Developing employee orientation concept for increased engagement - Case: Company X

Thuy Nguyen

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Thuy Nguyen

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Purpose of this development thesis is to design and develop an employee orientation concept to Company X for increased engagement. Company X is a small medium company in Finland that provides flexible and modern security solutions for organizations regardless to their size.

Development task was to design a comprehensive and effective employee orientation concept that will increase the participant' commitment to learn the topics they are orientated to, utilizing online learning. By considering new but effective methods such as online education to the process of inducting new employees, Company X can save time and capital. Suitable method for the commissioning company is the combination of contact and online teaching. To do this, the company must consider and carefully plan which areas shall be implemented online and which areas shall be implemented in person.

Theoretical framework of this thesis will explore the existing research and debates, and explain the reader the definitions of the following topics: concept, employee orientation, risk management, occupational safety and health, occupational accident, online learning and pitfalls of online learning. The author has chosen a qualitative approach which mandates the methodology of this study. In the means of data collection, two qualitative methods were chosen: unstructured interviews and a workshop. The interviews were organized to the managers of the commissioning company and the workshop was set up with the company's service manager due to their expertise in the regarding operations.

Based on the acquired data, it was clear that there was a need for development of the old concept because it consisted of time consuming and old-fashioned methods and information to induct the personnel. By implementing online elements to the employee orientation process the company can orientate their employees effectively and economically. Having a healthy, skillful and prosperous personnel will inevitably result into success. A healthy workplace and affluent work community is the base for motivated employees and increased productivity. Happy, well trained and skillful employees are companies most valued asset.

Keywords: Concept, employee orientation, online education, occupational safety and health, risk management

Työntekijänperehdytys konseptin kehittäminen sitoutumisen lisäämiseksi – Case: Yhtiö X

Year	2021	Sivumäärä	32

Tämän kehitettävän opinnäytetyön tarkoitus on suunnitella toimeksiantona Yhtiö X:lle työntekijänperehdytys konsepti sitoutumisen lisäämiseksi. Yhtiö X on kotimainen pieni keskikokoinen (SME) yhtiö, joka tarjoaa joustavia ja moderneja turvallisuusratkaisuja erikokoisille yrityksille.

Kehittämällä Yhtiö X:n nykyistä työntekijänperehdytys konseptia tavoitteena on suunnitella perusteellinen sekä tehokas konsepti, joka tulee lisäämään toimeksiantoyrityksen työntekijöiden sitoutumista perehdytettävien asioiden oppimiseen hyödyntäen verkko-oppimista. Tilausyritykselle sopiva menetelmä on lähi- ja verkko-opetuksen yhdistelmä. Kuitenkin, ennen kuin verkkokoulutusta tulisi suinpäin lisätä prosessiin yrityksen tulisi harkita sekä suunnitella tarkkaan mitkä asiat ovat perehdytettävissä työntekijöille lähiopetuksella ja mitkä verkko-opetuksella.

Opinnäytetyön teoreettinen viitekehys tutkii olemassa olevia tutkimuksia ja keskusteluja, sekä avaa lukijalle seuraavien aiheiden määritelmiä: konsepti, työntekijän perehdytys, riskien hallinta, työsuojelu ja -terveys, verkko-opetus, verkko-opetuksen sudenkuopat. Kirjoittaja on valinnut opinnäytetyölle kvalitatiivisen lähestymistavan mikä ohjaa sen osalta opinnäytetyössä käytettäviä menetelmiä. Tiedonkeruu tapahtuu laadullisia menetelmiä käyttäen ja tässä opinnäytetyössä käytetyt menetelmät ovat jäsentämätön haastattelu sekä työpaja. Perustuen hankittuihin tietoihin oli selvää, että vanhalle konseptille oli kehittämisen tarvetta sillä se sisältää aikaa vieviä sekä vanhanaikaisia menetelmiä työntekijöiden perehdyttämiselle. Työntekijät voidaan perehdyttää työhön tehokkaammin ja taloudellisemmin jos lisätään verkko-opetusominaisuuksia toimintamalliin mukaan. Tyytyväiset, hyvin koulutetut ja taidokkaat työntekijät ovat yrityksien arvokkain omaisuus.

Keywords: konsepti, työntekijän perehdytys, työsuojelu ja – terveys, verkko-oppiminen, riskienhallinta.

Table of Contents

1   Introduction

This thesis is a development project and the topic for this project is chosen because the commissioning company, that wishes to stay private and is hereinafter referred to as Company X, expressed their desire for a new concept for their employee orientation process. The commissioning company wants to implement new techniques and methods to orientate new and old employees to work. The idea of the thesis topic stemmed when the author's manager was introducing and orientating a new employee to the team. They quickly realized that there was a need for development because the process was time consuming and the methods used were outdated. The author then suggested that it would be best to develop the entire concept of employee orientation to improve the process holistically, to which the commissioning company agreed to.

Company X has recently in 3-5 years become part of a larger Nordic group which has helped the company to grow significantly – in every aspect. Being part of a larger organization meant they needed to adapt same practices and values used by the Nordic group. The current employee orientation concept is build based on the recommendations and in accordance with the standards of the Nordic group. Therefore, the current concept consists of very generalized information of the company, old practices and methods. It also includes very little information about Company X's practicalities regarding to occupational safety and health. In addition to that, the current concept consists outdated information and Company X has stated that their process of orientating and guiding new employees to work has been inconsistent because managers of the company follow the outdated information.

Purpose of this thesis is to develop the current concept to correspond the needs of the commissioning company by creating a concept based on Company X's needs and practices. The new concept will highlight the key aspects of occupational safety and health, and it is tailored to suit the target company's background. Additionally, the author aims to make the process of employee orientation more consistent and engaging for the company. For this concept, the initiative is to utilize online education in the employee orientation process to create a more interactive learning environment for the participants. Considering the use of new teaching and learning methods may also increase the engagement rate of the participants.

In this concept, the employee orientation program is planned to be implemented online in the near future. Metrics used to measure the performance of the employees will define their knowledge and engagement in the program. In addition, this will also reveal the success rate of the program and the concept to the commissioning company.

1.1 Scope and exclusion

The purpose of this study is to develop the employee orientation concept so that it will meet the needs of the commissioning company. According to the commissioning company (2021), the current concept facilitates methods and practices that are now considered to be time consuming and old-fashioned. In addition, the general intent of this study is to know and understand the impact of the new concept.

Over the recent years, the company has grown and developed vastly. Due to a rapid growth, some areas were left without development such as the current employee induction program. It is also noted that the current operating model's inconsistency has caused confusion amongst the teams over these past years which has affected the process of orientating new workers slightly negatively. The idea for a new concept came from the commissioning company aspiring to be more modern and innovative. Therefore, the plan is to develop the concept so that it can improve the commissioning company's current operating model to orientate new employees effectively, clearly and consistently.

This study will cover the following topics: general knowledge related to this study, theoretical framework, methodology and results.

In terms of thesis limitations, the following will be excluded from the study due to a limited timeframe. This thesis will not include the introduction of the actual e-learning platform that the company decides to use for staff training, since it is yet to be determined. The idea and plan of utilizing online education in the process of employee induction and guidance is planned to happen in near future. But because this is not yet to be confirmed the author cannot wait for the implementation to happen due to a restricted timeframe of this study.

1.2 Case: Company X

This study is done for Company X, they are a small medium (SME) company in Finland that offers modern, flexible, and cost-effective security solutions for organizations. They are a limited company and part of a bigger Nordic group. The company currently employs ca. 25-40 people. Their focus is on access control, but they do offer various services for worktime management, visitor management and other security solutions. The company's main product is Software as Service, or SaaS in short. Various security technology solutions are developed around SaaS, such as access control and alarm systems. SaaS refers to a software located in the cloud. This means that all the software modules can be found in a browser-based interface that are accessible through the Internet. In conclusion, the service is available regardless of one's location or place. This makes it a flexible alternative compared to old interfaces that require an entire room just to store their servers. (Atlantic.net, n.d.; Company X 2021)

The users of SaaS in most cases do not own the software they use but must license it from the service provide, in this case from Company X. In terms of practicality, the service provider will host the servers, databases and code to create applications, so that everything is ready to use for the client. In addition, because everything is browser-based there is no need for the client to download the software separately on a computer. This will save disk space that is considered a valuable aspect, since companies must pay for spare disk space as well.

Company X had a rapid growth when they became part of the larger Nordic group, and this inspired and encouraged the company to develop themselves further in every aspect. This means that the company aspire to follow and keep up with the current trends, and they strive for creative thinking in hopes for more innovating operations.

1.3   Objectives and development task

Objective for this study is to develop the employee orientation concept so that it will meet needs and demands of the case company. The current concept incorporates time consuming and old-fashioned methods for teaching and learning, as mentioned earlier. This is the reason why Company X is seeking to develop their current concept that will be more tailored for their own needs. In addition, the lack of topical information, especially in occupational safety and health (OSH from now on) has created confusion for the team leaders that are responsible for the employee orientation.

The new concept shall incorporate modern techniques for learning such as online education, e-learning and self-learning and consists of updated information of the commissioning company's practices. Main weight being on the company's OSH. Development task of this thesis is to make Company X's employee orientation concept more functional by regarding their needs for the new concept. The author has presented their plan presentation of the new concept for the commissioning company and it was approved by the executive team, and from there the author could start their developing process. See appendix 1 for the plan presentation. Due to the company wanting to stay anonymous and to protect their anonymity the plan presentation is a brief example of the actual content.

2   Research background

This chapter focuses on building a theoretical framework that will work as baseline knowledge for this study, that is then required for the development project. The theoretical framework will consist of selected topics relevant to the project, each with their own subheadings for clarity. This chapter shall highlight the important aspects of this study for the reader and provide sufficient insights to the presented topics.

As it was established previously, the purpose of this thesis is to develop the employee orientation concept for the case company by utilizing online education and online learning. However, before implementing a new practice it is important to seek and consider possible risks and underlying challenges that online education and learning may pose, and how they could affect the process of orientating and guiding new employees. By carefully considering the challenges and risks of online education and comparing them to the benefits the commissioning company can then decide whether the new practice is a way to go.

Online education is said to be more cost-effective than face-to-face learning. Which is why in today's tight economic constraints many companies are seeking alternatives for costly and traditional classroom training in order to cut down additional expenses (Baxter, Callaghan & McAvoy 2018). Online education has many benefits to its users besides being an economical option, it is also flexible, interactive, creative and effective – a new way of teaching and learning (Haythornthwaite & Andrews 2011). And what makes it so cost-effective and an ecological choice is the fact that there is no need for physical materials (books, papers etc.), and the materials and course content can be always updated when needed (Casey, Shaw, Whittingham & Gallavan 2018). In addition, the users can have access to the course and course materials anywhere and at any time - only if they have access to the Internet. This means that there is no need for travelling or requirement of physical presence. (Casey et al. 2018)

However, despite all the beneficial things mentioned above Baxter et al. (2018) raised their concerns about some difficulties and critiques circling around the online education. One of them being that online learning cannot replace classrooms or human interactions between students and teachers. It is also highly crucial to be aware that not all things can be taught online, for example the use of machinery, emergency exit routes, company premises to name a few. There can be an online guide, but the ultimate guidance and orientating should happen in person. (Anderson 2008; J. Baxter et al. 2018).

2.1   Concept

Concept is a term with various meanings. Usually, the meaning depends solely on the content and intended use of the term. Moritz (2009) explains that a concept is a combination of ideas formed in the human mind that cannot be defined readily in another way. Moritz (2009) continues to define concept as a formation of abstract ideas of a plan or a design, or general notions of the mind such as thoughts. Lehrer (1992) considers concept as a private entity in one's head – a product of an imagination that can only be explained and expressed through language, gestures, illustrations or through other means of communication.

Since concept is considered as a thought or an idea of a certain thing (process, operating model, product etc.) or a creation of the mind they are therefore considered as intangible

things (Lehrer 1992). By intangible, Lehrer (1992) means things that cannot be touched or seen, thus, they are not physical objects or targets. Moritz (2009) concludes that ideas formed in the mind are not facts and should not be interpreted as such. They are an individual's general notions of a certain thing, how they perceive it - and therefore are something that can be argued (Moritz 2009).

Commonly, the term concept means a certain ideology for a process, business model or operation. Regarding to this thesis, a concept in this context means an idea of an operating model that creates a guiding framework for the implementation of the employee orientation process. A new and fresh idea of how to implement the process of employee orientation.

2.2 Employee orientation

Employee orientation is a process of introducing new employees to their new job, work tasks, responsibilities and workplace - or current employees to their new position, tasks and responsibilities (Cadwell & Crisp 1988). Employers must under the Finnish Occupational Safety and Health Act 738/2002: 14§ provide sufficient instruction and guidance to the work, working conditions, correct use of tools and other safe work procedures for the employees (Occupational Safety and Health Act 738/2002,14§). According to the Centre for Occupational Safety (n.d.) employee orientation as well as guidance has crucial effects for a company's safety operations when it is done properly and proactively, it is also considered to be part of company's occupational safety and health – creating the conditions for efficient, safe and effective work.

Cadwell and Crisp (1988) emphasizes on the importance of planning the employee orientation. When planning is done properly and in the regards for safe work, the orientation will save time, money, increase productivity and improve employee relations. Whereas a careful and considered recruitment can be easily ruined by a poorly planned and executed orientation. In most cases the companies may even have to start the whole hiring process over again. In addition to that, inadequate work guidance has a higher risk for occupational accidents and for unexpected costs (Cadwell & Crisp 1988; Centre for Occupational Safety n.d.). The goal in employee orientation according to Cadwell and Crisp (1988), is to have an employee who knows how to do their work safely and efficiently, respects others and workplace, and has enthusiasm for work. A successful orientation will turn new employees into a valued asset to the organization. (Cadwell & Crisp 1988)

A written work guidance plan can be used to follow the flow of the entire process. Additionally, this will ensure that all the factors to promote safe work has been considered. The work induction plan should be drafted based on the information from the company's hazard and risk assessment; therefore, risk management plays a crucial role when it comes to employee orientation and guidance. Risk assessment begins when all the possible risks and

hazards related to the work and workplace are considered and identified. After that the company can begin evaluating the risks and decide on the precautions and procedures. (The Centre for Occupational Safety n.d.)

2.3 Risk management

Hopkin (2013) describes risks as situations or occurrences that can expose an organization to a negative impact or danger with undesirable consequences. Organizations must consider that their every activity may involve a potential risk that can have a harmful impact to the organization's assets or the environment. To minimize these potential losses and damage, the organization must initiate the process of managing risks. This process is called risk management. (Hopkin 2013).

Hopkin (2013) defines risk management as a set of activities to ensure the desired and best possible outcome after a harmful occurrence. Wolke (2017) describes risk management as a process of identifying, assessing and treating the risks. In short, it is a process of understanding the threat, calculating the likelihood or chance of the risk occurring and controlling the threat and consequences effectively. (Hopkin 2013; Wolke 2017).

However, Hopkin (2013) mentions that all risks do not always have a negative impact if a positive return is expected from the activity. This phenomenon is known as an opportunity in risk. For example, an organization wish to deliver stakeholder expectations but there are certain risks that may have a negative impact on the ability of the organization to achieve this aim. To keep the concept of opportunity risk simple; achieving the stakeholder expectations in this case represent the reward the organization is seeking. To claim the reward, the organization must undergo through activities that may involve risks with negative impact. The reward is considered to be more valuable than the related risks, so the company will execute these activities knowing that the activities will have negative impacts. But in the end, they will gain the stakeholders respect and trust for delivering the expectations as promised. (Hopkin 2013).

2.4 Occupational safety and health

Everyone has the right to practice safe work in a safe and healthy working environment. The Centre for Occupational Safety (n.d.) states that the goal of occupational safety and health is to ensure and secure safe and healthy work and working environment for everyone. Working conditions and working environment are regulated by the Finnish occupational safety and health act to prevent occupational accidents and diseases – as well as protecting the health of employees. It is the employer's obligation to exercise care by taking care of the employees' safety and health while at work. By any necessary means, the employer must ensure that the work the employees are set to do can be done in a safe and healthy work environment with

the right and appropriate tools and work practices (Occupational Safety and Health Act 738/2002,8§; The Centre for Occupational Safety n.d; Confederation of Finnish industries n.d).

Relation between quality of work and well-being at work can be seen in the productivity of the employees (Website of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in Finland n.d.). According to the Centre for Occupational Safety (n.d.) the foundation for productive work consists of a safe and healthy work environment, healthy employees, and a well-functioning work community. Occupational accidents are costly expenses for companies as they can cause material damage and personal injury, even death in a worst case of scenario (Centre for Occupational Safety n.d.). The Finnish institute of occupational health (n.d.) emphasizes on importance of anticipation and planning, companies must anticipate and identify various of risks related to work and working environment to prevent accidents from occurring. Each occupational accident means a breach in safety. It is the employer's obligation to identify and analyze risks and hazards relating to work considering the nature of work, activities, the working environment, working conditions and other aspects related to work (Occupational Safety and Health Act 738/2002, 10§). In a case where the risks and hazards cannot be eliminated, the employer must adequately and systematically assess their consequences to the personnel's health and safety. Use of an external experts shall be incorporated if the employer does not have an adequate expertise nor skills to perform such actions mentioned to ensure the health of the employees. (Occupational Safety and Health Act 738/2002,10§; The Finnish institute of occupational health n.d.)

2.5   Occupational accident

The Website of the Occupational Safety and Health administration in Finland (n.d.) defines occupational accident as a sudden and unexpected phenomenon that takes place at workplace or during worktime. It is often caused by external factors, for example, an impact of a fallen object, slippery surfaces, electric shocks, or a cut endured by using a sharp object such as a knife, scissors etc. Occupational accidents or accidents in general happen suddenly and are often unforeseen (Finnish Worker's Compensation Center n.d.). The Centre for Occupational Safety (n.d.) states that companies must be prepared for such events, and they must have a clear practice for informing and reporting of accidents and incidents. Employers must have a policy for actions required to promote safety and health of the employees. This policy should cover the needs for developing and improving the working conditions as well as the effects of the working environmental factors (Occupational Safety and Health Act 738/2002, 9§; Website of the Occupational Safety and Health administration in Finland n.d.).

Employers shall together with the employees work in a cooperation to ensure and maintain safety at work as well as improve it (Occupational Safety and Health 738/2002, 17§).

Employees shall, for their part, follow the orders and guidance provided by the employer. They must also practice care and caution when working, in order to maintain safety and health for themselves and others. To achieve a functional work community, employees must refrain from inappropriate behavior at workplace and avoid such treatment of other co-workers that may result into a conflict, hazards or risks to their safety and health (Occupational Safety and Health Act 738/2002, 18§).

In a case where an occupational accident has happened and where a person has dealt a severe injury or even died, the employer must without any delays inform the occupational safety and health authority and police. The police are obligated to start an investigation at the scene of accident. (Act on Occupational Safety and Health Enforcement and Cooperation on Occupational Safety and Health at Workplaces 44/2006, 46§).

2.6   Online learning

Online learning is a term with various definitions in literature, the meaning has changed rapidly over the years because of its vast development (Anderson 2008). Carliner (2004) presents online learning as a form of learning that takes place on the computer and all the educational materials are accessible and displayed through the computer. Online learning can therefore be categorized to distance education. Williams, Paprock and Covington (1998) defines distance education as a phenomenon where any formal approach to education and instruction takes place remotely. This means that the educator and the learner are not physically at the same location or in each other's presence. (Williams et al. 1998; Carliner 2004)

Williams et al. (1998) proceeds to explain that distance education has been around as early as late 1800s in a form of letters. The learner would receive their educational materials through the mail and would get educated using the materials. This process is then called distance learning when learning happens remotely - away from the physical presence of the educator. Later on, as the technology evolves, new methods for distance education arise in forms of educational television, radio, cassettes and online courses. (Williams et al. 1998).

To simplify the definition Casey, Shaw, Whittingham and Gallavan (2018) describe online learning as a process where a learner is getting educated entirely through the Internet rather than in a traditional classroom. All the teacher-student interactions, display of course materials and teaching happens online through the Internet. Casey et al. (2018) categorizes online education into two: synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous instruction and learning takes place in real time, whilst asynchronous instruction and learning can be done any time – granting participants more flexibility. Both methods, however, are done via the Internet. Educators will determine which type of instruction is seen best fit for the class. According to Casey et al. (2018) online courses has been around earliest in 1989. University of

Phoenix was the first institution to implement and offer their students courses via the Internet. Online learning has developed many names over the years, but most common terms are known as; e-learning, virtual learning, online learning. (Casey et al. 2018).

Haythornthwaite and Andrews (2011) believe that online education has many benefits and possibilities to it. It is seen as a new way of teaching and learning. In addition, they believe that as the technology progresses, online education will be an innovative method of education. Casey et al. (2018) supports this idealism as they believe that online education can offer various advantages. One critical advantage being able to offer a more active learning environment for the participants compared to face-to-face classes. Other considerable advantage is cost-effectiveness and online education is often considered to be more cost-effective than traditional classroom teaching because there is no need for physical class materials or a classroom (Haythornthwaite & Andrews 2011). This suggests that online education can be advantage for organizations who want to save in costs of training. Pettinger (2002) suggests that employee training is usually a costly expense for companies but considered as a vital element for the business as the trained employees will become one of the company's important assets. Nurturing employee's talents and skills will often increase their chances to success in their work (Pettinger 2002; Haythornthwaite & Andrews 2011; Casey et al. 2018).

2.7   Pitfalls of online learning

Even though online education has many benefits to it, we must explore and consider possible pitfalls of online teaching and learning to fully understand what it can and what it cannot offer. Despite of having all the course materials accessible through the internet and readily available for the employees, Casey et al. (2018) raises their concerns that the course material's accessibility may be limited due to a person's disability, capability or because of technological issues. In these cases, the learners might not be able to embrace all the opportunities online learning can provide. If an employee has a hearing or visual impairment the company must consider alternative ways to provide access to the employee training material for the employee. For example, in a form of videos with closed-captions and/or screen-reading software. Technological issues may also limit the accessibility to the materials. For example, having a poor internet connection affects the learning experience significantly when the employee cannot have access to the course materials or if the content loads slowly. This can create frustration and negative feelings towards the learning experience. Another technical challenge that should be considered before implementing everything online is computer skills of the learners. Not every employee requires the need to access the computer to do their daily work tasks, therefore, they may not be as acquainted to today's technology. This can be seen as poor computer skills. Employees with poor computer skills may experience more challenges with online learning which can again cause negative

feelings towards the training program. This can also create a mental barrier for the learner which can then affect the employee's motivation to complete the employee training. (Casey et al. 2018; Baxter et al. 2018)

According to Baxter et al. (2018), building relationships via the internet is often considered more difficult than in a traditional classroom. They raise their concerns how online education may limit the natural and authentic interaction between the participant and the educator. Or the interaction amongst the participants because for example, the nature of online instruction cannot provide or replicate personal interaction a person would find in a classroom. Other critiques regarding to online education discussed by Baxter et al. (2018) was that often communication is unidirectional. Unidirectional communication usually happens through text where the tone can be misinterpreted, through video or audio content (e.g. introductory video or audio to the course, or instructor introduces themselves). This can often decrease interaction between the educator and the learners or even decrease interaction among the learners. Authentic online discussions of the course topics will be more challenging to set if there is no kind of relationship established between the learners and the instructor. (Baxter et al. 2018)

One of the main attractions of online teaching and learning is that they are cost-effective which draws attention of many institutions and organizations. Organizations all over the world are always seeking for alternatives and more economical solutions for their operations. However, if the planning is done poorly and the main focus is to save some coins, the execution and use of the online course may turn into a burden.

3 Methodology

This chapter explains the research methodology the author has chosen to use for this study. The definition of research in its simplest sense is a process of an individual searching for knowledge (Kothari 2004). More specifically in the terms of study, it is a scientific and systematic investigation for information relating to a certain topic (Kothari 2004). Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2015) defines that the term methodology is about how individuals approach problems and seek for solutions. Therefore, methodology in research means finding a way to gain and gather information, data and knowledge needed to solve the research question. Kothari (2004) presents two types of commonly used research methodology approaches: quantitative approach and qualitative approach. (Kothari 2004; Taylor et al. 2015)

In quantitative approach the aim is to gather data that focuses on the measurement of quantity or amount. It is a phenomenon that is explained in terms of quantity and uses

standardized data, diagrams and statistics. This approach provides the researcher with numerical data that can be then measured. There are various ways to collect data with quantitative approach, these include: questionnaires with linear numeric scales, polls, experiments, structured interviews and controlled observations. (Kothari 2004; Taylor et al. 2015)

Qualitative approach is quite the opposite method opposed to quantitative approach. Qualitative research method is used to gather data that cannot be numerically measured, this approach provides the researcher the data in the forms of opinions, behavior, words and attitudes. It is often used to understand how an individual perceives their social reality (Taylor et al. 2015). Methods used to collect qualitative data are: in-depth interviews, open-ended surveys or questionnaires, direct observations, unstructured or semi-structured interviews, workshops and group discussions. (Kothari 2004; Taylor et al. 2015).

According Lapan, Quartaroli and Riemer (2011) qualitative research allows the researcher to investigate the behavior of individuals, social and organizational characteristics and understand the meaning to their behavior and acts. Out of these two methods the author has taken qualitative approach for their study. Reason being that the development project focuses on acquiring knowledge of individuals behavior in the process of orientating a new employee and understanding the phenomenon. In the means of data collecting, the author has chosen the following methods: unstructured interviews and a workshop. The interviews are held with the teams' managers and the topics focuses on the current employee orientation concept - in hopes to gain knowledge of the commissioning company's current situation. Furthermore, the author expects to gain a more detailed insight on how the commissioning company generally operates when a new employee is introduced to the organization - and based on the information, understand their situation. The workshop is organized together with the Company X's managers, HR, occupational safety and health manager (OSH manager) and occupational safety and health representative (OSH representative).

3.1   Research interview & workshop

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2015) describe research interview as a discussion with a purpose that usually happens between two or more people. Generally, the purpose is to gain information of the research target. Questions that the interviewer presents to the interviewee should be concise and clear, and the interviewee should answer to them truthfully and best to their ability. A good use of interview often helps the researcher to gather authentic, accurate and reliable data that are relevant to the study. (Schostak 2005; Saunders et al. 2015).

Saunders et al. (2015) present three types of interviews for the researcher to choose from, depending on their strategy, intent and use of their research.

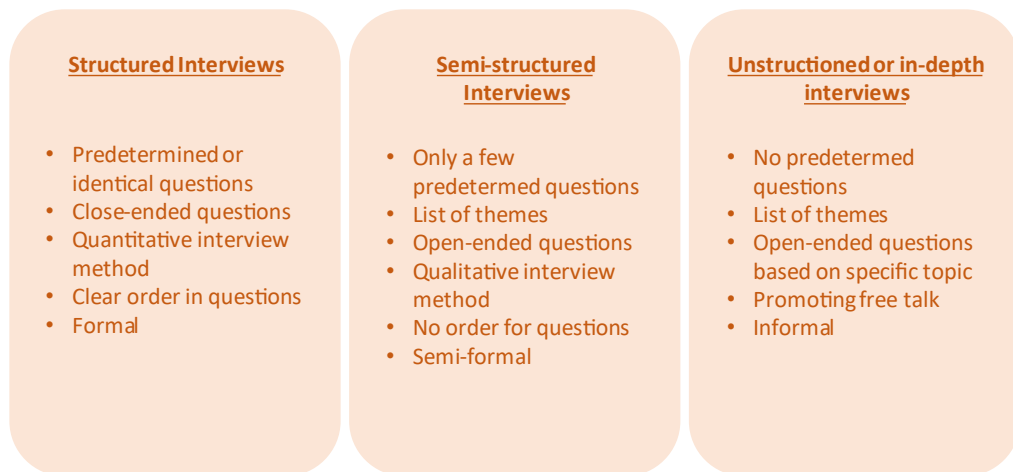| Structured Interviews	Semi-structured Interviews	Unstructioned or in-depth interviews
• Predetermined or identical questions • Close-ended questions • Quantitative interview method • Clear order in questions • Formal	• Only a few predetermed questions • List of themes • Open-ended questions • Qualitative interview method • No order for questions • Semi-formal	• No predetermed questions • List of themes • Open-ended questions based on specific topic • Promoting free talk • Informal

Figure 1 Interview types (Saunders et al. 2015)

Out of these three types of interviews, the author has chosen to conduct an unstructured interview. Unstructured interviews consist of open-ended questions that are not pre-determined. Open-ended questions are used to stimulate conversation in its natural flow, keeping the discussion authentic and natural as possible (Saunders et al. 2015). This form of interview relies heavily on storytelling (Schostak 2005). Even though the interview is unstructured, Saunders et al (2015) emphasize the importance of having a clear objective of the aspects explored before implementing this method because it may easily 'step out of its course'. Kothari (2004) concludes that non-structured interviews may often be more difficult to delineate because there is no structure to the interview, and therefore the data acquired may be more time consuming to analyze. However, despite that it can add richness to your data when the interview is conducted properly and in regards of the nature and objective of the study (Kothari 2004). (Kothari 2004; Schostak 2005; Saunders 2015)

The interview will be held to the managers of the Company X individually and the entire session will be recorded for the purpose of data collection. The data will be then transcribed into text sheets so the author can then organize, code and analyze their data. Transcribing process will require the author to access their data repeatedly in order to discover themes, patterns, ideas and topics that are relevant to the study (Kothari 2004; Saunders 2015).

Brooks-Harris and Stock-Ward (1999) describes workshops as a learning environment that pushes the students think creatively - encouraging them to be responsible for their own

learning. Workshops should always be planned in advance and the purpose of the workshop should be determined before carrying one out, implementing a workshop without knowing the purpose of it often result into waste of everyone's time (Nash 2010). Sufi et al. (2018) conclude that workshops often consist of a small group of people who have gathered together to explore a certain topic and discuss of new concepts, practices, methods and skills. Workshops are often seen as an effective way to pass knowledge, ideas, new insights and to identify problems (Sufi et al. 2018). The idea of a workshop is to produce a solution to a specific problem and they are often used in academic events to promote students' co-operation and encouraging them to interact with the professionals (Brooks-Harris & Stock-Ward 1999; Sufi et al. 2018).

The workshop will consist of the managers, HR, OSH manager and OSH representative of Company X. The purpose of it is to go through the concerns that were raised during the interview and based on the concerns consider the things to develop and specify the focus area for the new concept. The workshop session will be recorded in the means of data collection and analysis.

3.2 Data analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis often happens same time as data collection. The process is considered to be iterative because the researcher has to return to the data often. Returning into the gathered data will allow the researcher to understand the data better and reflect on it. It will also help the researcher to recognize common patterns, themes and subjects. Data analysis has to be done in order to discover useful information, compile conclusions and recommendations, provide meaningful insights that will support decision-making and finally find the meaning to the study. (Lapan et al. 2011; Taylor et al. 2015)

According to Taylor et al. (2015) analyzing data can often be challenging because the researcher must be able to provide their findings in words, images or in other means of communication. They should be able to make sense of their data, why it is collected and what it is used for. Often the process of collecting data is easy but many researchers get stuck when they have to analyze their data (Taylor et al. 2015). Analyzing qualitative data is considered challenging because the process is not fundamentally mechanical or technical and involves inductive reasoning (Taylor et al.2015). Saldana, Leavy and Beretvas (2011) provide an illustration of the process of data preparation and analysis.
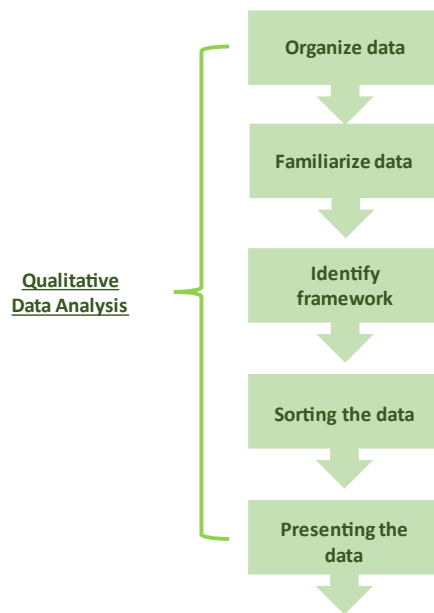
Figure 2 Process of Qualitative data analysis (Saldana et al. 2011)

For the author, the data analysis process has started simultaneously to data collection, because during the in-depth interviews and workshop the author must observe the participants' behavior and mannerism. First step according to Saldana et al. (2011) after the data collection is the preparation of the data to be analyzed. The author begins by transcribing the interviews into text sheets. After that the author can begin familiarizing themself into the data in order to recognize themes, patterns, topics and ideas that become apparent in the data repeatedly. Next and final step is to code and sort out the data so it will be ready to be presented.

Nature of data analysis

Regarding the nature and objectives of the research or study, one must consider and decide the approach to take when analyzing qualitative data. Saunders et al. (2015) introduces two approaches to analyze qualitative data, these are: deductive and inductive approach. In deductive approach, the researcher will use existing theory, information and facts to explore and analyze data (Kelley 2014; Saunders et al 2015). However, according to Saunders et al. (2015) efficiency of the deductive approach is debatable because it may be too restrictive to the concerns and issues raised in the data and therefore limit the study (Saunders et al. 2015).

In inductive approach, the researcher must collect the data by themselves and discover patterns, themes and issues to concentrate on and make inference based on an observation (Kelley 2014). Saunders et al. (2015) adds that inductive approach may be difficult strategy for an inexperienced researcher as it is crucial to examine the data same time as the data

collection happens, because often one might collect data without really examining it. This will drop the value of the data and the researcher may miss important and clear themes and patterns that are emerging from the data. (Kelley 2014; Saunders et al. 2015)

Kelley (2014) provides an excellent example of these two approaches to understand the differentiation and logic between deductive and inductive approach. In deductive approach one makes an inference solely based on the existing facts, statements, and information. For example, beverage is defined as liquid that can be consumed and is often consumed through a straw. Therefore, one could reason that soup is also classified as a beverage because it is liquid and consumable through a straw. Whereas in inductive approach, one makes inference solely based on the observation. For example, an individual is wearing a red top, red shoes and has a red backpack therefore the person's favorite color is red. In conclusion, deductive is interpreting the theory and inductive is testing the theory. For this study, the author is implementing inductive approach to analyze the data they have gathered. (Kelley 2014)

4   Results

This chapter will present the results of this study and the aim is to give the reader deeper insights of the data collecting and analyzing process. The author used qualitative methods to gather data as mentioned in chapter 3, two methods were implemented to gather data for this study: 1-on-1 interviews and a workshop.

The interviews were held for the teams' managers individually, in the departments of - customer support, software development and sales. Because the mentioned teams have had the most recent experiences with orienting and guiding a new employee to their work and workplace. Most of the new employees were employed during a worldwide pandemic which has affected the orientation process significantly. The interview focuses on the functionality and practicality of the current concept of the employee orientation, and the purpose of the interview is to understand the company's current situation and the need for the new concept.

The workshop was conducted together with the company's service manager, HR, OSH manager, OSH representative and development manager. They were seen best fit for the workshop because they have the most insights of the operating model for orienting new employees. The purpose of the workshop is to tackle down the issues that became apparent during the interviews and discuss about the development ideas.

Based on the gathered data the author has presented their final presentation of the new developed concept to the executive team of the company, see appendix 1. In respect of Company X's anonymity, the presentation is brief example of the original one, centralizing the most important aspects of the idea.

4.1   Interviews

For this study the author chose to conduct an unstructured interview, as it is seen to fit the best regarding to the nature of this study. This type of interview allows the participants to have a more freely conversation and does not restrict the participants to answer yes or no to asked questions. Although the interview will be implemented without a structure, the researcher must have a clear idea or aspect of the purpose of the interview before implementing it. Meaning, the researcher must direct the conversation by asking the right questions and providing the correct topics – without interfering the discussion too much. (Kothari 2004; Saunders et al. 2015)

The interviews are informal, which also grants the interviewees an opportunity for a more natural and honest interview (Saunders et al. 2015). Unstructured interviews are often used for the purpose to explore a specific topic or area in depth, which is why they are also known as in-depth interviews (Saunders et al. 2015). For the author, area of interest in this case is Company X's current situation and a need for the new concept. Instead of using predetermined questions and to encourage free-flowing and spontaneous conversation the author, for the sake of clarity, has introduced different conversation themes and prepared some questions for the interviewees. The following themes are numbered and analyzed in given order:

1. The state of the current employee orientation concept
2. General concerns of the current concept
3. Expectations of the new concept

These interviews were conducted individually to the interviewees and they were told that the session will be recorded for the purpose of this thesis and analyzing the data. The author was sure to exclude everything that may reveal recognizable information of the company in order to protect and respect the anonymity of Company X. Based on the given answers, the author has pinpointed the main points that appeared often during the interviews and summarized them.

The first theme deals with the state of the current employee orientation concept. In general, it was clear that the current state of the concept was good, but there is always room for improvement. When asking about the process of orienting, the managers reveal that the tools and methods they use to induct new and old employees to their work are considered too old-fashioned and time-consuming. Tools that they use are a personnel guide and a checklist that also works as a work induction plan. The personnel guide has not been updated since it was handed to the commissioning company during the transitioning phase to be part of a larger Nordic group. Main issue with the guide is that it consisted of outdated information and very generalized matters of Company X itself and its practices. Nowadays, the guide is given to the

employees after the induction process as a 'nice-to-know' reading material and has no real purpose in educational sense. During the discussion, it was clear to the author that the managers rely heavily on the checklist more. The checklist was created amongst the Company X's middle management with the purpose to unify the process. In addition, the list is checked once a year along the yearly audit. However, the checklist alone is not seen efficient enough and the managers have made some own adjustments to the checklist so that it will be suitable for their own teams. Therefore, there is a feeling that the concept has shown signs of inconsistency. Majority felt that if they were to hold on to the processes in the work induction plan it would work as it was planned, however, there are no means of controlling this. This means, there is no guarantee that the managers of different teams induct and orientate their new employees exactly in accordance with the work induction plan. This raised a concern amongst the managers whether the employees are sufficiently orientated to the company's practices on important aspects, such as workplace healthcare, emergency exit routes and rescue plan for example. In addition, there is no way to measure the employee's engagement to the orienting process meaning that there is no solid guarantee that the employee has actually comprehended, learned and internalized the orientated matters.

Second theme deals with the concerns of the concept that were brought up during the interviews. Especially the functionality of the concept was questioned during the worldwide pandemic because it affected the entire employee orienting and guidance process greatly. Generally, the orientation and guidance process can take up to 2-3 weeks and during this time the employee is introduced to the company, company practices, work tasks, responsibilities, workplace and co-workers and so on. However, during these exceptional times it has taken even longer to induct an employee to their work. COVID-19 has brought upon many obstacles and restrictions that were applied organizational wide, this limited the access to the office and social contacts amongst the personnel. Soon as the restrictions were applied, Company X decided to execute remote work policy in accordance with the government instructions and recommendations. Going to the office was never forbidden, but the overall 'at-office capacity' was limited to 20% and remote working was highly advised – unless the work could not be done remotely. Without an exceptional situation, according to the work induction plan the managers must orientate and guide their new employees to work using a traditional classroom method. It is believed that this way the company can create a better connection and improve their relations with the new employee immediately. However, because of the restrictions and limitations, the managers were forced to think of alternative ways to orientate new employees and reduce the time spent at the office. They had to schedule office time to orientate new employees from the company's own reservation system to be sure the maximum capacity would not be exceeded. Some managers mentioned that during this time most of their new recruits have never met some of their colleagues or other teams' members in person, but merely through online meetings.

Third and last theme regards to the expectations from Company X for the new concept. During the interviews, the managers expressed and discussed about their desire for the new concept to be customized into Company X's needs. It should also incorporate more about the commissioning company's safety policy - highlighting the company's practicalities in occupational safety and health. Additionally, they wish that in future the process will be more consistent and effective so that they can use the training time more efficiently and ultimately save some hours. For the participant engagement, the managers believe that by making the process more interactive and adding online elements to the process of employee orientation, it could increase the overall activity of the employees in learning. Another important aspect appeared during the interviews, this aspect was the option or possibility to monitor the learning process of the employees. Currently there is no means to monitor the learning process or outcome, as mentioned earlier.

4.2   Workshop & brainstorming

The author wanted to implement and carry out a workshop in co-operation with the company's service manager, HR, occupational safety and health manager, OSH representative and development manager (referred to Workshop group from now on). The purpose of the workshop was to tackle down the issues that were brought up during the interviews and generally go through the topics. Facilitating brainstorming into the workshop helped the author to generate new ideas and possible solutions together with the workshop group. The workshop group were chosen to participate in the workshop because of their knowledge and expertise in the employee induction process. The author has sent a preliminary agenda for the participants in advance and the date for the workshop was agreed beforehand. The workshop was executed entirely through an online meeting in the respect of the company remote work policy – and the workshop was recorded. Topics for the workshop are shown in appendix 2.

The workshop begins with discussion of the expectations of the new employee orientation concept. It was soon established by the workshop group that the new concept should incorporate new methods and techniques to induct employees to work and workplace. Currently, the process of orienting employees requires a lot of time and assets. Workshop group states that the new concept should support the company's current values and needs, therefore it needs to be developed.

Second topic focuses on the education methodology in the process of employee induction. So far Company X has used a traditional face-2-face method for orienting and guiding new employees to their work and it has been time consuming and costly. The workshop group pushed the idea of implementing the entire employee induction process online. However, the author expresses their concerns that this may pose accessibility issues or other problems that

may have a negative impact to the entire learning experience for the participants. For example, some of the employees may not be so tech-savvy when it comes to computers - and therefore navigating through the site for the right materials and courses can be difficult without guidance. Other concern raised by the author was that if everything were to implement online what happens when the employees do not have access to the Internet? Relying solely on the Internet may pose many risks. Instead, the author suggests considering the use of blended technique in this matter - which the workshop group agreed to. Blended technique will incorporate both education methods; contact teaching and learning, and online teaching and learning methods. This way Company X can get the best out of both methods and flexibility to their processes.

Third topic focused on how to increase the engagement of the employees in the employee induction process itself. There was a suggestion that the company could increase the engagement by making the process more interactive and fun for the participants. With a short brainstorming together with the workshop group, an idea of a playful quiz was developed. The quiz could be implemented in the end of the online course and it is meant to activate the participants. It should also motivate the employees to pay attention to the matters taught online. Results of the quiz will reveal the success rate for the employee and give the employer a general overview of the success of the course.

5   Conclusions and recommendations

In this chapter, the author will conclude the topics of this study and introduce their recommendations. Purpose of this functional thesis was to create a comprehensive, customized and effective employee orientation concept for Company X to apply in their work orientation and guidance process - in hopes to increase the overall engagement of their personnel in the orientation program. This study purpose was met when the author introduced the commissioning company's executive team the final presentation of the new concept and delivered their recommendations.

Orienting and training your employees has a major effect on the overall safety of the corporate and the wellbeing of the staff. When the employees are appropriately inducted, they will know how to act in unexpected events such as in emergencies, fire, illness, accidents and so on. They will also use the work equipment with confidence and apply their skills correctly. It is also crucial to keep your personnel up to date on any changes, updates and developments that are going on in the organization. Promoting and doing safe work should be one of the important aspects for companies.

Company X's main concern with the current employee orientation concept is that it incorporates old fashioned methods for teaching and learning, and it is too time consuming. With today's tight economic constraints many organizations are seeking for alternatives to cut down additional expenses – especially in personnel costs. Contact teaching is often more expensive than online teaching, which appears to be a sensible choice compared to traditional classrooms. Training costs, in most cases, are the reason why many companies have adapted online education to their employee orientation program in first place. Online education has many benefits to it and one of the main attractions is the fact that it does not tie down its user to a specific location physically or geographically. Which makes it a flexible option. It grants a certain freedom to its users as there is no requirements for the employee to be in same location as the instructor, and they can access the material from anywhere - as long as they have access to Internet. Online education is a new and creative way of teaching and learning, and it intrigues organizations who strive to be innovative and on top of new trends.

However, before hopping into the trend van Company X must consider and carefully plan the areas they want to implement online. They should also consider the pitfalls that online education poses before deciding whether they want to use online education in their employee orientation program. One of the main concerns of online education is the inability to create authentic relations between the educator and the learners. In classrooms the interaction is more natural and physical which cannot be replicated online. Additional concern is the guaranteed accessibility to the course material and to the course itself. Online education relies heavily on the Internet. If the employee does not have access to the Internet or otherwise has a poor internet connection, they cannot embrace the benefits online education can offer.

Therefore, the author does not recommend the commissioning company to implement the entire employee orientation program online. But instead, they could utilize the combination of contact– and online education. This way the company can benefit from both of the methods. The company must consider carefully what they want to implement online and what should be inducted in person. The author recommends that the general information of the company, company's safety policy and practices could be oriented online, because updating and modifying information is easy and cost-effective. Important aspects that are heavily tied to the company's safety and security (e.g. the orientation to the office's emergency exit routes, office premises and to the safe use of equipment), should be inducted to the employees in person. Key to success is to value and protect assets that are important to the company, in this case, the employees. Having a healthy, skillful and prosperous personnel will inevitably result into success. A healthy workplace and work community is creative and productive.

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Figures

Appendices

Appendix 1: Concept plan presentation

Concept will facilitate new ways of learning and teaching. Promoting proactive self-learning.

Concept will consist of updated information of the company's practices, values and vision. Importance being on the wellbeing and safety of the whole personnel.

Desire: to enhance the overall corporate safety of the company by orienting the personnel effectively and appropriately.

Concept of employee orientation

Aim: to match the corporate's needs for the new concept and engaging the personnel in the orientation process.

A wellbeing, healthy and skilful personnel and work community.

Appendix 2: Workshop topics

<u>Workshop</u>

- What are the expectations of the new employee orientation concept?
- Educational methods:
    - o current situation
    - o what should the new one be?
- What can we do to raise the engagement rate of the participants?