

Employee Engagement at Company X

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<p>The aim of the thesis was to measure the level of employee engagement at Company X, in three of its operating countries: Finland, Norway and Denmark. The focus of the research was to get an understanding on the level of engagement at the company as well as to point out possible differences in the engagement levels between the countries researched.</p> <p>The theoretical part of the thesis covers employee engagement as a concept. It differentiates the concept of employee engagement from other closely related terms employee satisfaction and employee experience and goes into detail about the definition of the term. The theoretical part also discusses the importance of employee engagement for organizations today and explains the reason behind engaged employees performing better than their disengaged colleagues, and the factors that enable engagement in organizations. Lastly, the theory focuses on measuring employee engagement and introduces the process of creating an employee engagement survey for Company X.</p> <p>Employee engagement at Company X was measured through an anonymous employee survey created with Webropol 3.0. The employee survey was segmented into different areas of engagement, based on the key themes for employee engagement surveys by The Society for Human Resource Management Foundation in the United States and the dimensions of Great Place to Work. The survey measures employee views on job satisfaction, feedback and opportunities for growth, their own engagement, employer credibility, fairness and camaraderie and pride and commitment at Company X, to create a comprehensive look at the engagement of the employees. The employees were also asked to reflect on reasons based on which they might choose to leave the company, what they think makes a company a good employer, and lastly, what they think Company X could do better as an employer. The data collected was analysed using quantitative and qualitative methods.</p> <p>The results of the survey showed that employee engagement at Company X is good, but some areas of it need further work. Based on the results there are slight differences in the engagement levels of employees in different countries and employees in Denmark are the most engaged ones. The results especially show that countries have different views on employer credibility and that opportunities for growth and development at the company are not seen as best. On the other hand, employees of Company X enjoy their work and have strong feelings of camaraderie and pride. Measuring employee engagement regularly should be implemented as part of the company's human resource processes to keep track of the development of the engagement level and to include the rest of the company's operating countries in the research as well.</p> <p>As employee engagement is one of the key people issues in organizations today, the thesis offers a comprehensive look at why all organizations should be interested in measuring employee engagement and introduces an example of how to do it.</p>	
Keywords Employee Engagement, Measuring Employee Engagement, Employee Survey, Human Resource Management	

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1 Introduction

The thesis is a research-based bachelor's thesis for the Degree Programme in International Business, taught at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. The author's specialisation in the International Business programme is Human Resource Management.

The aim of the thesis is to measure employee engagement at Company X, to find out if there are differences in the engagement levels between teams in three different countries and lastly, to offer the company recommendations on future work with employee engagement. The level of engagement is measured in three of Company X's operating countries with an employee engagement survey and the results are then compared between the countries. The theoretical part of the thesis introduces the concept of employee engagement and why it is such an important HR issue for organizations today.

The first chapter of the thesis introduces the topic, background, case company and the aim of the research. The second chapter covers the theoretical part of the thesis and chapter three introduces the research methods used. Chapter four covers the research results and recommendations for the company and chapter five concludes the thesis and discusses the author's own learning.

1.1 Background

Employees are often referred to as company's greatest asset. Competition for top talent is a common challenge for organizations and just as challenging can be to retain employees already employed. As hiring new employees is expensive and high employee turnover is to be avoided, focus on employee engagement in organizations is increasingly important. In an annual Global Trends in Employee Engagement study in 2017, it was reported that only 24% of employees are highly engaged and as much as 39% only moderately engaged (Bridger 2018, 1).

The fast-changing demands of work life places challenges on employees. As IT revolution has made it possible to work anytime from anywhere, a growing number of employees feel the pressure to perform better at work. This, combined with feelings of disengagement and dissatisfaction, can result in for example disinterest in work, absenteeism and stress. These negative feelings of employees will eventually have a negative effect on the company's business outcome. (Jha & Kumar 2016, 21.)

Organizations might have different reasons for being interested in employee engagement, but they all should be. Over the last decade employee engagement has become one of

the most important people issues in organizations (Edwards & Edwards 2019, 157). Making sure employees are engaged, feel satisfied with their work and are proud for what they do rewards the organization in many ways. High levels of employee engagement have been linked for example with higher company profit, customer satisfaction and productivity as well as lower employee turnover and absenteeism. (Bridger 2018, 23-37.)

Company X runs an annual employee satisfaction survey but has never focused only on measuring employee engagement. Company X is interested in finding out the level of employee engagement in three of its operating countries. In addition, Company X is interested in finding out if there are differences in employee engagement levels between the teams in different countries.

The research will be run in three countries Company X operates in: Finland, Norway and Denmark. The company operations in each country are similar, but the number of employees and years operated are different. Measuring employee engagement in these countries offers the company recent and relevant information on the level of employee engagement in the company and on the possible differences on engagement levels between the teams in different countries.

1.2 Research Question

The thesis aims to measure employee engagement at Company X and to offer the company recommendations for future work with engagement.

The thesis also aims to find out whether there are differences in the level of employee engagement between different countries the company operates in. The research is conducted to better understand the level of engagement of employees in different countries and to develop the work with employee engagement in the future.

The **research question (RQ)** is formed as: *On what level is employee engagement in Company X now and how can it be improved in the future?*

The research question has been divided into **three investigative questions (IQ)**:

IQ 1. On what level is employee engagement at Company X now?

IQ 2. How does the level of employee engagement differ between the three countries?

IQ 3. How can employee engagement be improved at Company X in the future?

Table 1 below presents the theoretical framework, research methods and results chapters for each investigative question.

Table 1. Overlay matrix

Investigative question	Theoretical Framework*	Research Methods	Results (chapter)
IQ 1. On what level is employee engagement at Company X now?	Employee engagement Enablers of employee engagement Measuring employee engagement Employee engagement survey	Employee Survey	4, 5.1
IQ 2. How does the level of employee engagement differ between the three countries?	Employee Engagement Measuring employee engagement Employee engagement survey	Employee Survey	4, 5.1
IQ 3. How can employee engagement be improved at Company X in the future?	Employee Engagement Importance of Employee Engagement to Organizations Enablers of employee engagement	Employee Survey + Theory on Employee Engagement	4, 5.1

1.3 Demarcation and International Aspect

The thesis focuses on measuring employee engagement at Company X, in three different countries the company operates in. Having relevant, up to date information on the engagement level of the employees the company can start working on the areas of employee engagement that need improving.

Company X is a Swedish company with branches in Finland, Norway, Denmark, France and United Kingdom. The thesis focuses on branches in Finland, Norway and Denmark, and aims to compare the differences in employee engagement between these countries. The countries were picked based on the wishes of the company and the similarities in the work environment. The three countries are also the closest to each other when it comes to the size of the team. The other countries the company has operations in will be excluded from the research to maintain the scope of the research, as well as to keep the results comparable between countries.

Company X in Finland has an outsourced customer service. The customer service agents will be excluded from the research, as they are employed by another company. Company X also has individual agents who will be excluded from the research as well, as they are not directly employed by Company X.

1.4 Benefits

Measuring employee engagement will result in better understanding of the level of engagement at Company X in the countries researched, and what causes either engagement or disengagement. By understanding what employee engagement consists of, and on what level it is in different countries of the company now, will allow Company X to further work on the engagement of its employees. Company X strongly believes that having happy employees will result in happy customers, therefore working on improving engagement of the employees is hoped to result in increased customer satisfaction as well. Employee engagement has been linked with many positive business outcomes, such as increased customer satisfaction and higher profit.

1.5 Key Concepts

Employee engagement is a process by which people become personally involved in the success of the organization (Smythe 2007, 28).

Employee satisfaction is the degree to which people either like or dislike their job (Spector 1997, 2).

Employee experience can be defined as the intersection of employee expectations, needs and wants and the organizational design of those expectations, needs and wants. (Goldsmith & Morgan 2017, 8.)

Employment is the relationship between the employer and the employee (Russo 2010, chapter 1).

Positive psychology is a scientific study of what makes life most worth living, and it has a focus on strengths instead of weaknesses. (Peterson 16.5. 2008.)

Organizational commitment refers to the bond between the employee and the organization that makes it difficult for the employee to leave the organization (Boudreau & Cascio 2011).

1.6 Case Company

The case company will be presented anonymously throughout the thesis and will be referred to as Company X.

Company X was founded in Sweden in 1890 and today has branches in five other European countries: Finland, Norway, Denmark, United Kingdom and France. All countries together, Company X employed 290 people in 2019.

The sector that Company X works in will not be mentioned as it might reveal the company, but all Company X employees work in an office job. The countries covered in the thesis are branches in Finland, Norway and Denmark. In Finland Company X employs 9 people, in Denmark 17 and in Norway 48 people. (Company X Annual Report 2019.)

The premium income of the company has been growing steadily since 2015, with an approximate average annual growth of 9%. According to Company X annual report, in 2019 growth in Denmark was strong with high customer loyalty, in Norway Company X was the market leader, and Finland grew strongly and exceeded its sales targets. In 2019 Company X made a profit (before appropriations and tax) of 123 M SEK, whereas in 2018 the same number had been 186 M SEK. In 2019 the company net profit was 94,6 M SEK, whereas in 2018 this had been 148,6 M SEK. (Company X Annual Report 2019.)

When it comes to employees, Company X's annual report of 2019 emphasizes commitment, trust, openness and professionalism being at the core of the company's corporate culture, and that skilled employees are the most important asset of the company. According to the annual report the company focuses on diversity, inclusion, skills development, health and good work environment in ensuring the well-being of their employees. Employee engagement as such is not mentioned in the report.

While writing the thesis and running the employee engagement survey in Finland, Norway and Denmark, the pandemic of covid-19 was still on-going. Since March most of the employees in all the countries have been working remotely from home.

2 Employee Engagement

This chapter covers the theoretical part of the thesis. First part of the chapter aims to differentiate the term employee engagement from closely related terms employee satisfaction and employee experience. After this a more detailed look into employee engagement is taken, explaining the term, introducing different definitions used and explaining the importance of engaged staff for organizations. The last part of the chapter explains why engaged employees perform better, what enables employee engagement and lastly, how employee engagement can be measured.

2.1 Employee Satisfaction, Employee Engagement and Employee Experience

Over the years the focus on employee well-being in organizations and human resource management has moved from employee satisfaction to employee engagement, and lately even on to employee experience. Although all these terms are used to define and measure the level of well-being and commitment of employees, they are different. To understand employee engagement, it is first needed to understand how it differs from other two closely related concepts. Figure 1 below illustrates how the focus in **employment** has shifted from utility and productivity to employee engagement and experience.

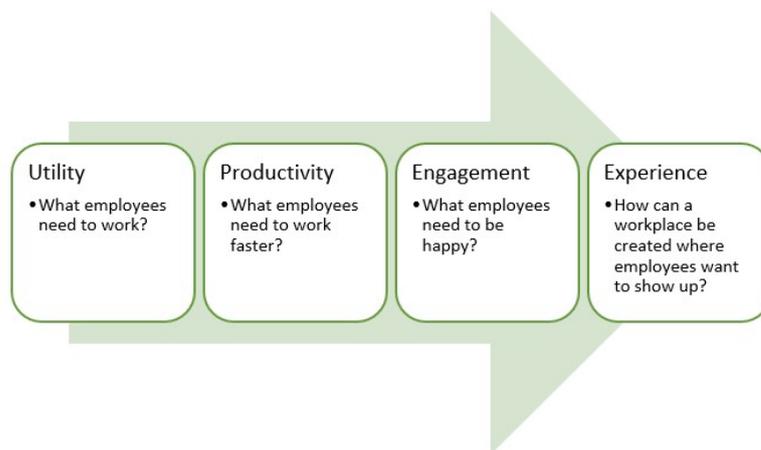


Figure 1. Evolution of employee engagement (adapted from Goldsmith & Morgan 2017)

Employees have a relationship with their employer and the organization they work for, employment (Russo 2010, chapter 1). **Utility** is the simplest form of the relationship. Employer has a job and employee needs one to make a living. In this case, employment is simply about the employer providing the employee with needed tools for working, nothing more. (Goldsmith & Morgan 2017, 3.) Especially in situations where employer has a supply of available workers, employer has the power to decide on work conditions, for exam-

ple who gets to work and when. When employees can easily be replaced and are only appreciated for their output, employees have no power over the conditions of their employment. (Russo 2010, chapter 1.)

Employment based on **productivity** is about optimizing how employees work. The focus is on what employees need to be able to do the job faster, and repeatable processes are emphasized. As with utility, there is no focus on creating a workplace where employees would want to work in. (Goldsmith & Morgan 2017, 3.)

The last decade has been called the era of **engagement**. The focus in employment has shifted from how the organizations could benefit from employees, to how the organizations could benefit their employees as well. (Goldsmith & Morgan 2017, 5.) During the era of engagement, both terms employee satisfaction and employee engagement have been used to define and measure employee well-being and commitment.

In 1970's and 1980's the focus in human resource management in organizations was on employee satisfaction. The term did not link with performance or productivity as such anymore but was more about the employee as an individual. (HR Zone 2013.) As many other terms in human resource management, also the definitions of employee satisfaction are various and have altered throughout the years. Simply **employee satisfaction** can be defined as the degree to which people either like or dislike their job (Spector 1997, 2).

The shift in focus from employee satisfaction to employee engagement began when a **link between engaged employees and positive business outcomes**, like the improvement of customer retention and sales performance, was shown by a paper by the Institute of Employment Studies in 1990. The term engagement was first introduced the same year by William Kahn, defining it to be "harnessing the organizations member's selves to their work roles" (Kahn 1990, 694). At the same time, employees had been moving away from the idea of a lifelong employment and were changing jobs more frequently than before, and organizations quickly realised to be losing some of their best employees. In early 2000's employee engagement was increasingly taken into practise, as organizations got results on engagement affecting employee retention, absenteeism, sales and profitability positively. (HR Zone 2013.) **Employee engagement** can be defined as the extent to which employees feel personally involved in the success of the company (Smythe 2007, 28).

In recent years employee experience has emerged as a new term linked with employee well-being and commitment. The increasing focus on employee experience does not

mean employee engagement will be replaced, but the two will most likely exist together. Employee experience is something that creates engaged employees. **Employee experience** can be defined as the intersection of employee expectations, needs and wants and the organizational design of those expectations, needs and wants. (Morgan & Goldsmith 2017, 8.)

2.2 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is the extent to which employees feel personally involved in the success of the company (Smythe 2007, 28). Many companies struggle with engaging their employees or know only little how to develop and improve the level of employee engagement. In Global Trends in Employee Engagement study in 2017 it was reported that only 24% of employees are highly engaged, and as much as 39% only moderately engaged. Organizations suffer from not understanding what employee engagement is and how it affects the business outcome, resulting in organizations choosing not to invest in developing employee engagement. According to a report by People Lab in 2017, only 14% of companies have a company-wide definition of employee engagement and only 42% of companies have an employee engagement strategy. (Bridger 2018, 1-2.)

William Kahn was the first to introduce the term engagement in 1990, defining it to be “harnessing the organizations members’ selves to their work roles” (Kahn 1990, 694). Although Kahn wrote more from the perspective of personal engagement rather than employee engagement, this is one of the first mentions of the term (Bridger 2018, 5).

There is no one, universal definition for employee engagement, but different definitions of the concept all have something in common. Employee engagement definitions all link to other human resource management related terms, such as **work effort** and **commitment**, as shown in figure 2. All the definitions describe employee engagement as something that can not be required from the employee, for example in a form of a contract. (Bridger 2018, 6.)

Employee engagement is defined usually as an internal state of the employee (Bridger 2018, 6). Defining the term can depend on the circumstances the term is used in, or the organization in question, and engagement is something that is not tangible nor can be proven by the employee. However, although employee engagement is often defined as an emotional commitment, it also must transfer into employee’s behaviour for it to affect performance (Mayo 2016, 84).

Employee engagement has been defined for example as "being positively present during the performance of work by willingly contributing intellectual effort, experiencing positive emotions and meaningful connections to others" and as "an individual's sense of purpose and focused energy, evident to others in the display of personal initiative, adaptability, effort and persistence directed toward organizational goals" (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development 2010, 5; Barbera, Macey, Schneider & Young 2009, 7). Simply, employee engagement can be defined as a process by which people become personally involved in the success of the organization. Engagement is about the employee being driven to reach the organization's goals and being proud for what the organization does. (Smythe 2007, 28.)

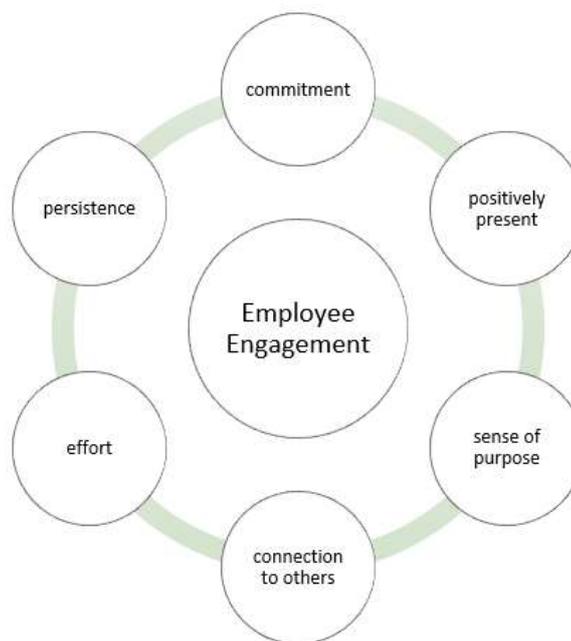


Figure 2. Terms linked with employee engagement

The definition of employee engagement usually has three dimensions as demonstrated in figure 3: intellectual, affective and social engagement. **Intellectual engagement** refers to the employee thinking about the job and how to do it better, **affective engagement** is about the employee feeling positively about the job and **social engagement** refers to the employee seeking actively opportunities to talk about work related things with others at work. Therefore, the definition of an engaged employee would be someone that thinks about their job, feels positive about it and seeks opportunities to talk about work related matters with colleagues. (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development 2010, 5.)



Figure 3. Three dimensions of employee engagement

Employee engagement can also be divided into transactional and transformational engagement depending on how the organization implements it. **Transactional engagement** is usually about responding to the results of an employee engagement survey, and the strategy to improve engagement is often a set of targets or activities. Employee engagement is not integrated in the organization or its culture but is a separate human resource strategy. **In transformational engagement**, on the other hand, the employees are an integral part of the business strategy. Employees' views and opinions are listened and acted on, and employee engagement is proactive and integrated in the strategy and culture. In transformational engagement, engagement is therefore not only about reacting to the results of an engagement survey. (Clarke & MacLeod 2009, 72.)

Commitment relates closely to employee engagement. Employee can be committed to their job, or the organization they work for. **Organizational commitment** refers to the bond between the employee and the organization that makes it difficult for the employee to leave. Employee's commitment can be about contributing for the organization, or staying in the organization, or both. Organizational commitment has three dimensions. **Affective commitment** refers to the employee's emotional attachment to an organization, **continuance commitment** is the extent to which an employee believes leaving the organization would be costly and **normative commitment** refers to employee's feelings that staying is the right thing to do. (Boudreau & Cascio 2011.)

Employees mostly want three things from employers, which all build to their engagement: opportunities to participate in decisions which affect them, ethics and values to identify with and to have opportunities to grow (Smythe 2007, 16). As employee engagement is about how much the employee feels personally involved in the business, having the possibility to contribute to the decision making in the organization is one of the most important aspects of engagement. Employees feel engaged when they are trusted and involved in the decisions, when they are given clear tasks and projects, and when they are accountable for the results of their tasks, which they can then see adding value to the whole company. (Smythe 2007, 28.)

Engagement is not only about how hard employees work, but it is about them putting their real selves into the work. Engaged employees speak out what they think and feel, while doing their work the best they can. When employees care about what they do, they are committed to do their best. Employees engage, when they feel it matters to do so. (Kahn 2010, 21-22.)

2.3 Importance of Employee Engagement for Organizations

Employee engagement has become increasingly important in organizations as the benefits of engagement for the overall business success have become known. Engaged employees are said to be more creative and productive, more critical and innovative and simply enjoy their work more, creating a good work environment for other employees as well. (Smythe 2007, 4.) Engaged employees create competitive advantage, which is why employee engagement should be included in every business strategy (Bridger 2018, 37).

Engagement impacts the company's financial and operational results positively in several ways. High levels of employee engagement can result in improved revenue growth, profit margins and shareholder returns (Clarke & MacLeod 2009, 11). High level of engagement has been shown to increase **company profit** (Bridger 2018, 23). Illustrated in figure 4 is the result from Towers Watson 2012 study, in which it was reported that companies with high sustainable employee engagement had an almost three times higher average one-year operating income margin than companies with low engagement. (Towers Watson 2012, 8.)

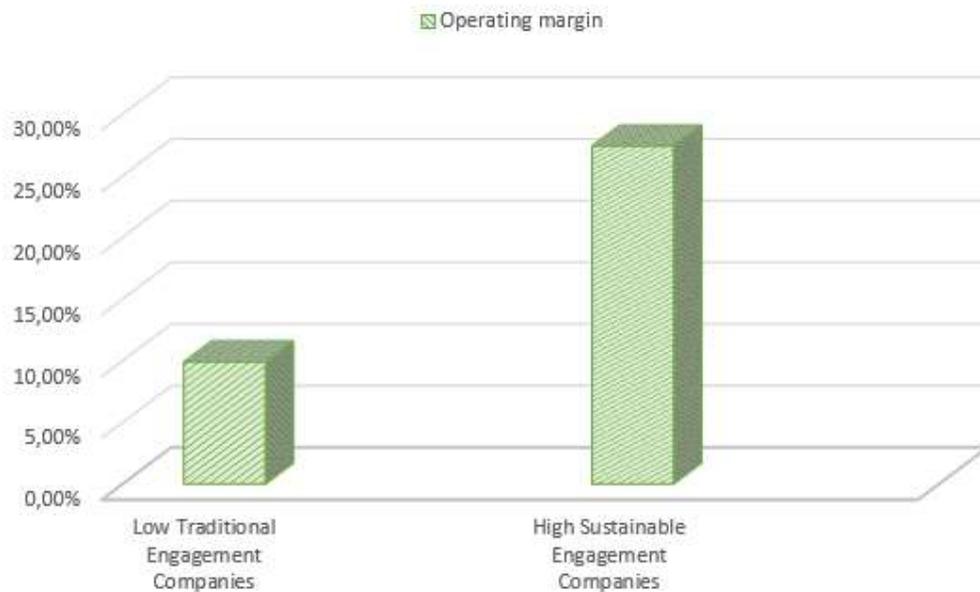


Figure 4. Operating margin based on engagement levels (adapted from Towers Watson 2012)

On the other hand, Boudreau and Cascio argue that people like to work for companies that are financially successful, which explains the better profits in organizations with higher engagement levels. Boudreau and Cascio argue that in some cases, the employee attitudes do not cause the financial performance, although these two are correlated. Even though employee engagement causes financial growth in companies, it can also be argued that financially growing companies are fun to work for and offer more opportunities for their employees, thus employees becoming more engaged. (Boudreau & Cascio 2011.)

High levels of employee engagement have also been linked with **positive customer experience** (Bridger 2018, 26). One of the first researches to prove this was the research by Harvard Business Review in 1998, as the American department store Sears created an employee-customer-profit -model. The model measured the organizations' success with customers, employees and investors, and showed how the actions of the management affected employee attitudes, which then had a direct effect on customer satisfaction. (Rucci, Kirn & Quinn 1998.) Employee attitudes are directly linked to customer attitudes. Employees that find their work meaningful are more committed and contributing, which then results in increased customer commitment. Eventually, this will lead to better financial results for the organization as well. (Ulrich & Ulrich 2010.)



Figure 5. Role of employee engagement in the success of the company

Employee engagement also affects employee **productivity** and **innovation**. Engaged employees are more innovative and more productive than their disengaged colleagues. (Bridger 2018, 28 & 30.) Disengaged employees lose an average of 14 days a year to lost productivity at work, whereas highly engaged employees lose only 7.6 days (Towers Watson 2012, 9). Gallup research in 2007 reported that 66% of engaged employees told that their job brings out their most creative ideas, whereas only 3% of disengaged employees reported the same. (Killham & Krueger 2007.)

In addition to business outcomes, level of employee engagement also has a direct effect on numerous **people indicators**, meaning that by feeling engaged the employees also feel overall more satisfied and well at their work. Engaged employees are less likely to leave the organization, which results in **lower employee turnover**. Employee turnover is usually one of the main reasons for companies to start working on their employee engagement. (Bridger 2018, 33.) The cost of replacing an employee and then training and integrating a new employee can cost the organization more than one and a half times the salary of a worker that was lost (Russo 2010, chapter 1). In a Towers Watson study, it was reported that 40% of disengaged employees were likely to leave their employer in the next two years, whereas only 18% of highly engaged employees were to do so (Towers Watson 2012, 9).

There is also a strong link between engagement and **low absenteeism**. Level of absenteeism is one of the main indicators of workforce well-being in organizations today (D'Analeze & Dodge 2012, 22) and according to a Mercer survey in 2008, unscheduled absenteeism costs the company 9% of its payroll (Boudreau & Cascio 2011). High engagement also results in better **safety** at work, engagement being half as important to safety performance as awareness of health and safety policies in the workplace. (Bridger 2018, 36.)

Many organizations focus on employee engagement because they see it as a worthy goal alone. Some organizations see there are also nonfinancial, less tangible and measurable outcomes of engagement. These outcomes are for example individual growth and well-being within the employee, organizational adaptability, and goodwill. (Boudreau & Cascio 2011.)

2.4 Why Do Engaged Employees Perform Better?

To understand why high levels of employee engagement result in better business outcomes, it is needed to be understood why engaged employees perform better than their disengaged colleagues.

Positive psychology is a specific area of psychology which explains the conditions that individuals can thrive in. (Bridger 2018, 49.) It is a scientific study about what makes life most worth living, and typical for positive psychology is that it has a focus on strengths instead of weaknesses. (Peterson 16.5.2008.) The ideas of positive psychology can help understand why engaged employees perform better than their disengaged colleagues.

People tend to look for meaning in their life, and as a lot of time is spend at work, meaning is naturally searched from work too. Search for meaning has two values: people value the feeling itself of finding meaning in life and work but finding meaning also has market value. Employees that find their work **meaningful** are more satisfied, engaged and more productive. Organization's success depends on the competences and commitment of the people working for the organization. Employees are motivated to sustain their competencies and commitment when they see that their work contributes to something they care about. (Ulrich & Ulrich 2010.)

A common idea is that happiness comes as a result from succeeding and performing well. Positive psychology bases on the fact that this is in fact the other way around: **being happy or positive is a precursor to success**. When employees are engaged, they are more likely to experience positive emotions at work. This affects the learning centres in brains positively, which help people for example organise, retain and retrieve information better. This allows people to think quicker, analyse complex information better and be more creative, in other words, perform better at work. (Bridger 2018, 50.)

2.5 Enablers of Employee Engagement

There is no one answer to how successfully work on employee engagement in organizations, but some enablers of employee engagement have been identified (figure 5).



Figure 5. Enablers of employee engagement

Strong strategic narrative refers to the importance of having and communicating the company's vision, key objectives and strategies clearly for employees. When employees feel their work contributes to these shared goals, they feel more engaged. (Smith & Henderson 2014, 14.) Strategic narrative is about where the company comes from and where it is going (Bridger 2018, 63).

To have engaged employees, **engaged managers** are needed. They inspire and coach employees and know their individual goals, strengths and weaknesses. (Smith & Henderson 2014, 14.) Engaged managers give their employees scope and help them focus on the right things. (Bridger 2018, 63.)

Employee voice is about ensuring that the communication in the organization flows two ways. It is about making the employees feel their concerns and ideas are listened to and that they can contribute to decisions related to them (Smith & Henderson 2014, 14). Employee voice is about seeing employees as central to the solutions (Bridger 2018, 63).

Organizational **integrity** refers to the consistence between organization's values and the managers actions. The values of the company must be clearly seen in the day-to-day actions for employees to become engaged. (Smith & Henderson 2014, 14.)

2.6 Measuring Employee Engagement

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development has reported that 80% of large organizations measure employee engagement. Employee engagement is often measured with employee engagement surveys, and the results help the organization in creating an employee engagement action plan. There is a variety of approaches to surveying engagement in organizations. (Bridger 2018, 189.) Many of the approaches are offered by different survey providers, but this chapter will introduce the academic viewpoint of the issue.

Three scales for measuring employee engagement have been developed and tested in the academic world. These are the Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale and the Job Demand – Resources model. (Bridger 2018, 191.)

The Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey (MBI-GS) was developed after the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), which was created to measure burnout of individuals who worked with other people. (Bridger 2018, 192.) The MBI-GS has three dimensions: exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy. Exhaustion refers to feelings of being exhausted by one's work, cynicism measures distant attitude towards work and professional efficacy measures employee's satisfaction with accomplishments and assesses expectations of effectiveness at work. (MindGarden 2019.) Therefore, the model assesses employee's energy, involvement and professional efficacy (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter & Taris 2008, 189). The MBI-GS approach argues that burnout and engagement are opposite. Low scores on exhaustion and cynicism and high scores on efficacy indicate high employee engagement. (Bridger 2018, 192.)

The most often used measure of engagement is **the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)** (Bakker et al. 2008, 187). This approach argues that employee engagement is a persistent state not focused on any particular object, event, individual or behaviour. As well as MBI-GS model, also this approach sees engagement and burnout as opposite. Not like MBI-GS, UWES argues that engagement and burnout should be measured separately and with different instruments. (Bridger 2018, 192.)

UWES approach sees engagement as characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption. Vigour refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, persistence and putting effort in one's work. Dedication is about being involved in work and feeling significant, enthusiastic, inspired, proud and that there is enough challenge. Absorption refers to

being fully concentrated in one's work. Vigour and dedication are considered as direct opposites of the two core symptoms of burnout, exhaustion and cynicism. (Bakker et al. 2008, 188.)

According to Bakker and Demerouti **the Job Demand – Resources (JD-R)** model assumes that any work can be divided in to two: job resources and job demands. Job demands are the aspects of the job that require physical or psychological effort and therefore come with physical or psychological costs. In case an employee already feels overburdened and meeting the job demands requires a lot of effort, these job demands can be negative. (Feldt, Mauno, Mäkikangas & Kinnunen 2010, 112.)

Bakker and Deremouti argue that job resources are the aspects of the job that are functional in achieving goals, can reduce job demands and the physical and psychological costs associated with them and stimulate personal growth, learning and development. (Feldt et al. 2010, 112.) The model argues that job demands are associated with exhaustion whereas lacking job resources are associated with disengagement (Bridger 2018, 193).

2.7 Creating an Employee Engagement Survey for Company X

Employee engagement surveys measure performance, strategic alignment, competency and satisfaction of the employees. Engagement can be measured already with a short survey with only a few questions, but usually this does not offer a specific answer to why employees feel engaged or disengaged. Without this information, it is not possible for a company to develop the activities supporting engagement and thus to increase the level of engagement in the company. (CustomInsight 2020a.)

To get a comprehensive look on the level of employee engagement, the engagement survey should have enough questions, as well as include open-ended questions to collect more detailed information. Surveys with less than 20 questions fail to give enough information on employee engagement, whereas surveys with over 80 questions cause “rater fatigue”, meaning that the quality of responses drops, as the rater becomes tired of the survey. (CustomInsight 2020b.)

The topics that the questions of an employee engagement survey usually relate to can be various. However, according to The Society for Human Resource Management Foundation in the United States, there are key themes that majority of the employee engagement surveys include. These include for example (Bridger 2019, 195):

- satisfaction with employer
- pride in employer
- job satisfaction
- recognition and positive feedback
- intention to stay with employer
- opportunity to perform well
- personal support from closest manager
- understanding the link between one's job and the company mission
- prospects for future growth

According to Great Place to Work, employees value their workplace when they can trust their employer, are proud for what they do, and can experience togetherness with their colleagues. The dimensions used to measure a good workplace with Great Place to Work model are credibility, fairness, respect, pride and camaraderie. (Great Place to Work 2019.)

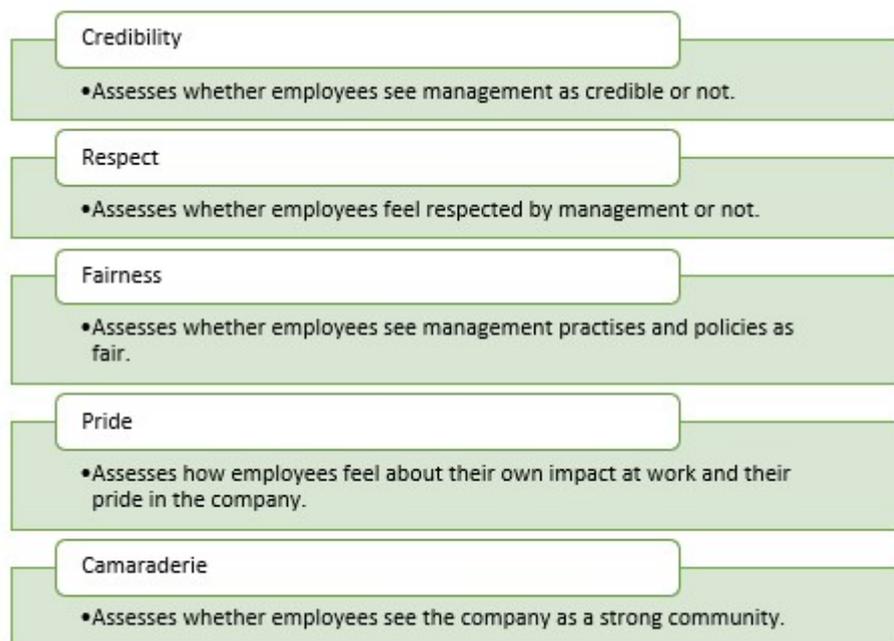


Figure 6. Dimensions of Great Place to Work (adapted from Great Place to Work 2019)

To create an employee engagement survey for Company X the author examined the dimensions of the Great Place to Work model and the themes most commonly used in employee engagement surveys, according to The Society for Human Resource Management Foundation in the United States. Based on these the author created six topic groups: job satisfaction, feedback and opportunities for growth, employer credibility, fairness and camaraderie, pride and commitment.

Each of the topic groups includes 6-8 statements, which the respondents of the survey are asked to rate on a scale from 1-4, 1 being disagree and 4 being agree. The respondents are also given a chance to answer 0, in case the employee has no experience from the matter. Four open-ended questions and one multiple choice question are included in the survey.

For background information the survey asks the respondents to choose an age group they belong to (18-30 years, 31-50 years or 51+ years) and the country they work for (Finland, Norway, Denmark).

The employee engagement survey is run anonymously, quarantining the respondents their identity will remain unknown, and to ensure the answers to be as honest and reliable as possible. Company X has also required the answering to take a maximum of 15 minutes from each respondent.

Creating an employee engagement survey that gathers relevant information from employees requires understanding of the concept of employee engagement, its enablers and importance for organizations, as well as how engagement can be measured.

Without relevant, up-to-date information on the company employee engagement level, it is not possible for an organization to develop the processes supporting further engagement of their employees, or to prevent disengagement in the future.

3 Research Methods

This chapter introduces the research design and methods used in the research, covered in subchapters one and two. Subchapter three discusses the data collection in more detail and the last subchapter covers the reliability of the research.

3.1 Research Design

The investigative questions aimed to be answered in the thesis are:

IQ 1. On what level is employee engagement at Company X now?

IQ 2. How does the level of employee engagement differ between the three countries?

IQ 3. How can employee engagement be improved at Company X in the future?

Research design in figure 7 illustrates how the author has planned the research and data collection in relation to the investigative questions. Research design is the general plan on how the researcher has planned to answer the investigative questions. The design specifies the sources used to collect the data and the methods used for collecting and analyzing the data. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2019, 163.) The research has one phase which consists of the survey, collecting primary data from the employees of Company X, and the quantitative and qualitative analysis of this data.

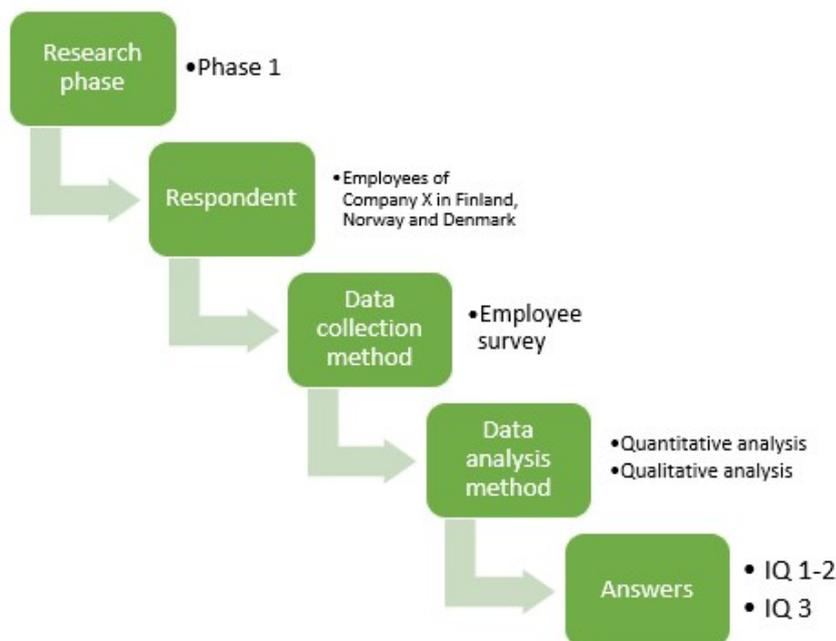


Figure 7. Research design

An employee survey is used to collect information on what level employee engagement is in the company right now, as well as to compare the engagement levels between three different countries. This answers IQs 1 and 2. When forming the survey, the questions were formed and selected carefully for the research to be as reliable as possible. When choosing which questions to include, it was carefully considered what the question will answer and what theory can be used to justify the inclusion of the question.

It is recommended to derive the survey questions from the research question and form the questions as unbiased as possible. (Rugg & Petre 2007, 145.)

IQ 3 is answered by analysing the results of the survey and combining the primary data collected through the survey to the secondary data on the theory base on employee engagement, presented earlier in the thesis.

3.2 Research Methods

The research has one phase and the answers are mainly collected using quantitative research. Quantitative research is a data collection technique that generates numerical data. It examines relationships between variables, and in this research the variables are then analysed using statistical techniques. (Saunders et al. 2019, 167.) The employee survey consists mainly of statements regarding different areas of employee engagement, which the respondents are asked to rate from 1-4 according to how much they either agree or disagree with the statement, reflecting their own situation with their current employment with Company X. Using quantitative research, it is important to make sure that the questions in the survey are clear and are understood in the same way by all respondents.

Part of the data collected from respondents is collected using qualitative research, as the survey includes four open-ended questions. These questions were included in the survey to generate more detailed answers, and therefore cover for data that would have otherwise been unable to be collected using only quantitative research. Qualitative research generates non-numerical data and studies respondents' meanings and the relationships between them. Data collection is non-standardised, meaning that the questions and data collection can be formed freely. (Saunders et al. 2019, 168.)

When quantitative and qualitative research is used together, this is called a mixed methods approach. As the research has one phase and it involves separate use of quantitative and qualitative methods, the method used for the research is concurrent mixed methods

research. This allows for the author to use both sets of the results together to offer a more comprehensive response to the investigative questions. (Saunders et al. 2019, 170.)

3.3 Data Collection

From the six countries Company X operates in, Finland, Norway and Denmark were picked for the research based on the wishes of the company and because of the number of employees in each country. The three countries each employ 10-50 people, whereas the other countries Company X operates in employ either under 10 people or well over 100 people. This ensures the data collection to be manageable as well as ensures enough answers to be collected. In addition, comparing results between countries is easier, as the respondent pools are of same size.

In Finland, all 9 employees were asked to answer the engagement survey. In Norway, where the number of employed people is the biggest of the three, the country manager together with her team picked 10 people that were willing to participate in the survey. In Denmark, the employee engagement survey was sent to 16 employees.

The employee engagement survey was run from 28th of September to 9th of October 2020. The time span of the survey was informed to the respondents in beforehand. From 35 employees that were asked to answer the survey, 26 participated. The respondents were provided with an online link to the survey via company e-mail and were sent a reminder to answer to the survey twice, once when the respondents had a week to answer to the survey, and on final day of the survey.

3.4 Data Analysis

When quantitative data has been collected, it needs to be analysed to be able to present the results. Quantitative analysis uses tables, graphs and statistics to present and examine relationships and trends within the data. (Saunders et al. 2019, 494.) For this research, the numerical data collected through the quantitative methods in the survey was taken into Excel and analysed with it. The collected data was then made into a chart, representing the results to each question in the survey, as well as showing the differences in answers between different countries. Each individual statement of the survey was analysed, using the country respondents work in and their age as background information.

Qualitative data is often more varied and complex than quantitative data, as it depends on social interactions and people's interpretation on things. In analysing qualitative data,

meanings are drawn from words and descriptions of the respondents. (Saunders et al. 2019, 568.) For this research and the analysis of the qualitative data, a deductive approach was used. Deductive approach uses the theoretical framework used in the theory part of the research to organise and direct the data analysis (Saunders et al. 2019, 570). For example, as the theory of employee engagement introduces traits of engaged employees, the respondents were asked to identify reasons they feel themselves engaged or disengaged. By analysing the results to this question, it is then possible to derive the answer from combining theory and qualitative data to see if the answers given to the question correlate with the theory on engaged employees.

The results from quantitative methods and qualitative methods were then lastly looked together to create comprehensive answer to the investigative questions.

3.5 Reliability of the Study

Assessing the reliability and validity of the research is crucial for the quality of the research. **Reliability** refers to the replication and consistency of the study and **validity** to the appropriateness of the measures used and accuracy of the results and findings. (Saunders et al. 202.)

Internal reliability refers to the consistency during a research project and is usually covered by using more than one researched to conduct the research or to analyse the data. (Saunders et al. 204.) As the research was conducted by one author, the reliability was ensured by having a thesis advisor participate to the process. The author has also used fellow students as opponents for the research to ensure the reliability of the study.

External reliability refers to whether the data collection techniques used would produce the same findings if repeated (Saunders et al. 205). The author has ensured this by forming the questions in the survey as clear as possible and forming them in a way that leaves little room for misinterpretations from respondents.

Validity of the research was ensured by designing the data collection method, employee survey, based on theory on employee engagement and measuring employee engagement. The theory that the research method is based on has been collected from several sources. The author has evaluated the reliability of the sources used carefully and the sources used are listed in the appendix of the thesis.

Assessing the reliability of the study it must also be considered that the respondent pool for the survey was quite small, 26 respondents participating in the survey. As the response rate was 74% (26/35 employees answering), the results might be slightly biased.

Still, the results can be considered showing a trend on employee engagement in the three countries covered in the research.

4 Key Findings and Recommendations

The following chapter introduces and discusses the results of the employee engagement survey run at Company X. As the employee survey was segmented according to different areas of employee engagement, the results are presented the same way. Each of the subchapter presents each of the different areas measured in the survey. The key findings are presented as well as recommendations for the company for future work with employee engagement. Lastly, the author offers recommendations for future research.

4.1 Background Information

The employee engagement survey consisted of statements categorized according to different areas of employee engagement, each segment of the survey including 6 to 8 statements. The survey also included four open ended questions and one multiple choice question.

For background information, only two questions were asked: respondents' age and the country the respondent works in. The sex of the respondents was left out of the survey, as most of the employees at Company X are female. This could cause for the male respondents to be identified from the results. The survey was run anonymously.

The survey was answered by 26 employees of Company X, 9 of which work in Finland, 10 in Norway and 7 in Denmark, the division presented below in figure 8. The survey was sent to 35 employees out of which 26 answered, therefore the response rate being 74%.

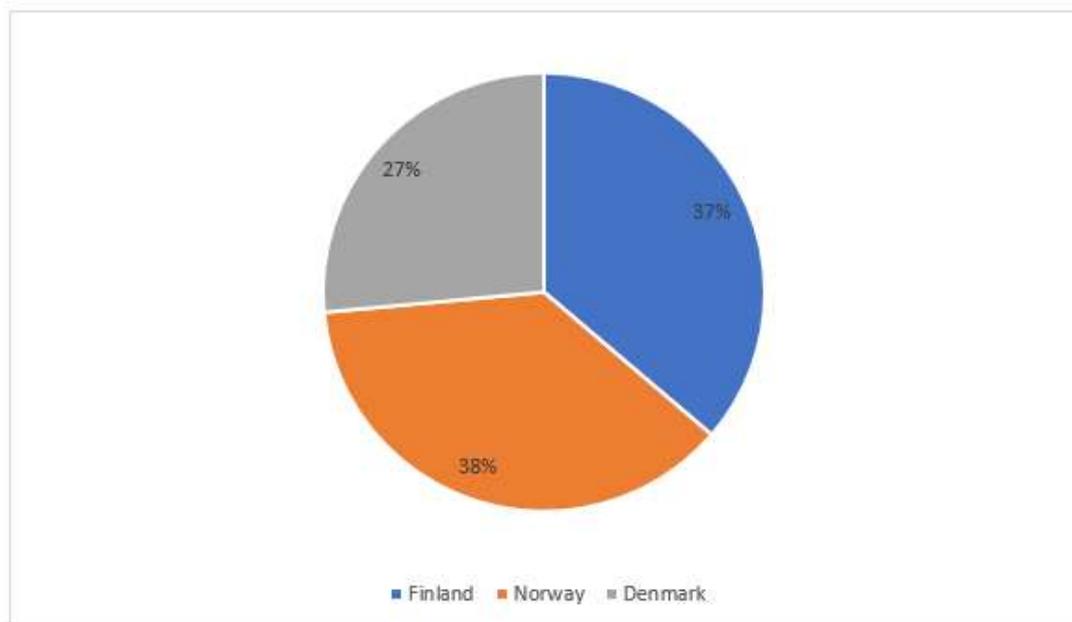


Figure 8. Countries respondents (n=26) work in

Seven of the respondents belong to age group 18 to 30, sixteen respondents to age group 31 to 50 and three respondents to age group 51 and older.

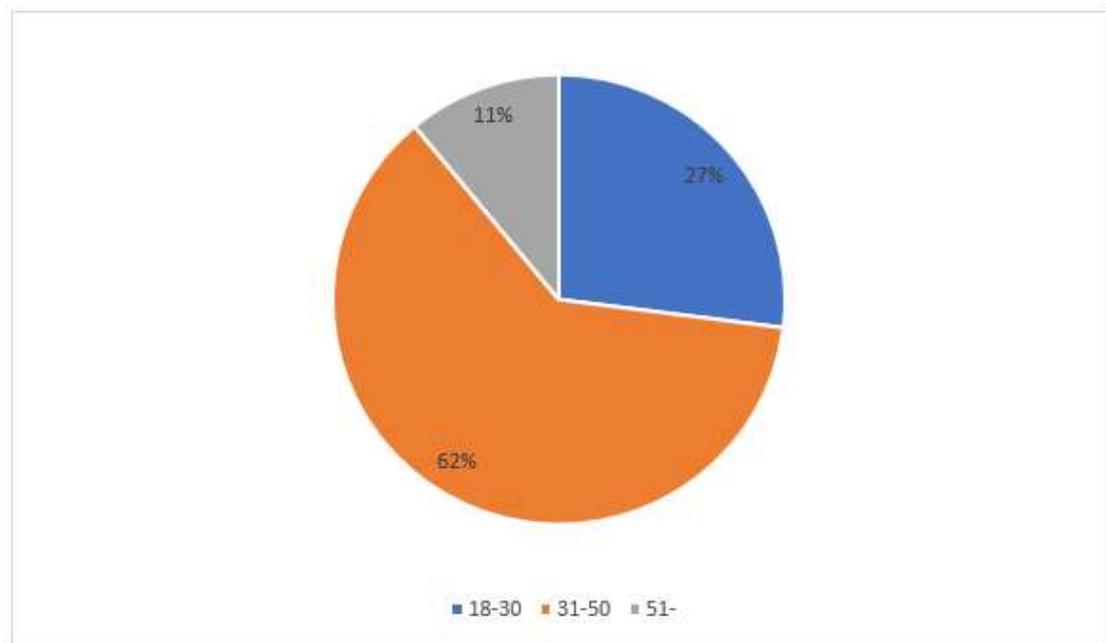


Figure 9. Age division of respondents (n=26)

Eight of the respondents in age group 31 to 50 years work in Finland, three in Norway and five in Denmark.

Out of the age group 18 to 30 years, six respondents work in Norway and one in Denmark.

For the respondents over the age of 51, one works in Finland, one in Norway and one in Denmark.

4.2 Job Satisfaction

The first segment of the survey measured the job satisfaction of the employees, the questions being related to employees' job tasks and their feelings about their own work. The respondents were asked to rate the statements from 1 (disagree) to 4 (agree) and to choose 0 on statements they do not have experience from. The results were analysed with the background information considering the country the respondents work in.

4.2.1 Findings

According to the survey results the average score for job satisfaction in all three countries was 3.3 out of 4. Job satisfaction in Denmark was the best of the three countries, with an average of 3.5. Both Finland and Norway scored an average of 3.3.



Figure 10. Respondents (n=26) job satisfaction

The biggest difference between countries is between Finland and Denmark for the statements “I feel inspired by my work”, scoring 3.6 in Denmark and 3.2 in Finland, and “I have enough time to finish my tasks during a shift”, with Denmark’s score of 2.6 and Finland’s 2.2.

The employees in each country agree the most on the feeling of enjoying their work. The answers to each statement do not differ greatly between countries, as the scores of each statement differ at a maximum of 0.4 points from each other.

Although there is a difference between how inspired employees feel about their work in different countries, the result for this can still be considered as good, each country scoring an average of over 3. Employees in Finland consider themselves as least inspired by their work.

Based on the results employees in all three countries feel they do not have enough time during a shift to complete their tasks, each of the countries scoring an average of under 3 for this statement. Out of the three countries, employees in Finland feel the most of not having enough time during a shift.

However, it should be considered that employees more often feel like having too much work and too little time, than having just the right amount of work. Still, as the result for this statement is low for all three countries, this should be considered as a key finding about job satisfaction at Company X.

Otherwise, based on the survey results it seems that most of the factors regarding job satisfaction are good at Company X in Finland, Norway and Denmark. The respondents in each country feel they enjoy their work, the tasks are challenging enough and interesting, and work feels inspiring and meaningful.

4.2.2 Recommendations

The next step for Company X would be to map out the reason behind employees feeling of not having enough time during a shift. Do the employees feel they have too many tasks to finish during a shift or are there not enough employees compared to the amount of work? This answer can not be derived from the survey results, as the respondents were not asked to elaborate on the feeling. It should also be mapped out what kind of tasks are usually left unfinished to find out if they are of high priority for the business.

Ways for Company X to start supporting employees with feelings of not having enough time would be to help them with their time management and the structure of their days. Learning how to prioritize tasks is an easy way for an employee to have more control over their workload. Considering dividing the tasks differently within a team is also an option that might help employees manage their time and workload.

4.3 Feedback and Opportunities for Growth

The second segment of the survey measured how respondents feel about the amount of feedback they receive and the opportunities they have for developing themselves and getting further in their careers. The respondents were asked to rate the statements from 1 (disagree) to 4 (agree) and to choose 0 on statements they do not have experience from. The results were analysed with the background information considering the country the respondents work in.

4.3.1 Findings

For feedback and opportunities for growth the average score for all three countries was a bit lower than for job satisfaction, being 2.9 out of 4. Again, Denmark scored the highest with an average of 3.1. Norway scored 3.0, whereas Finland scored the lowest, an average of 2.7.

Based on the results presented below in figure 11, there is a bit more variation to the answers for this segment between the countries than there was for the previous segment,

measuring job satisfaction. The maximum difference between answers is 1.5, indicating employees in different countries disagree on some aspects of feedback and opportunities for growth strongly.

The biggest difference between the countries is for the statement “Systems and processes at Company X support getting the job done”, Finland having the lowest score of 1.4 and Denmark the highest score of 2.9. There is also a big difference in average answers for the statement on having needed resources to do one’s job well, where Denmark has the best score of 3.3 and Finland the lowest of 2.3. The countries agree the most on getting enough feedback.

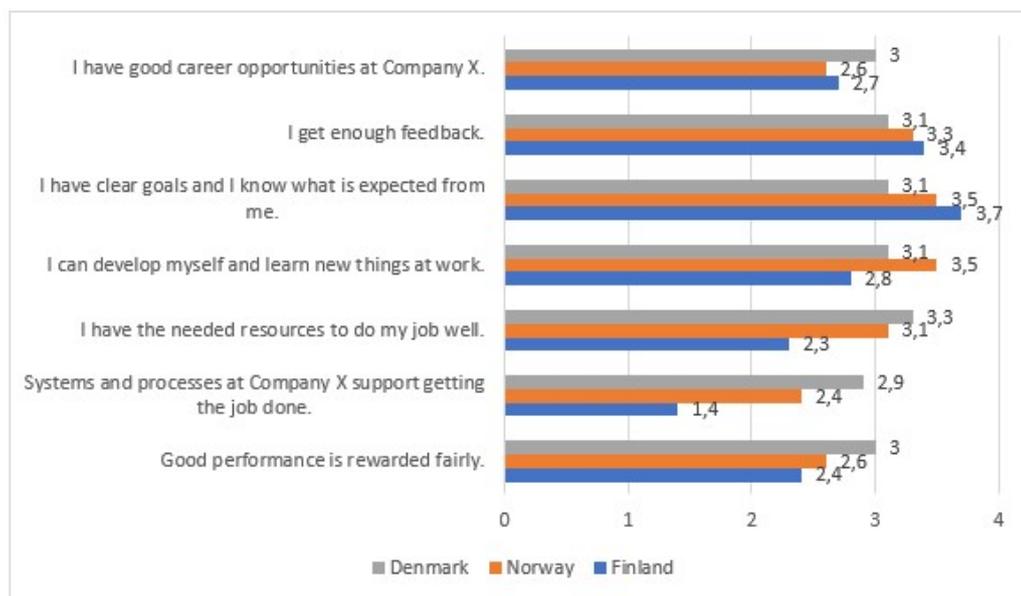


Figure 11. Feedback and opportunities for growth for respondents (n=26)

The score for Finland can be considered low for this segment of employee engagement, the average answers for Finnish employees being under 3. The score is low especially because of answers on feeling that systems and processes do not support working. This statement has scored low with other countries as well.

Employees in Finland also feel of not having the needed resources to do their job well, which correlates with their answer on systems and processes not supporting their work. The results show that in Norway and Denmark the employees do feel of having enough resources, although they too think the processes and systems do not support them.

Based on the results presented in figure 11, career opportunities at Company X are not considered being the best in any of the countries. Additionally, employees in Finland feel

of not having the possibility to develop themselves at work. Performance rewarding is also seen as something that could be fairer, as Finland and Norway both score an average of under 3 and Denmark an average of 3.

Rest of the results can be considered good for each of the countries. The employees in Finland, Norway and Denmark feel they are getting enough feedback and the goals and expectations at work are clear. The results show that employees in Norway and Denmark feel better about the company systems and processes and resources available, as well as having opportunities to learn and develop themselves, than employees in Finland.

4.3.2 Recommendations

The low result on feeling that systems and processes support working could be explained with employees not knowing the processes or not having enough know-how on the systems. Additionally, this could be explained with the processes and systems not being updated regularly to correspond with the work the employees are expected to handle.

As systems used at Company X are alike in different countries, the big difference between the average answers, especially between Finland and other countries, should be researched more closely. Has the training for systems been different in each country and is the training regularly updated? Processes might differ slightly between countries, which is why it would be helpful to map out which processes in Finland do not support the employees, and then to find out if these processes are different in the other countries scoring higher.

Finnish employees score the lowest on feeling of having enough resources to do their job well. In Finland it should be made sure that employees are aware of the resources already available, and then to research further what kind of resources the employees feel of lacking.

Employees should be offered more information on how the reward system works and what the system is based on. It can not be derived from the results whether the respondents think that the rewarding is unfair between employees, or if they think the rewarding system is based on wrong things, thus creating it to be unfair. However, in case the reward system is considered unfair widely, it should be updated.

Employees should be offered more information on the different positions in the company and actively supported with their career planning. Although the employees would not feel

of having further career opportunities at Company X, they should be supported in developing themselves in the positions they already are in.

4.4 Engagement

In the third question of the survey respondents were asked to rate their own engagement on a scale from 1 to 4, 1 being not engaged at all and 4 being very engaged. Engagement was defined for respondents as “the feeling of being personally involved in the success of the company”. After this, the respondents were asked to reflect on why they do or do not feel engaged and were given the chance to express this with their own words. The results were analysed with the background information considering the country the respondents work in.

4.4.1 Findings

Figure 12 below represents the number of respondents from each country answering either 1,2,3 or 4 on feeling engaged, 1 being not engaged at all and 4 being very engaged.

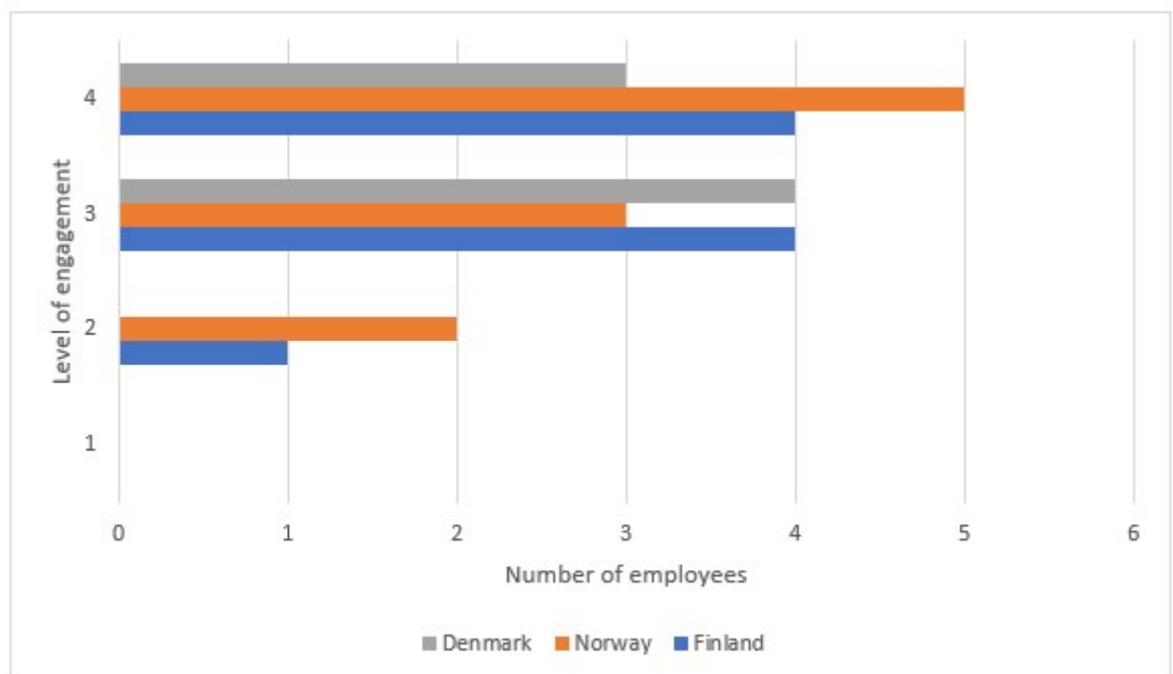


Figure 12. Engagement of respondents on a scale from 1 to 4 (n=26)

Denmark scored the best of the countries, all seven of Danish respondents answering either 4 or 3 on feeling engaged.

Eight employees out of ten in Norway and eight employees out of nine in Finland rated their engagement level either 3 or 4. Two employees in Norway and one employee in Finland rated their engagement as two. None of the respondents reflected themselves being completely disengaged, the responses for 1 being zero.

According to the results, the employees think of themselves as engaged and see themselves as being involved in the success of Company X, Danish employees considering themselves as the most engaged.

When asked to specify why they would say they feel or do not feel engaged, the respondents in each country were asked to describe this in their own words. 25 answers were given, out of which 15 answers clearly described the reasons for being engaged. From the 15 answers, the following responses were selected to represent the answers, having similar themes to the other answers given.

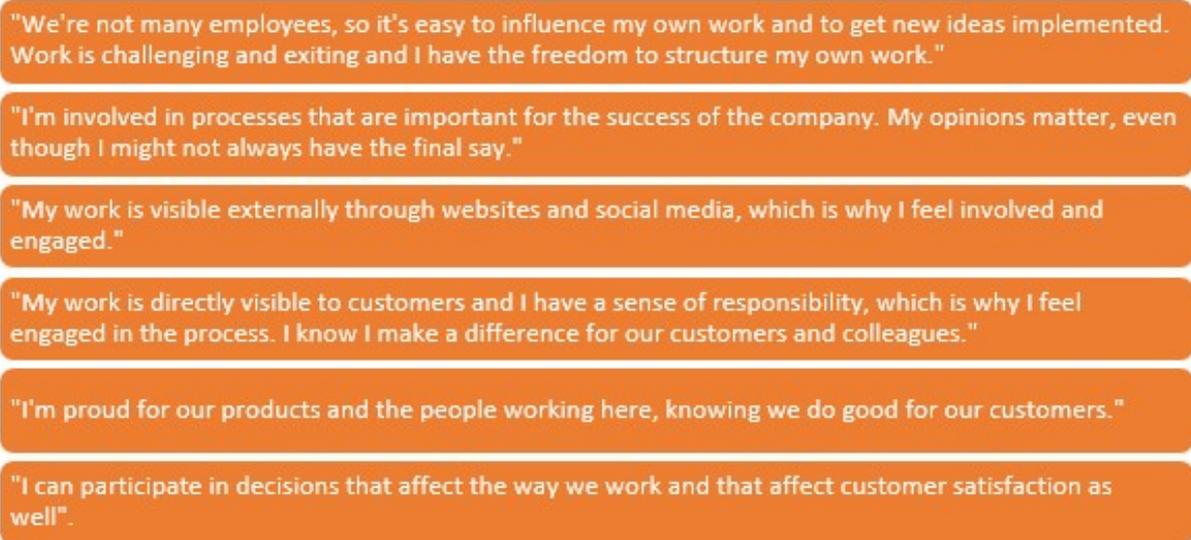


Figure 13. Reasons for feeling engaged at Company X

Repeated themes given in the answers for feeling engaged were about having the opportunity to affect one's work and having a sense of purpose at work. Several answers described the feeling of making a difference at work, or for customers, and being proud of the company. One of the things identified as creating feelings of engagement was the feeling of being able to appreciate one's colleagues.

Being involved in the decisions at the company, making a difference and having a sense of camaraderie and purpose have all been linked with being engaged, therefore the answers support the result of most of the respondents reflecting themselves to be engaged, as shown in figure 12. The answers show employees understand the concept of engagement and can identify right reasons behind their own feelings of engagement.

Out of the 25 answers given for this question, 6 answers clearly described the reasons for not feeling engaged.



Figure 14. Reasons for feeling disengaged at Company X

The answers describe that the reasons behind feeling disengaged have to do with not feeling that one's work matters or is appreciated, or that the tasks do not feel interesting or are too repetitive. Additionally, it seems the feeling of not being involved in decisions that affect one's work creates feelings of disengagement.

As only three respondents rated their own engagement being 2 in figure 12, and none of the respondents reflected themselves as completely disengaged, it can be concluded that even engaged employees have feelings of disengagement at times or can identify reasons for them to feel less engaged than they possibly could be. The answers show employees understand the concept of disengagement and can identify right reasons behind their own feelings of disengagement.

4.4.2 Recommendations

As most of the respondents rated their engagement as either 3 or 4, and most of the answers given for the open-ended question described the reasons for feeling engaged, Company X should focus on these reasons (figure 13) with future work with engagement. The results show that employees think of themselves as engaged when they have purposeful tasks, they are included in the decisions affecting themselves and their work is

visible and appreciated. Company X should identify the processes and ways of working that support these feelings among employees and continue using them. One of the key things on keeping employees engaged is to keep employees involved in decisions regarding them.

Employees should be asked frequently to reflect on their own feelings of engagement or disengagement. This helps the employee to identify their own feelings about their work and what affects it. Engagement is an internal state of an employee, but it turns in to action eventually. That is why the employer should be interested in how employees feel about their own level of engagement.

4.5 Employer Credibility

This segment of the survey measured the employees' views on employer credibility. The statements measured how the employees see the actions of the employer and the values the employer represents. The respondents were asked to think about Company X's Senior Management when answering to the statements regarding management. The respondents were asked to rate the statements from 1 (disagree) to 4 (agree) and to choose 0 on statements they do not have experience from. The results were analysed with the background information considering the country the respondents work in.

4.5.1 Findings

The average employer credibility score for all three countries was good, 3.2 out of 4. Denmark scored again the highest with 3.5, whereas Finland was the one to score the lowest, considerably under the average with an average score of 2.7. Norway was close to Denmark with a score of 3.4.

The biggest difference in answers between countries was for the statement "Decisions of management demonstrate that quality of work and improvement are top priorities", Finland having an average score of 1.9, while Denmark and Norway both had an average of over 3. The respondents agreed the most on agreeing with the values of Company X.



Figure 15. Respondents' (n=26) view on employer credibility

According to the results presented in figure 15, the countries disagree on views on employer credibility. There are big differences between the average answers, especially between Finland and the other countries. The average answers differ up to 1.5 points from each other. Currently the employer is not seen as credible in Finland and employees in Finland do not trust the management as much as employees in other countries surveyed do.

The results show that the Finnish employees do not think that the decisions of management represent right things. Finland also scores lower on getting enough information on decisions and changes, trusting that the management does right decisions and on the feeling of work being valued by the management, than the other countries. The difference in answers between Finland and other countries can be considered as a key finding for this part of the survey. Although scoring low for other parts of employer credibility, employees in Finland still agree with Company X values.

In Norway and Denmark employer credibility is good, and the employees in these countries especially feel that they know the company's mission and future goals, and that they can agree with company values. Employees in Denmark and Norway feel that the management values their work and they trust the managements decisions and its ability to make them.

4.5.2 Recommendations

First Company X should research further why employer is not seen as credible in Finland as it is in the other countries. Is something done differently towards Finland, or have there been some recent decisions considering Finland that would need further actions from the management?

Increase of information flow from the management to the teams in different countries is one of the solutions in bettering the credibility of the employer. When management actions are made visible and they are explained, the credibility of the decisions made is also communicated to the employees. The increase in information shared is not the only answer, but it should also be considered what kind of information is shared and how. As employer is not seen as credible in Finland, it might be that some things are lost in communication or not everything is communicated right towards the team in Finland.

As the countries score high on agreeing with Company X values, the company could look at how these values are communicated to the employees, and if some of these ways could be implemented to the rest of the information flowing from the management to the employees.

4.6 Fairness and Camaraderie

The segment for fairness and camaraderie measured the employees' views on the atmosphere at work, relationships with their colleagues as well as how they see the treatment of themselves and others at work. The respondents were asked to rate the statements from 1 (disagree) to 4 (agree) and to choose 0 on statements they do not have experience from. The results were analysed with the background information considering the country the respondents work in.

4.6.1 Findings

Fairness and camaraderie scored the highest of the different areas of employee engagement in the survey, scoring the average of 3.6. Denmark had the highest score of 3.8, following with Finland's 3.6. Norway's score on fairness and camaraderie was 3.4.

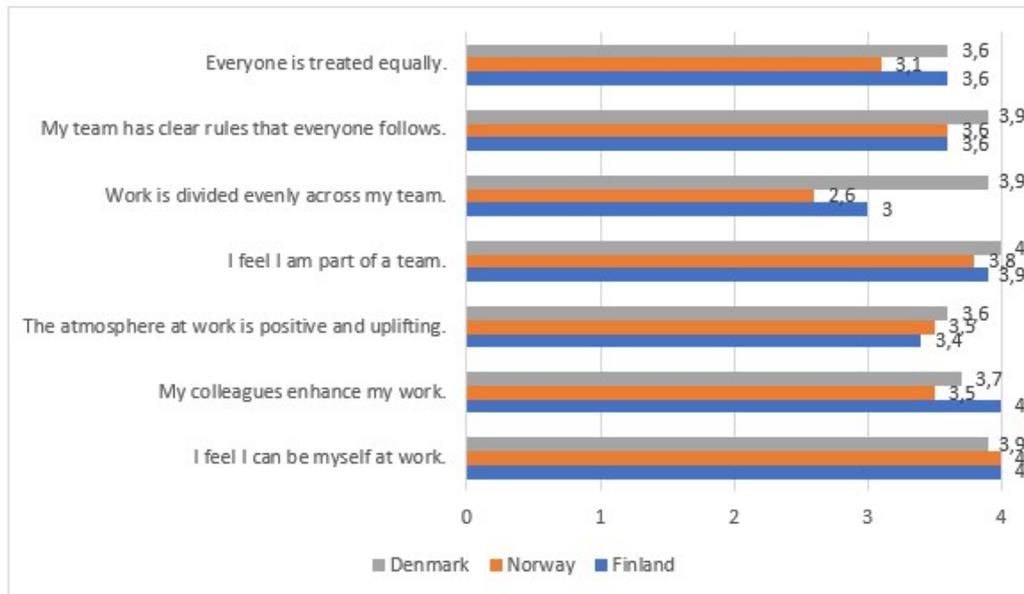


Figure 16. Respondents' (n=26) view on fairness and camaraderie

There are no big differences on most of the statements between countries, as presented in figure 16, most of the answers being within 0.5 points from each other. The countries agreed the most on feeling of being part of a team and feeling they can be themselves at work. The teams in Finland, Norway and Denmark disagreed the most on feeling that work is divided evenly across team members, Denmark scoring the highest of 3.9 and Norway scoring the lowest of 2.6.

The results show that employees in Norway and Finland think work is divided unevenly between team members, Norway feeling this more strongly. According to the results equal treatment in Norway could be better and the score is lower than in the other countries.

Despite slight differences in some of the answers, results show that employees in Finland, Norway and Denmark feel the workplace is fair and the atmosphere at work is good, everyone can be themselves at work and the feeling of camaraderie is strong. Especially employees in Finland feel that colleagues enhance their work.

4.6.2 Recommendations

The work division in teams in Finland and Norway should be looked at, and the number of tasks per employee assessed. Re-dividing tasks in the teams should be considered.

The score for feeling of unequal treatment for Norway is not alarming, but it should be paid attention to, scoring lower than in Finland and Denmark. As the respondents were

not asked to identify reasons for feeling of unequal treatment, this should be researched further.

Based on the results, Company X has succeeded in creating a workplace where employees feel comfortable and where atmosphere is good and uplifting. Strong feelings of camaraderie show that colleagues appreciate each other and feel they truly are a team. This is a strong aspect of feeling engaged at work, and something Company X should start utilizing more in building their employer brand, both internally for their own staff as well as externally.

4.7 Pride and Commitment and Company X as an Employer

The statements regarding employees' pride and commitment measured how the respondents feel about their employment with Company X: how proud they are to be employed by the company and if they can still see themselves working for the company in the future. The respondents were asked to rate the statements from 1 (disagree) to 4 (agree) and to choose 0 on statements they do not have experience from. Additionally, the respondents were asked if they have applied for a job outside Company X in the past year, and then to reflect on the reasons for possibly not seeing themselves working for Company X in the next 2 years. The results were analysed with the background information considering the country the respondents work in.

4.7.1 Findings

The average of answers for pride and commitment for Company X in Finland, Norway and Denmark was 3.4 out of 4. The countries scored almost evenly with each other with Denmark having the highest score of 3.5 and Finland and Norway both scoring 3.4. The countries agreed the most on thinking that they could recommend working for Company X to a friend, and disagreed the most on seeing themselves working for the company in the next 2 years, Denmark scoring the highest of 3.9 and Norway the lowest of 3.2.

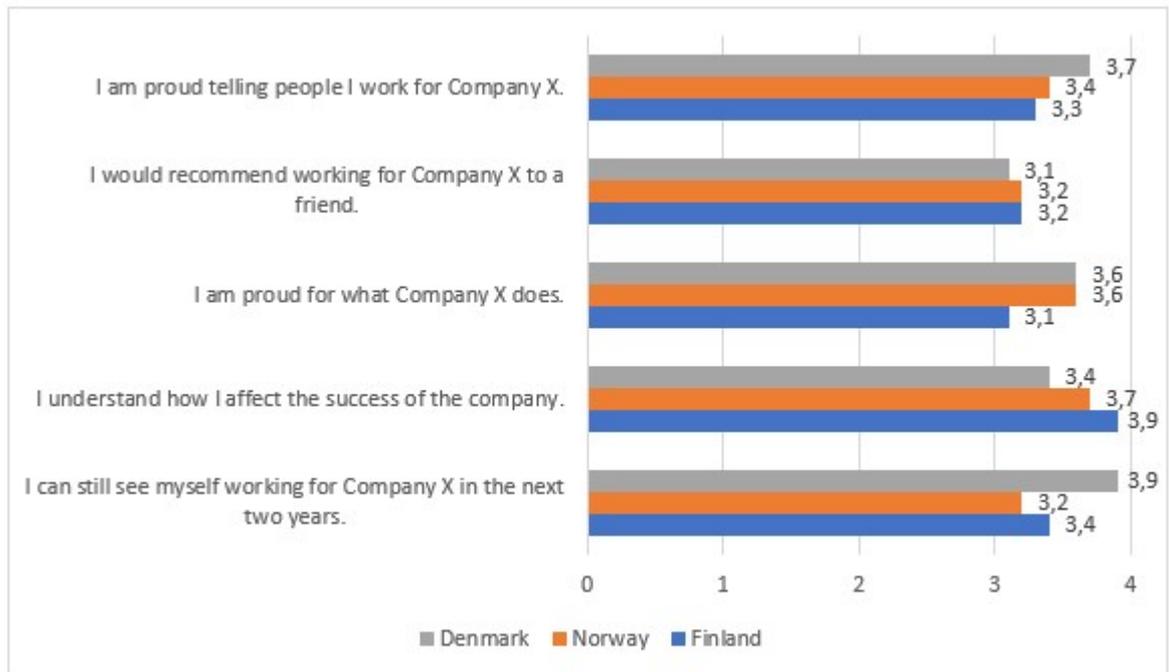


Figure 17. Respondents' (n=26) pride and commitment for Company X

Pride and commitment for Company X is on a good level, each of the statements scoring an average of over 3. Based on the results employees are especially proud for working for the company and are proud for what it does. The score for understanding the importance of own work for the success of the company is also high, especially for Finland.

When asked if respondents had applied to another job outside Company X in the past year, from 26 respondents 6 employees in all countries answered yes. Out of these 6 employees 2 work in Finland and 4 in Norway. None of the employees in Denmark had applied to another job in the past year. The number of employees having applied to another job is not high, and it should also be considered that each country scored an average of over 3 on seeing themselves with the company in the next two years (figure 17).

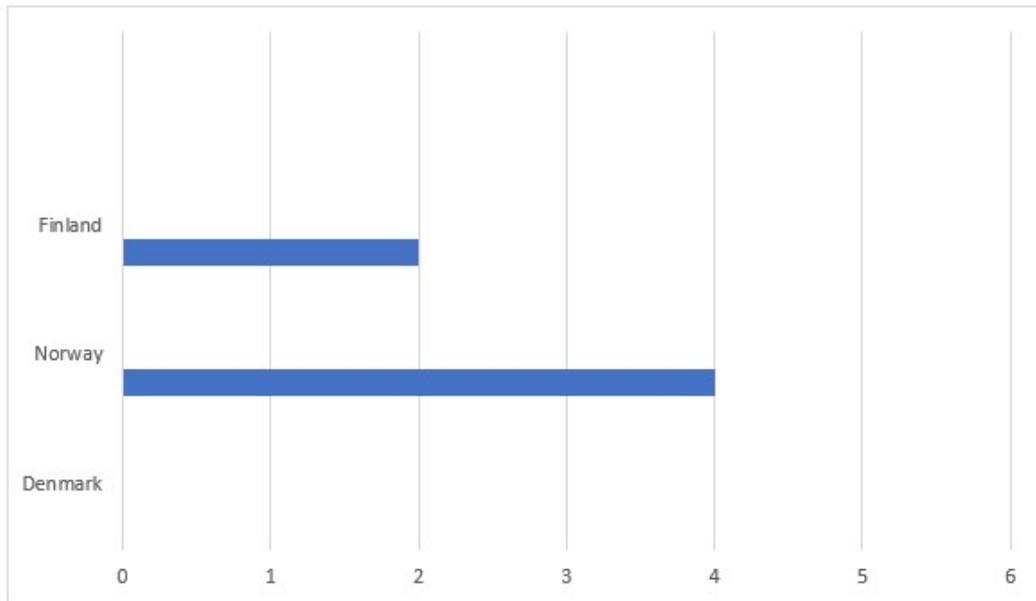


Figure 18. Number of employees having applied to a job outside Company X in the past year

As reported earlier in figure 11, the employees' score in Norway on feeling of having career opportunities at Company X was 2.6 out of 3, scoring the lowest of the three countries. Norway also has most employees applying to other jobs outside the company. Finland's score is not far from Norway's, Finland scoring 2.7 on feeling of having career opportunities, and having 2 out of 9 employees applying for jobs outside the company.

The result of having employees in Norway and Finland applying to other jobs outside the company and not seeing career opportunities at Company X support each other, and it can be concluded that employees in Norway and Finland might choose to seek career opportunities from elsewhere in the future as well.

Respondents were then asked to reflect on the reasons for possibly not seeing themselves working for Company X in the next 2 years. The respondents were given different options from which they were able to choose multiple options. The respondents were also given a chance to add their own reason for not seeing themselves working for the company in the future.

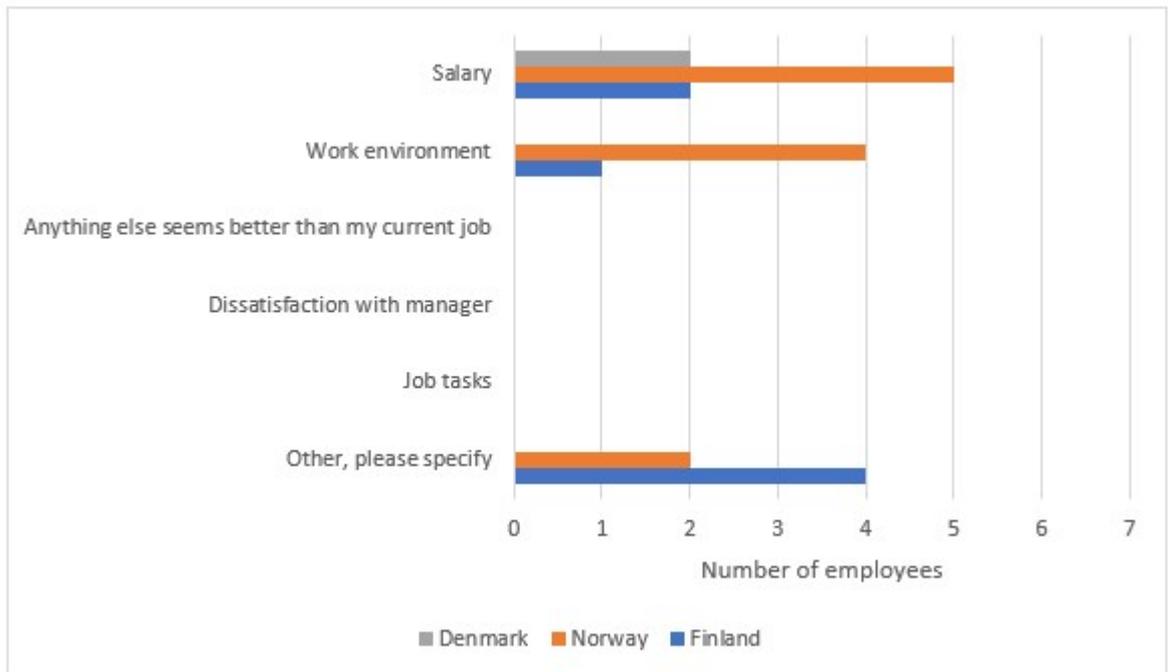


Figure 19. Respondents' (n=13) reasons for not seeing themselves in the company in the next 2 years

Out of 26 respondents 13 employees gave reasons for not seeing themselves with the company in the next two years. However, it should be considered that scores for seeing themselves with the company in the next 2 years were high for each of the countries, meaning that employees might have answered to the question thinking what could be the most likely reason for them to leave.

In Finland 2 employees could see themselves leaving because of salary and 1 because of work environment.

In Norway 5 employees could see themselves leaving because of salary and 4 because of work environment, and in Denmark 2 employees could see themselves leaving because of salary.

For other reasons for not seeing themselves in the company in the next two years, the respondents specified the following (6 answers):

- Location of work
- Career development opportunities
- Lack of competitiveness and lack of modernity
- Changing to a part-time job
- Prioritizing of wrong processes
- Current job is too burdensome

It can be considered as a key finding for this part of the survey that 9 out of 26 respondents could see themselves leaving the company because of salary, and that 4 respondents in Norway would leave because of work environment.

Lastly, the employees in Finland, Norway and Denmark were asked to reflect on reasons that make a company a good employer, and then to give feedback on what Company X could do better as an employer. 26 answers were given on what makes a company a good employer, out of which the following responses were selected to represent the answers, having similar themes to the other answers given.



Figure 20. Employee views on what makes a company a good employer

According to the answers most employees at Company X think a good employer values their employees and provides them with an open, equal atmosphere that is based on trust. Good work environment is also mentioned repeatedly, together with just rewarding and clear and good leadership. Receiving feedback and having the opportunity to voice own ideas is also appreciated.

For what Company X could do better as an employer, 26 answers were given, out of which the following responses were selected to represent the answers, having similar themes to the other answers given.



Figure 21. Employee views on what Company X could do better as an employer

Based on the answers given respondents in the three countries wish for the co-operation and information flow between different countries to be more active. Competitive salary is also mentioned in the answers, as well as investing more in employee well-being.

4.7.2 Recommendations

Based on the results for pride and commitment the employees in all three countries are proud to be working for Company X and would recommend it to their friends. This is something the company should start utilizing in building the employer brand, both internally and externally.

Although the number of employees having applied to other jobs outside the company is low, and most respondents can see themselves in the company in the future as well, Company X should focus on retention of the employees. The result show that especially in Norway, where employees are young, employees could decide to seek opportunities from elsewhere as career opportunities at Company X are not seen as good.

Employees need to be trained regularly and supported actively on their development at the positions they already hold. Employees that might consider leaving specify salary, and

in Norway work environment, as possible reasons for leaving. Salary is not considered to be competitive for the field.

From responses to what Company X could do better as an employee the wish to have more activities across countries rises above all. During the on-going pandemic it might be difficult to organize face-to-face activities, but the countries should be kept more informed on what is going on in the other countries.

4.8 Findings According to Age Groups

This chapter analyses the survey results with the background information of respondents age. In the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked to choose an age group they represent (ages 18 to 30, 31 to 50 and 51 and older). The age group division of respondents is presented in chapter 4.1, figure 9.

	Job satisfaction	Feedback and opportunities for growth	Employer credibility	Fairness and camaraderie	Pride and commitment
18 to 30	3.1	2.8	3.1	3.4	3.3
31 to 50	3.3	2.9	3.2	3.6	3.4
51 and older	3.7	3.4	3.7	4.0	3.9

Figure 22. Average answers according to age groups

The table in figure 22 represents the average answers of different age groups on the different areas of the survey, as the scale for each area was from 1 to 4. Only 3 respondents belong to the age group 51 and older, which biases the results slightly. The results are still presented as the respondent pool for the whole survey was small, and the age group 51 and older represents 11% of the respondents of the survey.

Based on the results in figure 22 engagement is the highest among employees that are 51 and older and the lowest among ages 18 to 30. There are no big differences between the results of age groups 18 to 30 and 31 to 50. The results for ages 51 and older are considerably higher than for other age groups.

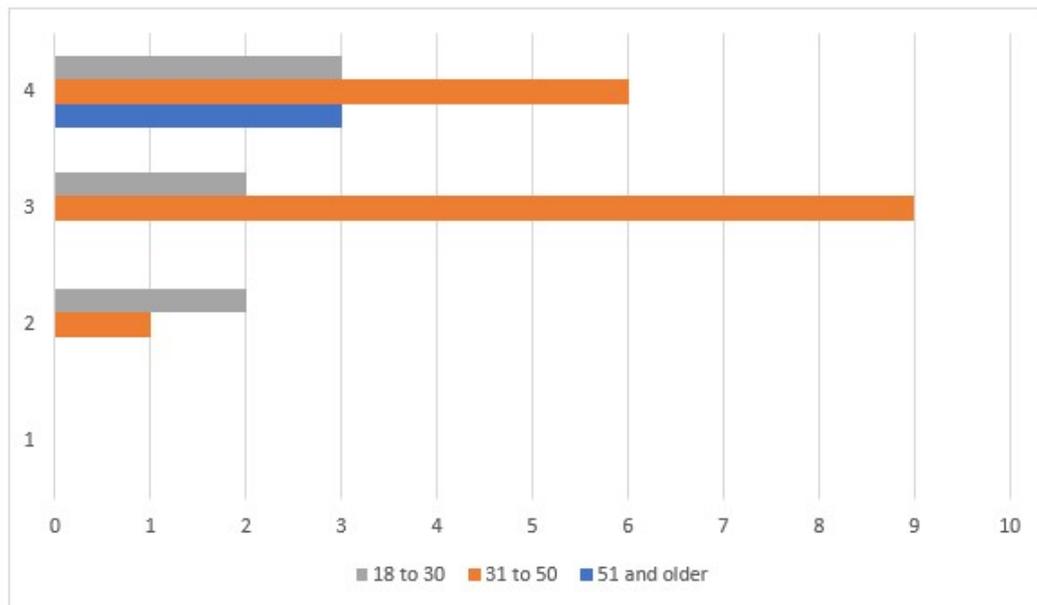


Figure 23. Engagement levels of different age groups

Figure 23 represents the engagement level of different age groups, when asked to rate their own level of engagement on a scale from 1 to 4, 1 being not engaged at all and 4 being very engaged. All respondents aged 51 and older answered 4, whereas there was a little more division among the answers from other age groups.

Based on the results, at Company X employees aged 51 and older are more engaged and also consider themselves more engaged than their younger colleagues. The youngest employees between ages 18 to 30 are the least engaged and also consider themselves as less engaged than their older colleagues.

Although the results for different age groups are not completely comparable because of the difference in the number of employees representing the age groups, Company X should still pay attention to the fact that younger employees do not feel themselves as engaged as they could be. Feelings of disengagement could cause the younger employees to look for more engaging employers elsewhere, and this could cause Company X to lose some of the most recently educated employees.

4.9 Recommendations for Future Research

For the measuring of employee engagement to be effective, and for the company to have recent information on the level of engagement, employee engagement surveys should be run regularly. The survey should be repeated once or twice a year to get a comprehensive look on which way the level of engagement is progressing in the company.

For this research, the results were analyzed using the country respondents work in and their age as background information. For future research, some other segments for background information could be selected. Some possible segments that could offer new findings would be for example analyzing the results using respondents' position in the company or years worked in the company.

For future research, the countries left out from this research, Sweden, France and United Kingdom should be included. The company could also consider including the individual agents and customer service agents to the research, to find out if there are differences in the employee engagement levels between them and the direct employees of the company. In case of the company opening branches in different countries in the future, the first employee engagement survey should be run as early as possible after opening the business.

The employee engagement survey revealed some differences in engagement levels between the three countries researched and pointed out areas of engagement that need further work. To get a full understanding on where these differences and some of the lower scores stem from, further research at Company X is recommended. These specific recommendations for future research have been included in the "recommendations" sections in chapter 4.

As the survey was run after a long, never before experienced period of remote work, it might be useful to run the survey again if going back to normal work environment is at some point possible, to see if there are some changes in the employee engagement levels.

5 Conclusion and Personal Learning

This chapter concludes the research and the results presented earlier in chapter 4. Lastly, the authors own learning throughout the process of writing the thesis is discussed.

5.1 Conclusion

The research was conducted to find out on what level is employee engagement at Company X in Finland, Norway and Denmark now, and if the engagement levels differ between the countries. The aim of the research was to offer recommendations on the work with employee engagement for Company X, based on the results of the survey.

As discussed in the theory part of the thesis in subchapter 2.1, the focus on employee engagement today is on how organizations could benefit their employees. As a result, engaged employees result in better business outcomes for the organization, as discussed in chapter 2.3. Employee engagement has several definitions, but simply it is defined as employees feeling that they are personally involved in the success of the company they work for.

The employee engagement survey run at Company X was segmented into smaller areas of engagement to get a more comprehensive look on the level of engagement in each country, and for the author to be able to offer as specific recommendations as possible. The survey measured employees' job satisfaction and commitment to Company X, how they see their own engagement and Company X as an employer, and how they feel about the amount of feedback received and opportunities offered for growth. As described in chapter 2.2 of the theory, employees are more likely to be engaged when they are involved in decisions, they have ethics and values to identify with, and opportunities for growth.

The results of the survey show that employee engagement is on a good level in each of the countries, although there are aspects of engagement Company X needs to pay attention to, to prevent disengagement in the future. According to the survey results employees of Company X in Finland, Norway and Denmark think of themselves as engaged. Results for being committed to Company X and being proud for what the company does, as well as having strong feelings of camaraderie towards colleagues scored especially high. Having career opportunities and the needed resources and processes for doing the work well, as well as seeing employer as credible scored the lowest.

What comes to the differences between the countries researched, based on the results engagement in Denmark is the highest and there are no drastic differences in the results for different aspects of engagement. The difference in results to Finland and Norway is not alarming, but should still be considered as a key finding from the survey. It should, however, be considered that the number of respondents from Denmark was the lowest. The engagement levels in Finland and Norway are on the same level with each other, with some small differences in some of the aspects of engagement.

Looking at the results for Norway, what can be considered as a key finding is that the employees in Norway are the youngest, at the same time Norway having the most employees applying for jobs outside Company X. Based on the results employees do not think of having much career opportunities, and therefore might choose to seek them from elsewhere. It should be considered in Norway that the risk for employees changing workplace seems to be slightly higher than in other countries researched.

The biggest difference in results is between Denmark and Finland, Finland scoring considerably lower than Denmark on employer credibility and having the needed systems, processes and resources to do one's job well. This finding should be taken seriously at Company X and to further research where the differences stem from. The company should especially pay attention to the low employer credibility score in Finland. Although other areas of engagement seem good for Finland, a continuous lack of credibility for employer is likely to cause disengagement in the future.

Analysing the results of the survey with respondents age groups showed that employees aged 51 and older are the most engaged and consider themselves as more engaged than their younger colleagues. The youngest employees in age group 18 to 30 are the least engaged and consider themselves as less engaged than their older colleagues. However, the age groups were considerably of differences sizes and therefore the result can not be considered as completely reliable.

Although employee engagement at Company X is good now, engagement level needs to be assessed regularly and carefully, and in the future more broadly than with this survey, including all countries and employees. Proof has been shown that disengagement can be contagious, which is why it is important to look at employee engagement not only on team level, but on individual level too. One disengaged team member can result in other members becoming disengaged too, as a lack of similar engagement exists in the group. Disengagement is more likely to be condemned to other team members than engagement is.

(AIHR Analytics 2019.) This especially might be risk at Company X, where feelings of camaraderie and appreciation of colleagues scored high.

All in all, the survey results offer Company X a comprehensive look on the engagement of employees in Finland, Norway and Denmark, and it succeeded in pointing out areas of engagement the company needs to focus on in the future. The survey results also revealed the areas of engagement Company X has succeeded in already now. Employees engage when they feel it matters to do so.

5.2 Personal Learning

As a human resource management related topic, the concept of employee engagement has several definitions and theories linked to it. Writing the thesis has allowed the author to learn in detail about the components of employee engagement and why the concept is so important for organizations. Especially interesting for the author has been to learn that an internal state of an employee, like engagement, can affect the business outcomes directly.

The process has also taught the author time and project management skills. As the thesis was written for a commissioning company, the time management and communication to the company were in an important role for the research to be successful. Having respondents from three different countries gave the author an experience of managing an international project.

The concept of employee engagement and its evolution from employee satisfaction throughout the years is something very relevant for Human Resource Management now. Therefore, writing the thesis on these topics has allowed the author to keep her knowledge and skills up to date and relevant as a HR professional. The author thinks that the importance of employee engagement for organizations will most likely increase in the future, as the amount of work done remotely is constantly growing. That is why the process of writing the thesis and conducting the research has been especially insightful for the author.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Survey.

Employee Engagement Survey

1. Age *

18-30

31-50

51-

2. I work in *

Finland

Norway

Denmark

The scale in the following questions is from 1-4, if not other wised mentioned. Please choose 0 only on questions you feel you don't have any experience from.

1= disagree

2= somehow disagree

3= somehow agree

4= agree

0= no experience

3. For following statements, please choose the option that best reflects your situation. *

	1	2	3	4	0
I enjoy my work.	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel joy when I accomplish a task.	<input type="radio"/>				
My work is interesting and challenging enough.	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel inspired by my work.	<input type="radio"/>				
I have enough time to finish my tasks during a shift.	<input type="radio"/>				
My work is meaningful.	<input type="radio"/>				

4. For following statements, please choose the option that best reflects your situation. *

	1	2	3	4	0
I have good career opportunities at [REDACTED]	<input type="radio"/>				
I get enough feedback.	<input type="radio"/>				
I have clear goals and I know what is expected from me.	<input type="radio"/>				
I can develop myself and learn new things at work.	<input type="radio"/>				
I have the needed resources to do my job well.	<input type="radio"/>				
Systems and processes at [REDACTED] support getting my job done.	<input type="radio"/>				
Good performance is rewarded fairly.	<input type="radio"/>				

5. Engagement refers to the feeling of being personally involved in the success of the company. How engaged would you say you are on a scale from 1-4? 1=not engaged at all and 4=very engaged *

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

6. Why would you say you do or don't feel yourself engaged? *

500 merkkiä jäljellä

The scale in the following questions is from 1-4. Please choose 0 only on questions you feel you don't have any experience from.

1= disagree

2= somehow disagree

3= somehow agree

4= agree

0= no experience

7. For following statements, please choose the option that best reflects your situation.

In these statements, management = █████ Senior Management *

	1	2	3	4	0
█████ is open for my development ideas and feedback.	<input type="radio"/>				
I know █████ mission and future goals.	<input type="radio"/>				
I agree with █████ values.	<input type="radio"/>				
I get enough information on important changes and decisions at █████	<input type="radio"/>				
I trust that the management has the ability to make right decisions.	<input type="radio"/>				
The management knows what is going on in my team.	<input type="radio"/>				
Decisions of management demonstrate that quality of work and improvement are top priorities.	<input type="radio"/>				
My work is valued by the management.	<input type="radio"/>				

8. For following statements, please choose the option that best reflects your situation. *

	1	2	3	4	0
Everyone is treated equally.	<input type="radio"/>				
My team has clear rules that everyone follows.	<input type="radio"/>				
Work is divided evenly across my team.	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel I am part of a team.	<input type="radio"/>				
The atmosphere at work is positive and uplifting.	<input type="radio"/>				
My colleagues enhance my work.	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel I can be myself at work.	<input type="radio"/>				

The scale in the following questions is from 1-4, if not otherwise mentioned. Please choose 0 only on questions you feel you don't have any experience from.

1= disagree

2= somehow disagree

3= somehow agree

4= agree

0= no experience

9. For following statements, please choose the option that best reflects your situation. *

	1	2	3	4	0
I am proud telling people I work for [REDACTED]	<input type="radio"/>				
I would recommend working for [REDACTED] to a friend.	<input type="radio"/>				
I am proud for what [REDACTED] does.	<input type="radio"/>				
I understand how I affect the success of the company.	<input type="radio"/>				
I can see myself still working for [REDACTED] in the next 2 years.	<input type="radio"/>				

10. I have applied to another job outside [REDACTED] in the past year. *

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to answer

11. In case you can't see yourself working for [redacted] in the next 2 years or have applied to another job, please specify why (you can choose multiple).

- Salary
- Work environment
- Anything else seems better than my current job
- Dissatisfaction with manager
- Job tasks
- Other, please specify

12. What do you think makes a company a good employer? *

500 merkkiä jäljellä

13. What could [redacted] do better as an employer? *

500 merkkiä jäljellä