

## **Unification of Team Leaders' working methods**

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<p>The objective of this Master's Thesis case study is to find out how the working methods of Team Leaders in B2C department of Company X could be unified. Additionally, the survey on Team Leaders' working methods aims to portray the current situation and identify the possible problem areas. Further, the survey is not only designed to discover means to unify the working methods of B2C Team Leaders but to enhance communication between them as well as stress team work and collaboration, and to find the ways to improve their job satisfaction and motivation.</p> <p>In the introduction the case company Company X and its B2C department are presented and the basis for the research is explained in accordance with the investigative questions.</p> <p>The theoretical part of this Master's Thesis introduces and discusses issues of communication, team work and collaboration, knowledge management, and cross-cultural issues. Moreover, the importance of employees in an organization are presented and evaluated.</p> <p>The empirical part introduces and discusses the research method used and the whole research process which included compiling a questionnaire in Webropol, which in turn was used as a base for interviews of all the Team Leaders in Company X's B2C departments' in Finland and in Estonia. The respondents were asked to answer to the questions either in Finnish or in English within a two week period in the latter part of 2012. The questionnaire comprised of both structured and open-ended questions about B2C Team Leaders' work and working methods. The results of the survey were analyzed manually and by using Webropol.</p> <p>The survey findings propose that the B2C Team Leaders' working methods are somewhat unified and many factors contribute to their cohesiveness. Subsequently the B2C Team Leaders should, however, receive more training in order to obtain more unified and coherent knowledge base which would help them improve the promptness of resolving the problems displayed by their subordinates.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Team work, collaboration, communication, leadership, international and cross-cultural management	

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# **1 Introduction**

The background information to the thesis and the purpose of the study will be introduced and explained. Additionally, the company background and the tasks of B2C Team Leaders' will be defined and discussed in this chapter. Further, the investigative questions together with the overlay matrix which bundles the whole study together by linking the study questions with the theory, research and analysis of the research results will be demonstrated. Finally, the international aspect, key concepts and demarcations to the study will be acknowledged.

## **1.1 Background to the thesis**

As organizations are networks of people it is noted that people need to communicate with each other to be able to perform the necessary tasks in order for the organizational goals to be realized. It can therefore be argued that within organizations it is of utmost importance to understand the purpose of the communication, what the subjects in the communication are and who are involved in it i.e., learning the skills to hold different types of conversations in a professional manner (Van der Molen & Gramsbergen-Hoogland 2005, 1.)

If communication planning is done improperly, this will inevitably lead to various problems including delay in message delivery, communicating sensitive information to the wrong audience, or perhaps inefficient communication to some of the required stakeholders. Indeed, the communication plan enables the project manager to communicate both effectively and efficiently with stakeholders. Here, effective communication indicates that the information is executed in the correct format, at the requested time, and with the right impact. Efficient communication, in its part, means that the information that is needed is also provided (PMBOK 2008, 246.)

In addition, it is acknowledged that not only the attitude and approach of the company but also the personal qualities of the employees will have a huge difference when testing whether the company is suited in doing business in international markets and

also whether the company will succeed internationally (Jobber & Lancaster 2003). Also Zeithaml et al. (1990, 10) point out that companies must be able to find and keep the right work force, i.e. employee selection is a key to ultimate success. (Jobber & Lancaster 2003; Gerson 1993) Gerson (1993, 25) continues that superior customer service and quality performance that ultimately result in customer satisfaction can only be provided by competent and qualified employees.

The importance of discovering the factors that affect the way employees see their line of work and whether they are motivated and feel they can perform in a way it is expected from them, are discussed. Moreover, in order for the internal communication and co-operation to be successful these basic functions need to be in order. According to Devereaux Ferguson (1999, 149) stimuli that are congruent with existing belief, attitude, and value systems are actually more easily perceived by people.

Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) argue that today's markets are fuelled with knowledge; however the challenge is to be able to systematically leverage the knowledge available. Even though companies recognise the value of knowledge and are aware that there is a clear need for developing knowledge strategies, the challenge is how to actually do this. Moreover, in order to compete for knowledge companies need to realise the challenge of managing knowledge. It is argued that useful knowledge is not a "thing" that can be managed as a self-contained entity as any other asset which makes it a challenging task for companies (Wenger et al. 2002, 8.)

While the confusion between the terms cross-national and cross-cultural may often lead to research confusion, the reality is even more complex. Usunier (1998, 15) notes that certain countries are made up of various cultures whereas corporate with other sources of culture such as education, religion and language all assist in building the cultural background of each individual person.

The key concepts and theories which this thesis and survey is based on and will be discussed and used as a theoretical background to support the topic, include a range of

factors such as communication, team work and collaboration, knowledge management and cross-cultural management.

### **1.1.1 Company presentation**

This research based thesis focuses on the case company, which is referred to as Company X for confidentiality reasons, and improving the operations within the company. Company X operates in the tourism and travel industry and has established themselves as the leader in their field of business in the Baltic Sea region. Since Company X is an international company, it operates also in for instance, Estonia besides Finland. Sales departments of Company X are divided into various departments, for instance, Business to Consumers (hereinafter B2C) and are established in the above mentioned countries; however the biggest sales centres are based in Helsinki, Finland and in Tallinn, Estonia. This thesis concentrates on the B2C departments in Finland and Estonia and particularly their Team Leaders. It is understood that prior proper and successful co-operation and intercommunication between the respective departments' Team Leaders can be established, some common principles and operational models need to be accepted and utilized by all parties.

Company X's B2C departments that are situated both in Finland and in Estonia are managed by Team Leaders. In total there are six B2C Team Leaders; two of them in Finland and four in Estonia. B2C Team Leaders' task are many and variable, however, the main tasks include providing technical, booking related, product related and other kind of support and guidance services to their subordinates that comprise of B2C sales agents. In addition, B2C Team Leaders are responsible for their own teams' training and success as sales agents.

### **1.1.2 Clear messages – programme**

Company X has introduced an internal programme within the organization which is aimed at clarifying each department's tasks and responsibilities as well as clarifying the communications between different departments. It is felt that by clarifying and clearly defining the tasks of each unit of the organization, employees will feel more attached

and motivated towards their jobs as well as unified as teams as they will thrive to accomplish common goals.

## **1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Thesis**

The primary objective of this thesis is to place emphasis on finding out how the Team Leaders of Company X's B2C department handle their daily tasks and whether their working methods are unified. In addition, this thesis aims to discover and discuss relevant matters concerning how the B2C departments' Team Leaders working methods and communication could be improved and how satisfied they are with their current tasks. Additionally, the survey "Unification of Team Leaders' working methods" aims to find out what the B2C Team Leaders perceive as positive and negative factors of their job. Furthermore, this thesis will be geared towards finding out the possible problem areas within the tasks of Team Leaders' that should be stressed in order to ameliorate the communication and collaboration amongst the B2C Team Leaders. Finally, cultural factors are taken into consideration and it is evaluated whether there are differences in working methods between the Finnish and Estonian B2C Team Leaders.

## **1.3 Benefits of the survey**

It is believed that when the common principles and operational models between the Team Leaders of B2C departments have been established and put into use, the positive consequences will follow. Enhanced communication and collaboration, and unification of the working methods are thought to influence higher work moral and motivation towards work. Finally, as a consequence of this, it is believed that B2C sales agents, the subordinates of the B2C Team Leaders, will feel more driven and confident in their own work which will improve their effectiveness and thus, the profitability of Company X.

The whole research increases the understanding of the current state of the management and the working methods of B2C departments' Team Leaders and provides answers to the research questions. This will hopefully contribute not only to a



better understanding but also an improvement of B2C Team Leaders' working methods and practices. It is anticipated that management effectiveness requires Company X's B2C Team Leaders to combine technical competencies, i.e. tools that will enable them to develop and display leadership.

#### **1.4 Investigative questions**

It is felt that the current knowledge is inadequate in relation to understanding the factors enabling the cohesiveness and success of management in the organizational conditions. Company X is interested in improving their management to better achieve company goals. This study aims to find out how unanimous is the management by Company X's B2C departments' Team Leaders by presenting and evaluating the results from a survey carried out.

The main research question in this study is:

*“What factors contribute to the cohesiveness of the B2C Team Leaders' working methods?”*

The investigative questions that will be aimed to answer in this thesis are as follows:

- What are the B2C departments' Team Leaders' daily tasks, working methods and required skills to be able to perform them?
- What do the B2C departments' Team Leaders perceive as their tasks?
- Are there differences between the Estonian and the Finnish B2C departments' Team Leaders and their working habits/methods?
- What are current communication and collaboration levels between the B2C departments' Team Leaders? (How do they do it and how often?)
- What motivates the B2C departments' Team leaders to collaborate their tasks currently?
- How could the communication and collaboration be improved between the B2C departments' Team Leaders?

The above mentioned investigative questions are divided into the research questions that are used in the survey questionnaire as well as in the interviews.

## 1.5 Overlay Matrix

The Overlay Matrix (table 1) provides an insight to the whole thesis and shows the procedures required in order to carry out the survey and gain necessary information to be able to come up with adequate analysis and recommendations to the topic of “Unification of Team Leaders’ working methods”.

Table 1. Overlay Matrix

<b>Investigative Questions</b>	<b>Theoretical Frame of Reference</b>	<b>Questionnaire question(s) linked to the Investigative Questions</b>	<b>Data Analysis and Research results</b>
What are the B2C departments’ Team Leaders’ daily tasks, working methods and required skills to be able to perform them?	Chapters 3.4, 3.5, 3.6	Questions 1, 13, 14	Chapter 5.6.2
What do the B2C departments’ Team Leaders perceive as their tasks?	Chapter 2.5	Question 2	Chapter 5.6.2
Are there differences between the Estonian and the Finnish B2C departments’ Team Leaders and their working habits/methods?	Chapter 4.3	All questions	Chapter 5.6
What motivates the B2C departments’ Team leaders to collaborate their tasks currently?	Chapter 2.6	Questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 15	Chapters 5.6.3, 5.6.4
What are current communication and collaboration levels between the B2C departments’ Team Leaders?	Chapters 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 4.3	Questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 11	Chapter 5.6.3
How could the communication and collaboration be improved between the B2C departments’ Team Leaders?	Chapters 2.4, 4.3	Question 12, 17	Chapters 5.6.3, 5.6.4

## 1.6 International aspect

The international aspect of this thesis is covered with the fact that the research is conducted with respondents from Company X's B2C departments which are situated both in Finland and Estonia.

## 1.7 Key concepts and abbreviations

**Communication.** In communication a general distinction between the sender i.e. the person who sends out the message, and the receiver i.e. the person who receives the message can be made. (Van der Molen & Gramsbergen-Hoogland 2005, 5)

**Organizational communication.** Organizational communication is made up of a vast and endless stream of criss-crossing messages. The content of these messages can be broken down into a number of elements such as raw data, factual information, ideas, opinions, beliefs and emotions (Blundel 2004, 6.)

**Culture.** "Collective mental programme" (Hofstede 1980, cited in Usunier 1998, 15); "A shared system of representations and meaning" (Goodenough 1971; Geertz 1883, cited in Usunier 1998, 15); "Basic assumptions or value orientations on the nature of man's relationships to nature and to other human beings" (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck 1961, cited in Usunier 1998, 15).

**Cross-cultural management/intercultural management.** A cross-cultural approach to management research compares national management systems and local business customs in different countries and tries to find out what is country specific and what is universal. An intercultural approach, however, emphasizes the interaction between business people, organizations, buyers and sellers, employees and managers, who have different national/cultural backgrounds (Usunier 1998, 9.)

**Team work and collaboration.** Recognizing individual team members as intelligent, skilled professional agents and placing a value on their autonomy is fundamental to all other practices. Team work and Collaboration form the basis for rich interactions and

cooperation between team members (Agile Project Management 2003-2008, 8.)

**Perception.** Perception is how we view and interpret the events and situations in the world about us. (Brooks 2006, 23)

**Motivation.** Motivation comprises an individual's effort, persistence and the direction of that effort. (Brooks 2006, 48) Job satisfaction, organizational commitment and involvement are further aspects of work motivation.

**B2C.** Business to Customers Sales department of Company X (Company X 2013.)

## **1.8 Demarcations**

This study concentrates solely on Company X and their B2C departments' Team Leaders.

## **2 Communication in organizations**

As organizations are networks of people it is obvious that people need to communicate with each other to be able to perform the necessary tasks in order for the organizational goals to be realized. (Van der Molen & Gramsbergen-Hoogland 2005, 1) It can therefore be argued that within organizations it is of utmost importance to understand the purpose of the communication, what the subjects in the communication are and who are involved in it i.e. learning the skills to hold different types of conversations in a professional manner. (Van der Molen & Gramsbergen-Hoogland 2005, 1)

In order to be able communicate effectively it is important to understand the psychology of audiences. Deveraux Ferguson (1999) argues that audience response to information or persuasion strategies depends on their beliefs, attitudes and values, whereas perception studies indicate that people are most likely to recall information that fits with their existing belief systems. The influence of beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, needs and personality are worth taking into consideration when communication planning is made within organizations and particularly when communicators want to impart knowledge or information, change or reinforce attitudes, or move people to action (Deveraux Ferguson 1999, 130.) It is also noted that not everyone hears the same messages nor does everyone have the same motivation or incentive to act on the messages. “A keen understanding of audience psychology lies at the heart of effective communication” as emphasised by Deveraux Ferguson (1999, 130.)

### **2.1 Communication process**

After PMBOK (2008, 255) the communication process elements comprise of the following:

- the sender
- encoding

- the message
- the channel
- decoding
- the receiver
- noise
- feedback.

When discussing communication, a general distinction between the sender i.e. the person who sends out the message, and the receiver i.e. the person who receives the message can be made (Van der Molen & Gramsbergen-Hoogland 2005, 5).

Furthermore, the same distinction can be made between sender and receiver/ listener skills. Van der Molen & Gramsbergen-Hoogland (2005) further argue that sender skills can be divided into regulating skills and assertive skills. Regulating skills are the ones with which one influences the structure and direction of the conversation and therefore necessary to monitor the meaningful progress of the conversation. Assertive skills on the other hand are those which are intended to reveal as clearly as possible what one thinks and wants. (Van der Molen & Gramsbergen-Hoogland 2005, 5-6)

According to Blundel (2004) communication also involves senders and receivers, but he additionally introduces further aspects such as the terms message, communication channel and “noise”. In communication theory the word noise refers to as anything that either interrupts or distorts an encoded message, so that it doesn’t reach the receiver in its original form, whereas a message comprises the content that the sender has encoded i.e. converted the message into a series of words. (Blundel 2004, 5-6)

As can be seen in figure 1, the communication process indeed involves a sender and a receiver and it is affected by many different factors. The steps between a source and a receiver result in the transference and understanding the meaning of the communicated message. Additionally, the key elements of the model include encoding, i.e. translating thoughts or ideas into a language that is understood by others. Message in this context means the output of encoding, whereas channel or medium is the method of conveying the message. As the channel or the medium is selected by the

sender through which the message travels to the receiver there are different types of channels available. Formal channels are established by the organization and transmit messages that are related to the professional activities of members. Informal channels, however, are used to transmit personal or social messages in the organization and are therefore more spontaneous and emerge as a response to individual choices. Noise, on the other hand, refers to anything that interferes with the transmission and understanding of the message such as distance, unfamiliar technology or lack of background information. Lastly, decoding is about translating the message back into meaningful thoughts or ideas. Message decoding also always leads to feedback which is given to the sender (PMBOK 2008, 255.)

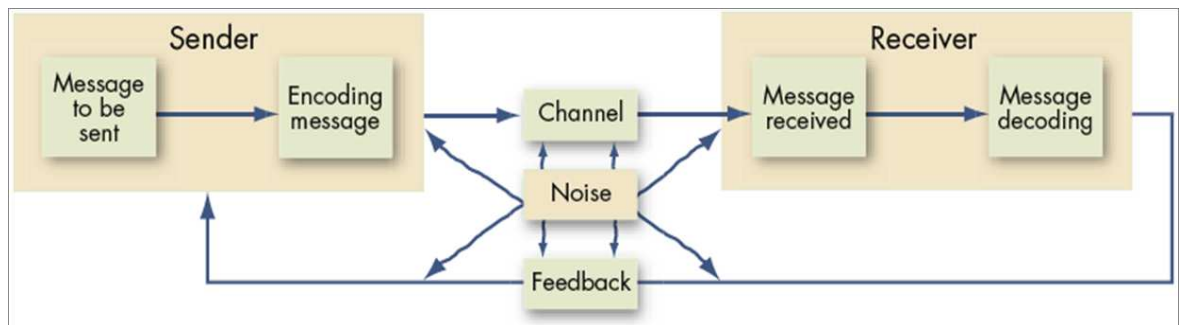


Figure 1. The Communication model (based on Figure 10-8, PMBOK 2008, 255)

It is argued that the elements in the communication model must be considered when discussing organizational communications. Firstly, the sender takes responsibility in sending clear and complete information in order for the receiver to receive it correctly and understand the information properly. The receiver, on the other hand, is responsible for ascertaining that the information is received in its entirety, understood correctly and acknowledged. Hence, a failure in the communication process can have a negative impact for the whole project (PMBOK 2008, 255.)

## 2.2 Communication channels

In figure 2 the information richness of different communication channels is demonstrated. For instance, memos and letters as well as formal reports and bulletins are argued to have low channel richness whereas videoconferences and face-to-face conversations have high channel richness. Thus, it is important to know when to use

which communication channel in order to be able to communicate most effectively.

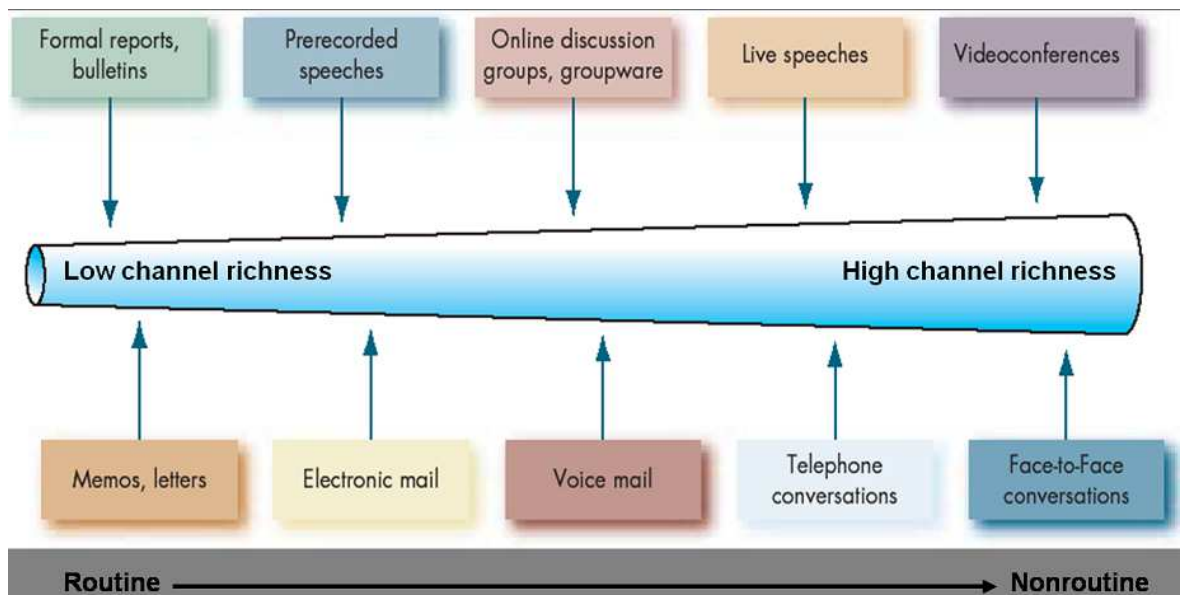


Figure 2. Information richness of communication channels. Source: Based on Lengel and Daft, “The Selection of Communication Media as an Executive Skill,” *Academy of Management Executive*, August 1988, pp. 225–32; and Daft and Lengel, “Organizational Information Requirements, Media Richness, and Structural Design,” *Managerial Science*, May 1996, pp. 554–72

Interpersonal communication can be divided into three areas of oral communication, written communication and nonverbal communication. Firstly, the advantages of oral communication such as live speeches or telephone conversations are speed and feedback. However, the disadvantage can be argued to be a possible distortion of the message. Written communication, on the other hand is tangible and verifiable, however, also very time consuming and usually lacks feedback. The advantage of nonverbal communication is that it supports other communications and provides observable expression of emotions and feelings. On the other hand, misperception of body language or gestures can influence receiver’s interpretation of the message.

Moreover, communication is described as a central method in virtual management and therefore also as an integral part of organizational activities. Additionally, there are many tools available to help with communication and distribution of information. The computer-aided communication or electronic communication can be said to consist at



least of the following elements: e-mail, instant messaging, intranet, extranet, and videoconferencing. The advantages of e-mails are that they can be quickly written, sent, and stored which also translates into low cost for distribution. The disadvantages of e-mails, however, include the information overload, lack of emotional content, and the fact that they can be rather cold and impersonal. Instant messaging in its part means “real time” e-mail transmitted straight to the receiver’s desktop, whereas it can be regarded as intrusive and distracting. Intranet, however, is a private organization-wide information network, whereas extranet is the opposite, i.e., an information network connecting employees with external suppliers, customers, and strategic partners. Videoconferencing, on the other hand serves as an extension of an intranet or extranet that permits face-to-face virtual meetings via video links (PMBOK 2008, 260.)

Furthermore, electronic tools for project management such as Microsoft SharePoint Server can be used as a project communication platform to larger audiences. It allows organization to facilitate collaboration and provides content management features and supports the implementation of business processes. Moreover, Microsoft SharePoint Server serves as a remote communications method by supplying access to information that is essential to realizing organizational goals and processes and thus diminishes the chance of project failures. (Mäkelä 2011)

### **2.3 Communication requirements and methods**

The reasons behind the issue of communicating in organizations being a struggle can be explained by the fact that organizational communication is made up of a vast and endless stream of criss-crossing messages. The content of these messages can be broken down into a several different elements, such as raw data, factual information, ideas, opinions, beliefs and emotions. The problem with this, however, is that these elements are sometimes difficult to distinguish (Blundel 2004, 6.)

It should also be noted that not only is it vital to have a command of basic communication skills in order to hold different types of conversations but it is also important to have good listening skills (Van der Molen & Gramsbergen-Hoogland

2005, 12). The advantages of having a good command of listening skills include the stimulation of the conversation partner and also avoiding problems which can be caused by not listening and following the conversation carefully enough. Listening has actually been described as “the forgotten skill” by Burley-Allen (1995, cited by Van der Molen & Gramsbergen-Hoogland 2005), who argues that nowadays people tend to speak too quickly without really giving a thought to their conversation partners and to what is actually been communicated.

In addition to basic communication skills such as the ability to formulate one’s own ideas, opinions and interpretations as well as possessing active listening skills, group conversations require regulating skills i.e. the bringing about and maintenance of a conversational structure. On top of this, problem solving and strategy development as well as knowledge and insight into decision making are of absolute significance in group conversations due to the fact that they are more complex than dialogues. In group conversations there are many senders and receivers and therefore misunderstandings are more likely to arise. Also, differences of opinion can lead to a conflict between conversation partners at which point a specific skill of negotiation is needed (Van der Molen & Gramsbergen-Hoogland 2005, 108.)

In Blundel’s (2004, 1) opinion effective communication requires an open mind i.e. willingness to take on new and unfamiliar ideas. Blundel (2004) adds that without being open to the needs of an audience and to the context in which the communication takes place, communication between the conversation partners will most likely fail. Therefore, an understanding of the principles of communication together with some practical tools and experience are needed. (Blundel 2004, 1) Moreover, for the communication to be effective the conversation partners need to make some effort in order to understand each other. Although this may seem a difficult task at times, effective communication has its advantages and therefore it should be worth striving for. Effective communication can, for instance, help organizations achieve satisfied repeat customers, well-motivated employees, a positive company image and innovative and creative strategies to improve and benefit the organization. (Blundel 2004, 2) It is also acknowledged by Blundel (2004) that organizations are complex phenomena and

as a consequence effective communicators within them need to be able to adapt themselves in handling various challenges that are not familiar to ordinary communications, for example between friends. Such challenges may include, for instance reporting arrangements and procedures, cultural diversity across the employees of the organization in perhaps different departments and countries as well as financial and time pressures, competing managerial priorities and demands. (Blundel 2004)

## **2.4 Barriers to communication**

As communication involves overcoming barriers it is acknowledged that in the process failure is also endemic. (Blundel 2004, 25) When individuals and organisations interact with each other it is common that messages may be lost or misunderstood. What makes this situation serious is that not only are these failures expensive as time and resources are wasted, but they also have cumulative effects. The intended receiver of the message has been relying on the information contained in the message and the sender obviously believes that the message has arrived to the receiver intact. (Blundel 2004, 25) However, the truth is that all messages are vulnerable to the phenomenon of “noise” i.e. messages not arriving to the intended receiver in their original form as described by Blundel (2004).

In order to overcome the barriers to communication, it is vital to understand the underlying causes of communication failures. These can comprise of a varied range of factors including, for instance, physiological, psychological, cultural, political, economic and technological. It is also essential to recognise that communicators need to gain a basic understanding of physiological processes such as differences in alertness, selective attention, powers of perception and memory, and their potential impact on communication. (Blundel 2004, 46)

## 2.5 Individual perception

Brooks (2006, 38) argues that one of the most important ways in which communication can influence individual behaviour is through its ability to change individual perceptions and perceptual bias. Similarly, according to Mullins (1999) significance of individual differences and preferences becomes particularly apparent when focusing on the process of perception. It is believed that everyone has their own unique picture or image of how they see the “real” world, therefore the information from the world is not just passively received but also analysed and judged. An argument for Mullins’ (1999) theory is that people integrate information that is supplied by each of the senses in order to construct a meaningful interpretation of the world around us (Roth & Bruce 1995, cited by Blundel 2004, 29). While significance may be placed on some information and regard other information useless, Mullins (1999) is of the opinion that people’s expectations may be influenced so that they will “see” what they expect to see. Deveraux Ferguson (1999, 149) backs this up by noting that the term “selective attention” refers to the fact that people see what they want to see and expect to see.

The process of perception explains how information or stimuli from the environment is selected and organised so that it provides meaning for the individual. Perception is the mental function that gives significance to the stimuli e.g. feelings such as likes and dislikes. Perception, therefore, affects the way in which individuals behave in certain situations. For instance, if a group of people physically see the same thing yet they will all have their own version of what was seen, i.e. their perceived view of reality. The process of perception is based on both internal and external factors. (Mullins 1999)

Furthermore, whereas psychological factors affect what is perceived, internal factors such as motives will give an inclination to perceive certain stimuli and to respond in certain ways. This is known as an individual’s perceptual set. (Mullins 1999) People’s “Selective perception”, however, is influenced by “family background, physical and personality characteristics, cultural differences, organizational affiliation and position,

professional experience and other factors” (Garnett 1992, 23 cited by Deveraux Ferguson 1999, 149).

Roth & Bruce (1995, cited by Blundel 2004, 29) emphasise that humans have very advanced powers of perception. This means that in many cases it is possible to re-construct a whole picture or a concept from a tiny piece of visual information such as a glimpse of a friend’s face in the middle of a crowd of people. Humans are also capable of identifying whole objects from fragmentary evidence, which is a very useful ability to communicators as it is not always necessary to spell out the entire message. In fact, many of the most effective forms of communication take advantage of this imaginative capability. (Blundel 2004) On the other hand, it is additionally significant to note the limitations of this impressive sensory system. For instance, if the message or evidence is ambiguous, it can be easily misinterpreted and the interpreter may even “see” something that does not exist. (Blundel 2004)

Interpersonal communication is also affected by the way in which other people are perceived. Blundel (2004) notes that people tend to make judgements of other people according to these different cues and some of them have a powerful effect. For instance, these so called central traits may lead people to a conclusion of the existence of other similar characteristics i.e. if a person is perceived to be warm, they are also likely to be perceived as being happy, sociable etc. (Blundel 2004) Communicators need to take these perceptual limitations into consideration when clarity of communication is the main objective. (Blundel 2004, 29)

Whereas people may at times have mistaken perception of reality, for managers customers’ perceptions are just as important as reality. As a matter of fact, it doesn’t really matter if so called objective measures indicate a certain condition if customers perceive something else to be the case, as to customers, their perception is their reality. Therefore, a great source of frustration for managers can be that sometimes customers’ perceptions are absolutely inaccurate (Keiningham & Vavra 2001, 21.)

In the end, it is customers' perceptions of quality that managers are interested in. In effect, managers must understand what drives satisfaction i.e. what prevents pain, and what drives delight (Keiningham & Vavra 2001, 33.)

Denove & Power (2006, 254) summarize the main focus of perception as: "When it comes to your customers, perception is reality, and ultimately your company is nothing more than what your customers say it is."

## **2.6 Human motivation**

Motivation takes many forms and a wide range of models and theories have been put forward. It is noted that motivation is a critical factor in individual, group and organizational success, however there is some debate concerning its definition. Brooks (2006, 48) is of the opinion that motivation can be defined to comprise an individual's effort, persistence and the direction of that effort i.e. "motivation is the will to perform". The discussions of motivation, however, are best conceived if applied to specific areas of motivated behaviour. This thesis mainly concentrates on employee motivation, which enables the development of a dialogue between this area in question and the models and theories of motivation.

In order to understand human motivation it is of importance to find out what needs people have and how they can be fulfilled. (Johnson et. al. 1992) Using Maslow's (1954) theory as a basic framework seems appealing as it provides five main classes of human needs i.e. physiological, safety, love (social), esteem and self-actualisation. These needs are organised into a hierarchical form based on the immediacy of the needs so that by satisfying the classes one by one the highest level of the hierarchy, self-actualisation can be reached. The concept of self-actualisation as defined by Maslow (1954) can be argued to contain an inherent notion of individual choice as well as self-determination. The problem with Maslow's approach, however, is that it excludes several important needs and therefore alone is not enough. (Johnson et. al. 1992)

In order to begin to understand the complex subject of employee motivation further,

Jobber and Lancaster (2003) believe that creating and maintaining well motivated employees is a vital yet an extreme challenge, therefore it is crucial that managers understand their employees as being individuals with different personalities, needs, drives, goals and value systems. (Jobber & Lancaster 2003)

Additionally, Jobber and Lancaster (2003) argue that the attitude and approach of the company as well as the personal qualities of the sales people will affect largely whether the company is suited in doing business in international markets and evidently will also determine whether the company will succeed internationally. Additionally, it is believed that training and motivation are largely dependent upon the intrinsic qualities of a recruit and their characteristics, although sales effectiveness can be improved by training and motivational techniques, yet it is argued that good sales people usually have an innate ability and skills, which stimulate them to achieve high sales. (Jobber & Lancaster 2003)

Furthermore, to be able to understand what motivates people; various motivational theories can be applied such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's dual factor theory, Vroom's expectancy theory or perhaps Likert's sales management theory. Vroom (1964 cited in Brooks 2006, 50) developed an expectancy theory, which produces a systematic explanatory theory of workplace motivation. Vroom's theory believes that "the motivation to behave in a particular way is determined by an individual's expectation that behaviour will lead to a particular outcome, multiplied by the preference or valence that person has for that outcome." (Brooks 2006, 50)

Likert, on the other hand concentrated on the motivation of sales people and based his theory on research about differing characteristics and styles of supervision to performance (Jobber & Lancaster 2003). Likert argues that sales managers' own behaviours will affect the behaviour of their sales people (Jobber & Lancaster 2003). This is why it is believed that sales managers, i.e. in this case B2C Team Leaders should concentrate on motivating their sales agents in practice rather than in theory. Firstly, organising regular, maybe even weekly meetings between managers and sales force will provide opportunities for improving motivation as well as communication. For

instance, holding a meeting for the whole sales team will help the sales manager to understand the personality, needs and possible problems or challenges each individual sales person is facing. Furthermore, this will make the manager see the reasons behind motivation and demotivation of each person and therefore respond more accurately and accordingly to each person's special needs. The aim of this is to make each person feel important and recognised as a vital part of the organisation, which in turn will increase their motivation and performance. (Jobber & Lancaster 2003)

Another method of motivating sales force is providing them with proper, adequate training. It is argued that people will achieve higher sales when they have received training that prepares them for their job and for instance, provides them with some extra tools to handle with objections, helps them to form business solutions, learn consultative selling and manage team selling approach. Not only will the sales person feel more confident about selling the product as s/he will know it throughout, but his/her confidence and knowledge will shine through to the customers who will feel happy buying from a competent sales person who actually knows what they are selling i.e. add value to the customers through excellent service. (Jobber & Lancaster 2003)

Further, as shown by Whiteoak (2007, 11-20) individual's perception of their group plays an important part in terms of the level of their commitment towards group goals and also, their intention to leave a group. Therefore, it can be argued that it is very important to note that before the actual operations of certain departments of a company can be improved, the basic factors such as working atmosphere need to be encouraging and supportive in order to make the people commit themselves. To back up this argument, there is a strong and positive relationship between flexible working and perceptions of job quality (Kelliher & Anderson 2008, 419-431.)

To sum up, Brooks (2006) emphasises that a vital ingredient of motivation is communication between employees and managers within organizations. Brooks (2006) further argues that powerful intrinsic rewards require that communication is apparent and additionally it needs to be two-way. In a similar way, mis-communication i.e. sending out inaccurate or misleading information can cause motivational problems



(Brooks 2006, 59). Motivating employees to participate in intra-firm knowledge sharing activities is indeed very difficult as it depends on their willingness to voluntarily share their experiences and insights (von Krogh et al., 2000; Wenger, 2000; Kogut and Zander, 1996; von Hippel, 1998; Hildreth and Kimble, 2000 cited in Wolf, Späth and Haefliger 2011, 22). Therefore, management faces the challenge of allocating employees to knowledge sharing activities, and ordering them to contribute their knowledge to the organization, however, valuable contributions cannot be forced (Borzillo, 2009 cited in Wolf et al. 2011, 22).

### **3 Leadership and knowledge management**

It is noted that today's markets are fuelled with knowledge; however the challenge is to be able to systematically leverage the knowledge available. Companies have already realised that technology is not enough in leveraging the knowledge. (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder 2002)

#### **3.1 Defining knowledge**

It is argued by Wenger et al. (2002, 9) that "we know more than we can tell". However, not everything that is known can be codified as documents or some kind of tools yet from a business point of view these tacit elements of knowledge are usually the most valuable. Indeed, tacit knowledge "consists of embodied expertise, a deep understanding of complex, interdependent systems that enables dynamic responses to context specific problems." Moreover, knowledge like this is rather problematic to replicate by competitors which makes it a real asset for companies (Wenger et al. 2002, 9.)

In order to share tacit knowledge interaction and informal learning processes like storytelling, conversation, coaching, and apprenticeship are required. Even explicit knowledge is dependent on tacit knowledge thus; communities of practice can best codify knowledge since they can combine both tacit and explicit aspects of it (Wenger et al. 2002, 9.)

On the other hand, the knowledge of experts is defined as "an accumulation of experience, a kind of "residue" of their actions, thinking, and conversations that remains a dynamic part of their ongoing experience. This type of knowledge is much more a living process than a static body of information." (Wenger et al. 2002, 9.)

Wenger et al. (2002, 10) further argue that even though the experience of knowing is individual, knowledge itself is not. They continue arguing that "appreciating the collective nature of knowledge is especially important in an age when almost every field changes too much, too fast for individuals to master." However, it is also noted that

stressing the collective character of knowledge does not imply that individuals were not appreciated. On the contrary, “the best communities welcome strong personalities and encourage disagreements and debates. Controversy is part of what makes a community vital, effective, and productive.” (Wenger et al. 2002, 10.)

It has been established that knowledge is not static but continuously in motion. Therefore, the key tasks of communities of practice are to try and standardize a common understanding within the group to enable their focus to be shifted on more advanced issues. However, knowledge requires constant updating and can only be done by people who have an understanding of the issues and who appreciate the evolution within their topic field. This kind of interaction also aids the members of communities of practice “manage information overload, get knowledgeable feedback on new ideas, and keep abreast of leading thoughts, techniques and tools.” (Wenger 2002, 11.)

### **3.2 Managing knowledge**

While communities of practice are age old companies have just recently become more aware of “managing” knowledge and are therefore eager to apply this method again. Indeed, it is argued that “knowledge has become the key to success as it is far too valuable a resource to be left to chance.” Moreover, companies must find out what kind of knowledge it is that they need in order to gain competitive advantage, as well as to learn to deploy and leverage it in their operations, and finally spread it across the whole organization (Wenger et al. 2002, 6.)

Wenger et al. (2002, 6) further note that companies should manage their knowledge in a similar manner they already manage any other of their assets, by cultivating communities of practice in the appropriate and strategically important areas. Moreover, as knowledge is increasingly getting more complex in terms of it requiring more and more specialization and collaboration, knowledge is also argued to become increasingly difficult to keep up with. Indeed, without communities of practice that focus on critical areas, it is challenging to follow the rapid pace of change. As companies are forced to

act upon the requirements of the changing markets they do it by restructuring their internal and external relationships to respond to the demands. Communities of practice therefore help to connect people not only across business units but also from totally different organizations. It is further argued that success in global markets thus depends on communities of practice that share knowledge globally (Wenger et al. 2002, 6-7.) In today's business world companies are not only competing for market share but they are also competing for talent, i.e. people who have the requested expertise and capabilities to generate and implement new and innovative ideas. It is further argued that finding and keeping the right work force can make a huge difference in helping companies become market leaders as well as to gain access to venture capital. Therefore, it is found imperative to develop a "knowledge strategy" alongside with a business strategy. Knowledge strategy is said to depend on the communities of practice and the process starts with defining strategic goals and required core competencies, business processes, and key activities. The next phase includes analysing these aforementioned elements in regard to their critical knowledge "domains". In the end, people who need this knowledge in order to carry out their work are identified. Finally, the ways in which these people could be connected into communities of practice so that they can together share this knowledge, are explored (Wenger et al. 2002, 7.)

Even though companies recognise the value of knowledge and are aware that there is a clear need for developing knowledge strategies, the challenge is just how to do this. Moreover, in order to compete for knowledge companies need to realise the challenge of managing knowledge. It is argued that useful knowledge is not a "thing" that can be managed as a self-contained entity as any other asset which makes it a challenging task for companies. (Wenger 2002, 8) In addition, what makes managing knowledge a challenging task is that "it is not an object that can be stored, owned, and moved around like a piece of equipment or a document. It resides in the skills, understanding, and relationships of its members as well as in the tools, documents, and processes that embody aspects of this knowledge." (Wenger et al. 2002, 11.)

### 3.3 Leadership and management

Traditionally the concepts of management and leadership are differentiated even though they are both about leading, and thus have many similarities but are also varied. These two paths include influencing, working with people and effective goal accomplishment, however, management is task-oriented whereas leadership is more concerned with the people orientation aspect (Sydänmaanlakka 2003, 37.) In fact, according to Northhouse (2001, cited in Sydänmaanlakka 2003, 37) from the very beginning management has been aimed at reducing chaos in organizations and therefore help them be operated more effectively and efficiently.

In addition, Kotter (1990, 3-8) is of the opinion that leadership and management cannot be treated as the same but must be differentiated from each other. Kotter (1990) agrees with Northhouse (2001) that management was actually created to bring order and consistency into organizations which also includes activities such as, planning, budgeting, organizing, staffing, controlling and solving problems. Leadership, on the other hand, is said to produce change and movement and thus, involves vision building, strategising, people alignment, communication, and enhancing motivation and inspiration. Sydänmaanlakka (2000) argues that since management tries to improve the running of organizations, it could be linked with three general issues of efficiency, learning and well-being. Thus, good management activities are there to create, maintain and develop efficient organizations in order for them to be competitive; learning organizations in order for them to remain successful also in the future; and well-being organizations in order for their employees to be motivated and thus, willing and capable to work long-term (Sydänmaanlakka 2003, 37.)

Kotter (1990) summarizes the differences between the two paths of leading in the following way: within the discipline of management the overriding function is to seek order and stability, however the discipline of leadership seeks adaptive and constructive change. Similarly, Bennis and Nanus (1985, 221) note that “Managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing”. Finally, also Adair (2007, 5) offers his view to differentiate between leaders and managers: “the latter can

be appointed over others in a hierarchy regardless of whether or not they have the required qualities.”

### **3.4 Characteristics of an effective leader**

Adair (2007, 5) begins to argue that first of all, personality and character are qualities that a leader has to have. Moreover, Adair (2007, 5) believes that a leader should “possess, exemplify and perhaps even personify the qualities *expected* or *required*” in the working group.

It has been argued that the characteristics or traits of an effective leader are many and varied, and the degrees to which the qualities are required will vary considerably. In fact, there can be found some rather generic and transferable qualities leaders should recognise in themselves. These include, for instance, enthusiasm, integrity, toughness, fairness, warmth, humility, and confidence (Adair 2007, 6.) Zimmerer and Yasin (1998) further argue that the most important factors in effective leadership comprise being visionary and having technical competence. Yukl (2010, 62-64) agrees with this and adds that besides technical skills, effective managers and other leaders possess conceptual or cognitive skills including good judgement, foresight, intuition, creativity, and the ability to find meaning in uncertain situations. In addition, Yukl (2010, 64) believes that interpersonal and social skills, i.e. knowledge about human behaviour and the ability to understand feelings, attitudes and motives, and to be a clear and persuasive communicator are a must for a manager.

Yukl (2010, 52) also believes that managerial traits that affect effectiveness and advancement are many. Firstly, Yukl (2010, 52) is of the opinion that sufficient energy level and stress tolerance are traits that effective managers must possess. Additionally, Yukl (2010, 53) argues that in order to become an effective manager, one needs to be self-confident, which includes concepts of self-esteem and self-efficacy. Moreover, effective leaders tend to be emotionally stable and mature, i.e. well adjusted and have an awareness of their strengths and weaknesses and are thus, oriented towards self-improvement (Yukl 2010, 54).

People with a strong need for power and influencing people are more likely to end up as managers or leaders as managerial role requirements usually involve the use of power and influence over others. Yukl (2010, 55) points out that whereas a strong need for power may be desirable, a manager's effectiveness is also affected by the means how this need is actually expressed. Another key trait for an effective leader or a manager is personal integrity, which is explained as a person's consistent behavior, including honesty, ethical code of conduct and trustworthiness. Therefore, integrity is perceived as a vital part in building interpersonal trust (Yukl 2010, 56.)

Wellington (2011, 21) continues to argue that as leadership is a quest that never ends, thus successful leaders radiate confidence and optimism. In addition, it is essential to be able to be a good communicator, good motivator, and being able to make decisions. Moreover, other attributes that appear to be important when defining effective leadership comprise of the following: emotional intelligence, i.e. being attuned to feelings of oneself and others and being able to integrate emotions and reason; social intelligence, i.e. perceptiveness and behavioural flexibility; and systems thinking, i.e. understanding complex interdependencies among organizational processes (Yukl 2010, 65-67.) In fact, Dwight D. Eisenhower (cited in Wellington 2011, 21) has summed up the idea of a leader as follows: "Optimism spreads down from the Supreme Commander. Pessimism also spreads down from the Supreme Commander, only faster." This indicates that it is the leader's responsibility to have vision and believe in it, and communicate the way forward to his followers. Indeed, successful leaders believe that the strategies and objectives they utilize are valid and that their personal abilities to lead others to success are sufficient. Similarly, Yukl (2010, 58) argues that effective leaders are achievement oriented, i.e. they have a desire to excel and drive to succeed, thus willingness to take responsibility. Moreover, successful leaders also have belief in the ability of others to overcome adversity and therefore, rise to the challenge to achieve that success (Wellington 2011, 22.) Effective leaders also have ability to learn not only from experience but also from mistakes and continuously adapt, innovate and reinvent themselves and possibly also change their beliefs and assumptions, i.e. refine their mental models when required. (Yukl 2010, 68)

### 3.5 The role of a leader

Since leadership according to Wellington (2011, 1) comprises “getting people moving and heading for a positive future with vision”, this can be explained to mean influencing people by providing them with purpose, direction and motivation, while operating in order to complete the mission and at the same time improve the organization. Differently put, leadership thus, has three facets that comprise of: objectives, a team of followers and a “contract” between the leader and the followers. (Wellington 2011, 2) As illustrated in the figure 3 below, “people expect their leaders help achieve a common task, to build the synergy of teamwork and to respond to individuals and meet their needs.” The overlapping circles of the figure integrate these three leadership functions as put forward by Adair (2007, 23.)

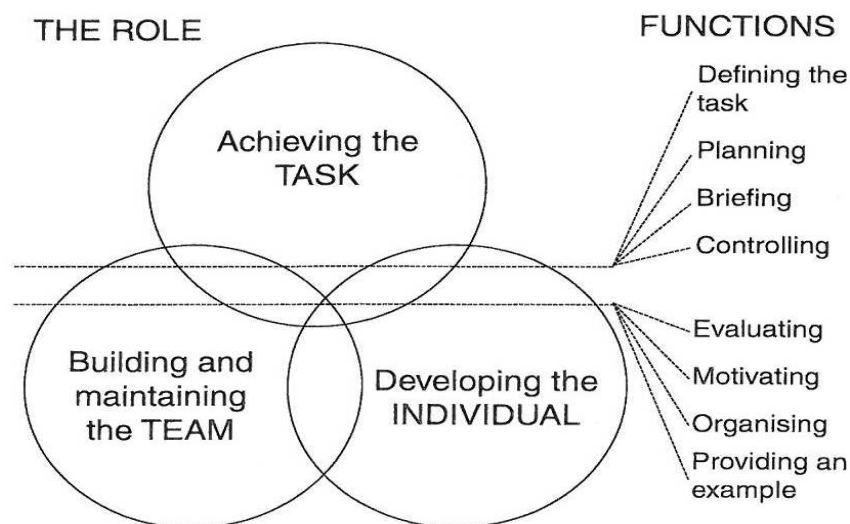


Figure 3. Leadership functions. Source: Adair 2007, 23

When it comes to achieving sustainable business success, it is suggested that there needs to be excellence in leadership at three levels; strategic, operational and team level. Thus, strategic, operational and team leaders must be capable of working harmoniously together as the organization’s leadership team (Adair, 2007, 70.)



### **3.6 Teamwork and collaboration**

Firstly, teams can be defined as consisting of a small task group, and who are interacting and interdependent with complementary skills, and who have come together to achieve particular goals. Moreover, there are various types of teams that can come together in regard to achieving their common goal and include for instance, task, interest, and friendship driven groups (Yukl 2010, 356.)

It is further noted that the more complex the task the team has, the more it is non-routine and requires a range of skills, the more important the group process and synergy becomes. The external factors that influence the building of a team can be described as including authority structures, human resource selection processes, performance evaluation and rewards, organizational culture, and physical work setting. On the other hand, teams are groups with greater interdependence and they have a shared purpose and destiny. It is argued that teams aim to be high performing. In order to build high performing teams the following aspects should be taken into consideration:

- Keep the team small
- Ensure members have necessary skills
- Allocate roles
- Build consensus on important team features
- Build commitment and trust
- Establish goals
- Keep members accountable (Yukl 2010, 361-365.)

## **4 International and cross-cultural management**

It is argued that culture can be deemed as somewhat all-encompassing, thus it has been defined rather extensively and in several different ways. Moreover, according to Usunier (1998, 7) international and cross-cultural management research considers different countries and their social and economic systems as well as encourages the analysis to take into account various cultural variables.

### **4.1 Definition of culture in international management**

Hofstede (1980, cited in Usunier 1998, 15) defines culture as “collective mental programme”, whereas Goodenough (1971) and Geertz (1883) define it as “a shared system of representations and meaning” (cited in Usunier 1998, 15). Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961, cited in Usunier 1998, 15), on the other hand define culture as being “basic assumptions or value orientations on the nature of man’s relationships to nature and to other human beings”.

It is further argued that when researchers discuss cultures they often do it in relation to certain countries or to a particular group of countries such as Western countries, Latin countries or Arabic countries (Usunier 1998, 15). While the confusion between the terms cross-national and cross-cultural may often lead to research confusion, the reality is even more complex. Usunier (1998, 15) further notes that certain countries are made up of various cultures whereas corporate with other sources of culture such as education, religion and language all assist in building the cultural background of each individual person.

Moreover, culture can be regarded as learned and forgotten norms and behavioral patterns, and in some cases culture can be considered as being rather vague or somewhat “blurred” concept (Usunier 1998, 16). Lagerlöf (1960, 100 cited in Usunier 1998, 16) on her behalf defines culture as “what remains when that which has been learned is entirely forgotten”. Lagerlöf, however, identifies two basic elements of cultural dynamics at the individual level: 1) it is learned and 2) it is forgotten, meaning that people are to a great extent unaware of its existence as a learned behaviour (cited

in Usunier 1998, 16).

Furthermore, culture can be defined as “a system of meaning shared by individuals” (Usunier 1998, 16). After Linton (1945, 21, cited in Usunier 1998, 16) “a culture is the configuration of learned behaviour and results of behaviour whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society”. However, it is argued that individuals should not be solely considered as being programmed by a certain culture as individuals will always have their own needs and feelings as well as capacities for independent thought and action (Usunier 1998, 17). Therefore, it is felt that culture can be regarded as “a set of beliefs and standards, shared by a group of people, which help the individual to decide what is, what can be, how one feels about it, what to do, and how to go about doing it” (Goodenough 1971, cited in Usunier 1998, 17). To support this, culture is also defined as “a set of components, concept of truth, basic beliefs and values” (Baligh 1994, cited in Usunier 1998, 17). Moreover, it is acknowledged that individuals may share different cultures within multiple groups and switch into the particular culture when in a particular situation. Such cultures include for instance corporate culture with work colleagues, an educational culture with other students, and an ethnic culture with people who are of the same ethnic origin (Usunier 1998, 17).

## **4.2 Significant elements of culture**

The following aspects are argued by Usunier (1998, 17-20) to be significant elements of culture and they will have an impact on international management:

- “Relationships or relational patterns; these concern how the individual relates to group or groups; what the dominant family and kinship patterns are; and how relationships are framed (individualism/collectivism, patronage relationships). Relational patterns affect international cross-cultural management research through the style of interaction between people, their decision-making process, and the way in which they mix human relationships and business matters.”

- “Language and communication; How people communicate (that is, both emit and receive messages) and the influence of their native language on their world views and attitudes directly affect international business. “
- “Institutional and legal systems; Differences in legal systems, contractual formalism and recourse to litigation, express contrasts in how societies are organized in terms of rules and decision-making systems, to what extent they accept display conflicts, and the ways and means to solve them.”
- “Values and value systems; The prevailing values in a particular society and the extent to which they are respected in the everyday behaviour of individuals, are important because they may impinge on the willingness to take risks, on leadership styles, an on the relationships between superiors and subordinates.”
- “Time orientations; Time is a prominent variable in management, for planning, strategy, for synchronizing people at work, etc. Cultural attitudes towards time shape the way in which people structure their actions. This pervasive influence is reflected in punctuality in everyday management behaviour which probably appears as the most visible consequence. Yet differences in time orientation, especially toward the future, are more important as they affect long-range issues such as the strategic framework of decision-making or the trade-offs made by organizations between long-term company value and short-term profitability.”
- “Mindsets; There are mental maps and structures which correspond to a certain type of world view, linked in particular to the language structure, a facet of culture generally neglected by both international and cross-cultural management researchers. Mindsets influence ways of addressing issues, collecting information, choosing the relevant pieces of information and assessing their “truthfulness”, so that finally they influence organizational processes, decisions and their implementation.” (Usunier 1998, 17-20.)

### **4.3 International and cross-cultural management approaches**

It is argued that the first different element between international and cross-cultural management research compared with general management research is the fact that it takes a broader view. In addition, international and cross-cultural management research considers different countries and their social and economic systems as well as

encourages the analysis to take into account various cultural variables (Usunier 1998, 7.)

According to Usunier (1998, 7) the main aspects of international management research design can be described as can be seen in table 2.

Table 2. Main aspects of international management research designs

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Type of international/cross-cultural management research studies</b>
Type of issues	National versus international
Geographical focus	Country descriptive, foreign, cross-border, international, multinational
Researcher's orientation	Parochial, ethnocentric, polycentric, comparative, geocentric, culturally synergistic
Basic type of design	Comparative (cross-national/cross cultural) vs. interactive
Basic underlying model	Context/environment versus built-in/behavioural
Culture in the design	National versus cultural vs. "multiple culture perspective"

Source: Usunier 1998, 7.

Usunier (1998, 7) continues to argue that as seen in the table above, the first criterion in international management research design is whether the issue is addressed as being national versus international, or alternatively, as cross-national versus cross-cultural. Another option of differentiation in international management research design is whether it concentrates on particular country, usually the one of the researcher, or whether it is a cross-border, international or multinational study. "Country-centred research presents an implicit comparative design because the researcher tries to "translate" a unique culture and its idiosyncratic management concept and practices for outside observers." Cross-border research designs, in its part, "comprise two or more countries which do not necessarily share a common border, when none of them is considered foreign." This type of design can be used to compare or describe an interaction when the two countries are close geographically as well as co-operation prone as is the case between Finland and Estonia. Multinational research, however,

would include various countries from all over the world, i.e. major cultural and geographical areas would be represented (Usunier 1998, 8.)

Moreover, Adler (1983, cited in Usunier 1998, 8) has come up with typology of management studies that applies to all international management research even though it was originally intended for cross-cultural management research. Adler (1983, cited in Usunier 1998, 8) emphasises “researcher’s own orientation towards reality and interpretive frames and the degree of openness to foreign fields of experience, theories and interpretations.”

In addition, it is argued that comparative management aims to identify similarities and differences within different organizations as well as in management across different cultures. Moreover, an essential subject area of the research design is whether it concentrates on comparing or on observing interactions between people or organizations from differing cultures. In cases like these, the term “cross-cultural” is often used as a generic category, however, it is recommended to differentiate between “cross-cultural” and “intercultural” approaches. A cross-cultural approach to management research compares national management systems and local business customs in different countries and tries to find out what is country specific and what is universal. An intercultural approach, however, emphasizes the interaction between business people, organizations, buyers and sellers, employees and managers, who have different national/cultural backgrounds (Usunier 1998, 9.)

Another significant dissimilarity in international management research designs is “whether they see the variations across national contexts as being constructed mostly in different environments (economic, social, and political) or as built into people’s and organizations’ behavior” (Usunier 1998, 10). Yet another important option in international management research is whether to assign variables and their differences between nations to context/environment or to behaviour/people and organizations (Usunier 1998, 10-11).

#### 4.4 Managing multicultural teams

It is argued that multicultural teams can bring along frustrating management dilemmas. Cultural differences can for instance create substantial obstacles to effective teamwork, however, such obstacles may be subtle and difficult to recognize until damage has already occurred (Brett, Behfar & Kern, 2006, 1.) Brett et al. (2006, 1) continue that “the challenge in managing multicultural teams effectively is to recognize underlying cultural causes of conflict, and to intervene in ways that both get the team back on track and empower its members to deal with future challenges themselves”. On the other hand, it is also recognized that cultural challenges are manageable if managers and team members choose the right strategy and do not assign single-culture-based approaches on multicultural situations (Brett et al. 2006, 2.)

It is most often thought that the challenges on multicultural teams are created due to differing styles of communication. However, this is only one of the four categories that can create barriers to creating a successful team. After Brett et al. (2006, 2) these categories comprise of direct versus indirect communication; trouble with accents and fluency; differing attitudes toward hierarchy and authority; and conflicting norms for decision-making.

The issue of direct versus indirect communication can be explained in the following way. Whereas communication in Western cultures is typically direct and explicit, i.e. the meaning of the message is on the surface, and a listener doesn't have to know much about the context or the speaker to interpret it his, however, in many other cultures, the meaning is embedded in the way the message is presented. Therefore, in cultures that use indirect communication, negotiators may have to infer preferences and priorities from changes, or the lack of them, in the other party's settlement proposal. Differently put, in cross-cultural negotiations, the non-Westerner can understand the direct communications of the Westerner, but the Westerner may have difficulties understanding the indirect communications of the non-Westerner (Brett et al. 2006, 2.) Indeed, the differences between direct and indirect communication can seriously harm relationships when teams experience problems. Moreover, communication challenges

can create barriers to effective teamwork by for instance, reducing information sharing, creating interpersonal conflict, or both (Brett et al. 2006, 2.)

Brett et al. (2006, 2-3) continue to argue that although the language used in international business is English, misunderstandings or deep frustration can be explained by nonnative speakers' differing accents, lack of fluency, or problems with translation or usage. In addition, these may also influence perceptions of status or competence. It is noted for instance that nonfluent team members may well have the most expertise, however due to their difficulty in communicating their knowledge the team cannot acknowledge and utilize their expertise. Moreover, if teammates become frustrated or impatient with some teammates' lack of fluency, interpersonal conflicts are most likely to arise. In addition, nonnative speakers may not only become less motivated to contribute towards the common goal, or anxious about their performance evaluations but also about their future career prospects. All in all, it should be noted that in cases like this it is the organization as a whole that pays the greater price as its investment in a multicultural team turns out to be a failure (Brett et al. 2006, 3.)

Another challenge within multicultural teamwork is that usually teams have a rather flat structure. However, team members from certain cultures, in which people are treated differently according to their status in an organization, are uncomfortable working in flat teams. This can be seen when for instance, they defer to higher-status team members and their behavior will be regarded as appropriate when most of the team comes from a hierarchical culture; but they may damage their stature and credibility, and even face humiliation if most of the team members are from egalitarian cultures (Brett et al. 2006, 3.)

Furthermore, it is noted that cultures also differ greatly in terms of decision making, and particularly, in regard to how quickly decisions should be made and how much analysis is required in advance. For instance, managers in the U.S. tend to make decisions very quickly and with rather little analysis whereas managers from some other countries like to take their time to do the analysis before reaching any decisions. (Brett et al. 2006, 3-4.) Managers from other cultures may, for example, decline to share



information until they understand the full scope of a project. On the other hand, they also realize that they can't simply ignore the desire of their American teammates to make decisions quickly. Therefore, a comparable lesson for managers from other cultures is to be explicit their needs, such as "We have to see the big picture before we talk details." (Brett et al. 2006, 4.)

According to Brett et al. (2006, 4) the most successful teams and managers use four strategies for dealing with problems: adaptation (i.e., acknowledging cultural gaps openly and working around them), structural intervention (i.e., changing the shape of the team), managerial intervention (i.e., setting norms early or bringing in a higher-level manager), and exit (i.e., removing a team member when other options have failed). It is thought that the ideal strategy is adaptation because when this strategy is applied the team must work effectively to solve its own problem with minimal input from management. Therefore, the team will most importantly also learn from the experience (Brett et al. 2006, 4.)

It has been noticed that multicultural teams face challenges that cannot directly be explained by cultural differences. While cultural differences must be handled seriously and attentively as they may have a negative effect on team functioning, it is also argued that cultural challenges may also imply severe managerial problems. "Managers who intervene early and set norms; teams and managers who structure social interaction and work to engage everyone on the team; and teams that can see problems as stemming from culture, not personality, approach challenges with good humor and creativity." (Brett et al. 2006, 7.) On the other hand, managers who have to intervene when the team has reached a stalemate may be able to get the team working again, however, they are usually not able to empower the team in order to help them to help themselves the next time a stalemate occurs. It is argued that if frustrated team members would take some time to think through the challenges they face and also possible solutions themselves, this would make an enormous difference (Brett et al. 2006, 7.)

## **5 Empirical Research**

The empirical research chapter intends to review and discuss the information and research required to support this thesis, and to show how this information and research regarding the B2C departments' Team Leaders' working methods can be best assembled and carried out. This chapter will additionally examine different information sources and outline the research process and methodology used. Therefore, this chapter outlines the process of research and discusses the research methods and methodologies available as well as the appropriate data analysis available. Moreover, quantitative and qualitative research methods and the different research techniques are discussed and demonstrated.

In order to undertake the research both primary and secondary data are required. Within this research, secondary data will be a mixture of books, journal articles, web sites and some company materials comprising different organizational behaviour, communication, perception and motivational studies and theories.

### **5.1 Choosing research strategy**

Menezes and Elbert (1979 cited by Driscoll et al. 1994) have noted that researchers face the decision of choosing appropriate data collection instruments when measuring attitudinal and perceptual phenomena. This includes adequate research methods, scaling techniques, and response formats. Due to the costs involved in surveying it is often impractical to test various response formats. Additionally it is important to recognise that all research processes have their own advantages and disadvantages, which leads to the problem of accurate measurement. (Driscoll et. al. 1994)

Researchers categorise two distinct types of research, qualitative/ phenomenologist or quantitative/ positivist. Although the topic has often been approached as one of qualitative versus quantitative, most practitioners perceive both as valid, both complementing each other, and yet both having different objectives and problems. (Ryan 1995) There are ranges of qualitative and quantitative methods available to

researchers, varying from observation to interviews and questionnaire surveys of many kinds.

Qualitative research concentrates on words and observations in order to express reality and to describe people in a natural manner. At the opposite, the quantitative research approach places importance on numbers that represent opinions and concepts (Amaratunga et al. 2002, 19). It is apparent that both methods have their strengths and weaknesses and there are not ideal solutions. Yin (1994, cited in Amaratunga et al. 2002, 20), on the other hand, is of the opinion that research strategy should be chosen “as a function of the research situation. Each research strategy has its own specific approach to collect and analyse empirical data, and therefore each strategy has its own advantages and disadvantages”. Moreover, it is noted that each strategy obviously has its own characteristics, however, there are also some areas that overlap, which makes the strategy selection a complex matter. Yin (1994, cited in Amaratunga et al. 2002, 20) continues that “the type of question posed, the control over actual behavioural elements; and the degree of focus on historical or contemporary events” are the conditions under which the decision on choosing the strategy should be made.

It is rather difficult to come up with an unambiguous definition of what qualitative research actually is. This is because topic, theory and methodology, in most cases are interrelated in qualitative research, which in its part is conducted in contact with a “field” or life situation, and is therefore reflective of the everyday life of individuals, groups, societies, and organisations (Miles and Huberman, 1994, cited in Amaratunga et al. 2002, 21.)

Qualitative data is also said to provide “rich descriptions” as it focuses on ordinary events in natural settings, which makes it the best method for discovery, exploring a new area and developing hypotheses. However, there are some perceived constraints: volume of data, complexity of analysis, details of classification record, and finally flexibility and momentum of analysis (Richards and Richards 1994, cited in Amaratunga et al. 2002, 22.) Richards & Richards (1994, cited in Amaratunga et al. 2002, 22) further note that using only qualitative research the social and cultural

construction of the variables being studied may be neglected. On the other hand, quantitative research designs characterize human behavior as “social facts” and the quantitative investigation looks for “distinguishing characteristics, elemental properties and empirical boundaries” and usually measures “how much” or “how often” (Nau 1995, cited in Amaratunga et al. 2002, 22.) Despite its many advantages, the weaknesses of quantitative research designs are mainly their incapability of ascertaining “deeper underlying meanings and explanations, even when significant, reliable and valid” (Amaratunga et al. 2002, 23). In fact, there is a suggestion that both quantitative and qualitative research are best mixed as they seem complementary to each other since they focus on the different dimensions of the same phenomenon (Das 1983, cited in Amaratunga et al. 2002, 23). Indeed, triangulation is “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon”. The effectiveness of triangulation is said to rest on the premise that the weaknesses in each method will be compensated by the counter-balancing strengths of another. Rossman and Wilson (1991, cited in Amaratunga et al. 2002, 23) further discussed the benefits of linking qualitative and quantitative methods: “to enable confirmation or corroboration of each other via triangulation; to elaborate or develop analysis, providing richer details; and to initiate new lines of thinking through attention to surprises or paradoxes, “turning ideas around and providing fresh insights”.

As this thesis is based around collecting both “hard facts” and also some “deeper underlying meanings” it uses quantitative approach and questionnaires as well as qualitative approach with interviews.

The questionnaires will enable structured questions to be set in order to uncover the bottom line of the research problem. A survey that is conducted by using a mixture of preconstructed questionnaire/interview questions, which is then sent by e-mail to all the Team Leaders that belong to Finland’s marketing area’s B2C departments of Company X, was chosen as the technique of collecting the necessary primary data. This was due to its simplicity in contacting the examination subjects. This technique also allows the sample to be gathered from a wide geographical area, which is principal in this thesis as part of Company X’s B2C departments are situated in Estonia. Gathering

information from all the Team Leaders of the B2C departments will also add to the sample's representativeness and validity. Furthermore, questionnaires enable the data gathered to be processed and analysed easily given the vast abilities of computerisation. (Ryan 1995)

The collected data is processed using Webropol, which allows flexible and rather complex statistical analysis of the data in a relatively short period of time. The questionnaire used in this thesis mostly comprises of open-ended questions where the respondent can express their own views and feelings on the subject areas given. In addition, there are questions with semantic differential scales, such as Likert-type scales. Scaled questions, in turn, invite respondents to rate the subject on a basis of a range of attributes and intuitively place the emphasis on the subject in question. Additionally, Likert scale type responses, when ordinal data in question can be compiled into bar charts and central tendency can be summarised by the median or the mode. Moreover, responses to many Likert scale type questions may also be summed, however, all questions need to be designed as employing the same Likert scale and that the scale is a defensible approximation to an interval scale. It is believed that this type of questionnaire will not only give specific answers to specific questions, but it will also encourage all respondents to complete the survey as questions posed are easily understandable, clear and concise, as well as well-defined. The questionnaire is also designed in a way that completing it will not take too much of the respondents' time. The risk is that if the questionnaire is viewed too long and too time-consuming by the respondents, they will not complete it at all or they will complete partly without giving it a lot of thought. This would therefore affect the validity of the results.

As part of the B2C Team Leaders of Company X are also situated in Estonia the language issues of the questionnaires/ interview questions need to be taken into consideration. Indeed, cross-cultural surveys, specifically interviews are context specific including communication, and data collection in different national, cultural and linguistic environments. Thus, the choice and use of language will have an effect on the outcome of the survey results (Marschan-Piekkari & Welch 2004, 224.) It was therefore decided that the questionnaire questions would also be translated into

English besides Finnish in order to avoid losing respondents due to the language barrier. Although the official language in Company X's Finnish marketing area is Finnish, it is therefore assumed that all B2C Team Leaders have adequate skills in Finnish. Altogether, it is believed that respondents will most certainly feel more positive about taking part in a survey in a language they are fluent in. This is also thought to diminish misunderstandings that might be caused by a foreign language.

Although the structured instruments have their limitations, they possess the advantage of easily lending themselves to descriptive statistics. In order to add depth to the survey also open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire. Open-ended questions allow the respondents to freely express their opinions and views, which will evidently add to the representativeness of the survey. Furthermore, it is possible to compute average scores for the sample that not only permit comparisons but also allow the use of techniques to assess the significance of differences. (Ryan 1995)

The descriptive questions including demographic questions are added to the end of the survey questionnaire. The main reason for this placement is that because the questions are more personal in nature, they might provoke a respondent to terminate answering to the survey if asked too early on (Johnson & Gustafsson 2000, 92-93.)

To add, in order to test the usefulness of the questionnaire, a small scale pilot survey was carried out. The questionnaire, which was translated into English language in addition to Finnish, was tested both in Finnish and in English to be able to find out whether the questions were understandable or whether they would need improving. This is additionally believed to increase the validity of the survey results.

When applying qualitative research method the possible methods for collecting data include, for instance, interviews, participant observation, tracer studies and case studies, whereas quantitative research methods are mostly limited to conducting surveys and using questionnaires. The major part of the research consists of the analysis and interpretation of the research results. This is said to be much easier with quantitative methods as the results will be "hard facts", i.e. numbers, however, after

using qualitative methods, the analysis and interpretation of the research results will be more time-consuming and challenging, yet the results are also expected to be more “deep” (Amaratunga et al. 2002, 26.)

This study uses interviews conducted with two B2C Team Leaders, one from each country, Finland and Estonia. The interviews were held one at a time and in a quiet, peaceful place where the interviewees could feel relaxed and at ease. The interview questions were structured, however, some room was left for improvisation as well in case it was required. Enough time was also reserved for the interviews to ensure that the interviewees would not feel rushed, but appropriate amount of time would be allowed for them to answer the interview questions. In addition, the interviewees’ were assured that the interviews will be handled anonymously and any given answers will not be distributed publicly. The rest of the survey respondents, i.e. the B2C Team Leaders were asked to answer the same questions as used in interviews, but in Webropol questionnaire format. The respondents were given thorough instructions on how to proceed with the questionnaire and the link to the questionnaire itself via e-mail. In addition, all respondents were given an opportunity to contact the researcher in case they had any further inquiries regarding the survey. This was thought to enhance the respondents’ trust and motivation towards participating in the research.

## **5.2 Choosing research methodology**

The overall methodology of this study is based on different approaches comprising both case study as well as a survey.

It is anticipated that this study will increase the understanding of the current state of the management and the working methods of B2C departments' Team Leaders and provide answers to the research questions. This will hopefully contribute not only to a better understanding but also an improvement of B2C Team Leaders' working methods and practices as achieving management effectiveness requires B2C Team Leaders for instance, to combine technical competencies, i.e. tools that will enable them to develop and display leadership.

### 5.3 Brief introduction to Company X's B2C Team Leaders' tasks

<b>Mission</b>	Managing, guiding and assisting the sales team to ensure that the given sales and service objectives are met.
<b>Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• acts as the supervisor of the sales agents</li><li>• acts as the shift supervisor at regular intervals</li><li>• ensures that shifts are followed by sales agents</li><li>• follows the absences of sales agents / doctor's certificates</li><li>• ensures that phone calls / emails are taken care of in accordance with the objectives</li><li>• assists sales agents in daily booking/ system problems and reports of problems ahead</li><li>• ensures that work is evenly spread among the sales agents</li><li>• tracks sales agents' work; makes conclusions and offers guidance/ coaching accordingly</li><li>• maintains sales agents' information / knowhow</li><li>• observes the wellbeing of the working community; prevents any possible problems</li><li>• creates a good working atmosphere and the development of means</li><li>• keeps development discussions with sales agents</li><li>• keeps up to date with the sales process and sales tools by participating in the sales work</li><li>• solves the complaint situations and guides sales agents in dealing with demanding situations</li><li>• solves the special pricing situations within one's own rights</li><li>• collaborates with other client groups</li><li>• reports to the Head of Department on important issues and the current situation</li></ul>



#### **5.4 Data collection method**

The survey was carried out during a two and half week period in October-November 2012 when the interviews were held and the questionnaire was available to be answered via Webropol. The questionnaire was available in Webropol from October the 29<sup>th</sup> until November the 14<sup>th</sup>, and the two interviews were held on November the 9<sup>th</sup> in Helsinki, Finland.

The respondents were first sent a notification about the survey via email (Attachment 3) where they were kindly asked to take part in it. At the half way the given answering period, a reminder of the survey was sent via email to ensure a 100% response rate (Attachment 4).

Each interview was held separately, and the respondents were given a freedom to speak their minds, however the questionnaire was used as a framework. Both of the conversational interviews took about an hour.

Interviews combined with questionnaire was thought the best way to gather information about the current state of the B2C Team Leaders' working methods and collaboration as well as their own ideas, perceptions and feelings about their jobs. Additionally, since the research subject is completely new within Company X, i.e. there is no prior data on the subject matter available, it was necessary to start off rather conservatively in order to be able to gather the data at all, given the small number of the B2C Team Leaders and the personal, thus rather delicate subject matter. The respondents, whom were comprised of both Finnish and Estonian Team Leaders, were given a choice to take part in the survey either in Finnish or in English, however, they all chose to answer in Finnish (Attachments 1-3).

## **5.5 Data analysis methods**

The results of the interview and questionnaire survey were interpreted by using Webropol; however, the open-ended questions were also interpreted manually to an extent.

Due to the many changes within Company X and its B2C sales teams, including the B2C Team Leaders, the number of respondents were fewer than anticipated originally. As a result of YT negotiations and maternity leaves the original number of B2C Team Leaders has been reduced to only six. Therefore, it was thought best to carry out the survey in the above mentioned manner. Webropol not only lends itself to a rather easy way of collecting the required data but it also acts as a flexible analysis platform with the right tools, which is why it was chosen in the first place.

## **5.6 Description and interpretations of results**

Within this chapter, the survey results are discussed and analysed in various sections. The sections are divided in accordance to the questionnaire and interview questions (Attachments 1 & 2), yet in a modified order. The primary objective of this survey was to discover whether the Company X's B2C Team Leaders' working methods are unified or whether they differ from each other tremendously. If the results should show that there was a lot of differentiation to be found within the working methods of the B2C Team Leaders, it would be important to know how they differ. In addition, the survey aimed to find out what are the B2C departments' Team Leaders' daily tasks, working methods and required skills to be able to perform them, and particularly how the B2C Team Leaders actually perceive their jobs, i.e. their daily tasks, and whether there are differences between the Estonian and the Finnish B2C departments' Team Leaders and their working habits/methods. In addition, the survey was designed to discover what the current communication and collaboration levels are between the B2C departments' Team Leaders, i.e. how do they do it and how often do they do it, and what motivates the B2C departments' Team Leaders to collaborate their tasks currently. Finally, it was hoped that the survey would help find solutions as to how

could the communication and collaboration be improved between the B2C departments' Team Leaders.

### 5.6.1 Respondents' profile

All, i.e. 100 % of the survey respondents were women. In fact, during the survey was conducted there were only women working as B2C Team Leaders in Company X, thus it was not necessary to ask this question at all. As shown in the compiled answers to the survey questionnaire and interview questions (Attachment 5) and figure 4, only two of the B2C Team Leaders were positioned in B2C Finland whereas the rest of them, i.e. four B2C Team Leaders were positioned in B2C Estonia.

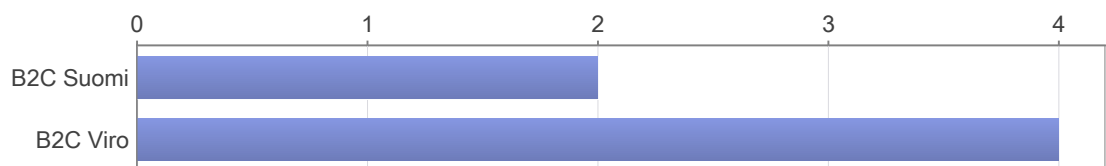


Figure 4. The respondents' place of work within Company X

The age categories in which the respondents fell into, however, varied. Four of the predefined age groups were represented as can be seen in figure 5.

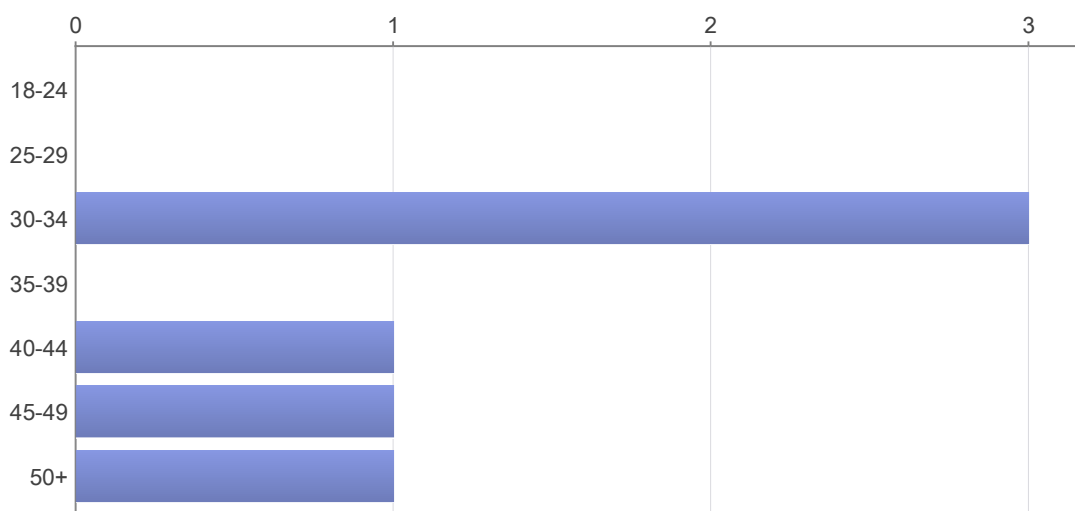


Figure 5. The respondents' age categories

However, age group 30-34 included the majority of the respondents (50 %) followed by 40-44 year olds, 45-49 year olds and 50+ category, which were all equally represented each with 16,6 %.

Figure 6 demonstrates how long each B2C Team Leader has been working at their current post and at Company X. The figure shows that none of the respondents have stayed with Company X working as a B2C Team Leader less than a year or 10 years or more. However, one B2C Team Leader has been working for Company X for a year, whereas three of them have been with the company for four to six years and two of the respondents for seven to nine years.

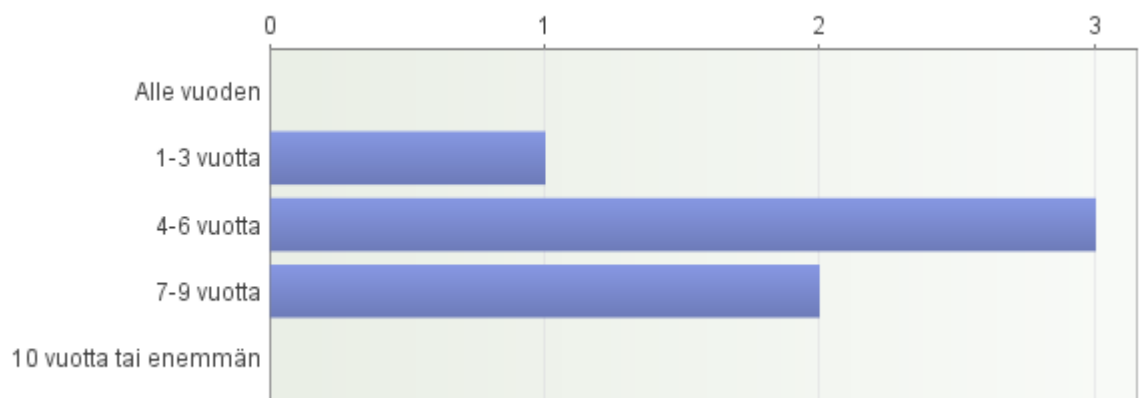


Figure 6. The time period B2C Team Leaders have been working at Company X

In figure 7 it is shown that none of the respondents had experience of working as a Team Leader or in a similar position in some other company prior working for Company X. This therefore indicates that all of the Company X's B2C Team Leaders have solely gathered their experience and expertise of working in a supervisory position while working for Company X.

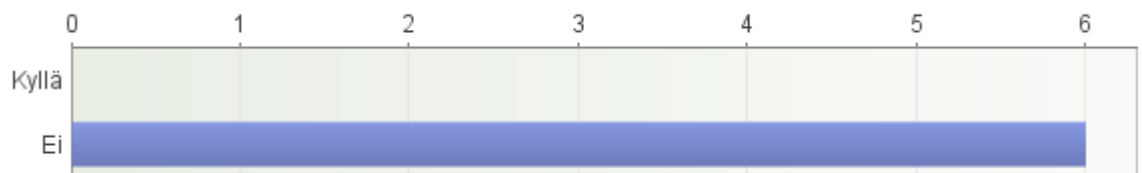


Figure 7. The respondents' previous experience of working as a Team Leader or in a similar position in some other company than Company X

When the respondents were asked about their own comments and ideas concerning the work and working methods of B2C Team Leaders or some potential improvement methods, the answers were rather scattered and non-coherent. Two of the respondents did not have anything to say at all, whereas one respondent was of the opinion that some of the current tasks could be removed completely such as the follow up of the stand by bookings and the follow up of the early booker bookings' payments. One of the B2C Team Leader's wish was to be able to participate in well organized telephone sales training courses regularly, and additionally to establish and maintain good communication and co-operation between different departments and marketing areas of Company X. Two respondents answered in a similar manner when they expressed that the job as a B2C Team Leader was fairly challenging but for the most part enjoyable and also fulfilling. (Attachment 5)

#### **5.6.2 B2C Team Leaders' daily tasks, working habits and required skills**

When the respondents were asked to choose from a predefined list what the B2C departments' Team Leaders' daily tasks, working methods and required skills to be able to perform them are in their own opinion, the answers were rather unified. As can be seen in figure 8 all six B2C Team Leaders agreed that the following were included in the daily tasks, working methods and required skills: "acts as the shift supervisor at regular intervals", "tracks sales agents' work; makes conclusions and offers guidance/coaching accordingly", "observes the wellbeing of the working community; prevents any possible problems", "creates a good working atmosphere and the development of means", "keeps development discussions with sales agents", "solves the complaint situations and guides sales agents in dealing with demanding situations", "solves the special pricing situations within one's own rights", and "keep up to date with the sales process and sales tools by participating in the sales work".

Five out of the six B2C Team Leaders responded that also the following should be included when thinking of the B2C Team Leaders' daily tasks, working methods and required skills: "acts as the supervisor of the sales agents", "ensures that shifts are

followed by sales agents”, “follows the absences of sales agents / doctor’s certificates”, “ensures that phone calls / emails are taken care of in accordance with the objectives”, “collaborates with other client groups”, and “reports to the Head of Department on important issues and the current situation”.

As demonstrated in figure 8 four respondents out of the six B2C Team Leaders would have also added the following to the list of the B2C Team Leaders’ daily tasks, working methods and required skills: “assists sales agents in daily booking/ system problems and reports of problems ahead” and “sales agents’ information / knowhow maintenance”. Finally, only three out of the six B2C Team Leaders who responded to the survey would have additionally included “ensures that work is evenly spread among the sales agents” to the list that comprises the B2C Team Leaders’ daily tasks, working methods and required skills to be able to perform them.



Figure 8. What are the B2C Team Leaders’ daily tasks, working methods and required skills to be able to perform them?

When the respondents were asked to elaborate and give reasons for their choices on the selected specific tasks that they perceive as tasks of a B2C Team Leader, the answers given were varied. (Attachment 5)

Since all of the tasks mentioned in the predefined list of the question “What are the B2C Team Leaders’ daily tasks, working methods and required skills to be able to perform them?” actually are the tasks of B2C Team Leaders, it is rather alarming to notice from the results that some of the B2C departments’ Team Leaders in fact, did not perceive all these as their tasks. One of the Team Leaders who works in Finland’s B2C answered that Team Leader’s main task is to track sales agents’ work; make conclusions and then offer guidance/coaching accordingly whereas the other Finnish B2C Team Leader explained her choices as tasks that she handles daily or regularly. The four Team Leaders who work in the B2C department based in Estonia, on the other hand answered in a rather similar manner with each other. They were of the opinion that all of the predefined tasks in the list were tasks of a B2C Team Leader, and these tasks are done in order to ascertain that sales agents can concentrate on their own work, thus offer customers as smooth and high quality sales service as possible. One of the Estonian B2C Team Leaders, however, criticised that in her opinion a task of ensuring that work is spread evenly among the sales agents is not a task of a B2C Team Leader as sales agents can have different types of tasks at different times, therefore a Team Leader cannot truly influence how work is spread among the sales agents. (Attachment 5)

When trying to find out whether there are differences between the Estonian and the Finnish B2C departments’ Team Leaders and their working habits/methods, it is evident from the survey results that indeed there can be detected differences, at least to some extent. It must also be noted that majority of the B2C Team Leaders (i.e. four out of six) are based in Estonia and thus are Estonian, which however, does not automatically mean a same trend in all of the Estonian B2C Team Leader answers, but they all seem to have similar ideas in addition to their own perceptions regardless their nationality. This is to say that even though nationality and cultural background will undoubtedly influence an individual’s way of thinking and perceiving the world around them, it is not a self evident quality that an individual cannot change by using her own

experience and expertise. It is most often thought that the challenges on multicultural teams are created due to differing styles of communication. After Brett et al. (2006, 2) there are four categories that can create barriers to creating a successful team, which comprise of direct versus indirect communication; trouble with accents and fluency; differing attitudes toward hierarchy and authority; and conflicting norms for decision-making.

When the respondents were asked for their opinion on the leadership skills that a B2C Team Leader should possess, the answers were many and varied. (Attachment 5) A competent Team Leader was described as being able to make decisions, being sociable / getting along with different people, being mature, confident, organized and responsible, and not being afraid of asking for help when needed. In addition, according to the survey results a B2C Team Leader should show fair judgment, be firm but relaxed with her subordinates, and possess knowledge and knowhow both on the sales as well as the products and the booking system. A B2C Team Leader should also be willing to train and give guidance to her subordinates, and be patient. Another answer stressed that a B2C Team Leader should be able to think for herself and be able to motivate people to work for the same goal. Additionally, a B2C Team Leader must be able to put up with stress, be decisive and unprejudiced, and last but not least, come up with a positive attitude and being able to give feedback, even negative one, if necessary.

When the B2C Team Leaders were further asked to describe the most important traits of a leader (characteristics) that are required in order to be a good B2C Team Leader, the answers given were rather expected and general. (Attachment 5) Two of the respondents actually answered in the same way as to the previous question when asked about the leadership skills that a B2C Team Leader should possess. One of the B2C Team Leaders, however, replied that the most important trait of a leader is calmness, whereas another respondent was of the opinion that the most important characteristics include being reliable, being secure, and mature. Other respondents added the following characteristics to the list of the most important traits of a leader: positive attitude, fair judgment, being able to motivate others, being able to make the right



decisions and take responsibility of them, and being able to delegate. Finally, one of the respondents also added “being able to give feedback” to the list.

On the other hand, when the B2C Team Leaders were asked in general, what they regard as the most challenging tasks/issues of working as a B2C Team Leader, two respondents (one from B2C Finland and the other from B2C Estonia) mentioned handling customer feedback concerning booking mistakes or more specifically customer reclamations as it is impossible to prepare one for them since situations and customer reactions vary every time. A respondent from B2C Estonia noted that the most challenging task of working as a B2C Team Leader is solving problems in a way that leaves all parties satisfied. “Calming unhappy customer down” was also mentioned by one B2C Team Leader respondent from B2C Estonia. A B2C Team Leader respondent from B2C Finland, on the other hand, mentioned training, i.e. getting the best out of sales agents as the most challenging task of working as a B2C Team Leader. Finally, a Team Leader respondent who works at B2C Estonia answered “Making unexpected transitions or decisions that concern the sales agents” as the most challenging task of working as a B2C Team Leader. (Attachment 5)

In addition, when asking the B2C Team Leaders’ opinions on how the most challenging tasks/issues of working as a B2C Team Leader could be solved, a respondent working in the B2C Finland suggested “by offering more training to the sales agents”. The other Finnish B2C Team Leader was of the opinion that there is not that much that can be done in order to solve these most challenging tasks/issues that were brought up, however, she would concentrate more on what motivates each of the sales agents and start solving the issues from there. The three B2C Team Leaders from the B2C Estonia, on the other hand, concentrated on the issue of handling customer reclamations: “They (reclamations) need to be handled in any case”, “It would be useful to get the information about reclamations before hand, so that one would have the time to think it through for arguments”, and “I don’t think reclamations will ever become any easier to handle”. The fourth B2C Team Leader based in B2C Estonia could not come up with any suggestions. (Attachment 5)

### 5.6.3 Communication and collaboration levels between the B2C Team Leaders

While discovering what the current communication and collaboration levels between the B2C departments' Team Leaders are, it was necessary to ask various questions in order to find out for example, how often and how they actually communicate and collaborate.

As the respondents were asked that in case of a doubt or a problem, do they consult their peers/ fellow Team Leaders, all six B2C Team Leaders answered yes in a unified manner, which indicates that all B2C Team Leaders actually communicate and collaborate with each other as evident in figure 9.

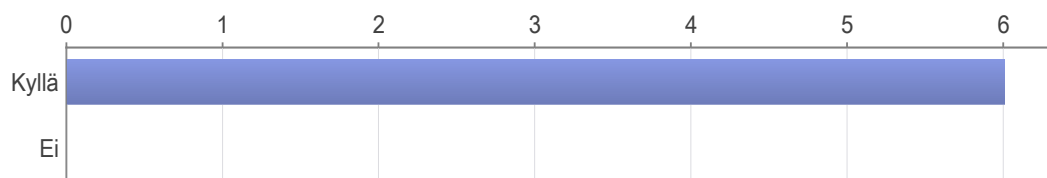


Figure 9. In a case of a doubt or a problem, do you consult your peers/ fellow Team Leaders?

Moreover, when the respondents were asked that if in case of a doubt or a problem they consult their peers / fellow Team Leaders, how often they do this, the majority of the respondents (i.e. five out of six) answered every month, whereas only one B2C Team Leader replied that she consulted her fellow Team Leaders every week as can be seen in figure 10. None of the respondents would consult their peers daily or more seldom than every month.

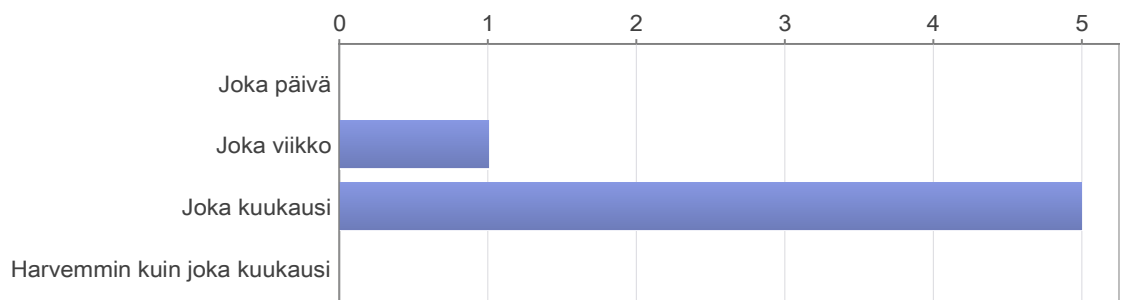


Figure 10. If in case of a doubt or a problem you consult your peers/ fellow Team Leaders, how often do you do this?

When asking the respondents “If in case of a doubt or a problem you consult your peers/ fellow Team Leaders, how do you do this?”, the answers received were rather similar regardless the work place of the B2C Team Leader. Two respondents would first call the other B2C Team Leaders and ask for their comments and/or advise on the matter in question. One respondent replied that “It depends on the subject matter; usually it is the case of giving compensation to a customer”, whereas one respondent did not give answer at all. One respondent said that she usually sends e-mail to all the B2C Team Leaders, therefore the one who has the time at that particular moment can then provide their help. She continued that on the other hand, if she only after someone else’s opinion or a second opinion and she need to get the answer quickly, she phones the other B2C Team Leaders. Similarly, one other B2C Team Leader responded that she consults her fellow Team Leaders in order to get a second opinion, i.e. get reassurance on some matter. (Attachment 5)

Whereas when the respondents were asked to answer the question “If in case of a doubt or a problem you consult your peers/ fellow Team Leaders, do you find consulting your colleagues helpful?” they all seemed to be on the same track according to their responses. One respondent noted that “Two people are always two people and by talking things through there will always be a solution to be found to any problem”. Two other respondents, on the other hand noted that sometimes someone else may interpret the situation in a different way, and thus offer a different viewpoint to the same situation. In addition, three other respondents answered similarly when they expressed that consulting one’s peers’ helps to get support on one’s own ideas or in one’s decision making, i.e. consulting others enhances one’s self-assurance and thus, is helpful. (Attachment 5)

In addition, when the respondents were asked whether they thought it important to collaborate and share knowledge between the B2C Team Leaders it was clear that all of them thought it was very important as is also evident in figure 11.

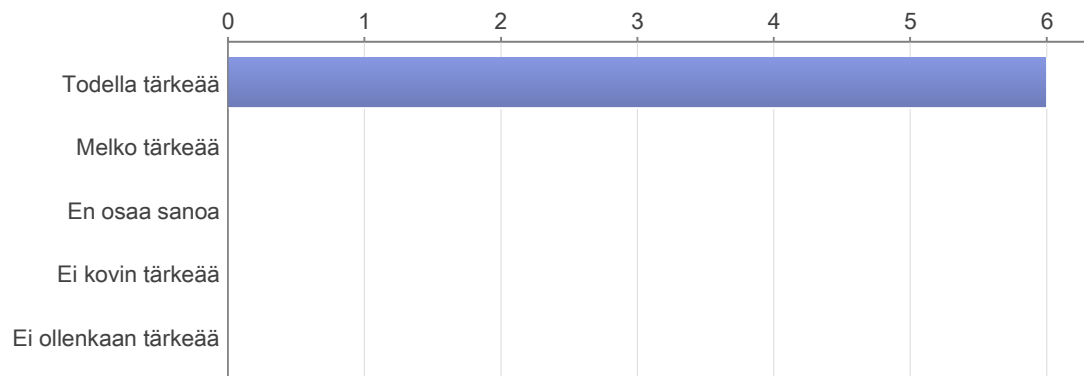


Figure 11. How important do you find it to collaborate and share knowledge between the Team Leaders? (Likert scale: very important...insignificant)

#### 5.6.4 Motivating factors for collaboration

In order to discover what factors motivate the B2C departments' Team Leaders to collaborate their tasks currently some personal questions concerning each B2C Team Leader's own challenges, strengths as well as their perceptions were asked.

When the respondents were asked to elaborate on what their biggest personal challenges as a B2C Team Leader (e.g. working methods/skills) are, their opinions were quite different. (Attachment 5) One respondent who works in the B2C Finland mentioned that her biggest personal challenge was getting along with different customers as well as sales agents. Similarly, the other B2C Team Leader working in Finland also mentioned handling difficult customers and customer feedback. One B2C Team Leader from the Estonian office explained that her biggest challenges as a B2C Team Leader included treating each sales agent personally and/or individually so that feedback could be given on a personal level in a way that it would enhance and motivate each sales agent's personal attributes, and thus make them perform their personal best at work. Another Estonian B2C Team Leader responded that at times her own age was a challenge as some sales agents, i.e. subordinates are younger and the situation therefore requires that the Team Leader must work a little bit harder to gain their trust and approval. The same respondent also mentioned the Finnish language as a challenge, i.e. specifically when answering to a customer feedback one must write

very clearly and always check the spelling. This is why this particular B2C Team Leader prefers to call the customers rather than e-mail them when replying to a feedback or reclamation. The Finnish language was mentioned for the second time as a personal challenge that needs to be constantly improved by another Estonian B2C Team Leader. The same respondent also added that she finds it difficult to give negative feedback to sales agents. Finally, one of B2C Team Leaders working in Estonia answered that in her opinion, the biggest challenge was the deficiency in communication as it would be extremely important to get and share all the new information. (Attachment 5)

On the other hand, when the respondents were asked to share what they thought were their biggest personal strengths that aid in working as a B2C Team Leader (e.g. working methods/skills) the answers were varied yet also included some consistent themes. One of the respondents disclosed her biggest personal strengths as: “Getting along with different people, being a good listener, and really liking the job”. Another respondent said that her biggest strengths as a B2C Team leader were a good knowledge of the booking system, and being able to listen to sales agents and their problems as well as solve the problems efficiently. Also, one other B2C Team Leader responded that she knows well the booking system and gets along with people and is easily approachable. Another respondent added that her long experience in the job that has brought along some sense of poise and being fair were her biggest personal strengths. Experience in the job was additionally mentioned by another B2C Team Leader respondent as well as constant willingness to improve on one’s skills, and being open-minded. Lastly, it was noted by one respondent that being active, ambitious, precise, flexible, positive, and understanding the technical side of the job, i.e. the “soul” of the booking system comprise the biggest strengths of this particular respondent. (Attachment 5)

All in all, these answers include many of the characteristics or traits that an effective and a good team leader or a manager should possess also according to many authors. These include, for instance, enthusiasm, integrity, toughness, fairness, warmth, humility, and confidence (Adair 2007, 6.) Zimmerer and Yasin (1998) further argue that the most important factors in effective leadership comprise being visionary and

having technical competence. Yukl (2010, 62-64) agrees with this and adds that besides technical skills, effective managers and leaders possess self-confidence, conceptual or cognitive skills including good judgement, foresight, intuition, creativity, and the ability to find meaning in uncertain situations. In addition, Yukl (2010, 64) believes that interpersonal and social skills, i.e. knowledge about human behaviour and the ability to understand feelings, attitudes and motives, and to be a clear and persuasive communicator are a must for a manager. Moreover, as also seen in these answers effective leaders tend to be emotionally stable and mature, i.e. well adjusted and have an awareness of their strengths and weaknesses and are thus, oriented towards self-improvement (Yukl 2010, 54).

When asked about the factors that make the work as a B2C Team Leader delightful/pleasure the answers included the following: “Different customers and colleagues”, “Happy and content customer; situations where it is possible to help the customer and make their day, when one’s own teams of sales agents are happy – a certain flexibility and freedom within one’s own work”, “To be able to help the sales agents in problematic situations”, “Experiencing sales agent’s success when they achieve their own goals such as making a complex booking or alternatively when a sales agent has learned something new and tells me about it; there is nothing better than that.”, “Working with different people, challenging customer reclamations”, ”Every day at work is different and challenging in a different way, it is never boring at work.” (Attachment 5)

While the respondents were asked what are the factors that make their work as a B2C Team Leader disappointing/unpleasant two respondents mentioned dissatisfied and demanding customers and five respondents revealed that customer reclamations and other exceptional situations that need to be taken care of, specifically during weekends, were the factors that make the work as a B2C Team Leader unpleasant or challenging at the very least. One respondent additionally noted that the factors that make her work as a B2C Team Leader disappointing/unpleasant include that while being a supervisor one is sometimes not allowed to make the ”right” decisions, which is frustrating and finding out that a sales agent does not thrive at their job. (Attachment 5)

The B2C Team Leaders were also asked how equal they feel to their peers / colleagues as Team Leaders (Likert scale: extremely equal...not at all equal) and four of them felt extremely equal, whereas one of them answered fairly equal, and one could not say at all as can be seen in figure 12.

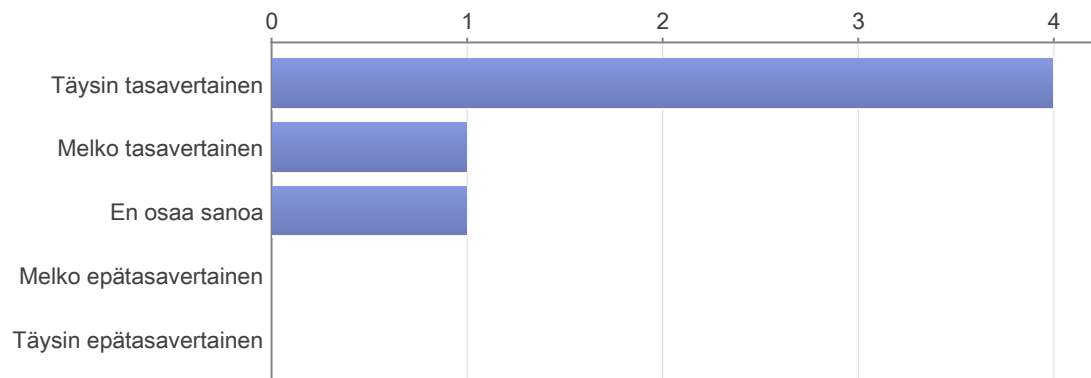


Figure 12. How equal do you feel to your peers / colleagues as a Team Leader? (Likert scale: extremely equal...not at all equal)

Moreover, when finding out how could the communication, collaboration and knowledge sharing be improved between the B2C departments' Team Leaders the respondents were quite consistent with their answers. It was pointed out that since all B2C Team Leaders are different people with different mindsets they don't always solve problems in the same way even if they try and act according to the common rules.

The majority of the respondents thought that more face to face meetings and events where B2C Team Leaders can get together should be organised in order to enhance the communication, collaboration and knowledge sharing between the B2C Team Leaders. However, some respondents answered that the communication and collaboration levels are satisfactory as they are currently.

In fact, when engaging in group activities such as these suggested B2C Team Leader face-to-face meetings, it should be noted that problem solving and strategy development as well as knowledge and insight into decision making are significant elements due to the fact that group conversations are more complex than dialogues. In

group conversations there are many senders and receivers and therefore also misunderstandings are more likely to arise. Also, differences of opinion can lead to a conflict between conversation partners at which point negotiation is needed (Van der Molen & Gramsbergen-Hoogland 2005, 108.) Moreover, Blundel (2004, 1) points out that effective communication requires an open mind i.e. willingness to take on new and unfamiliar ideas. However, effective communication can help organizations achieve satisfied repeat customers, well-motivated employees, a positive company image and innovative and creative strategies to improve and benefit the organization, thus it should be strived for (Blundel 2004, 2). To sum up, Brooks (2006) emphasises that a vital ingredient of motivation is communication between employees and managers within organizations. When it comes to achieving sustainable business success, there needs to be excellence in leadership at three levels; strategic, operational and team level. Thus, strategic, operational and team leaders must be capable of working harmoniously together as the organization's leadership team (Adair, 2007, 70.) Indeed, it has been said that "knowledge has become the key to success as it is far too valuable a resource to be left to chance." Therefore, companies must find out what kind of knowledge they need in order to gain competitive advantage, as well as to learn to deploy and leverage it in their operations, and spread it across the whole organization (Wenger et al. 2002, 6.)



## **6 Discussion**

This chapter will present and discuss the summary findings of the survey according to which conclusions are drawn. Moreover, the recommendations that were made by the survey respondents in order to improve the unification of the B2C Team Leaders' working methods and collaboration as well as suggestions for further research are referred to.

### **6.1 Summary and conclusions**

The survey results show that even though most of the B2C Team Leaders tend to perceive their daily tasks in the same way, and thus their working methods are rather unified, there is still some differentiation to be found.

All survey respondents were women and two of the B2C Team Leaders were positioned in B2C Finland thus, the rest of them, i.e. four B2C Team Leaders were positioned in B2C Estonia. The age categories in which the respondents fell into also varied the youngest respondent being 30 years old, whereas the oldest was 50 +. None of the respondents had been working for Company X in the B2C Team Leader position for less than a year or for 10 years or more, however most respondents had been working in their positions for 4 to 6 years. In addition, none of the respondents had any prior experience of working as a Team Leader or in a similar position in some other company than Company X, which proposes that all of the Company X's B2C Team Leaders' experience and expertise of working in a supervisory position has been gained while working for Company X.

When the survey respondents were asked to pick from a predefined list what the B2C departments' Team Leaders' daily tasks, working methods and required skills to be able to perform them are in their opinion, the given answers were rather unified, however, some respondents did not actually perceive all of them as their tasks at all. Some differences could also be seen between the Finnish and the Estonian respondents' answers; however, also many similarities were detected within their answers in many cases. Thus, even though nationality and cultural background will undoubtedly

influence an individual's way of thinking and perceiving the world around them, it is argued that an individual can change and modify their way of thinking and perceiving by using her own experience and expertise as has also been seen within this survey and the results of it. This is backed up by an argument that individuals should not be solely considered as being programmed by a certain culture as individuals will always have their own needs and feelings as well as capacities for independent thought and action (Usunier 1998, 17). Indeed, Mullins (1999) believes that everyone has their own unique picture or image of how they see the "real" world, thus each individual does not just passively receive the information from the world, but they also analyse and judge it.

When the respondents were asked for their opinion on the leadership skills that a B2C Team Leader should possess and what a good B2C Team Leader should be like in terms of characteristics, the answers were varied and all respondents seemed to have their own personal ideas about the subject matter. In fact, the answers given were similar to those as pointed out by Adair (2007, 23). According to Adair (2007, 23) the role of a leader includes at least three fundamental elements that are expected to be fulfilled by their subordinates, i.e. help achieve a common task, to build the synergy of teamwork and to respond to individuals and meet their needs.

On the other hand, when asked about the most challenging tasks/issues of working as a B2C Team Leader and how these most challenging tasks/issues of working as a B2C Team Leader could be solved, for instance handling customer reclamations and problem solving were mentioned. However, it was thought that handling reclamations will never get any easier, but both B2C team Leaders and sales agents would need some more training.

All respondents answered that in case of a doubt or a problem, they consult their peers/ fellow Team Leaders, and most of them do so monthly. This clearly indicates that there indeed is communication and collaboration between the B2C Team Leaders. As to how the B2C Team Leaders consult each other, the answers given were rather similar regardless the work place of the B2C Team Leader, i.e. by calling or sending e-mail. It is argued that the advantages of oral communication such as telephone

conversations are speed and feedback; however, there is a possibility for distortion of the message. The advantages of e-mails on the other hand, are that they can be quickly written, sent, and stored which also translates into low cost for distribution. The disadvantages of e-mails, however, include the information overload, lack of emotional content, and the fact that they can be rather cold and impersonal. Furthermore, lack of body language or gestures can influence receiver's interpretation of the message (PMBOK 2008, 260.)

While the respondents shared what they thought were their biggest personal weaknesses as well as strengths as a B2C Team Leader (e.g. working methods/skills) the answers given varied, however, they also included some consistent themes such as language issues (with Finnish), handling difficult customers and reclamations, whereas some thought they had a good knowledge of the booking system, got on well with different people and were good at solving problems. On the other hand, when the respondents pointed out the factors that make the work as a B2C Team Leader delightful/pleasure or disappointing/unpleasant, they all had their own opinions, however, some common responses on the positive side included for instance, different customers and colleagues whereas on the negative side demanding customers and reclamations were mentioned several times. Moreover, the B2C Team Leaders were asked how equal they feel to their peers / colleagues as Team Leaders on Likert scale: extremely equal...not at all equal. Most of them felt extremely equal, however, one of them felt fairly equal, and one respondent could not answer the question.

In addition, probably the most important result of the whole survey is that all B2C Team Leaders found consulting each other helpful and thus, maintaining and enhancing the collaboration also very important.

Most of the B2C Team Leaders were of the opinion that more actual face to face meetings should be organised to be able to improve the communication, collaboration and knowledge sharing between the B2C Team Leaders. At the same time, some respondents thought that the current communication and collaboration levels are sufficient as they are. When it comes to the information richness of different

communication channels Lengel and Daft (1988) agree that face-to-face conversations have high channel richness. Thus, it is integral to know when to use which communication channel to ascertain that communication is most effective.

Therefore, it is concluded that the main research question “What factors contribute to the cohesiveness of the Team Leaders' working methods?” which was divided into more specific questions and used in the survey have received valid answers and thus, has been discussed and evaluated more thoroughly in the previous chapters. The survey findings propose that the B2C Team Leaders' working methods are somewhat unified and many factors contribute to their cohesiveness. Subsequently the B2C Team Leaders should, however, receive more training in order to obtain even more unified and coherent knowledge base which would help them improve the promptness of resolving the daily problems displayed by their subordinates.

## **6.2 Reliability and validity of the survey**

It is argued that reliability refers to the stability and consistency of the results derived from research that is, the probability of whether the same results could be obtained if the same research with the same measures were replicated. Essentially, reliability is concerned with the consistency, accuracy and predictability of specific research findings.”(Chisnall 2001, 38.) Additionally, reliability of a research is affected by the question design. Therefore it is suggested that “Questions should be clearly worded and easily understandable and only one interpretation should be possible. Also the language in which questionnaires are phrased should be suitable for the study in question. Open-ended questions should be limited and questionnaires should have instructions printed on them to guide respondents. Questions with Likert scales have good reliability.” (Chisnall 2001, 145-146; 211; 216.)

Questionnaires were used in this survey as a method of collecting secondary data because they enable the data gathered to be processed and analysed rather easily (Chisnall 2001, 405-406). Furthermore, the questionnaire was designed keeping in mind the above mentioned factors in order to ascertain the reliability and validity of

the research. However, since the subject matter required using also open-ended questions in the questionnaire that was used as the background in the interviews, thereby, the reliability of the research carried out was amplified by acknowledging the importance of careful preparation. Moreover, as Pasteur argued, chance favours prepared mind; thus researcher must have the needed resources and equipment available as well as some arrangements and contingency plans in place, in order to succeed in the research, and to ensure its validity. In order to succeed in interviewing, preparation is needed for logistics, (i.e. the right place at the right time), physical properties of the interview (i.e. the venue, appropriate physical appearance etc.), not forgetting mental preparation (Marschan-Piekkari & Welch 2004, 209-211.)

The questionnaire was carefully structured and instructions on how to answer each question were given to the respondents. Finally, to ensure the reliability of this study a pilot survey was conducted after which the questionnaire was revised and finalised in accordance with the results of the pilot test (Chisnall 2001, 139-142; 145.) The response rate with 6 responses was 100 %, which is considered as the best result possible, given the circumstances. Thus, there is nothing else that could have been done in order to increase the response rate.

The respondents were firstly sent an e-mail and instructions about the survey, and they were assured that all answers would be handled confidentially and anonymously. This was done also because the respondents were familiar with the researcher and thus this way any chance of bias could be removed. At half way of the given response period the respondents were reminded about answering the survey. Moreover, the respondents were encouraged to answer the survey by appealing to them for help in improving their own work and working methods.

The survey results were analysed using Webropol to some extent, which offers sophisticated means for flexible analysis of the data in a relatively short period of time, which also influences the reliability and validity of the whole research (Chisnall 2001, 406). Moreover, since majority of the questionnaire and interview questions were open-ended, they were interpreted manually.

It is further pointed out that “To be valid, a research measure must also be reliable. But if it is reliable, it may or may not be valid. Hence reliability is a necessary but not sufficient condition for validity. Validity refers to how well a specific research method measures what it claims to measure.” (Chisnall 2001, 38-39; 211.) Moreover, after Marschan-Piekkari and Welch (2004, 464) “validity is related to the social research issues of ontology, that is, the nature of ‘reality’, such as the essence of the phenomenon under study, and epistemology, that is, assumptions about the grounds of knowledge, and how this knowledge can be grasped through methods of inquiry.”

The overlay matrix as shown in table 1 exhibit the study questions with the theory as well as research methods utilized and analysis of the research results that was conducted. The overlay matrix therefore shows that the research carried out is valid. Webb (2002, 148) continues that “there is an asymmetrical relationship between reliability and validity; a valid measurement is always reliable, a reliable measurement may not be valid. Valid measurement instruments are free of bias (systematic) error.” In addition, it is argued by Marschan-Piekkari and Welch (2004, 475) that “there is no single way of validating one’s qualitative research findings, and consequently there exists more than one set of procedures to demonstrate validity when publishing qualitative research.” According to Marschan-Piekkari and Welch (2004, 475-476) the key validity issues include, firstly to ensure validity during the research process and avoid problems that may arise due to self-deception of the researcher. The second key issue rests on the resolution of the first, which is to enable all readers and users to evaluate the research results that are presented.

To conclude, the main research problem: “What factors contribute to the cohesiveness of the B2C Team Leaders' working methods?” is argued to be valid as suggested by the survey results that point out many factors that contribute to the cohesiveness of the B2C Team Leaders' working methods. In addition, the survey results as well as the manner in which the survey was carried out resulted as being helpful to the management of Company X when tackling the subject matter in question. However, like most of the surveys carried out, this one also could be improved, if conducted again in the future.

Therefore, recommendations and suggestions for further research and improvement are also made.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

The most common and also most costly error most organizations commit today includes focusing leadership development solely on their senior managers ignoring their team leaders. This strategy does not make much sense since it is the team leaders who are closest to the customer, and therefore plays a major role in achieving the organizational success (Adair 2007, 70.)

Thus, when it comes to achieving sustainable business success, it is suggested that there needs to be excellence in leadership at three levels; strategic, operational and team level. Therefore, strategic, operational and team leaders must be capable of working harmoniously together as the organization's unified leadership team (Adair 2007, 70.)

Since most of the B2C Team Leaders in Company X have been working in the same position for number of years, this can be argued to have both positive and negative associations. The positive aspects are for instance, the company specific thorough know-how that the B2C Team Leaders possess and which has been gathered over the years, and can thus be transferred onto their subordinates, i.e. the sales agents in their own teams. On the other hand, the negative aspects can be argued to include for instance, greater possibility for resisting change when it comes to new working methods and habits as well as procedures.

It is suggested that in order to further enhance the co-operation between the B2C Team Leaders, chances for informal teambuilding; i.e. "Team Leader Days" where all the B2C Team Leaders would be welcomed, could be organised at regular intervals. It is understood that such would require not only effort of organising the events but also proper time-management and financial assets, which may be hard to come by given the current economy, however, it is thought that such events would be vital for the

teambuilding efforts as agreed by Jones (1998). Indeed there are various teamwork and teambuilding techniques or games available that range from “Group Transformation”, i.e. to work as a team to create group sculpture that includes everyone in the group to “Sneak a Peek”, i.e. to work as a team to complete a difficult task (Jones 1998, 42; 70). Such exercises and the whole togetherness of such events like “Team Leader Days” are believed to enhance the communication, collaboration as well as self-esteem of all B2C Team Leaders and thus, teamwork, which can then be carried over to their own teams of subordinates. Therefore, organising events such as the “Team Leader Days” is thought to create greater good in long-term.

#### **6.4 Suggestions for further research and improvement**

In order to keep track of the B2C Team Leaders’ current needs, aspirations, motivation levels towards their jobs and so forth; it is recommended that conducting surveys regarding these issues would be made a regular habit. The surveys, whether carried out by using questionnaires or interviews or the mixture of the two methods, should always concentrate on the outcome of the previous survey and thus, dig deeper into the issues raised previously. This way it is thought that each survey would lend themselves into a more precise source of insight and knowledge that could then be used to further enhance the working methods, communication and collaboration of the B2C Team Leaders of Company X. In addition, if such surveys were carried out say, once or twice a year, in the meanwhile the B2C Team Leaders could be given a so called feedback box through which they could share their own ideas and comments regarding their work. This could also be done anonymously if it was felt appropriate.

In addition, the role of the researcher must be thought through carefully before conducting the survey. It is worth considering that the researcher would actually be someone who does not have any prior experience or knowledge on the B2C Team Leaders and their work, and/or does not work for the same company. This is thought to bring completely new insights into the survey; however, having a complete stranger as a researcher may also have a negative influence on the research subjects, i.e. the B2C



Team Leaders who may feel for instance, insecure or uneasy answering rather personal questions.

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## Attachments

### Attachment 1. Interview and questionnaire questions

#### Thesis Interview questions

1. The tasks and working methods of a B2C Team Leader; please, tick the tasks that in your opinion are the tasks of a B2C Team Leader.
  - acts as the supervisor of the sales agents
  - acts as the shift supervisor at regular intervals
  - ensures that shifts are followed by sales agents
  - follows the absences of sales agents / doctor's certificates
  - ensures that phone calls / emails are taken care of in accordance with the objectives
  - assists sales agents in daily booking/ system problems and reports of problems ahead
  - ensures that work is evenly spread among the sales agents
  - tracks sales agents' work; makes conclusions and offers guidance/ coaching accordingly
  - sales agents' information / knowhow maintenance
  - observes the wellbeing of the working community; prevents any possible problems
  - creates a good working atmosphere and the development of means
  - keeping development discussions with sales agents
  - keep up to date with the sales process and sales tools by participating in the sales work
  - solves the complaint situations and guides sales agents in dealing with demanding situations
  - solves the special pricing situations within one's own rights
  - collaborates with other client groups

- reports to the Head of Department on important issues and the current situation
2. You have just selected specific tasks that you believe are tasks of a B2C Team Leader. Please elaborate on/ give reasons for your choices.
  3. In your opinion, what are the biggest personal challenges for you working as a B2C Team Leader (e.g. working methods/skills)?
  4. In your opinion, what are the biggest personal strengths you possess and aid in working as a B2C Team Leader (e.g. working methods/skills)?
  5. What are the factors that make your work as a B2C Team Leader delightful/pleasure?
  6. What are the factors that make your work as a B2C Team Leader disappointing/unpleasant?
  7. In case of a doubt or a problem, do you consult your peers/ fellow B2C Team Leaders?
  8. When in case of a doubt or a problem you consult your peers/ fellow B2C Team Leaders, how often do you do this?
  9. When in case of a doubt or a problem you consult your peers/ fellow B2C Team Leaders, how do you do this?
  10. When in case of a doubt or a problem you consult your peers/ fellow B2C Team Leaders, do you find consulting your colleagues helpful?
  11. How important do you find it to collaborate and share knowledge between the B2C Team Leaders? (Likert scale: very important...insignificant)
  12. How do you think collaboration and knowledge sharing between B2C Team Leaders could be improved?
  13. In your opinion, what leadership skills are required from a B2C Team Leader?
  14. What are the most important traits of a leader (characteristics) that are required in order to be a good B2C Team Leader?
  15. How equal do you feel to your peers / colleagues as a B2C Team Leader? (Likert scale: extremely equal...not at all equal)
  16. In general, what do you regard as the most challenging tasks/issues of working as a B2C Team Leader?
  17. In your opinion, how could the most challenging tasks/issues of working as a B2C Team Leader be solved?

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### **Background questions**

1. Please, state where you work. a) B2C Finland b) B2C Estonia
2. Please, indicate to which age category do you fall into? a) 18-24 b) 25-29 c) 30-34 d) 35-39 e) 40-44 f) 45-49 g) 50+
3. How long have you been working as a B2C Team Leader in Company X?
4. Have you previously been working as a Team leader or similar position in some other company?
5. You have been working as a Team Leader or in similar position in some other company, for how long?
6. Please, share your other comments / ideas regarding the work of B2C Team Leaders'.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Attachment 2. Interview and questionnaire questions in Finnish**



1. B2C Team Leaderin työtehtävät ja työskentelytavat; valitse listasta ne tehtävät, jotka mielestäsi kuuluvat B2C Team Leaderin työnkuvaan.
  - toimii myyjän lähimpänä esimiehenä
  - toimii myyntipalvelun vuorovastaavana omilla säännöllisillä vuoroillaan
  - seuraa työvuorojen noudattamista
  - seuraa poissaoloja/lääkäristodistuksista huolehtiminen
  - huolehtii että puheluihin/sähköposteihin vastataan tavoitteiden mukaisesti
  - auttaa myyjiä päivittäisissä varaus/järjestelmäongelmissa ja raportoi ilmenneistä ongelmista eteenpäin
  - töiden jakaminen tasaisesti myyjien kesken
  - raporttien hallinta
  - myyjien tulosten seuraaminen; johtopäätökset ja ohjaus/valmentaminen
  - myyjien tietotaitojen ylläpito
  - työyhteisön hyvinvoinnin tarkkaileminen ja ongelmien ennaltaehkäisy
  - hyvän työilmapiirin luominen ja keinojen kehittäminen
  - kehityskeskustelujen pitäminen
  - pitää itsensä ajan tasalla myyntiprosessissa ja myyntivälineiden käytössä osallistumalla itse myyntityöhön
  - ratkaisee reklamaatiotilanteita ja ohjaa myyjiä tilanteiden vaativampien tilanteiden hoitamisessa
  - ratkaisee erikoishinnoittelutilanteita, omien oikeuksien puitteissa
  - on yhteistyössä muiden asiakasryhmien kanssa
  - raportoi päällikölle tärkeistä asioista ja osaston kulloisestakin tilanteesta
2. Valitsit tietyt tehtävät listasta, jotka mielestäsi kuuluvat B2C Team Leaderin työnkuvaan; kerro nyt syyt valinnoillesi.

3. Mitkä mielestäsi ovat suurimmat henkilökohtaiset haasteet sinulle työskennellessäsi B2C Team Leaderina (taidot, työskentelytavat tms.)?
4. Mitkä ovat mielestäsi suurimmat vahvuutesi työskennellessäsi B2C Team Leaderina (taidot, työskentelytavat tms.)?
5. Mitkä asiat tekevät työstäsi B2C Team Leaderina ilahduttavaa/nautinnollista?
6. Mitkä asiat tekevät työstäsi B2C Team Leaderina haastavaa/ikävää?
7. Kohdatessasi ongelman, pyydätkö apua kollegoiltasi (muilta B2C Team Leadereilta)?
8. Jos/kun pyydät apua kollegoiltasi (muilta B2C Team Leadereilta) kohdatessasi ongelman, millä tavoin konsultoit kollegojasi?
9. Kun pyydät apua kollegoiltasi (muilta B2C Team Leadereilta) kohdatessasi ongelman, kuinka usein tätä tapahtuu?
10. Kun pyydät apua kollegoiltasi (muilta B2C Team Leadereilta) kohdatessasi ongelman, millä tavoin kollegojesi konsultoinnista on mielestäsi apua ongelman ratkaisussa?
11. Kuinka tärkeää on mielestäsi tehdä yhteistyötä ja jakaa tietotaitoa kollegojen (B2C Team Leadereiden) kesken? (Likert asteikko: erittäin tärkeää...ei ollenkaan tärkeää)
12. Kuinka yhteistyötä ja tietotaidon jakamista B2C Team Leadereiden kesken voisi mielestäsi parantaa?
13. Mitä tiiminvetäjän ominaisuuksia mielestäsi vaaditaan hyvältä B2C Team Leaderilta?
14. Mitä ominaisuuksia arvostat tiiminvetäjässä?
15. Kuinka tasavertainen tunnet olevasi kollegojesi (muiden B2C Team Leadereiden) kanssa? (Likert asteikko: täysin tasavertainen...ei ollenkaan tasavertainen)
16. Yleisesti ottaen mitkä ovat mielestäsi haastavimmat asiat/tehtävät, mitkä kuuluvat B2C Team Leaderin työhön?
17. Kuinka nämä edellä mainitsemasi haastavimmat asiat/tehtävät, mitkä kuuluvat B2C Team Leaderin työhön, voitaisiin ratkaista?

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Taustatietokysymykset**

1. Missä työskentelet? a) B2C Finland b) B2C Estonia
2. Mihin ikäkattegoriaan kuulut? a) 18–24 b) 25–29 c) 30–34 d) 35–39 e) 40–44 f) 45–49 g) 50+
3. Kuinka kauan olet työskennellyt Team Leaderina Company X:ssä?
4. Oletko aikaisemmin työskennellyt Team Leaderina tai vastaavanlaisessa roolissa jossain toisessa yhtiössä?
5. Kerroit, että olet aikaisemmin työskennellyt Team Leaderina tai vastaavanlaisessa tehtävässä jossain toisessa yhtiössä. Kuinka kauan olet tehnyt kyseistä työtä?
6. Muut ajatuksesi / kehitysideasi koskien B2C Team Leaderin työtä ja työtehtäviä.

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### **Attachment 3. The email notification about the survey**

Hyvä B2C Team Leader

Olemme tekemässä tutkimusta B2C Team Leadereiden työskentelystä ja työtavoista Webropol-kyselynä.

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on kerätä tietoa siitä, kuinka B2C Team Leaderit työskentelevät tällä hetkellä ja miten toimintatapoja voitaisiin mahdollisesti kehittää yhtenäisemmiksi tulevaisuudessa.

Tutkimus on myös osa Haaga-Helian IBMA -opiskelijan ja Asiakassuhdeassistentin, Mari Piipponen lopputyötä.

Osanottonne on meille erittäin tärkeä, joten toivomme, että suhtaudutte kyselyyn myönteisesti ja vastaatte siihen alla olevan linkin kautta 11.11.2012 mennessä. Voitte vastata kyselyyn joko suomeksi tai englanniksi.

Antamanne vastaukset käsitellään luottamuksellisesti ja nimettöminä. Tulokset julkaistaan ainoastaan kokonaistuloksina, joten kenenkään yksittäisen vastaajan tiedot eivät tule esille tuloksista.

Mahdolliset kysymykset koskien kyselyä voitte osoittaa minulle osoitteeseen:  
[mari.piipponen@companyx.com](mailto:mari.piipponen@companyx.com)

Kiitämme teitä avustanne tutkimuksen läpiviennissä.

Ystävällisin terveisin

Mari Piipponen

**Attachment 4. The reminder email notification about the survey**

Hyvä B2C Team Leader

Muistutamme teitä, että olemme tekemässä tutkimusta B2C Team Leadereiden työskentelystä ja työtavoista Webropol-kyselynä.

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on kerätä tietoa siitä, kuinka B2C Team Leaderit työskentelevät tällä hetkellä ja miten toimintatapoja voitaisiin mahdollisesti kehittää yhtenäisemmiksi tulevaisuudessa.

Tutkimus on myös osa Haaga-Helian IBMA -opiskelijan ja Asiakassuhdeassistentin, Mari Piipponen lopputyötä.

Osanottonne on meille erittäin tärkeä, joten toivomme, että suhtaudutte kyselyyn myönteisesti ja vastaatte siihen alla olevan linkin kautta 11.11.2012 mennessä. Voitte vastata kyselyyn joko suomeksi tai englanniksi. Huomioitthän, että kyselyyn voi vastata vain kerran.

Kysely on suunnattu kaikille, jotka ovat viimeisen vuoden aikana työskennelleet B2C Team Leaderina.

Antamanne vastaukset käsitellään luottamuksellisesti ja nimettöminä. Tulokset julkaistaan ainoastaan kokonaistuloksina, joten kenenkään yksittäisen vastaajan tiedot eivät tule esille tuloksista.

Mahdolliset kysymykset koskien kyselyä voitte lähettää osoitteeseen:

[mari.piipponen@companyx.com](mailto:mari.piipponen@companyx.com)

Suuret kiitokset avustanne tutkimuksen läpiviennissä!

Ystävällisin terveisin

Mari Piipponen

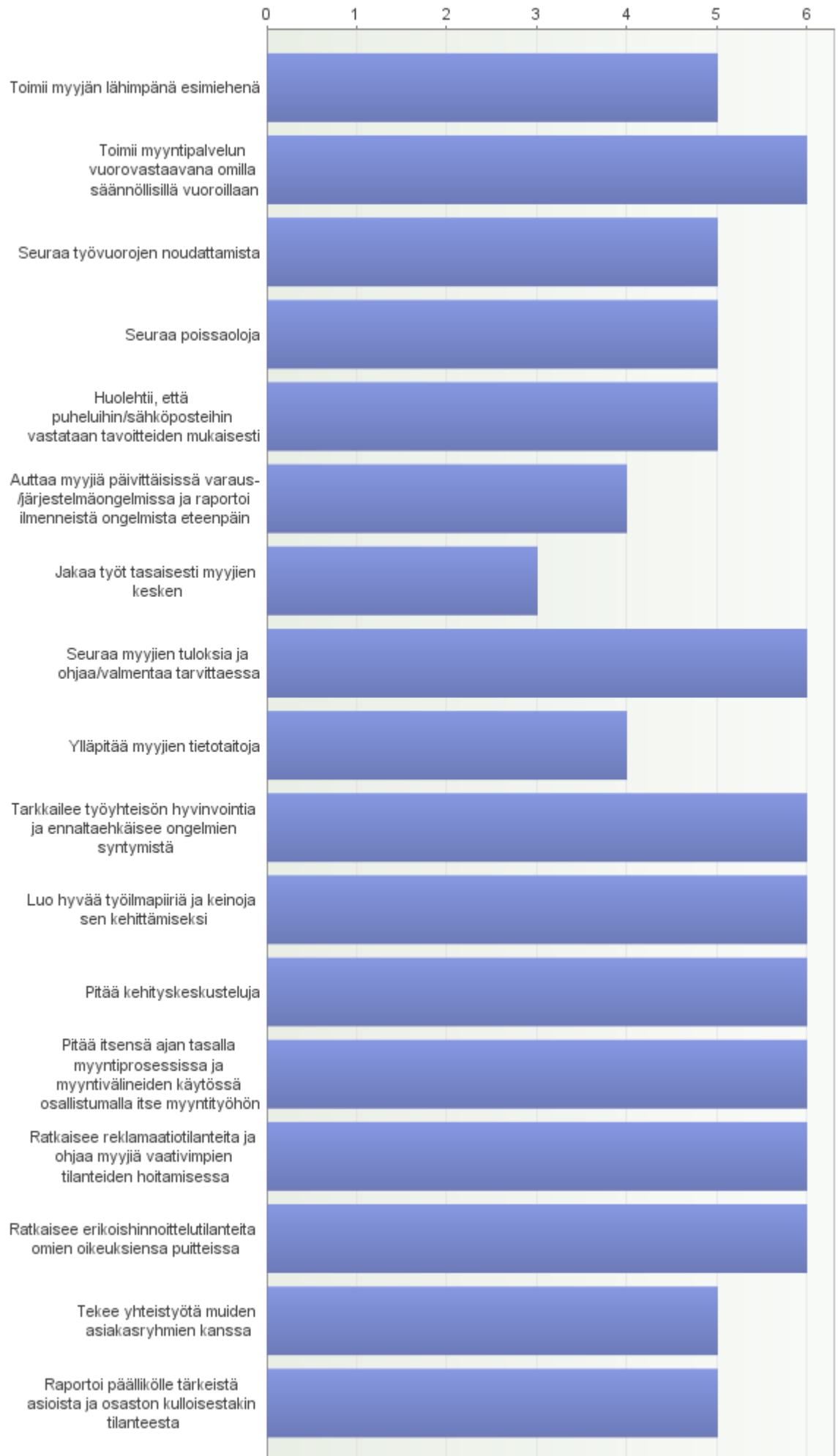
<https://www.webpolsurveys.com/Recipients/SurveyInGroup.aspx?SURVEYGROUPID=446c1f63-6b33-41f5-9552-32a6a6a20672&RID=993b58fe-4326-400c-b4bb-f50c02df118b>

**Attachment 5. The compiled survey results**

## B2C Team Leaderien työskentelytavat - Perusraportti

1. Team Leaderin työtehtävät ja työskentely; valitse listasta ne tehtävät, jotka mielestäsi kuuluvat B2C Team Leaderin työnkuvaan.

Vastaajien määrä: 6



2. Valitsit tietyt tehtävät annetusta listasta, jotka mielestäsi kuuluvat B2C Team Leaderin työnkuvaan. Kerro nyt syyt valinnoillesi.

Vastaajien määrä: 6

- TL seuraa myyjien tuloksia ja ohjaa/valmentaa
- valitsin kaikki, koska ne ovat TL(vuorovastaavan)tehtävät
- mielestäni valitsemani asiat ovat ne asiat mitkä ovat päivittäisiä tai toistuvia (vaikka olisivat harvemmin)
- Minun mielestä kaikki yllä mainitut kuuluvat Team Leader työhön. Jotkut on jokapäiväisiä asioita ja toiset ei niinkään. Esim. en itse yllä pidä myyjien tietotaitoa sen tekee kouluttaja, mutta minä ole se joka ilmoittaa kouluttajalle mitä myyjille kannataisi käydä läpi uudestaan. Poissaoloista sama asia, saan ilmoituksen myyjältä ja laitan tietoa etteenpäin että miehityssuunnittelu pysyy ajantasalla jos niitä on paljon päälikönkanssa sovimme miten kannataisi toimia.
- Kaikkia tehdään päivittäin sujuvan ja laatukkaan myyntityön vuoksi
- mun mielestä kuuluvat kaikki ne listalla olevat tähtävät teamleader tehtäviin, paitsi tämä: jakaa työt tasaisesti myyjien keskeen. Myyjillä on eritehtäviä : club one liittymiset,ryhmien nimilistat, mikä voin vaikuttaa. Mutta yleensä jakaa työttunteja miehitussuunnittelija.

3. Mitkä mielestäsi ovat suurimmat henkilökohtaiset haasteesi työskennellessäsi B2C Team Leaderina (tiedot, taidot, työskentelytavat tms.)?

Vastaajien määrä: 6

- pärjääminen erilaisten asiakas ryhmien ja myyjien kanssa
- asiakaspalautteet(hankalat asiakkaat)
- suurimmat haasteet on kohdella myyjiä henkilökohtaisesti eli esim. palautteen anto eri tavalla eri henkilöille sekä saada myyjistä heidän parhaat ominaisuutensa/puolensa tässä työssä esiin.
- Huomaan että joskus ikäni on haasta. Meillä saattaa olla vanhempia myyjiä kuin minä itse ja minun tarvitsee enemmän työtä sen eteen että saan heidän luottamuksen.

Toinen haaste mielestäni on kieli, kun saan palautteen asiakkailta kirjoitan mahdollisimman selvästi ja tarkistan kirjoitus virheet. Soitan asiakkaalle aina kun mahdollista jos he eivät ole vaatineet vastausta s-postitse.

- tiedon kulku: tärkeä saada tietoajoissa
  - mulla on suomen kielen taito, sitä pitää kehittää kokon ajan lisää.
- Sekä negatiivista palautetta myyjille on vaikea antaa.

4. Mitkä mielestäsi ovat suurimmat henkilökohtaiset vahvuutesi työskennellessäsi B2C Team Leaderina (tiedot, taidot, työskentelytavat tms.)?

Vastaajien määrä: 6

- Pärjääminen eri ihmistyyppien kanssa , hyvä kuuntelemisen taito ja oma työstä tykkäminen
- varausjärjestelmän hyvä tunteminen, olen valmiina kuunteleman työntekijän murheita ja ratkaisen niitä mielestäni hyvin.
- pitkä kokemus, mikä on tuonut tietyn varmuuden, asiat saa aina jollain tavalla järjestettyä

reiluus

- Tieto: Olen hyvin perillä meidän varausjärjestelmästä.

Taito: Osaan asiaoida ihmistenkaa helposti, uskon että olen helposti lähestyttävä henkilö.

- kokemus, ei ennekoluuloja eikä oteta töitä kotiin mukaan



- jatkuva halu kehittyä
- Olen aktiivinen, kunnianhimoinen, täsmällinen, joustava, positiivinen, teknisen ajattelutavan (tajun varausjärjestmän sielun)

## 5. Mitkä asiat tekevät työstäsi B2C Team Leaderina ilahduttavaa/miellyttävää?

Vastaajien määrä: 6

- erilaiset työkaverit ja asiakkaat
  - tyytyväinen asiakas. Sellaiset tilanteet, missä saa auttaa asiakasta. Oma tiimi voi hyvin
  - tietynlainen joustavuus/vapaus työssä
- se että voi auttaa myyjä hankalissa tilanteissa
- Myyjän onnistuminen! Ei ole mitään sen parempaa kun että myyjää pääsee esim. tavoitteisiin tai myyjä jonkun vaikean matka-paketin. Ilahtuu siitä että on oppinut jotain uutta ja tulee kertoo siitä. Tuntuu mahtavalta kun huomaa että olet selittänyt/ neuvonut jotain ja neuvostasi ollaan opittu.
  - työskenteleminen eri ihmisten kanssa, haastelliset palautteet as:ta
  - joka työ päivää on eri, mikä oli viimeinen-siitä ei tule koskaan tylsä olemista. haastetta joka päivää! :))

## 6. Mitkä asiat tekevät työstäsi B2C Team Leaderina haastavaa/ikävää?

Vastaajien määrä: 6

- Ei tyytyväiset ja vaativat asiakkaat
  - asiakaspalautteet, poikkeustilanteet (etenkin viikonloppuna)
  - se että esimiehenä en kuitenkaan välttämättä saa tehdä juurikaan "oikeita" päätöksiä
- huomaaminen että joku myyjistäni ei viihdy työssään
- No varmaan asiakaspalautteet, ne on yleensä reklamaatioita ja jotkut asiakkaat ovat tosi vaikeita tyydyttää. Toki kun saan asiakkaan tyytyväiseksi minulle tulee hyvä olo ja tiedän että olen hoitanut työ onnistuneesti.
  - lukutaidottomat as:t
  - ei ikävää, mutta haastetellista on erikoistapaukset- vaikeat asiakkaat, laivojen vaihto, Force major tapaukset jne

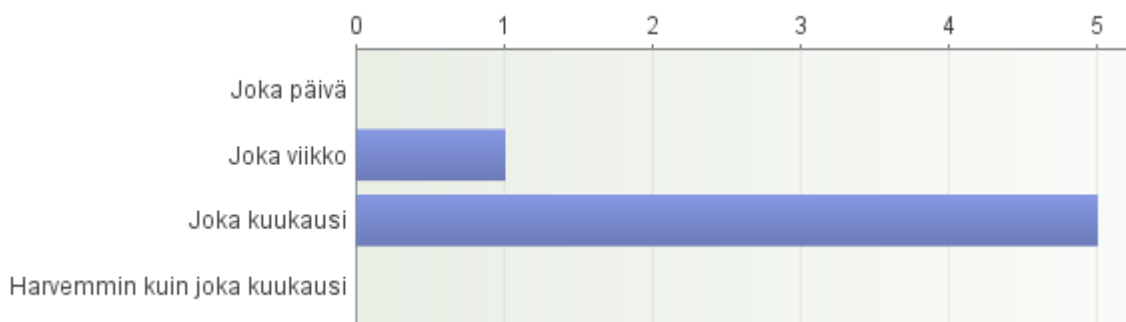
## 7. Kun kohtaat ongelman, mitä et pysty ratkaisemaan yksin, pyydätkö apua muilta B2C Team Leadereilta?

Vastaajien määrä: 6



8. Kun pyydät apua muilta B2C Team Leadereilta kohdatessasi ongelman, kuinka usein tätä yleensä tapahtuu?

Vastaajien määrä: 6



9. Kun pyydät apua muilta B2C Team Leadereilta kohdatessasi ongelman, millä tavoin konsultoit kollegojasi?

Vastaajien määrä: 6

- Soittamalla ja neuvottelemalla
- ++++
- riippuu asiasta, usein kysymys on hyvityksestä tai sen suuruudesta
- soittamalla yleensä j apyhdän toisen/toisten mielipidettä asiasta
- Yleensä laitan kaikille team leadereille mailia, niin että se joka on vähemmän kiireinen voi auttaa. Jos kyse on jostain mielipiteestä ja haluan vaan nopean vastauksen soitan.
- kysyn heidän mielipiteettä asiasta, yleensä on he sama mieltä asiasta kun itse. enemmän tarvin tukea jo tehdyn ratkaisuun tai päätökseen

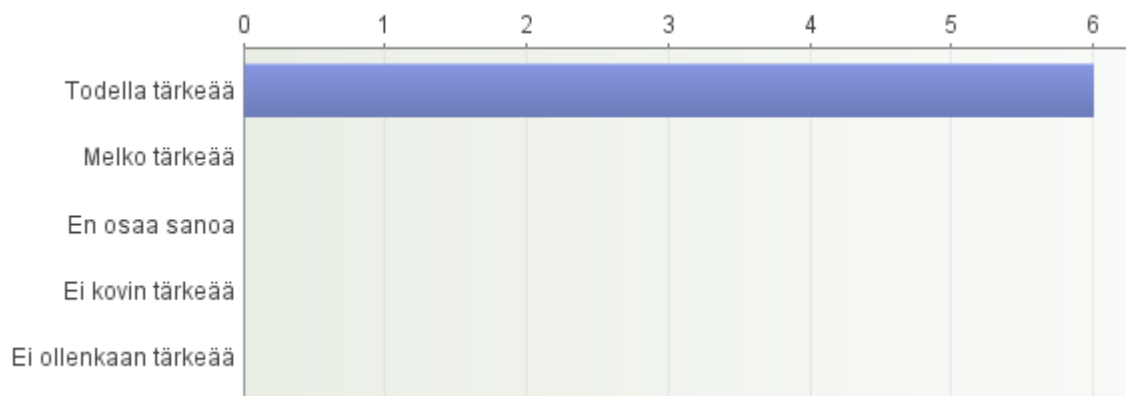
10. Kun pyydät apua muilta B2C Team Leadereilta kohdatessasi ongelman, millä tavoin kollegojesi konsultoinnista on mielestäsi apua ongelman ratkaisussa?

Vastaajien määrä: 6

- 2 ihmistä on aina kaksi ihmistä ja puhumalla löydetään aina ongelmaan ratkaisu
- voi olla että toinen näkee tilanteen eri tavoin kuin minä
- saa varmistuksen joko omalle mielipiteelleen/ajatukselleen
- eri näkökulmia, voi tulla ilmiin jotain, mitä toinen ei ollut huomannut
- Yleensä kun pyydän apua haluan tietää olenko itse tekemässä oikein tai ovatko he samaa mieltä, eli konsultointi antaa mulle varmuutta.
- saan heiltä tukea tehdyn päätöksen

11. Kuinka tärkeää on mielestäsi tehdä yhteistyötä ja jakaa tietotaitoa B2C Team Leadereiden kesken?

Vastaajien määrä: 6



## 12. Kuinka yhteistyötä ja tietotaidon jakamista B2C Team Leadereiden kesken voitaisiin mielestäsi parantaa?

Vastaajien määrä: 6

- Enemmän tapamisia keskenään (ei puhelimen välityksellä)
- se on jo nyt melko hyvällä tasolla. Ollaan keskenämme yhteydessä monta kertaa viikossa
- mielestäni asiat toimivat melko hyvin nykyisellään
- face to face palaverieita
- Tämä on haastavaa koska kaikki ovat erilaisia ja ongelmien ratkaisu ei aina tehdä samalla tavalla. Mutta koitamme aina pitää kiinni säännöistä. Ehkä jos nähtäis enemmän ihan kasvotain helpottais tiedon kulkua.
- enemmän kokouksia , yhdenviettoja

## 13. Mitä tiiminvetäjän ominaisuuksia mielestäsi vaaditaan hyvältä B2C Team Leaderiltä?

Vastaajien määrä: 6

- päättäväisyyttä, ihmisten kanssa pärjämistä, tarkkuutta ym
- järjestelmällinen, velvollisuudentuntoinen, ei pelkää pyytää apua
- varmuus
- kypsyys
- luotettavuus
- Oikeudenmukainen.
- Tiukka tarvittaessa, mutta myös rento.
- Myyntitietoa.
- Järjestelmän osaamista.
- Sosiaalinen.
- Halukuuta valmentamiseen.
- Kärsivällisyyttä.
- osaamista ajatella omilla aivoilla
- stressinsietökykyä
- osaamista/kokemusta toimia eri ihmisten kanssa saamalla ne työskentelemään samaan asiaan eteen
- ratkaisukykyä
- ennakkoluulottomuus
- positiivinen asenne

- kaikki mainitut + negatiivisen palautteen antamisen osaaminen

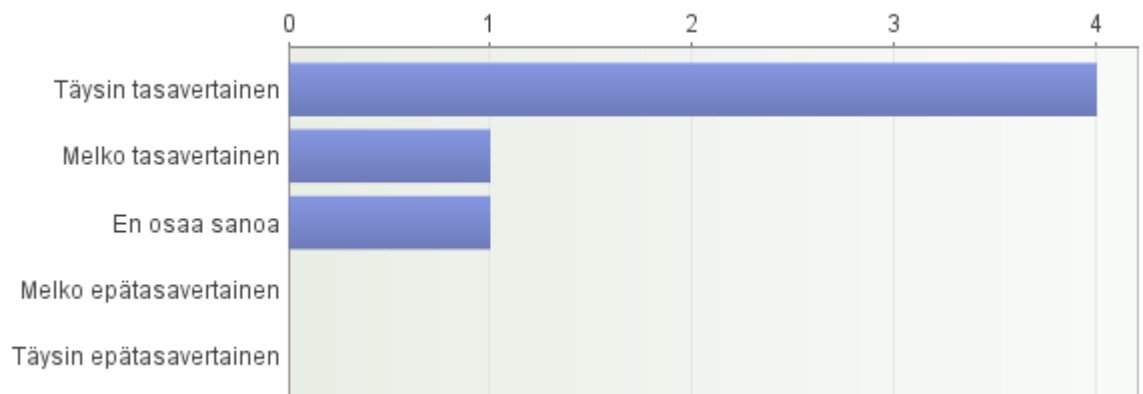
#### 14. Mitä ominaisuuksia arvostat tiiminvetäjässä (B2C Team Leader)?

Vastaajien määrä: 6

- rauhallisuutta
- samat mitä vastasin edellisellä sivulla
- edellämainittuja
- luotettavuus
- varmuus
- kysyys
- Oikeudenmukaisuutta ja että mulle annetaan palautetta.
- positiivista asennetta ja motivointikykyä
- tekee oikeita päätöksiä ja ottaa kantaa myös niistä;
- delegointi osaaminen

#### 15. Kuinka tasavertainen tunnet olevasi muiden B2C Team Leadereiden kanssa?

Vastaajien määrä: 6



#### 16. Yleisesti ottaen mitkä ovat mielestäsi haastavimmat asiat/tehtävät, mitkä kuuluvat B2C Team Leaderin työhön?

Vastaajien määrä: 6

- asiakaspalautteet ennen matkaa (varausvirheet)
- ei tyytyväisen asiakkaan rauhoittaminen
- valmentaminen eli saada myyjästä paras irti
- odottamattomat siirrot/päätökset
- Asiakas reklamaatiot sen vuoksi että asiakkaan reaktioon ei ikinä pysty valmistautumaan etukäteen.
- ongelmien ratkaisu, mistä on kaikki osapuolet tyytyväiset

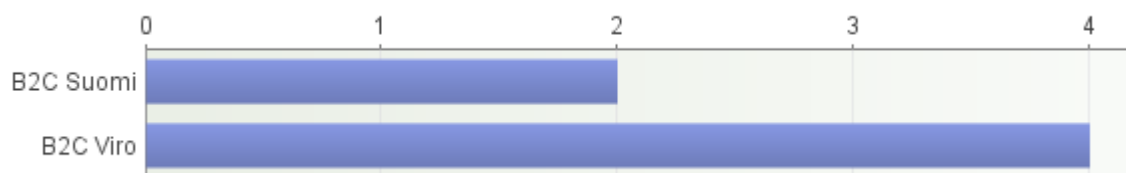
17. Kuinka edellä mainitsemasi haastavimmat asiat/tehtävät, mitkä kuuluvat B2C Team Leaderin työhön, voitaisiin ratkaista/tehdä helpommiksi käsitellä?

Vastaajien määrä: 6

- kouluttamalla myyjiä enemmän
- ne pitää hoitaa joka tapauksessa
- mielestäni tähän ei hirveän paljon voi eväitä tuoda muualta vaan ehkä tähän liittyy myös aikaisemmin mainitsemi myyjien henkilökohtainen "kohtelu" eli esim. ymmärtää mitkä asiat ketäkin myyjää motivoivat
- tieto etukäteen ainakin TL tasolle että ehtisi miettiä argumentteja
- No en usko että reklamaatiot pystytään tehdä helpommaksi.
- en osaa vastata

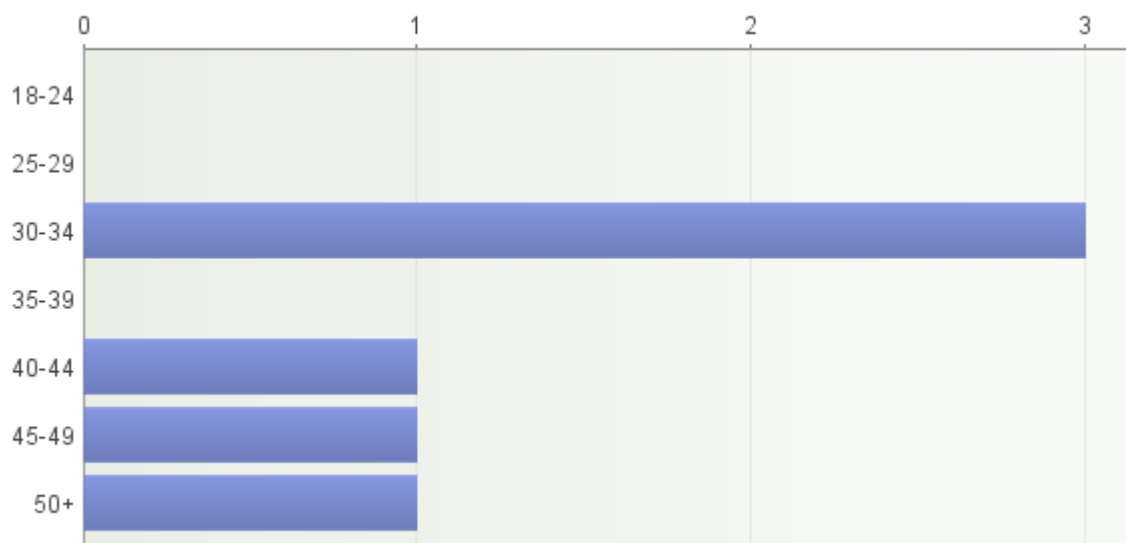
18. Missä työskentelet?

Vastaajien määrä: 6



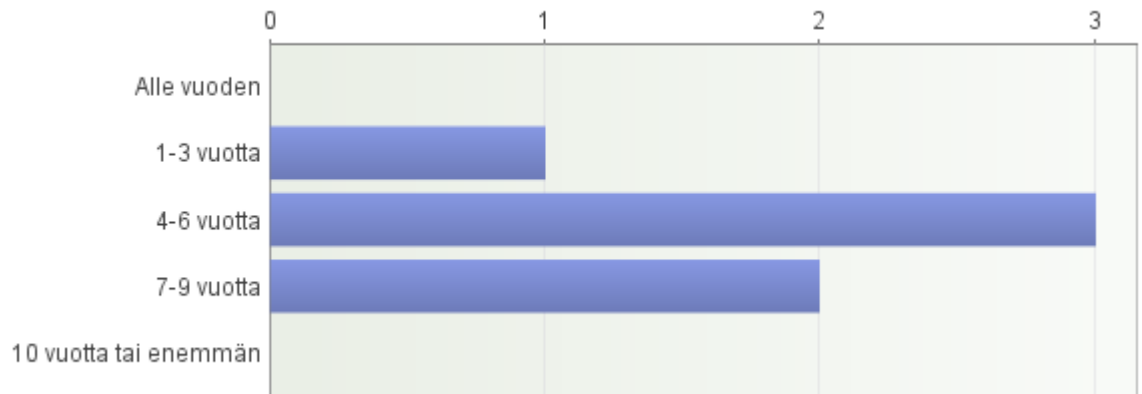
19. Mihin ikäkattegoriaan kuulut?

Vastaajien määrä: 6



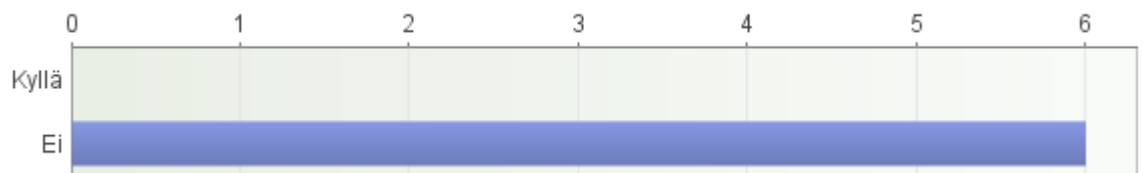
20. Kuinka kauan olet työskennellyt B2C Team Leaderina nykyisessä työpaikassasi?

Vastaajien määrä: 6



21. Oletko aikaisemmin työskennellyt Team Leaderina tai vastaavanlaisessa tehtävässä jossain toisessa yhtiössä?

Vastaajien määrä: 6



22. Kerroit, että olet aikaisemmin työskennellyt Team Leaderina tai vastaavanlaisessa tehtävässä jossain toisessa yhtiössä. Kuinka kauan olet tehnyt kyseistä työtä?

Ei vastauksia.

## 23. Muut ajatuksesi / kehitysideasi koskien B2C Team Leaderin työtä ja työtehtäviä.

Vastaajien määrä: 6

- Osa tehtävistä voisi jäädä pois:  
jonotusten seuranta  
early booker maksujen seuranta
- ei muuta
- työ on pääsääntöisesti "mukavaa"
- hyviä puhelinmyyntikoulutuksia ja yhteistyötä eri osastojen ja markkina-alueiden välillä
- Team leaderina työnteko on haastavaa, mutta antoisaa.
- ei tule mieleen tällä hetkellä....