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# Flexible working: remote working and flextime

**Change management**

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## Abstract

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<p>The objective of the thesis is to make suggestions related to the change done end of 2015 in the case company regarding working hours and place. Case company is Finnish sales office, which is part of large international company. Before the change, work was done mainly within the certain working hours from the main office. After the change implementation remote working and flexitime was introduced.</p> <p>There are several theories on change management processes, which help to build the steps and follow up the implementation. From the nature, all theories are rather similar – starting with the need of implementation, moving on with preparation of implementation, communicating of implementation and finally implementing the change. Followed by follow-up and improvement phase. Successful change management requires fulfilling each step successfully.</p> <p>The qualitative and quantitative research results showed that change within the case company was implemented successfully and is still well understood and appreciated by the employees. There was few general issues addressed by the employees during their feedback. Firstly, if the benefits offered by the remote working and flexitime is understood and addressed by all middle management equally throughout different departments. As well as if it is introduced and explained well enough to the new employees. Especially on a management level – including managers that are located outside of Finland. Another topic was related to the quilt factor of what others think when the benefit of remote working is used. It was found during the research that these are general issues when it comes to remote working and flexitime. Also noticed in other companies.</p> <p>The outcome of the thesis is five suggestions to the case company. Firstly, it is suggested to continue with the current flexibility offered to the employees. During the second, third and fourth suggestions – it is given a direction of following up frequently what is the current state within the company regarding the topic. Moreover, to make sure that initial idea of implementation is introduced during hiring process and followed up later on. Most importantly to follow up if middle management understands and follows the initial purpose of the change. Fifth suggestion was to find out more about what kind of possibilities there are available to support employees with the equipment used while working remotely.</p>	
Keywords	Change management, remote working, flexitime

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## 1 Introduction

Remote working and flexible working conditions in terms of timing have become as a subject over the years within many companies. There are several reason for this. The main reason for that is most probably due to the change, which is happening in people expectations and lifestyles outside of the office. The direction is towards more modern fast moving lifestyle where flexibility is essential to be able to keep up with that. If you can't trust your employees to work flexibly, why hire them in the first place (Henderson 2015) is placing a good question to many employers. In his article, he is discussing how flexible working do not mean only where do you work, but also how do you work. Staying 100% in the office, staying 100% at home or having mixture of two of these – in all cases there are benefits, but also its challenges.

The idea is to establish better quality in work life balance by offering more flexibility for employees. Such approach is built only when there is high level of trust towards the employees. It also requires taking more responsibility by the employees while giving them more freedom. Increase in motivation and productivity should be the outcome while making such organisational change within the company.

When not understanding the reasons for why to make the change and not having good preparations on how to implement and manage the change, it is likely that returning the old ways of working are necessary due to the failure of implementation. Yahoo is a good example for such a case where remote working was changed back into more traditional working from the office. In 2013, Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer banned remote working for her employees. She states that people are more productive when they are alone, but they are more collaborative and innovative when they are together (Miller 2013). In this case, productivity might have not been what company was looking for as an approach to reach better results. Innovativeness and creativity seems to be rather the key. According to Mrs. Mayer, remote working is not the tool to reach it.

The purpose of this thesis is to learn about the reasons and evaluate why and how the change was implemented in the case company. As an addition, current state analysis will be conducted to learn more about how the change has affected the employees and how they are managing with

new working conditions nowadays. This research is used to analyse the data and give possible suggestion to the management of case company.

### 1.1 Definition of Flexible Working

Flexible working can be defined in several ways case by case based on which kind of flexibility company is offering.

Financial Time (FT) lexicon defines flexible working gives employees' flexibility on how long, where and when they work. Employees access flexible working through human resources policies, which usually require supervisory approval. In this definition, it is also divided flexible working into three different groups by its arrangements: full time, part time and career flexibility. Full-time flexible options include next possibilities for the flexibility: flexible hours, telework, time banks, and compressed workweeks. Part-time options include working a few days a week. Another possibility is career flexibility, which allows individuals to change careers and/or take career breaks for personal or family reasons without suffering career penalties. Career flexibility involves challenging the traditional career ladder of containing a continuously upward path with workers likely to fall back to the bottom of the career ladder if they change their careers.

### 1.2 Description of Case Company

The case company (hereinafter – the company, the case company) is rather small local Finnish sales office that is part of large multinational engineering and electronics company which is operating in approximately 60 countries. In this context, the case company is not strictly dependent of the parent company, but must follow certain rules and get approval to the decisions.

The case company has several different business units and ways of working can differ in one or another. It applies to Finland sales office, which has approximately 80 employees and is divided into five divisions, based on different business areas in terms of product groups. On top, there is also administration department. All divisions are from the nature representing local sale office and almost all employees have equal possibilities in terms of working hours and location. There are few exceptions. One division has repair concept and they need to be available for end customers at workshop within certain working hours due to the safety requirements and nature of the service that is offered. As well as there are already employees, who were not working in the main office due to the location of their customers. This group of employees were already using home office

and flexible time as default. As well when it comes to all others – everyone have equal rights and possibilities of using flexibility. Complexity in this case is that most of the employees within local sales office belong to the international teams and are having also supervisors outside of local office. That means that some employees might have more need on visiting physically main office as their team is acting more locally. At the same time, others might have more flexibility on location for working as most of the colleagues are located in foreign countries. In these cases, again availability in time wise might be more regulated by the availability of other team members located outside of Finnish sales office. In all cases, it is important to be available still for customers and colleagues according to the requirements that are set in each individual case. Especially within the classical working hours.

### 1.3 Background

Until November 2015 majority of the work was done either in the office or at the field. During that time, also all working hours were signed into system for tracking when arriving to office and leaving from office. From the nature, the case company is sales office and high percentage of work is done at the field. This requires that all hours, which were done outside of the office, had to be added later as an manual effort into the system by administrative personnel. As well as the hours which were forgotten to sign while arriving or leaving from office.

Since November 2015 saving the working hours into device, which was located on the wall of the office building, was removed. With this approach was also offered more freedom when deciding the working location and more responsibility for the employees to follow up and manage their working hours and workload themselves. At the same time, another option was offered by the external company, for those, who wished still to track their exact hourly data in similar way as in the past. This case is belonging to category of full-time flexibility by offering of flexible hours, telework and option for time banks.

In August 2019 there was another change done within the company. Company physically moved from one office building to another. Old office was with rather more traditional layout and most of employees had a possibility to have their own office surrounded by walls and having an option in closing the door. All workstations were named to specific person. In the new office, the layout and working space is an opposite of the previous one. It is an open layout office with several options for working conditions. Working stations are not signed to specific person and everyone can

decide on which option they prefer to use during the day. Rules and best options for the new layout were designed in cooperation with employees and are still to be improved and modified based on feedback - if possible.

#### 1.4 Business Problem, Objective, Expected Outcome and Scope of the Thesis

The current business problem is that the case company would like to follow up if moving from traditional way of working within the main office in contracted working hours into having possibility to work remotely with more flexibility in working hours is adding expected positive effect for the employees. Four years after implementation it is relevant to follow up if the change has met the expectations and if there are any concerns or needs for improvement.

The objective of the thesis is to make suggestions to the management related to the topic.

The expected outcome of the thesis is suggestions to human resource (hereinafter – HR) and management level based on research made.

The scope of the thesis is to follow up already implemented change and to make possible suggestions based on that research done. Implementing the suggestions is not in the scope of this thesis.

## **2 Method and Material**

This chapter will explain more in detail methods and the material used for this research. Author of the thesis has chosen the methods based on own personal vision and combined by companies' expectations to reach the outcome. Previously mentioned reasons will require several steps to fulfil the goal.

### 2.1 Research Approach

Research approach is built based on authors' personal preferences while collecting the data and in a logical form to support the goal, which will help in building up the final proposal to the management.



To understand the topic better, it is needed to look more in detail into theory of this field by researching literature and other already existing information. First step is to look more into the term – change management. There is a need to find out what the change management is, what are the processes and key factors to the successful change management and how to evaluate change implementation. Existing knowledge is applied as two sections. First set is done before current state analysis to use this as a base when forming research questions to the target groups. Results of are used when building the current state analysis. Second set of existing knowledge is researched because of the need for further more understanding for the topic. Within this section best practices and case studies are research to support the proposal. The outcome of the first existing knowledge section will be conceptual framework and outcome of the second section will be to develop the solution.

As already mentioned in earlier section – current state analysis is done as a next step after conceptual framework. Previously learned information is used to form the questions needed to be asked during current state analysis discussions and in the questionnaire. This research will include two data sets within current state analysis process. First data set is used to have a look into management view. Face to face interviews will be done as a method to collect the information. The outcome of the first set will be to understand the implementation reasons. The second data set is implemented in a form of a questionnaire to all employees, who are affected form the change. The outcome goal will be to collect data about strengths and weaknesses.

Third step is to build and evaluating the proposal based on the information collected from existing knowledge and first two data sets. The outcome of building a proposal will be the feedback and proposal(s) draft to the management. Third data set will be used to validate the proposal as a base for a face to face discussion with the HR and the manager.

## 2.2 Research Design

Research design section will explain the phases of the process used to reach the outcome – final proposal to the HR and management.

As the basis to start the investigation, it is necessary to place the objective. This is done as a corner stone before the research was started. In this research, the objective is to follow up the

change and to make suggestions to human resource and management for improvements that could clear the uncertainties of the change implemented in 2015.

In next phase, it is necessary to investigate the literature and other already existing written information related to the topic.

Third important area to cover is to analyse current state and to understand implementation reasons and methods better.

In fourth phase, existing knowledge is to be looked into again based on the third phase outcome to find out what more details are needed to come to the better position while building the proposal.

Fifth step is to build the proposal draft based on previous information gathered and investigation done. This will be checked together with management and HR and as a last step final proposal will be given by the researcher to the management and HR.

Research design is shown also in the Figure 1. Along with research design is also shown research process which is including three data sets. Within first data set information is collected from management level to understand better the beginning of this change implementation – the reasons and how the outcome was selected. In second data set bigger data will be collected to follow-up how the change has seen to be working out since the implementation. Finally, all previous data outcome will be discussed with manager and HR during face-to-face discussion and outcome will be recorded in this paper.

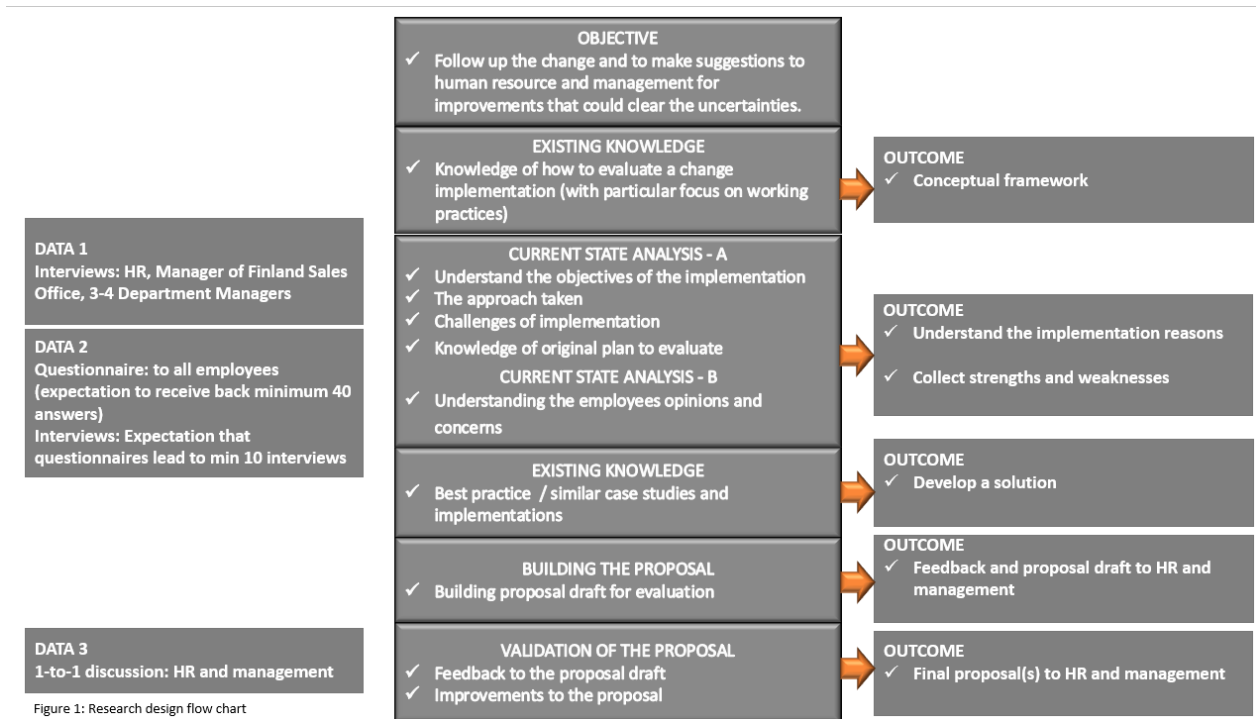


Figure 1. Research Process flow chart.

### 2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The first dataset was collected after the first investigation on existing knowledge was done. Questions for the first data set were decided based on outcome of information gained from theory of how to evaluate a change implementation. It was used to process partially current state analysis. To collect the data three interviews were held. Each interview was built specifically for the person based on the level and background in the company. First interview was held with the manager of the local sales office and two interviews with department managers. Two of the interviewees were working with the company at the time of implementation and were involved within the process. One of the divisional managers entered the company after the change implementation.

Second data set was used to build second half of the current state analysis. Online questionnaire for all employees was created to collect second set of the data to reach the outcome of this research. Questionnaire was built in Finnish language to be able to reach audience better and collect more responses. It was sent to seventy employees and twenty-four out of seventy answered the questionnaire. Authors expectation was to reach at least thirty-five responses to get

better insight to the situation. Response time was two weeks and one reminder, of possibility to give an input, was sent out during this time period. Author has given employees a possibility to answer anonymously and freedom in how much they would like to share about the topic, while offering twelve simple questions to be answered with an option to add additional comment to each topic. As well it was communicated that detailed answer sheets will not be shared with third party and are used only by the author of the thesis to present overall outcome to build the possible proposal for the management. Only two questions were set as mandatory. Both were quantitative questions and asked in the beginning of the questionnaire. First one was to find out about the age group of the respondent, where five age groups, selected by the author, were offered. Age question was not placed to understand about which age group is answering the most, but to see if there is some pattern later on with some questions related to age. Second questions were about if the respondent was working with the company during the time of implementation of this organisational change. Third quantitative question was set to find out how employees would evaluate how the change was implemented in a scale of five. Next nine questions were to seek for more about the feelings and opinions of the respondents. Four questions were placed with expectation of getting back open answer as a response. And for five of the questions were given options by the author based on authors personal experience within the company, but also with an option for an open answer in the end of each section. All the questions and outcomes of the responses will be explained more in detail within the current state analysis section. This set was used to find out how employees feel about how the change was implemented and how is it working out for them now. It was also used to locate the need for furthermore theory that was needed to be investigated to understand this topic better. With this author was seeking for a possibility to be able to give better proposal as an outcome of the thesis.

During third dataset collection, it was discussed points collected from the theory, two first data sets and proposal made based on previous steps. Feedback for the proposal draft was collected and final proposal was given based on that.

To build all three data sets, qualitative and quantitative methods, but emphasis was on qualitative data collection.

All details of the questions, used during the interviews and within the questionnaire, can be found in the section of current state analysis.

### 2.3.1 Qualitative method

Qualitative method was used to build the interview questions and most of the questionnaire. Based on information collected first part of the current state analysis and most of second part of current state analysis was formed.

The interviews for the first data set and third data set were conducted as semi-structured interviews. The purpose of collecting information for first part of the current state analysis was to find out more about why the change was necessary, about the vision, which steps were taken to implement the change and how it is followed up and maintained continuously. Furthermore, to understand how this works on a management level nowadays and which issues have faced since implementation. Three interviews were conducted and outcome was recorded in written for to template that was designed for the purpose. As the idea was to have more relaxed discussion instead of structured question-answer interview, answers were recorded while catching suitable outcomes to each question line. Extra space was added for additional information that was not considered in original questions.

Qualitative method was selected also within second data set for most of the questions. Author's main wish was to collect open feelings - and opinions-based feedback. Questionnaire was sent to approximately seventy employees.

During the third data set qualitative feedback was collected as a respond to the presented initial proposal and based on this proposal was validated and final proposal was built. Within this phase, all initial proposals were presented to head of the sales office and HR manager.

### 2.3.2 Quantitative method

Quantitative method was used as small portion within the questionnaire sent to all employees. The purpose of quantitative questions was to build some base for the questionnaire.

### 2.3.3 Approach to the analysis

Author used explained approach based on personal experience within the company as well as made some pre-research of the topics for theory that could be related to the case. Initial idea was

to find out how did the employees feel about the change done during the implementation phase and now. This was the starting point for how to build the draft for research process. It came to author's attention that it was necessary to understand how and why the change was done. Most logical method was decided to conduct the interviews with the drivers of the change to find out. Previous step seemed to be logical to have before asking for employee's feedback. Expectation was that outcome of interviews would help to build the questions for the questionnaire for all employees. It was also clear that more research was needed, to understand the topic better from the existing knowledge. Based on what author could build questions for the interviews as well as for the questionnaire. For that, purpose pre-research was done to find out which topics could be the starting point for the research of existing knowledge. It came to an attention that this is clearly a topic of change management. As a final step before starting to form initial proposal, it was already known by researcher, that after analysing first existing knowledge set and current state analysis, more data is to be collected – to be able to reflect and compare already collected data against something that is similar and already existing. Next logical step was to write initial proposal and present these to the management, collect feedback and offer final proposal based on this. After all the data collection – author analysed the results to find out which suggestions could be made to the management while reflecting the initial business problem of the thesis. The attention from the beginning was to check if new approach, in terms of time and place, is working out. So, the suggestions in the end were not expected to be necessarily huge change implementations that were needed. More of an understanding if the new way is well understood and accepted by the employees and considerations for how to maintain it also successfully in future.

### **3 Study on Change Management**

#### **3.1 Change Management**

This chapter is concentrating more into the definition of change management. Firstly, looking into some definitions to understand the core of it. Then moving on to find out what could be general mistakes made during the process. Moreover, which are the key success factors during planning and implementing phase.

### 3.1.1 What is change management?

Akdeniz, entrepreneur, consultant and business author, explains change management in his book “Change Management Explained” very simply. He describes that it is the managing of major change in a company, which deals more with the people side of change implementation. He also mentions in his book another similar definition given by Prosci, which is an organisation that focuses on change management and offers trainings to the companies about the topic. According to them change management is defined as it is the application of a structured process and set of tools for leading the people side of change to achieve a desired outcome. Based on the definitions Can Akdeniz makes a conclusion that successful change management involves developing a plan and following specific steps in order to smooth the transitional period and ease the acceptance of changes. An interesting point that he raises as well is that it is important to know also what change management is not. As an example, Mr. Akdeniz explains that change management is not something that will save a faltering business; it is a way to ensure that a successful business remains a successful business throughout a period of change. Moreover, it is not process improvement method. Instead, it is a method of reducing resistance to change and thus smoothing the process of change (Akdeniz 2014).

### 3.1.2 Process of Change

There are several concepts models of change management developed over the years. In this chapter two theory are explained more in dept. Concepts were picked to be included based on author’s interest and best fit for the case.

One of the oldest known was introduced by Kurt Lewin. He was a known as a moving force in social psychology. Lewin’s theory consist of three steps: unfreezing, changing, refreezing. The logic of it is that during first “unfreezing” phase is preparing for change while getting people involved motivated to accept move along with the change. Second step is the “changing” which involves the change itself. In addition, it is finalized with “refreezing” - establishing stability once change have been made. Final step requires a support of the acceptance phase and making sure that there are mechanisms in place to ensure that changes remain implemented. This theory has been criticised for being too simplistic.

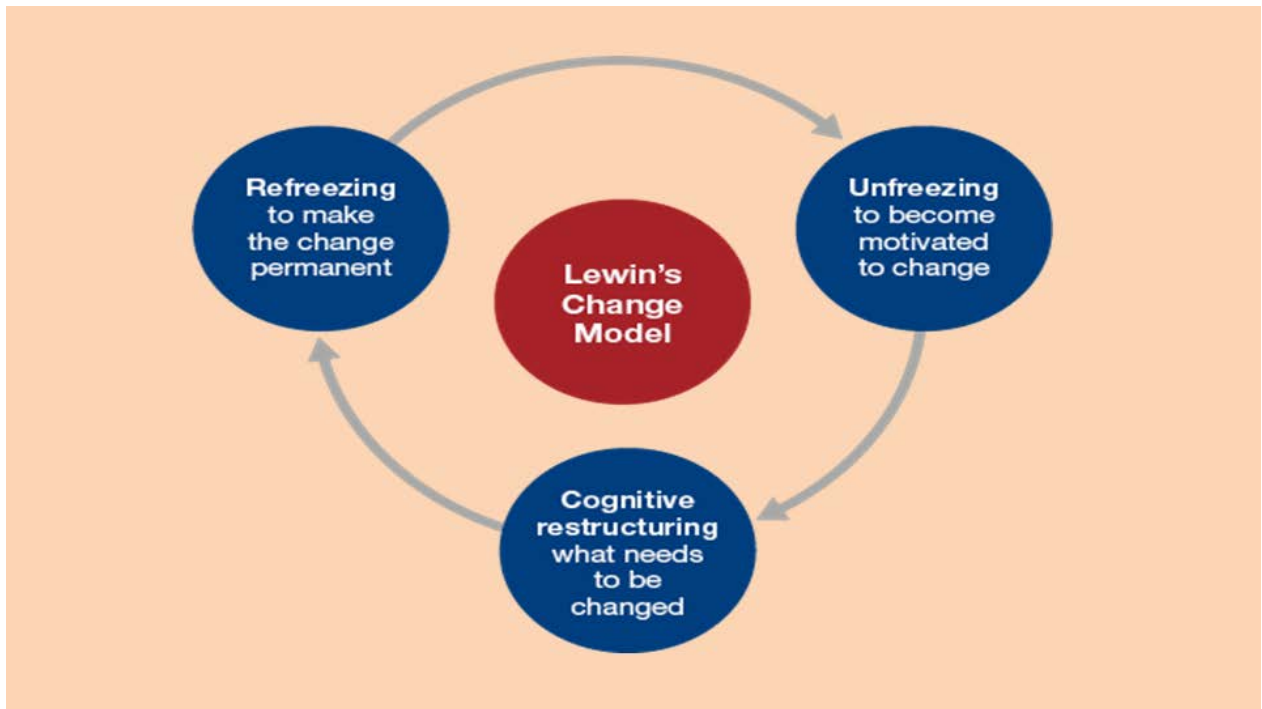


Figure 2. Lewin's Change Model.

Another more in detailed theory is Kotter's Change Model. In there he explains change process with eight steps: establishing a sense of urgency, creating the guiding coalition, developing a vision and strategy, communicating the change vision, empowering employees for board-based actions, creating short-term wins, consolidating gains and producing more change, anchoring new approaches in the culture (Kotter 1996). As the change is almost never easy, all these steps are needed. He divides these eight steps into three groups. First four steps in transformation process help defrost a hardened status quo. Phase five to seven takes the transformation forward by adding many new practices and final stage is to ground the change into corporate culture and makes them stick.





Figure 3. Kotter's Change Model.

These two theories show that there are different ways of processing change and over the time, the need and ways can change. Moreover, in the end, these are the theories that can be used for a guidance but are not rules that can't be pended or changed. It is important to evaluate what is going on in the world and what kind of trends are relevant for the time being. Initiated by Kottler Group it has been published by Harvard Business Review Press in 2014 new updated version of the original eight step version, giving it reach and potency today and beyond by fitting today's warp-speed world. They state that both versions are still relevant and effective today but are designed for different contexts and objectives. In new version, new enhanced eight steps are introduced and named as eight accelerators. Within this theory, there was added four change principles. Eight accelerators are faster in speed and bigger in volume. Kotter group explains four main differences between two versions. In 1996 version, it was guidance in respond to or effect episodic change in finite and sequential ways. While new version is recommending running the steps concurrently and continuously. Secondly, driving change with small, powerful core group

has changed into forming a large volunteer army from up, down and across the organization to be the change engine. In addition, it was very traditional in formal ways to function within a traditional hierarchy; while nowadays, it is more efficient to function while networking flexibly and nimbly outside of, but in conjunction with, a traditional hierarchy. Last, as a fourth difference, it was recommended to focus on doing one thing very well in a linear fashion over time. New version on the other hand give guidance of constant need for seeking new opportunities, identify initiatives to capitalize on them, and complete them quickly.

Case company fits well to Kotter's theory in nature. Large worldwide company with long history and roots in Germany is well known by its traditional hierarchy and Kotter's theory could have fit well in 1996 to implement organizational change. Now when the time has moved on, company reach for modern ways to fit current trends in the world. Update in theory presented in 2014 is again nowadays relevant for the case company. This renewal in mindsets and ways of working has allowed implementing such a change within a local office while belonging to bigger group. Especially I find great fit for the sentence that it is more efficient to function while networking flexibly and nimbly outside of, but in conjunction with, a traditional hierarchy.

### 3.1.2.1 Successful change management

Previous steps of the change are helpful tools within the implementation process. However, what is the key to the successful change management? This topic is discussed in next chapter more in detail.

C. Akdeniz introduced six key factors, that he finds most crucial to be successful in change management. Firstly, he explains, no matter which steps you choose to follow out of theories, there needs to be plan available. Secondly, it is important to identify the resistance. As a third point, Akdeniz brings forward that it is crucial to find good leaders. Next point is to establish methods of measuring the success. Fifth key point he finds relevant is to develop a vision and final goal. Last, but not least, he finds it is necessary to be a great communicator. The last point is my personal favourite in terms of importance. No matter what the situation, the way you communicate something has great impact on results and outcome. However, clearly, maximum potential can't be reached if not being successful also within all other points given by Akdeniz.

Successful change management is nowadays well-established business plan offered by many companies and as a topic that fascinates business enthusiasts to discuss furthermore about the

audience. Some write books, others give presentations and some of them like writing a blog about the topic. As change is huge part of the business world, especially nowadays fast moving world, there is not necessarily enough capacity within the company to evaluate, implement and follow the change in best possible manner. In these cases, it is a good option to turn to professionals that can support on that. Sometimes also on money wise it can cost less than by hiring expensive external company than attempting to go through the process with no external advice. If the change fails, it will still costs time and money or other valuable resources.

As I already mentioned previously, I find communication as one of the important keys to the success. So does Kim Harrison. He loves sharing actionable ideas and information about professional communication and business management. Kim Harrison has experience as a corporate affairs manager, consultant, author, lecturer, and CEO of a non-profit organisation and is former national board member of the Public Relations Institute of Australia. He writes about his blog about four keys to successful change management that are communicated by some of the experts from probably one of the worlds' top management consultancy McKinsey & Co. He explains that change management is hard to achieve as people find it hard to change habitual ways of doing things. He brings out that there are two schools of thoughts on making successful organisational change: changing mindsets or culture and changing actions and reinforcing those actions to lead to changed mindsets. As a main message, he adds that either way, good communication s the core factor to make change work. These four reasons were picked for the paper because of it's way of wording for the key factors: simple to understand and on-point approach. First point is to find a purpose to believe in. He explains if people understand the case and agree with it, they tend to change the attitudes to support the change and will prepare their individual behaviour in support of the purpose. Employees are not likely to put sustained effort into a new kind of behaviour if they have only rational understanding of why it matters. They need to understand what kind of positive effect the change will give them on their personal growth. Second step according to the blog is reinforcement of behaviour. Within this period, the new behaviour have to be supported or reinforced by a range of motivations. This involves setting targets, measuring performance and providing financial and non-financial incentives to employees to reinforce changed behaviour. During the third step is necessary to teach the skills required for the change. This step needs time to be embedded. Mr. Harrison suggests that public relations professionals can develop communication material that supports the change in the local level. In addition, as fourth key he presents need for consistent role models. He explains how it is not enough for top management to show the way, but also influencers at every level need to do it as well.

Based on opinions selected for the key factors for successful change, we can see that these support the same logic as rest of the theories for the organisational change processes, which were used when evaluating and finding the successful key factors. These are selected as in a more thought through on-point steps or advices. When investigating information available for this section, I found one of important suggestion – using external professionals to cope with communication and implementation. Including of course all steps within the change management process. Successful change requires well-organised and planned steps for which often within the organisation there is not enough time and skills available.

### 3.1.3 How to evaluate change implementation

There are several methods for evaluating the change. It is necessary to find appropriate method for the purpose. Measuring something for which is rather clear expectation and defined outcome is easier. For example, measuring budget, time and if the change meets the technical objectives. However, how to evaluate business and human objective? This is much more difficult. These five measures are the ones that Paula Alsher see necessary to be successful while implementing and measuring transformational change. These measures fit, for example, better in a world of measuring specific customer related projects, financial change and for approach that is more technical. Last two points of Mrs. Alsher's objectives, business and human objective, are also relevant for the change management within an organisation that involves more people factor within the change environment. In addition, financial objective can often be a reason why organisational change is required and possible to follow by the results of employees performances.

When it comes to increase in wellbeing of the employees, best measure is to follow up regularly by making simple questionnaires, by asking for feedback directly and generally through collecting data while communicating to them.

## 4 Current State Analysis

This section is looking into the current situation in the company while investigating the background of change implementation to understand better employee's feedback gathered with second data set. The aim is to learn more about the sense of urgency, vision, problems faced and preparation's

made during the implementation phase. From there moving on to see how employees feel about the current working situation and how the effort done in the beginning of the process has paid off.

#### 4.1 Interviews

First interview was conducted with the manager of the local sales office. He was working with the company during the time of change and also main driver of the change since the beginning. Interviewer placed six main questions to him in advance that were used as basis of the openly formed discussion:

1. Was there a specific reason(s)/motivations why this change was considered (sense of urgency)?
2. Was there a vision when starting the discussions about the change? If yes, then what?
3. Which kind of preparations were done before the implementation?
4. Which kind of issues were you facing while preparation phase? How did you solve these?
5. What are the challenges, if any, which are still valid now (four years later)?
6. How would you personally evaluate how change was implemented and how it is working out now for everyone?

First, he explained that the need for the change came from the employees and based on practical issues having while using tracking system that was in place at the time. Each employee had to sign in his or her selves while entering to work and leaving from work, as well, as while leaving and returning during lunch break. It was felt that it is rather complex and not well working system. Each time signing was forgotten, there was need for correction by administrative employee. Second issue was that as the nature of sales office is to travel often to customers and for business reasons to abroad because of company's international structure. In such cases system signing was also needed to be done by the administrative employees. Sense of urgency was faced. Question was how to get rid of that kind of time tracking option and what other choices there are. With the result of the discussions and brainstorming conclusion was reached – none of the employees, working from the traditional office, were restricted to the place and time to be able to perform their tasks in high quality. There were exceptions mentioned to whom this did not apply: workshop employees and also the ones who already were working from home as main "office" location as their customers are located further from the main office. For the others, the statement was found to be true. Management did not see any reason not to give freedom and responsibility,

when picking the time and place, to the employees as long as there is no negative impact on others (colleagues, company results, customers).

During the interview, also the vision was asked. Kotter says that if you cannot describe the vision driving a change initiative in five minutes or less and get reaction that signifies both understanding and interest, you are in trouble (Kotter 1996). Interviewee was able to answer this question within one minute with simple answer – the vision was to improve furthermore employees work satisfaction and wellbeing.

Then he moved on to talk more about the challenges found before the implementation and how these were overcome before the communication phase. Firstly, it was necessary to find out if this is possible at all due to legal and tax related issues or other obstacles that would allow removing the tracking system that was used at that time. Finnish law indicates that employee's work hours need to be tracked by the employer, but it does not specify how. Law gives an employee a freedom to decide for themselves if they wish to report back official working hours given by the contract or they wish to report back exact hours with all overwork and less hours done. With this knowledge in hand, was found an option, which could cover both possibilities: Cozone. Cozone is an external company that offers several accounting, payroll, human resource and leadership services. One of the options in their scope is employees time tracking. System offers two options for employees. First option is to accept monthly contracted working hours and sign them in the end of the month. Second option is offering possibility to track working hours similar to old system and sign these in the end of the month. Later option is requiring though that both, plus and minus, hours are signed in detail. All of the process is done online in the Cozone webpage and can be maintained while not attending in the main office.

Management noticed that they were rather in a good starting point regarding the change implementation as there was already two steps done previously that were supporting it. Firstly, it was already offered flexitime in entering an office or leaving the office. Secondly, more restricted home office option was introduced and used already by them.

After preparations and investigations done, change was communicated to the employees openly in face-to-face meeting. People were taking the news positively and there was hundred percent acceptance of the change at the point. No one communicated that this is wrong direction.

Responsibility complexity for the future remain in terms of tracking the wellbeing of the employees while performing in such environment. As well as it is more difficult to the managers to track if the workload is sufficient and if employees are performing their best. Generally, interviewee did not

see any challenges or issues at this point even if there was bit of hesitation in pre-implementation phase if employees start using this option in a wrong way and do not perform their best. He found that, yes, in certain terms this is a grey area, but as it is built on mutual trust, it is working out well in general. Manager of sales office added that he would evaluate that preparation and communication phase was done well and the execution was a success.

Second interview, for the first data set, was conducted with the local department manager. Similar questions, as for the previous interview, were asked in open discussion form. As an outcome, also similar answers were collected. Interviewer learned that department managers were involved with the process at the point where most of the preparations were already done and understanding for the need of change was same as for the general manager of the local sales office. Interviewee did mention that he had certain concern in mind in the beginning about how he is able to track how this option is used, but added that he do not see an issue in there. He adds that we have never tracked the attendance in office, but the results of the performance and this remains the same. He also remembers that there was no clear resistance when change was presented and it was accepted one hundred percent by the employees.

Based on these two interviews, researcher did not find a need to collect more data and restricted first data set to these results. It was clearly seen that reason and vision of the change was well handed over to the middle-management level and was understood in the same way.

#### 4.2 Questionnaire

Second data set was prepared and used to collect input from all local sales office employees about the topic. The main purpose of it was to ask experience-, feeling- and opinion-based feedback about the change implementation. Moreover, how this change have influenced their lives since then

Online questionnaire was prepared for the purpose and sent to approximately seventy employees. Response rate was approximately 34 %, which was less than, what did the researcher hope to receive, but still offered valuable amount of information and feedback to the researcher. Based on experience and personal feeling of the author, the assumption is that if more employees had answered, then the general outcome would have been very much similar to the current one.

In total twelve questions were asked. In the next paragraphs, I will go through each question, explain why I choose this certain question for the questionnaire, what was the nature of the question and how were the results like.

As an introduction to the e-mail and questionnaire itself, author took the opportunity to introduce herself, the topic and the purpose. It was also explained in the beginning that answering to the questions is fully anonymous and the final answers will not be shared in detail level with any other person, but the writer of the thesis. In the end of the e-mail, in which the link to the questionnaire was sent, it was also offered an option for face-to-face discussion about the topic for those, who wish to give rather more input on it. Author did not receive any response to this offer.

First question was about the age group of the respondents and this question was placed as mandatory question to be answered. It was offered five age groups to choose from by the researcher: younger than twenty-five and including, from twenty-six to thirty, from thirty-one to forty, from forty-one to fifty-five and fifty-six upwards. The purpose to this question was not to collect the age groups of the respondents, but to see if there is any certain strong trends in specific age groups. No strong links, between age groups and answers given within the questionnaire, was found.

The second question was also quantitative and set as mandatory to answer. The question was about if the respondent worked in the company during the time of implementation. There was possibility to choose from answers Yes and No. Sixty-seven percentages of the employees, who answered the questionnaire, were working with the company at the time of implementation of the organisational change and thirty-three percent of respondents entered afterwards. The purpose of the question was to find out if there is any concerns by the employees, who were hired after the change. As well as to see if the answers show the trend in mind-set change over the years by the respondents who were working with the company during the previous way of working. Questionnaire did give expected results for these two topics. There was no strong signals, but some certain concerns by low percentage of new employees as well as few responses about how the mind-set by employees, who were working with the company while the change was implemented, had changed into more positive direction within these last four years. These topics will be discussed more in the section of the next questions.

Next, third questions, was feeling-based question with an option for open answer. Researcher was seeking for first feelings and concerns of the respondents after the change was communicated. This was relevant question only for sixty-seven percentage of respondents, but also gave an



option to the new employees to give an input about how it seems how the implementation was done and how did they feel when they first heard from it. Maturity of the feedback was positive and employees felt that this is correct direction and this change was expected. There was few concerns about how will it work out in reality and what will the future bring. One feedback was explaining the concern about the possible change direction later on from own office principle to open-layout option, but added, that this is exactly what happened and it was only a positive change. Another concern was about if the people will start using this option in a wrong way. No negative response was given as an answer to the question. There was also couple of employees, who felt neutral about the news.

Fourth question, which was last quantitative question asked, looked for an understanding of how employees felt about change implementation. It was possible to answer with an option given in scale from one to five. Five stand for excellent and one for poor. Eighty percent of respondents gave high rating on the performance of the management while preparing and implementing the change. They felt that it was well prepared already before the communicating it first time on overall level and feedback of employees was taken into consideration when eliminating possible obstacles. Twenty percent of the employees rated the change implementation as average or slightly under average. The issues were seen in two main categories: not enough support in middle-management level either in local Finnish office or by the supervisor, who is located in another country where this same option is not given and concern about how this freedom is used wrongly by other employees. The first issue was seen stronger in the beginning of the implementation phase, but has moved into better direction after people have got more used to it and managers have experienced that this opportunity is not influencing the quality of the work. Moreover, gives benefit on it. Small presentence of the respondents did give a feedback about the concerns and issues that are still relevant at this point of the time. Very few people felt that colleagues use this freedom in a wrong way and do not work full eight hours during the day. There was though no feedback on if this has an influence on their or someone else workload. Then there was also other side of this this issue – employees feel pressure by colleagues, while working outside of office building. They feel that there is still monitoring and tracking by others in a negative manner. Percentage of the last one was higher than the one for the previous.

Similar trend, as within previous question, was given as a feedback while answering fifth question - how employees feel about the change nowadays. Most of the employees are happy about the current situation and had an emphasis on a word “modern”. Feedback also included, that same direction should be followed also for the future. Percentage of people clearly noted that their own

mind-set have developed positively, together with the change, over the years. It is also raised forward, that general in a company this seems to be working well, but could be that there are departments where rules and same line is not necessary fully understood. Partially maybe as it is dependent also on nature of the position and tasks, which is not offering as much of freedom to some of employees as it does for others. Especially, when the position requires more face-to-face interaction with other local colleagues.

Question six – From where do you work mainly? Researcher has given some options based on personal experience and knowledge about possible often-used options: home, main office, at the field (customers, travelling for work), cafeteria, openly used workspaces and option for others. According to the results, seventy-nine percentage of the respondents work still in the main office as a preferred option. Seventeen percentage prefer working from home and four percent of employees answer that they spend most of their working time visiting the customers and/or travelling for the work related reasons.

Questions seven and eight are seeking for main reasons why people would prefer to work either at office or at home. Author has given options to choose one out of these and offered possibility to choose “other” and give more input at comments section. For the question seven, what is the main reason for working in the main office in Vantaa, next options were offered: it is not possible to perform work outside of office, interaction and direct face-to-face cooperation with others, better working environment (tools, room, internet, furniture...) and others. Interaction and face-to-face communication was selected most frequently. This option ranked first with fifty percent of all options, followed by environment and equipment advantage with a result of twenty-nine percentage. Ability of working outside of main office made thirteen percent out of total. In this current case, for some of respondents there was small possibility in using an advantage given by flexibility, but limited due to nature of the tasks. Some extra comments about the topic were given as well. Several people mention that new working space is also a good motivation in working at the main office building. Eight question is seeking for the advantages or reasons, employees find, when working outside of main office. Fifty-eight percentage of people use this advantage of flexibility to organise better work-life balance. Common to the sales office high percentage of respondents work elsewhere due to customer visits. This option was picked by twenty-five percent of employees. Researcher gave an option to choose also an answer about not preferring open-layout office option. This was not chosen by anyone, but in the remarks was mentioned that one of the reasons to work elsewhere is to get quiet environment while working on more demanding task or task that needs full concentration.

Ninth question was placed to find out the most important positive possibilities that are offered by the new way of working. It was possible to choose maximum two options out of six answers given by the researcher. Ranking from the highest to the lowest was next: flexibility, balance between work and family time, better concentration, option to work from home, more time for the sport related activities, more time for the other hobbies. Flexibility is highly appreciated with ranking of seventy-nine of respondents checked this as an one of the options out of two and have a strong connection in using this to balance personal life and work life. Authors aim was to collect some respond on if people appreciate a flexibility when using it for exercising or other hobbies. Three people picked have chosen an option about the sport activities. Unexpected outcome of the answers was that nobody from age group under thirty picked that answer. There was also given a possibility to give comments related to the question. In one of the comments was noted that in international company, as case company is, it is an advantage to the employee and employer that some of the teleconference meetings that are held in later time due to difference in time zone, can be attended from home. That gives better tools and possibilities in communicating with colleagues from different countries. Another reason mentioned was work efficiency. It was explained that while travelling often to customers, starting and ending point of the place have remarkable difference in time management.

Following, tenth, question is collecting an information about the opposite: what are the biggest challenges while working from home? As well as in the previous question, maximum two options was able to choose. The ranking, for five options given, was next: shortcomings in the working environment (equipment, furniture, space...), not enough social interaction, distractions at home, time management, and poor internet connection. Highest picks was given to shortcomings in the working environment. Comments section in the end of the question offered a possibility for remarks. It was explained that ergonomics of the home "office" was not as high quality as in the main office and working from small screen is making it challenging to work from home. Internet connection was picked twice and is similar issue as the previous one – shortage in equipment required for efficient work performance. Positive surprise was that time management was not found as an issue in most of the cases. It is still important to note that percentage of people did pick it as an answer due to the reason, explained in comments section, that clear line between work time and personal time is difficult to see for them.

Eleventh question is a follow-up question for the tenth, which is asking more in detail, what is needed to perform work better when working from home. This was asked in open answer form. Most answers are related to the equipment such as bigger screen, printer, better chair and table,

extra headsets, additional cables and docking station. Highest mentioned was bigger screen. Employees wish that company would support in having additional screen also for home. Another, more mentioned issue was internet connection. Next suggestions for improvement was made regarding last topic: company is providing a possibility for an internet option, which is not connected to phone, but to the computer directly or/and faster internet connection for the phone, which would be more efficient when sharing the connection with computer. Several people mentioned that separate office at home would help in concentration. It was still found by many respondents that current situation is good and there is no need for additional improvements. As well as some of the employees, who did answer about the improvement possibilities, did mention that these are not crucial, as working from home is not their preference. Within results of the outcome, again, it was mentioned that common understanding and trust by the colleagues is necessary when working from home.

Last question of the questionnaire is looking for a general feeling of the employees about how well they manage their time now, when they have more freedom and responsibility in doing that. Majority of the respondents find that they do manage time well and see no issue in that. Some mention that it is nowadays better than during the previous way of working as they can use it now more efficient. Generally, freedom and possibility for responsibility in this is highly appreciated by the employees. Percentage of respondents though find that they are not managing it well due to high level of the workload. It did not specify if the working way of working is reason for not managing the time.

In this section of the thesis, author used the interviews, done with the management, to learn more about the motivation and vision of the change. Moreover, information about, how the change was prepared and implemented. In second section it was tested, by using questionnaire, how this does reflects in the answers, given by the employees. As an outcome, it was seen that there is high appreciation, by the effort done during pre-implementation and during implementation phase. The need for the change was initiated by the employees and executed in a way that the vision set, was understood by most of the respondents of the questionnaire. Even though the general feeling about the implementation, execution, follow-up and current situation of the change was positive, there is still few issues that were raised by the employees.

#### 4.3 Summary of the Current State Analysis

As a general conclusion, of the current state analysis, author finds that change preparations and implementation was well prepared and done by the management. Feedback of the employees was reflecting that it was well understood and appreciated. Author received very positive feedback of the topic during current state analysis. There were few small points mentioned that should be considered later on to within the proposal section. To be able to understand these issues more in depth, additional research on similar cases and general mistakes made is needed. Next paragraph will be covering these topics.

## **5 Literature and Case Studies: Strengths and Weaknesses**

Previous research done, during first existing knowledge section and current state analysis section, created a need for furthermore investigation on theory. Moreover, there is a reason to seek for some practical cases or researches that could give the direction and needed recommendation when forming an initial proposal.

### 5.1 Case Studies

Current paragraph will look into two cases where remote working was banned after several years when having it as one of the options for employees. In both of the cases, similar reasons of the change made were communicated and critics, as a result, were received.

#### 5.1.1 Case Study: Yahoo

Remote working was in use by Yahoo until 2015, when Marissa Mayer, chief of Yahoo, banned this option from their employees. The Guardian reflects in their article the memo from Yahoo's human resources chief Jackie Reses – but driven by Mayer –to become the absolute best place to work, communication and collaboration will be important, so we need to be working side-by-side. That is why it is critical that we are all present in our offices (Miller 2013). This topic was also written about in New York Times in 2013 and one of the points mentioned there was that studies show that people who work at home are significantly more productive but less innovative. John Sullivan, a professor of management at San Francisco State University who runs a human

resource advisory firm, said this. John Challenger, chief executive of Challenger Gray & Christmas, an outplacement and executive coaching firm explains also that a lot of companies are afraid to let their workers work from home some of the time or all of the time because they're afraid they'll lose control (Miller 2013). Probably both of these statements are true and can explain the measures taken by management in Yahoo.

### 5.1.2 Case Study: IBM

Another, more recent, case was by IBM in 2017. In 2009, IBM reported that 40% of its 386,000 employees in 173 countries were working remotely. After several years of accepting remote working within the company, IBM management applied "move or leave" program, which means that the Big Blue's US marketing employees will have to work at one of the six main offices in America. However, that is not the only department that might have to obey the new rules. Similarly in this case, need for face-to-face meetings and close cooperation between employees, was mentioned as reason for the decision made.

### 5.1.3 Summary of the Case Studies

In both of the cases, there was indicated reason on getting more input, creativity and efficiency from the employees through the collaboration. Both cases also received critics about that they had failed to use remote working option to add more efficiency and increasing the results. Moreover, it is claimed that returning back working from main office is a tool that is used in a hope to recover from poorly performing business situation.

## 5.2 Strengths and Weaknesses of remote working

Based on first set of existing knowledge and current state analysis, author was able to identify some main strengths and weaknesses of remote working that are true for the case company. One of the main weaknesses found, was that employees feel guilt while working remotely.

Within article, about IBM decision, it was also mentioned one of the main issues of the remote working. Scott Hanselman, Microsoft employee, programmer, teacher and speaker, wrote about the disadvantages of being a remote worker on his blog. He believes that people who work

remotely feel guilty because they assume colleagues think they waste time and not put in “a solid 40 hours.” Because of this, home workers tend to work late and even work weekends.

Hanselman identified at least four disadvantages of working from home and gave some advice how to deal with these:

- ***Being unseen might make you invisible at times.*** He suggests that to make sure this does not happen, you should go into the office from time to time to reassure everyone that you are still working there and you are fulfilling your tasks. While you are at it, you can have some one-on-one meetings, crack a joke with your colleagues and meet new people. So, basically, that old saying “out of sight, out of mind” is true, which means that you need to make your presence felt — and seen.
- ***The ‘guilt’ card.*** The remote worker often puts in more hours than required to make sure colleagues do not think they are slacking off.
- ***You shall not pass.*** You may have access to everything you need but every now and then, there is this problem that you can only solve if you are in the “actual” office.
- ***Feedback pending.*** Receiving feedback on your work sometimes means that you have to ask for it. Your remote status may feed your paranoia and you may think that silence is trouble. However, it really is not! You simply have to ask for feedback.

As a general advice, if you work from home, you need to remember not to skip some important things such as eat, blink, take breaks, drink water etc. He challenges to see if you might say “I knew that already” but when it comes to taking a break or stopping for the day if your answer is “just this thing and I’m done” you clearly need to change something (Motroc 2017).

This can often be a reason also for employees start being overloaded and is no longer able to manage their time in an efficient way. Being “invisible” is another side of the story. Others might really develop an understanding that colleague, who is working more remotely, is not putting in enough effort to fulfil required working hours.

From the positive side, author learned through the current state analysis, case studies and other theory given, that flexibility is highly appreciated by the employees when balancing work and personal life. Moreover, when it comes to the benefit of the business perspective, it increases

efficiency and productivity. There are several studies made on this topic. Stanford professor Nicholas Bloom did one of the researches. Bloom worked together with in his economics graduate at Stanford--James Liang, co-founder and CEO of Ctrip, China's largest travel agency, with 16,000 employees for two years period. The CEO was interested in giving employees the work-from-home option because office space in the company's Shanghai HQ is supremely expensive and because employees had to endure long commutes to work (not being able to afford city living). He did his research on 500 employees, who were divided into two groups: a control group, who continued working at headquarters, and volunteer work-from-homers, who had to have a private room at home, at least six-month tenure with Ctrip, and decent broadband access as conditions. Bloom expectations were to find both, positive and negative outcome. Instead, study showed an astounding productivity boost among the telecommuters equivalent to a full day's work. Turns out work-from-home employees work a true full-shift, or more, versus being late to the office or leaving early multiple times a week and found it less distracting and easier to concentrate at home.

Based on feedback collected from the employees during second data set, it was found out that working from main office is the preference for most of them. Respondents gave an input that they use remote working in most of the cases to perform some task which is more demanding on concentration or to use this option for work-life balance. This was exactly the expectations of the management when change was implemented. However, as already learned during the research, working in main office together with colleagues, add creativity and more perspectives.

A number of researches show important role of social factors when it comes to creativity. It is recognized that family experience, classroom climate, corporate cultures, and national cultures can influence creativity. Hennessey, Professor of Psychology, evaluate social perspective of creativity from the vantage point of the intrinsic motivation theory of creativity. She does find out that external pressure or rewards or controlling environment are typically associated with low level of motivation, but can have positive effect on creativity. It appears that conditions that limit feelings of autonomy limit extent to which individuals are motivated for creativity. She also adds that without change of membership, groups may become rather "stale" and may have little motivation or ability to innovate.



### 5.3 General Mistakes Made While Planning and Implementing the Change

Based on previous research of theory done and current state analysis feedback, author finds relevant to investigate more about general mistakes done within process of change management. With this information, it is hoped to see which kind of possible mistakes case company has made during the process and in which points company has been successful. Previously, Kotter theory of eight steps were discussed. Author of the thesis find that this was rather a good fit to the case company for a guidelines due to its history and ways of forming together with the time. For this reason, Kotters eight main transformation mistakes were chosen to be looked into more in depth to see if these could be relate to the case company. These eight points were identified in his book based on his own experience.

**Allowing too much complacency.** When making a change within organisation, according to him, is that when employees are satisfied and used to the way of working that has been existing up to the point and it is not well enough explained to them why the change is necessary. Often management, or others who drive the change overestimate their abilities to change the people or/and enter their comfort zone when changing their ways of working. Based on research done within current state analysis phase, author finds that case company has been successful at this point. Mainly due to the reason that change need came to an attention from bottom-up, not from top-down approach.

**Failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition.** Secondly, he describes how lack of strong teamwork can lead into wrong direction. Often there are some leaders who resist the change as a middle management. He also states that no matter how capable and dedicated the staff head, guiding coalition without strong line leadership never seem to achieve the power that is required to overcome what are often massive sources of inertia. When reflecting this point to the case company, the attention is on the structure of the international company. As well as on the fact that different departments within local sales office could have difference in management structure and team structures. Based on the feedback received – this was not mentioned as a huge issue when considering the topic, but was still considered as a one of the possible problems. For this reason, author of the thesis considers this step within the proposal section.

**Underestimating the power of vision.** Vision plays a key role in producing useful change. The purpose of vision is to direct, align, and inspire actions on the part of large numbers of people. Without a vision debate can be an outcome of every discussion. The smallest decisions can generate heated conflict that saps energy and destroys morale and waste time. Kotter gives a useful rule of thumb: Wherever you cannot describe the vision driving a change initiative in five minutes or less and get reaction that signifies both understanding and interest, you are in trouble. Within the interview conducted with manager of the local sales office, question was asked about the vision and quick and clear answer was received.

**Under communicating the vision.** This is a state where mistake is done while employees are underestimated. It is crucial that most of employees are willing to help, often to the point of making short-term sacrifices. Communication comes in both words and deeds. The latter is generally the most powerful form. It is important that behaviour by important individuals is reflecting the change and verbal communication. Based on the feedback given by the employees and information collected during the interviews – it was quite clear that management was successful when performing this certain step.

**Permitting obstacles to block the new vision.** New initiatives fail too often when employees, even though they embrace a new vision, disempowered by huge obstacles in their path. Sometimes the obstacles can be organizational structure. He states that perhaps the worst of all are supervisors who refuse to adapt to new circumstances and who make demands that are inconsistent with the transformation. Whenever smart and well-intentioned people avoid confronting obstacles, they disempower employees and undermine change. As already previously explained, complexity is in the structure of the company and for this reason, maintaining of the “way of doing” has emphasis on. Author is little uncertain on if this step is well enough considered on a local management level and considers this step for proposal section.

**Failing to create short-term wins.** Real transformation takes time. Kotter explains that creating short-term wins is different from hoping for short-term wins. Creating short term wins is active approach and hoping short-term wins is passive approach. In a successful transformation, managers actively look for ways to obtain clear performance improvements. That step was difficult

to analyse within the company for the researcher, but based on experience within the company – decision was that there is no problems on that section.

**Declaring victory too soon.** Some people can be tempted to declare victory too soon and this can cause a situation where it is communicated to others that the job is mostly done, which is often not true. At this section – author of the thesis decided that there was no issues on that within the case company while conducting this selected change.

**Neglecting to Anchor Changes Firmly in the Corporate Culture.** When the change becomes “the way we do things around here”. Many people may link performance improvements with wrong achievement and change. While people in management level changes mind can still stay with this one management change made back in a day within another leadership team and organisational culture adapted can be ignored over the time. As already mentioned during few previous steps and within the methods section – following up and maintaining is the logical next step for the case company. For this reason also last step is considered within the proposal section.

## 6 Building a Proposal

Proposal is built based on existing knowledge, current state analysis, case studies and the author’s personal experience while working for the case company. Author found five proposals relevant for the case company based on research done. Within the proposal phase author of the thesis did not find need for the change at the way of working that was applied during end of 2015. Proposals were more built on the future suggestions on to keep in mind the need for maintenance and follow-up. Very positive feedback was collected from the employees as a result of the questionnaire as well as verbally over the years since the change was implemented. There were some small suggestions and concerns addressed that should be considered for the future to be able to continue with current way of working in a successful way.

### 6.1 Initial proposal

Initial proposal was built based on previous research and researcher's personal experience within the company while considering initial business problem of the thesis.

#### 6.1.1 Proposal 1

***Continuing with the current model in terms of responsibility and freedom given to employees.*** General feedback given by the employees was that current working option is well appreciated and understood. Employees found that this is the selling point of the company while recruiting. In addition, gave an advice that returning to old ways of working would not be preferred within the company. One of the reason for this was as the need for change came from the working level and management succeeded well when preparing, communicating and implementing the change.

#### 6.1.2 Proposal 2

***Continue improving working conditions together with employees within the main office.*** As a result of the current state analysis it was found out that most of employees prefer working from main office due to better possibility for social interaction and better working conditions. Company moved in August 2019 into new building and working environment changed compared to the one used in previous office, management has been working from early stage to design new conditions together with employees to find best possible solutions that can fit for all. This should be continues process throughout the years to come within new office and should not be forgotten after several years. Information found in theory and case studies section showed us that creativity could be added better within the groups. This is an advantage of the employer. Even if offering remote working option, direction should not be that employees prefer working from outside of main office building and only individually.

#### 6.1.3 Proposal 3

***Follow-up regular basis on a middle-management level.*** There were few issues that author picked from the feedback given by the respondents of the questionnaire. One of the topic was that employees feel quilt while working remotely and using the advantage given by the employer. Later on during the research author found out that this is common issue within such working

environment. Author finds that this issue can be solved or reduced on middle management level and due to that recommends to have strong process to follow up, offer trainings and discuss the topic with the department managers, team leaders and also if necessary with the managers outside of local sales office, in regular basis. Some of employees felt that not every department manager understood the option offered in the same way and are not giving equal opportunity throughout the company. It was added that difficulties were mainly in the beginning of the change and with the managers outside of Finnish sales office, but is still valid at current point of the time. These issues stand in Kotters main mistakes when permitting obstacles to block the new vision. One of the advice on middle management level could be to direct employees in a way that they would feel themselves better in using the freedom, by giving more visibility to the managers and other colleagues about the work he or she is doing and about the location where the work is done and when. This could help also with the point where colleagues feel that remotely working employee is not putting in required effort. There are several structures and nature of the work throughout the different departments. Understanding these differences could lower the conflict and possible jealousy.

#### 6.1.4 Proposal 4

***On-boarding process for new employees related to the topic and follow-up.*** One of the common mistakes presented by Kotter is neglecting to Anchor Changes Firmly in the Corporate Culture. Here we come again to the topic where training and following-up management level for the topic is crucial in maintaining this way of working successfully. As Kotter mentions, situation might change into different direction when manager changes. It could go both ways: positive or negative. For that reason, on boarding and follow-up is needed. But not only on a management level. It is also necessary to have strong integration during every hiring process. Most of new employees felt that this is certainly preferred way of working nowadays and felt that they can manage themselves within it well. Despite, there was small percentage, who communicated concern on not feeling themselves comfortable within this environment. There should be emphasis on the topic within the hiring and on-boarding process. Moreover, follow-up on a regular basis for time period to see if person can manage with the responsibility given and if the option is correctly understood by them. Starting in new position is challenging always due to lots of new information and new environment. For young people the issue could be that they just made a step from academic life to work life and not everything is obvious. For elderly, challenge could be in coping with this new way of working.

### 6.1.5 Proposal 5

***Conduct further more research on which kind of support could be offered and would be used by employees most effectively in terms of supporting with equipment for home offices.*** High percentage of employees referred to a disadvantage when working from office is the equipment available elsewhere. Main emphasis was to the wider screen and poor internet quality. Based on data collected author proposes to the management to make additional research on the topic within the employees to find out more about which option would be the most efficient and logical that can be offered to all employees equally. Every action is a additional effort for the administrative employees and it would be necessary to see if employees would really use the advantage if company would work on options to offer it. In this point authors additional recommendation is to give some more training on tax issues that might limit or need to be considered by the employees while company is offering equipment for use outside of main office building. For the direction, author, offers some options that could be considered:

- Training on how and if equipment bought by employees themselves could be reduced in personal tax return process.
- Possible negotiated discount by the company with the external provider, which all employees could use for equipment.
- Training about how tax reduction need to be done by individual if company is providing equipment directly to the employee.
- Better internet connection for the mobile phones, which could support more efficiently when sharing connection with the computer.
- Possibility to have internet connection that can be connected and carried with the laptop.

## **7 Validation and Final Proposal**

Five proposals were presented during the discussed with manager of the local sales office and HR manager. Open form was used for the discussion. Author presented each proposal point and gave an additional information on why it was picked as an outcome of the research. Feedback and proposals were taken into consideration and were found relevant for the future steps.

### 7.1 Validation of Proposal

First proposal made by the researcher was agreed by the management and appreciated as a confirmation of right direction. Proposals two, three and four were written down as good suggestions to be considered more in depth for future. These were seen bit as an eye-opener, as it was agreed that often with the time it could come to the point that everything is taken as a default and issues could grow silently behind the working process. Last proposal raised the most discussion in terms of if and how company could offer the benefits for the home offices due to the tax reasons and complexity of what to offer that could be equal to everyone. It was also mentioned that every investigation on which benefits could be offered and every negotiation with the external companies done for the benefits offered, requires working hours and effort of administration employees. History has shown that previously used efforts often do not pay off as in the end employees will not use these often enough. It was agreed that the proposal will be taken under consideration, but was asked from the researcher to have a quick check from available cases if there is information easy to reach on if and how other companies in Finland offer such benefits and what kind of issues they face with these. Researcher took this request with her and concluded that there is not really information well available on a topic. Proposal on educating and informing employees more on possibilities and tax issues related to the topic was well appreciated.

### 7.2 Final Proposal

Initial proposals were accepted by the management of local sales office and later on presented as a final proposal of the research.

## 8 Conclusions

The objective of the thesis is to make suggestions to the case company management while considering initial business problem. Management of the case company found that there is a need to follow up if the change implemented in 2015, regarding the flexibility in working hours and location, was well conducted and is still working out for everyone. The expectation was to receive clear suggestions on if there is a need for improvements on the topic. Outcome of the research is five proposals to the management based on the research done during the process of the thesis.

General message is that change is well appreciated by the employees of the company and no improvements and changes is needed to be done. Proposals of the researcher are focusing more on maintaining of the change made back on 2015. It came to an attention that over the time change could become as the “way the things are done” and when the world is changing as well as the people within the company will change – it is necessary to make sure that everyone will stay on board with the initial idea of this change which was applied. It is needed to follow-up regularly and make sure that everyone understand this approach in a same way – to make the most of it.

## 8.1 Evaluation of the Thesis

This thesis did meet the requirements of the case company. Management did find proposals, which will be considered for future, useful. Especially, feedback of the employees was confirming that the change is working out well within the company even after four years since the implementation. As well as it was shown the appreciation on a successful change management conducted by the management of the local sales office. The thesis did meet the criteria that was initially set.

### 8.1.1 Outcome vs Objective

The objective of the thesis is to make suggestions to the case company and the outcome of the thesis is the suggestions. The initial purpose of the thesis is met.



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