yet and use this research as a reference when discussing engagement levels in their companies. When considering the formation of resource managing companies could apply these findings and research if they could for example provide better environment and transparency when company grows while ensuring that their current and future employees remain engaged. Engagement is something any company has to consider in order to gain best possible outcomes, both economic and social, and this study offers many elements that have been proven successful in game industry.

For a young industry game companies in Finland have achieved a lot throughout the years. As Finland is home to multiple internationally successful game developing companies further research of the field as a whole should be considered in order to gain deeper understanding about the field and gain insight of the elements that make it successful. Additionally, further research about game industry could possibly reveal issues that have not been noticed yet by industry professionals and therefore contribute to the business evolution. Employee engagement as a subject could also be studied further by expanding what this research has already started. While this research does not dive deep in to the game industry in Finland it is surely a new perspective about this young industry that has not, as of time of writing this report, been researched much. It will therefore provide perspectives for possible future studies and give insight specifically about the state of employee engagement in the business. In addition, this research could also serve as a basis for future studies about

the subject or inspire other research regarding the subject. When conducting interviews for this purpose, many of the participants expressed interest in the results which indicates that there is interest by professionals in the industry towards research of their field. Future studies regarding game industry and forming of their HR structure in companies should be studied more as it would offer more knowledge on the subject which could be used to improve the Finnish game industry further.

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