

The most effective communication channel to spread information in an organization

Susanna Ketoja



Degree programme

<p>Authors Susanna Ketoja</p>	<p>Group Liibba 05</p>
<p>The title of your thesis The most effective communication channel to spread information in an organization</p>	<p>Number of pages and appendices 48+ 1</p>
<p>Supervisors Kevin Gore Suvi Kalela</p>	
<p>The thesis was made for a small law firm that was undergoing a change. The change concerned the restructuring of the services. The company created a product family which included the old services but the tasks and responsibilities were divided in a new way. This created a need to research an effective way to communicate in a new situation.</p> <p>The main objective of this thesis was to find the most effective communication channel to spread information in an organization. This was further divided into three research problems regarding matters such as effectiveness of different communication tools, structure of the organization and content of the message. These research problems were then divided into sub questions. The first research problem was divided in two and it included sub questions such as what communication tools are available in the organization and what is the most effective communication tool or a set of tools to get information from the management to the employees in an organization. The second research problem included the following sub questions: how does the structure of the organization affect information flow and how does the structure of the organization affect channel choice. The last research problem included the following sub question: how does the content of the message, informing change in an organization, affect channel choice.</p> <p>The study employed a qualitative research approach. The data was collected by questionnaires from all the employees and an interview was conducted with the CEO of the company. The data was collected, analyzed and interpreted within few months. Also theories were applied, for instance media richness theory.</p> <p>The available channels were e-mail, memo, telephone call, informal and formal meetings. The most effective set of tools was a combination of e-mail and informal meeting. The structure highlights time and independence of employees which means that the information needs to flow fast and circle around so that it is available for all the employees. This then means that the chosen channel needs to deliver the message fast to a large audience. Informing change requires interactivity a lot which means that the chosen communication channel needs to be as rich a channel as possible therefore making the formal meeting to be the best choice for that.</p>	
<p>Key words Communicating change, communication channel, internal communication</p>	

Table of contents

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	The company	2
2	Theoretical part.....	8
2.1	Communication tools.....	8
2.1.1	Written media.....	10
2.1.2	Oral media.....	11
2.1.3	Electronic media.....	12
2.1.4	Media richness theory.....	14
2.2	Structure	16
2.2.1	Tall structure	17
2.2.2	Flat structure	17
2.2.3	Hierarchical structure.....	18
2.2.4	Centralised and decentralised structure.....	19
2.2.5	Matrix structure	20
2.2.6	Other factors relating to structure	20
2.3	Content.....	21
2.3.1	Communicating change.....	21
2.3.2	The role of the management.....	23
2.3.3	Strategies in communicating change.....	23
2.3.4	Contents of the message	24
2.3.5	Channel choice for change.....	25
2.3.6	The follow up.....	25
2.3.7	Factors to consider when choosing media	26
3	Empirical part.....	29
3.1	Collection and handling of data	29
3.2	Methods.....	30
3.3	Results.....	30
4	Discussion.....	37
4.1	The most effective communication tool.....	37

4.2	The effect of the structure on information flow and channel choice	38
4.3	The effect of the content of the message on the channel choice	40
4.4	Summary.....	41
4.5	Conclusions.....	43
4.6	Limitations	45
4.7	Recommendations.....	46
	Bibliography	47
	Appendices.....	49
	Appendix 1. The questionnaire.....	49

1 Introduction

The thesis was made for a small law firm called Kalliolaw which was undergoing a change. The change regarded restructuring of their services; the company created a product family from the old separate services and turned them into a coherent service line. This was done in order to grow and to become more understandable to the customers. The idea was also to divide tasks and responsibilities and to decide who was doing and what inside the company.

Communication is a vital part of everyone's job, and making the communication effective is not a simple task. When changes are made in a company also the communication changes but the effects of the change on the communication can be seen generally a lot later and sometimes the results are not in favour. Therefore the company provided an interesting starting point to research communication because the change was still undergoing and it was possible to guide the communication to the right direction. In order to make the communication effective, it was decided to research the effectiveness of communication tools. Also as the company was restructuring their services, it was decided to research the structure as well in connection with the communication. And as a last part since the company was undergoing a change it was decided to research how the change itself affected the communication.

The main objective of this thesis was to find the most effective communication channel to spread information in an organization. This is divided further into three research problems and they were effectiveness of different communication tools, structure of the organization and content of the message. Each of these included sub questions. Effectiveness of different communication tools was divided into two research questions:

R1: What communication tools are available in the organization?

R1a: What is the most effective communication tool or a set of communication tools to get the information through from management to employees in an organization?

The second research problem was the structure of the organization. This was also divided into two research questions:

R2: How does the structure of the organization affect the information flow?

R2a: How does the structure of the organization affect channel choice?

The last research problem was the content of the message:

R3: How does the content of the message, informing change in an organization, affect the channel choice?

In the theoretical part the research questions were approached from a very basic point of view. For the first research problem, different media and channel choices were introduced. This included mainly the usage of them, their advantages and disadvantages. Also media richness theory was introduced. For the second research problem, different organisational structures were presented. Other factors relating to the structure were briefly gone through as well. For the last research problem, different aspects related to content of the message were introduced, for instance goals and strategies. Also other factors to consider when choosing media were demonstrated.

The data of the empirical part was gathered from the questionnaires that the employees of the company filled in. Part of the information was gained from the interview with the CEO of the company. After analysing the information and making conclusions, solutions to the research problems were found.

The key concepts in the thesis are communication, communication channel and internal communication. Communication here is defined to be any type of interaction between at least two persons where information is given or received or both. Communication channel refers to anything that can be used for transferring the information from one person to another. Internal communication refers to any information exchange between employees inside the company. As can be perceived these concepts are defined to be as broad as possible in order to secure that they include all the possible meanings of the word.

It needs to be stated as well that words employee, respondent, receiver, sender, person and people are used to describe the same thing – a person who works in the company. The same thing is with the words channel, tool, medium and media. They describe the way with which the information is moved from one person to another.

1.1 The company

The company is a law firm that is specialized in helping different size companies with different types of legal issues. Their aim is to serve growing companies with international operations fast and effectively with strong expertise. The company has diversified expertise and extensive experience in international and domestic business law. Their clients are both foreign and domestic corporations that are highly respected and leaders in their business areas. Their services focus on eight different sectors: biotechnology, corporate, mergers and acquisitions, information technology, human resources, mining, intellectual property rights, and finance. (Kalliola 2008 a.)

The company has also received recognition as an expert organization by ACQ Finance Magazine. ACQ publishes internationally a much respected finance magazine and it is a market leader when it comes to highlighting global business transactions. The ACQ Finance Magazine has chosen the company as the winner in two different categories in a survey measuring the expertise and respect of law firms. They announced in the Global Awards of 2009 the company to be the best Nordic Small Law Firm of the Year (small being 1-50 employees). The survey was conducted globally amongst 18,000 organizations. In the Country Law Awards in 2008 they also declared the company as the best Finnish Law Firm on the field of Mining. (Kalliola 2008 b.)

Services

GrowthPower is a trademark of the company and it represents the company's integrated way of thinking and acting. GrowthPower is a tool to help companies to evaluate the condition of the company's business in all legal respects in relation to their present and future challenges. The idea of the GrowthPower is to enhance the security and everyday dynamics of the business activities, and also to help companies to prepare themselves for the future. GrowthPower includes an efficient product family with different service-oriented models to meet different kinds of needs in companies.

Following services are included in the GrowthPower product family: TransactionPower, InfoSecPower, BT-Power, IdentityPower, ICT-Power, CorporatePower, PersonnelPower and ContractPower. (Kalliola 2008 c.)

TransactionPower is aimed at companies that are growing and going international and therefore requiring financing, or buying or selling business activities. It is also aimed at companies

where the owners want to sell the company or perhaps merge it with another company. The idea is to help companies in different legal complexities relating to different kinds of transactions in a company. For example, in acquisitions and sales, the team of the company can plan and lead the process as a “project manager” or they can just comment and bring forth important legal issues in the negotiations. The TransactionPower includes among other things the following contents: Due Diligence, different kinds of acquisitions, financing rounds and instruments, stock exchange listings, shareholders’ agreements, mergers and demergers, establishing a fund and all kind of planning, negotiations, documentation, and implementation relating to these issues. (Kalliolaw, TransactionPower.)

InformationSecurityPower or in short InfoSecPower is aimed at all businesses where assistance in legal complexities related to information security is needed. The process starts by charting the present status of the company and its objectives, and continues with determining strategy and setting new objectives in order to support the company in the future. The idea is to bring security and stability to the business activities of the company, and to achieve and maintain the business environment as risk-controlled as possible. The InfoSecPower includes among others these services: Surveying of the present information security including for example technical implementation, Super user and administrator related issues, preparation of new modes of operation, agreements and negotiations related to information security, drafting of directives for the company relating to correct procedures for different kinds of information types (personal data, data with special protection etc.), and a tailored training program for the whole organization to efficiently execute the new information security strategy. (Kalliolaw, InfoSecPower.)

BT-Power is concentrating on protection of biotechnological innovations, especially in mergers and acquisitions and other transactions. The aim is to protect innovations and rights with contracts and assist companies in legal complexities related to development, licensing and other commercialization of biotechnology. The process starts with charting the present situation of the company and can lead up to securing the company’s legal position both in domestic and international markets with the help of international cooperation network that the company has. The services of the BT-Power include for example the development of the company’s internal processes, securing the protection of the biotechnology rights (e.g. employment contracts), participation in or leading of contract negotiations, financing arrangements (e.g. negotiations with venture capital investors), and contract negotiations related to usage of

the innovation in the clients' and cooperation partners' business activities. (Kalliolaw, BT-Power.)

IdentityPower is aiming to protect products, brands, domain names and intangible rights of any kind, especially in mergers and acquisitions and other transactions. The idea is to find a suitable form to protect the intangible rights in today's growing international competition. The team from the company can draft guidelines for the usage of the brand for the company or they can plan and draft agreements on licensing and transferring technology and products of the company. With the service companies can strengthen their identity and reduce risks in these matters. The IdentityPower includes among other things the following services: Charting identity objectives and a need for protection of the company, registrations of trademarks, domain names, business and auxiliary business names, drafting and negotiation of licensing, developing of the internal processes to secure the intangible rights in the company (e.g. employment contracts, employment invention regulations). (Kalliolaw, IdentityPower.)

ICT-Power is concentrating on information technology through contracts. The aim is to protect the ICT innovations of the company, especially in acquisitions. The idea is to assist companies in legal complexities related to development, licensing and other use of technologies. The ICT-Power services include among others the following contents: Development of internal processes, securing the protection of information technology rights with contracts and agreements, financing arrangements and contract negotiations regarding licensing of the company's ICT innovations. (Kalliolaw, ICT-Power.)

CorporatePower is aimed at companies that wish to have a good administrative strategy that helps the company to operate in a changing business environment. The idea is to assist companies in legal complexities related to administrative issues as for example financing rounds and share issues. The team of the company will support and guide the company's management in administrative and corporate decision making related to the future of the company. The CorporatePower includes the following kinds of services: Development of internal processes, for example Board meetings and Shareholders' meetings, administration of the Articles of Association and shareholders' agreements, conditions related to directors' and employment contracts and mergers and demergers. (Kalliolaw, CorporatePower.)

PersonnelPower is aimed at all companies with a need for assistance in legal complexities related to personnel administration. The idea is to make sure, with the help of the contracts that

the company meets the requirements set out by the law as an employer but also to protect the interests of an employer. This includes for example rules and regulations of the company; working hours, use of e-mail and the Internet. The team of the company will provide a comprehensive service which will strengthen the company's human resources administration, clarifies the legal position of the employees and anticipates possible conflicts. The PersonnelPower includes among others the following services: Directors' and employment contracts, procedures regarding a termination of employment and cooperation procedures and residence permits and visas for employees. (Kalliolaw, PersonnelPower.)

ContractPower is concentrating as the name implies to contracts of all kinds. The idea is to create a high quality contract management for the company by assisting the company in drafting contracts and in contract negotiations. This includes supporting the company in different stages of a contract process by leading the negotiations as a "project manager" or by assisting in them and giving valuable legal advices. The ContractPower includes the following services among others: Shareholders' agreements, reseller, distribution and agency agreements, license, maintenance, hosting and escrow agreements, sales and supply agreements, cooperation agreements and loan and financing agreements. (Kalliolaw, ContractPower.)

At the moment the company is expanding the product family with three more services. These are ChannelPower, Start-UpPower and Real EstatePower. ChannelPower concentrates on the internet pages, web store and e-mail and mobile as channels to marketing. Start-UpPower concentrates on helping the companies at different stages of the lifecycle starting from the beginning. Real EstatePower concentrates on advising companies in real estate business in maintenance, leading and repairing related matters. (Kalliolaw, ChannelPower, Start-upPower and Real EstatePower.)

Personnel

At the moment the company is employing 10 persons; CEO, two partners, marketing manager, two assistants and three Masters of Laws and one Attorney-at-Law. All employees have specialised into certain field of law and therefore all the clients have been divided between the employees so that each client will have a specialist of their business field as an advisor. This excludes the marketing manager and the assistants because they are handling the general issues and tasks in the company and therefore they are involved with all the customers. The following figure 3. will demonstrate the general hierarchy in the organisation. (Kallio, J. 9.11.2009.)

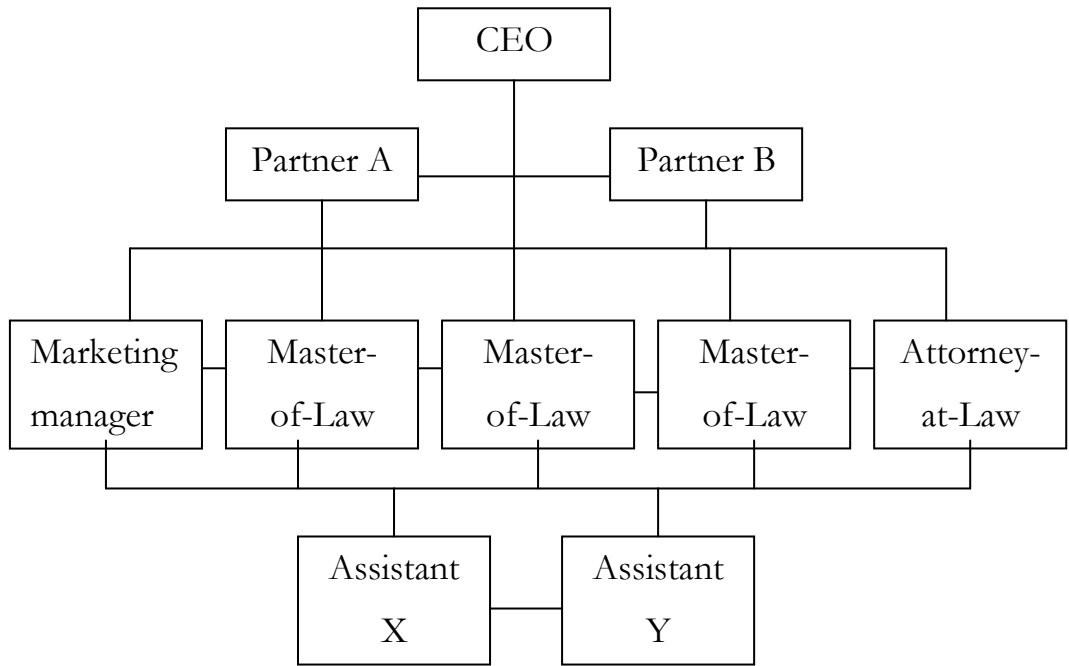


Figure 3. Organization chart (Kallio, J. 9.11.2009)

2 Theoretical part

The theoretical part will describe the theories related to research problems. For the first research problem, the theoretical part will introduce different communication channels; their usage, advantages and disadvantages as well as the media richness theory. For the second research problem, different types of organizational structures will be presented as well as their pros and cons. For the last research problem, the theoretical part will introduce different aspects relating to communicating change in the organization. These aspects include for example the role of the management, strategies, content of the message and follow-up.

2.1 Communication tools

This chapter concentrates only on internal communication channels that are available for the company. At the moment the company uses five different channels; e-mail, telephone, memo or note, informal meeting and formal meeting (Kallio, J. 9.11.2009).

According to Gerson and Gerson, (2007, 3-4) communication at work has many forms. Employees communicate both orally and in writing, informally and formally, but they are also relying on various types of correspondence and technology, depending from the audience, purpose and situation. In order for employees to communicate efficiently, they have to adapt to many different channels of communication. Many of the channels overlap with each other in terms of purpose and audience. Sometimes one can use many different channels to communicate the information, but sometimes the channel choice is more exclusive. Therefore, in order to have an efficient communication, one must choose the right channel.

Communication is a major component of everyone's job. Whether it is oral, written, informal or formal, it helps to manage products, services, employees and customers. Communication is also time-consuming and it costs a lot of money for the company. Moreover, communication is important for the company's image – poor communication leads to poor and negative image of the company. (Gerson & Gerson 2007, 5-7.)

Bové and Thill (2005, 99) categorize communication channels in three larger entities; written media, oral media and electronic media. These entities include of course many different channels with different advantages and disadvantages but they have chosen to categorize the media

from a very fundamental point of view. Their categorization takes into account the situation and audience as can be seen from the figure 1.

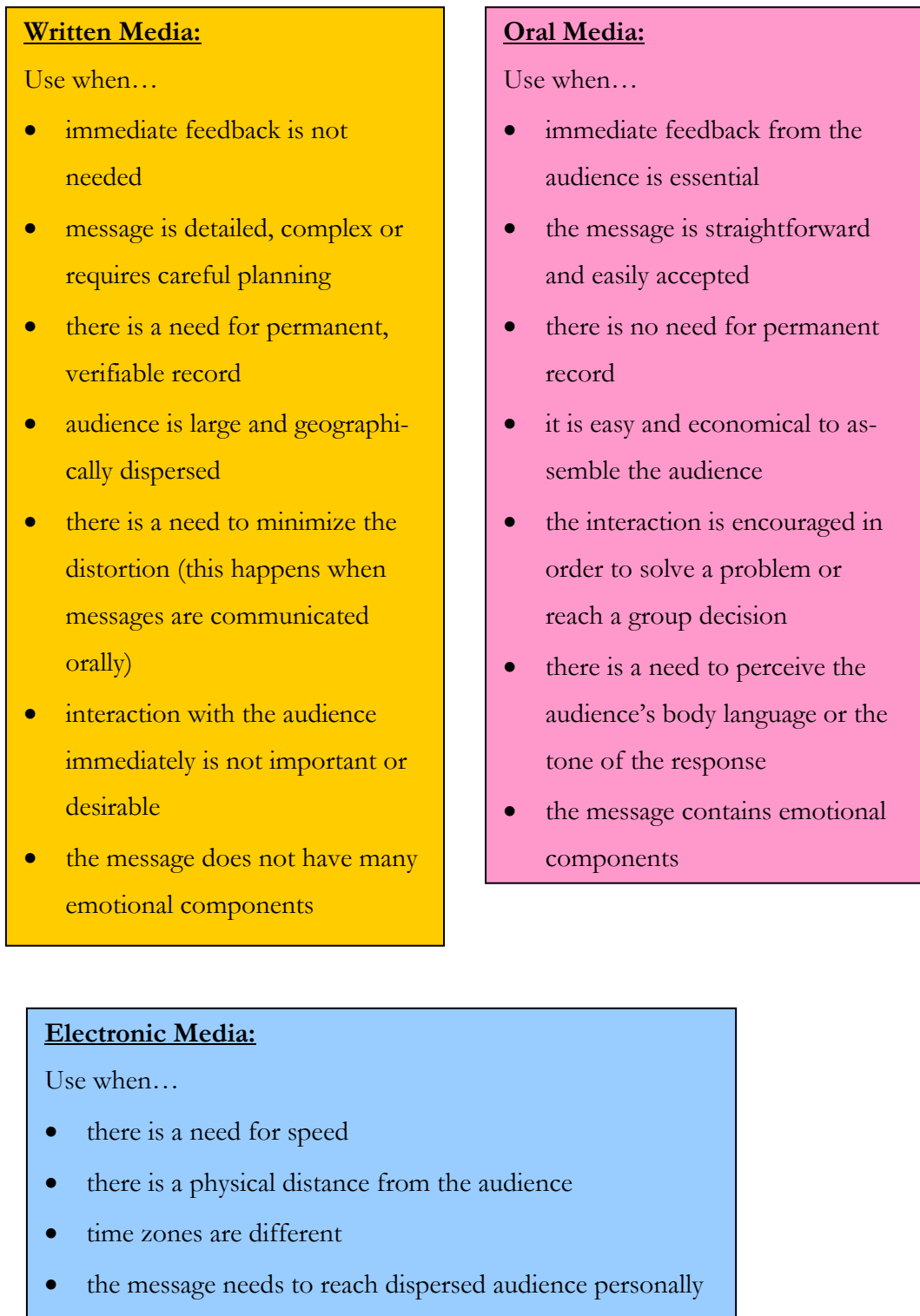


Figure 1. Categorization of media (Bovée & Thill 2005, 99)

In the following subchapters this categorization will be split into smaller pieces in order to describe better the nature of individual channels and their usage, as well as advantages and disadvantages. The following subchapters will concentrate only on those internal channels that are available to the company. These channels are e-mail, memo, telephone and formal and informal meetings.

2.1.1 Written media

Written media in a traditional meaning refers to printed text in general. Written media is for example long and short reports, notes and memos but in this case only the memo is introduced because it is the only traditional written media that the company uses.

Memos

In this paragraph the word memo is referring to the traditional, old-fashioned memo which is printed on paper. Memos are commonly used in internal communication and they are usually short. Memos are also more informal than letters for example and they provide verifiable record. Generally memos are written to a wide range of readers; supervisors, co-workers, subordinates, and different combinations of these audiences. They can be addressed to only one person or to a whole department, in either case they are normally still copied to even more people. The basic idea though is that memos are a channel for employees to communicate with each other and the audience is determined beforehand. Memos are most commonly used for communicating internal corporate decisions and routine, day-to-day exchange of information but they are very flexible and can be used for many other purposes as well. These purposes can regard for example the following: documentation, confirmation, procedures, recommendations, feasibility, status, directive, inquiry and cover (see more about these in the subchapter regarding e-mail). Memos are also a demonstration of the sender's interpersonal communication skills.

One of the disadvantages of the memos is that the delivery time of the memo to all the readers can be long; it can take hours or even days to deliver the memo to the whole audience. Moreover, receiving feedback from the memo takes of course even longer. Privacy issues can be a problem as well if the matter is sensitive. For example if the memo is not delivered in an enclosed envelope. In some sense the privacy issue can be important also when it comes to complimentary copies, but more importantly these complimentary copies can cause unneces-

sary amazement or unawareness if the memo is originally addressed for example from one specialist to another, and the memo is copied to someone that has no primary knowledge about the matter but still has something to do with the matter. (Gerson & Gerson 2007, 97-101.) Moreover, it takes more time and resources to create and distribute a memo than for instance an e-mail. Also as the memo is a demonstration of the sender's interpersonal skills, it is possible that the person writing the memo is not that skilled a writer and the message will be understood and interpreted wrong. (Bové & Thill 2005, 97.)

2.1.2 Oral media

Oral media refers to verbal communication channels. The oral media includes for example telephone and informal and formal meetings which will be introduced more specifically below.

Telephone

Telephones are hard to categorize in these days because the product development has made it possible to use the phone for both oral and written communication as well as for illustrated communication. Also it seems that phones are nowadays used more as a complimentary communication channel for intranet or e-mail for instance. (Juholin 2006, 118-119.) In this case the telephone is examined more as a traditional communication channel and the chapter concentrates on telephone calls.

Telephone is quite a rich medium because it allows the person to use voice and language diversely and one can express emotions behind the message. Telephone also overcomes the barriers of time and distance because one can easily call to the other side of the world in seconds. This makes the telephone one of the fastest channels. It also gives an opportunity to ask questions and makes interaction easy. Moreover it provides immediate feedback.

One of the disadvantages of the telephone is that it does not provide permanent verifiable record. Also people can easily forget the politeness etiquette and be too casual and informal in the phone because nowadays we use it so much to keep in touch with friends and family. In addition to that, some people feel it is invasive. Telephone calls in a traditional meaning can be expensive as well compared for example with e-mail. Compared to other oral communication telephone also lacks visual element. Moreover, even though telephone overcomes the barriers

of distance there remains a problem with time zones when it comes to long-distance calls. (Bowman 2002.)

Informal and formal meetings

The idea of the informal meetings (so called hallway and cafeteria meetings) is to create and strengthen the communication between co-workers without any bigger prior arrangements. When people come to drink coffee and exchange opinions, as a side product new ideas and visions can be born which would not be possible in formal meetings. Informal meetings can be also a great way to meet people from different departments and teams. (Juholin 2006, 174.)

Formal meetings are generally planned beforehand and the aim is to go through issues that are also planned in advance within a certain time limit (Juholin 2006, 175). But whether the question is about informal or formal meeting, they both share more or less the same advantages and disadvantages. They are both face-to-face communication channels which mean that they allow complete use of all senses. This channel provides verbal and visual cues, physical gestures, and allows expressing emotions. Meetings also enable immediate feedback and are a good choice especially for nonroutine business messages. (Marie E. Flatley, Answer Corporation a.)

Even though meetings are one of the richest media they still have disadvantages. First of all, meeting is restrictive when it comes to participation because only those physically present can attend therefore making the channel geographically limited. Also, depending from the meeting it is possible that there is no permanent, verifiable record of the communication left behind. In addition to that, as meetings are mostly based on verbal communication the communicator has control over the message only to a certain point and generally it is not possible to revise or edit spoken words afterwards in order to check what has been said. (Bové & Thill 2005, 96.) Moreover, if the participants feel that no consensus was reached in the meeting for instance, the meeting can be perceived to be costly and time-consuming (Flatley 2009).

2.1.3 Electronic media

Electronic media refers to the different types of communication channels presented in electronic form. Electronic media can be considered to be at the same time also written or oral

media but the difference lies in the form of presentation. In the working environment the most common electronic media is probably the e-mail.

E-mail

E-mails are the most common type of communication used at work. Nowadays one has also access for e-mail almost everywhere anytime because of the mobile phones and wireless internet. One of the most important pros of the e-mail is time. E-mail messages are delivered in seconds, whereas a letter can take several days to deliver. E-mail also allows people to communicate both internally and externally, whereas letters and memos are normally used only in internal or external communication, not both. Moreover, e-mails are cost effective because they are paper-free and there are no shipping fees even in international business. E-mails are valuable also when it comes to documentation because e-mail messages can contain a huge dialogue that can be recorded for future reference with ease.

E-mail is an excellent tool to be used for the following purposes: a) Ordering employees to complete a task (directive), b) informing a reader about the attachment with key points mentioned in the message itself (cover, transmittal), c) reporting on for example expenses, problems and hiring (documentation), d) informing a reader about a meeting, dates and times, costs etc. (confirmation), e) explaining the usage of a new machinery or software (procedures), f) providing reasons for purchasing new equipment, to renew contracts or to revise current practises (recommendations), g) studying the possibilities for changing things in the company (practices, procedures etc.) (feasibility), h) providing reports about the current situation in the company regarding a certain matter (status) and i) asking questions about new processes or procedures (inquiry). (Gerson & Gerson 2007, 135-138.)

Despite all the good things and advantages that e-mail has brought to business life, it still has some downsides as well. For instance e-mail can create tension and conflict inadvertently because they can create an illusion of anonymity and people may say things in e-mail that they would never say in person or in a traditional document. It is also easy to overuse e-mail because it is fast and convenient but this can easily lead to message loss or system crash. Moreover, e-mails can lack privacy because of careless distribution listing or forwarding the message to third parties. In addition to this, employers have the right to monitor the usage of e-mail at work. E-mails can also reduce employee productivity because employees can be dis-

tracted by constant streams of e-mail or they may use e-mail for their personal purposes for example by forwarding a joke for co-workers. (Bovée & Thill 2005, 98-99.)

2.1.4 Media richness theory

Media richness theory or sometimes called information richness theory was created by Daft and Lengel in 1984, and it is based on contingency theory and information processing theory. Media richness theory is a framework for describing a communication medium by describing the ability of it to reproduce the information that was sent over it. It also states that if the task is very ambiguous and uncertain or regards equivocal issues one should use the richer and more personal format of media in order to communicate effectively.

According to Daft and Lengel, the information richness is the information's ability to change understanding during a certain time limit. Communications that go beyond different frames of reference and clarify issues that are ambiguous in order to advance understanding in a timely manner are considered to be richer than those communications that require a longer time to convey understanding.

According to the theory, media richness has four functions; 1) the capacity of the medium to receive feedback immediately, 2) the number of available cues and channels, 3) variety of language, and 4) the degree of intent focused on the recipient. The greater the social presence of a medium is the greater immediacy and warmth of the communication it creates because there is greater number of the channels.

Media richness theory is most applicable for a sender who is choosing a medium for communication. The theory states that the sender should use the richest possible medium to communicate the desired message, but unfortunately in reality this is not always possible. The idea then is that the sender understands the limitations of the used medium in the dimensions of feedback, multiple cues, message tailoring, and emotions. Take for example the difficulty of interpreting whether a text message is serious or sarcastic in its tone. (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., 2009 a.)

As one can see from the figure 2. below face-to-face communication is the most effective and richest medium to use in communication whereas the unaddressed documents are the least effective and leanest medium to use in communication. Unaddressed documents include fly-

ers, bulk mail, posters and bulletins for example. Written, addressed documents include letters, e-mails, memos and notes to mention some of them. The figure below is lacking mediums such as 2-way radio, chat and blogs because they are irrelevant mediums when it comes to company X. These mediums would be placed in the middle of the figure, between written, addressed documents and telephone due to their nature. (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., 2009 b.)

Face-to-face communication is the most effective and richest medium to be used because it uses all four functions of the theory as effectively as possible. Communicating face-to-face allows immediate feedback, and people involved can use facial expressions, body language and show emotions to back up their words. They can also use language vividly and the message they are sending is focused on exactly for those people that the sender has intended. Telephone is in the middle of the figure, because it allows immediate feedback as well as face-to-face communication, and people involved can use also language vividly but they are not able to use facial expressions or body language on the phone. Moreover the message is intended for someone as in face-to-face communication. The least effective and the leanest medium according to the media richness theory are unaddressed documents. They are not focused on certain recipients, they don't allow the sender to use facial expression or body language, and they don't allow immediate feedback and the language used in them is printed so there is no possibility to change it anymore.

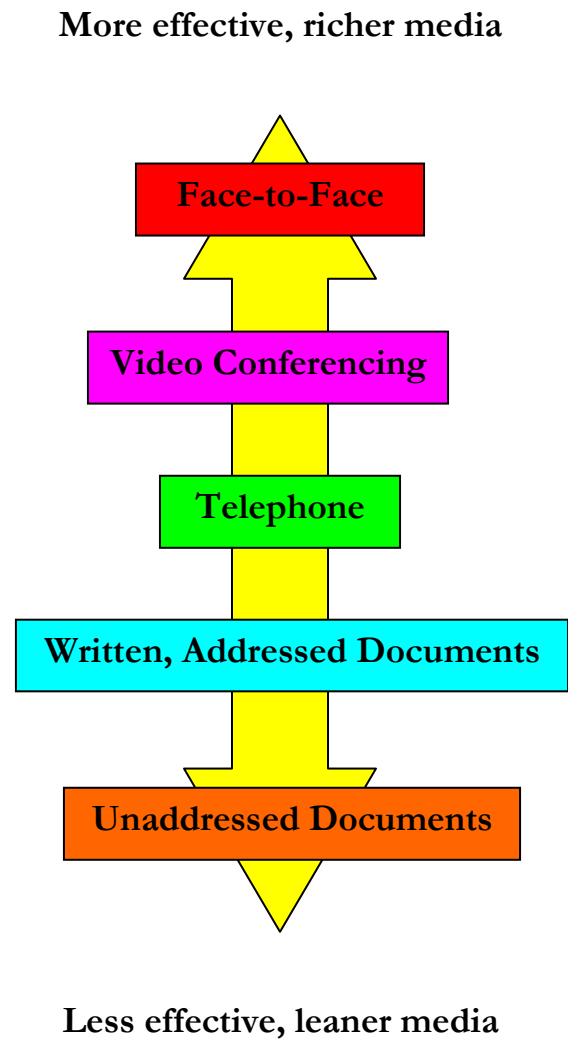


Figure 2. Effectiveness of communication media (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., 2009 c)

There has been also criticism towards the media richness theory. Some argue that media choice is also influenced by social pressures therefore making the theory by some parts inconsistent. Some state that cultural and social background influence the individual's choices and some claim the theory lacking a scientific basis. Also one should note that the theory was created in an era when information technology was not as developed as it is nowadays. (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., 2009 d.)

2.2 Structure

Organizations have many types of structures depending on the objectives and culture. And it is the structure itself that determines how the organization operates and its performance.

Structure helps allocating responsibilities for different functions and processes to different department and employees.

If the organization has a wrong kind of structure, it will limit the success of the organization. The aim of the structure therefore is to maximize the efficiency and success. (Learn Management 2, Organisational structures: Introduction a.) An effective structure defines and facilitates the relationships between the employees within the organization but also retains order and command while at the same time promoting flexibility and creativity. All these relationships then will have an effect to the nature and quality of communication throughout the organization. (Bové & Thill 2005, 11.) The most common organization structures are tall, flat, hierarchical, centralized/decentralized and matrix (Learn Management 2, Organisational structures: Introduction b).

2.2.1 Tall structure

Tall structures tend to have lots of layers between the lowest and highest position when it comes to management, therefore suffering often communication breakdowns and delays because messages are passing through multiple layers, both up and down (Bové & Thill 2005, 11). The layers have though very clear and distinct functions with clear lines of responsibility and control. The management structure is also very clear but as a downside the decision making can be slow as the approval might be needed by different layers of authority. Tall structures have a narrow span of control meaning that there are only few employees under the control of each manager, making it easy for the manager to closely supervise the employees. From the employees' point of view this structure is very restrictive because their freedom and responsibility is very restricted. Tall structures have also clear progression and promotion ladder but it comes with a high cost because each manager is paid more than the one below. (Learn Management 2, Tall structure organisation.)

2.2.2 Flat structure

To avoid the breakdowns and delays that tall structures tend to create, many companies have changed their structure to a more flat one because it reduces the number of layers. When there are fewer links in the communication chain, there will be less misunderstandings as well. Moreover, in a flatter organization it is easier for managers to share information because they can give responsibility for lower-level employees when it comes to decision making, goal set-

ting, and problem solving. This of course requires then that the employees take more responsibility for communication because there are then fewer formal lines of control and communication in the company. (Bové & Thill 2005, 12.) Flat structures are common in small companies because they tend to hinder the organization's growth. The communication in general flows more freely than in tall structures and team spirit is usually very good. Also decision making is easier and there is less bureaucracy. As a disadvantage for workers there can be more than one manager, and employees' functions can be blurred and merge into other's job roles. Flat structures are though less costly than tall structures because of the fewer layers. (Learn Management 2, Flat structure organisation.)

Some companies have gone even further and have adopted even more flexible organization structure which includes, besides their own employees, also external partners, like for example ad agencies, marketing consultants or web developers. When there are so many individuals and organizations involved in the communication process, everybody has to share their responsibility for giving and getting necessary information because otherwise the communication will break down. (Bové & Thill 2005, 12.)

2.2.3 Hierarchical structure

Hierarchical structure means that employees are ranked at various levels inside the organization and each level is above the other. At each level, one person has many workers working directly under them, and the authority is typically shaped to a form of a pyramid. Hierarchical organizations can at the same time also have tall or flat structures.

In a traditional hierarchical structure each employee has a clear role in the organization and the nature of the relationships between other employees is defined as well. A traditional hierarchical organization usually has a tall structure with narrow spans of control, which gets wider the further one goes down the structure. The most important decision making is centralized to the senior management. Earlier hierarchical structures were very popular because of their nature of ensuring command and control in the organization. However because of the globalization and technology development, tall hierarchical structures started downsizing and reducing workforce because the new technology was able to perform many of the functions that humans had performed earlier.

The advantages of the hierarchical structure are clearly defined authorities and responsibilities, as well as promotion paths. Moreover, managers are specialists and the environment encourages using them effectively. Also employee loyalty to their department is very high. As a disadvantage this kind of structure can be bureaucratic and slow in responding to changes. Moreover, communication across different levels is usually quite poor, especially referring to horizontal communication. Also decision making in the departments can be more beneficial to themselves rather than for the whole organization. (Learn Management 2, Hierarchical organization.)

2.2.4 Centralised and decentralised structure

Centralised organizations retain the most important responsibilities and powers in the head office whereas decentralised organizations spread responsibility to various levels and lower level managers, even outside the head office, when it comes to specific decisions. Some organizations combine both in order to be more effective. For instance, they can have centralised functions for accounting and purchasing to save money but use decentralised function for recruitment. Organizations can also use vertical decentralisation or horizontal decentralisation. Vertical decentralisation means that certain decision making is done lower in the hierarchy, and it increases the input that people have in the lower levels of the organization when it comes to decision making. Horizontal decentralisation on the other hand shares the responsibility across the organization, for instance, when new technology is implemented across the whole organization. In this case the technology specialists have the sole responsibility of implementation.

One of the advantages of the centralised structure is that senior managers have greater control and their experienced decision making benefits the organization. In general the decision making processes are beneficial to the whole organization rather than just for certain departments, and since many of the procedures are standardised it will save costs. Also when companies face uncertain times, there is a need for strong leadership from the upper levels of organization that pulls the whole organization to the same direction.

The benefits of the decentralised structure concentrate mainly on empowerment. Empowerment enables faster response to changes and new challenges and it increases motivation and through that the employee output increases as well. It also eases the acceptance of responsibility and it can turn the responsibility into success. In addition to that, decentralised structure helps

senior managers to concentrate on the most important decisions because lower level employees can make other decisions. Also, employees in the lower levels have more understanding of the working environment, co-workers and customers that they interact with, which means that they are able to make effective decisions because of this knowledge skills and experience gained. (Learn Management 2, Centralised and decentralised organisation.)

2.2.5 Matrix structure

Matrix structure is made of teams and projects. It means that employees from different business sectors are combined to a team and they are assigned with a certain project to perform from the beginning to the end. A team and a project are always led by a project manager. The idea often is that the team only exists as long as the project exists, and then people move on to work on another project. Matrix structures are most commonly used for developing new products and services.

The advantages of the matrix structure are the following; people are chosen to work on a project based on the needs of the project, the project team is dynamic and can view problems from different points because of the specialists brought together from different departments, and project managers have the responsibility to complete the project during a certain time limit with a certain budget.

The disadvantages of the matrix structure are the following; general managers and project managers can have conflicts regarding loyalty when it comes to allocating of resources, there exists a certain difficulty to monitor the teams because they do their work independently, and costs increase since there are more managers because each team has a project manager. (Learn Management 2, Matrix (or project-based) organisations.)

2.2.6 Other factors relating to structure

There are also other internal factors that influence the structure of an organization. These are among others, size, product or service, skills of the employees, and corporate culture. For instance, when the organization grows the chain of command becomes longer and the spans of control get wider. Also, if the level of the skills of the employees is high, the more useful the matrix structure becomes for the company because it maximizes the skills across the

whole organization. (Learn Management 2, Organisational structures: Introduction c.) One of the most important factors when it comes to communication though is the corporate culture.

Corporate culture is the mixture of values, habits and traditions that create the atmosphere and personality of the company. In the best possible scenario from the communication's point of view the company will encourage employee contribution by letting the communication flow freely down, up and across the organization. Open climate will help the employees to admit their mistakes, disagree with the management and express their opinions. This of course includes also sending and receiving negative news both from the management to the employees and from the employees to the management but in the constructive way. (Bovée & Thill 2005, 12.)

2.3 Content

The content of the message affects greatly the channel choice. When it comes to the case company the content regards informing change. In the following sub-chapters different aspects related to the content will be introduced.

2.3.1 Communicating change

Change is moving from a state or situation to another. This means that thinking and action models are being assessed in a new way and they are shaped into something new which means that all the old models are changed. A change can regard internal or external environment but also people or all of them. With changes companies are aiming for better effectiveness, productivity and competitiveness. The idea of communicating change is to describe and execute the change at the same time. In a situation of change the need for information grows significantly but normally the lack of information is greater than ever, and it has grown even bigger in the 21st century. (Juholin 2006, 317-320.)

When communicating change internally the main goals are:

- Internalizing values and culture of the organization – how and why we are working as we are? This needs throughout consideration and conversation in order to get people to understand what the values and culture hold inside and how employees can use them in their own work. Values don't transfer into practice by command.

- Seeing one's own work and organization's task as a part of broader entirety. The more specialized work people are doing the harder it is for them to perceive their work to be a part of the entirety referring to the tasks and goals of the whole organization.
- Highlighting the vision. The most important goal of the communication is to make the vision so irresistible that each member of the organization will get excited about it and wants to commit themselves into it. Communicating vision is a not a one time project but a continuous process where deeds and words strengthen it.
- Listening and dialog. Listening is not just apparent but valued, for which a lot of time is reserved. Performance review is an example of this but listening and dialog are not only meant for internal use, referring to scanning or monitoring and issue management. The idea of listening is to perceive all signals that help the organization to adapt their actions to the requirements of the environment and to cope with the tasks.
- Communication from the recipients' point of view. Since nowadays organizations are split into teams and processes, it has caused the entirety to weaken and information to scatter. It is in this kind of situations where the new type of communication is needed to combine and shape the information into a form where it serves each group of recipients from their needs. (Juholin 2006, 317-320.)

A change can be a great opportunity for an organization to find something that could not be found in stable and calm circumstances. Some have also questioned whether changes need to be controlled and led because then there are already set boundaries for creating new. Even though communicating change can be a great opportunity, for some it is also always a threat. There are always some people who resist the change, some who agree with it and some who don't know what to think of it. Most people belong to the last group, and they are the ones who are most open to all the information that regards the future of the organization and their own work. When the organization starts to communicate the changes it is important to recognise and research how employees are relating to it and how prepared the organization is to confront the change. Attitudes can be researched or even anticipated with the help of corporate culture; static organization is usually more resistant for changes than a dynamic organization that is used to constant changes.

It is important to what the contents of the message and the concrete implementation of it, and also to make sure that enough time is used for communicating these so that the personnel really understands what the change is all about and the organization can benefit from the expertise of the personnel in the implementation of the change. When the personnel understand

the connection between the success of the organization and their own work, they are more satisfied and productive than those who do not recognize the connections. (Juholin 2006, 317-320.)

2.3.2 The role of the management

Management's position in the change is central and critical because they are the ones that take the responsibility of anticipating situations and create policies to move forward. The contents of the message and style of the management affect how personnel and other people understand the subject and whether they are able to accept it and commit to it. If there is no understanding there will be no commitment either. If the management's messages are unclear and contradictory, they cause confusion and distrust. Sometimes the communication is still not enough and therefore it is important that people are able to bring up their own opinions about the change and influence the implementation of it. (Juholin 2006, 321-322.)

It is decisive how the management discusses about the changes; is it presented as an informative matter or are the employees invited to implement the change. The communication itself can not solve all the problems but it can lower the resistance regarding change and motivate people to take the change as a possibility. But in order for people to commit, it requires concrete evidence that the change is going forward and is successful. It requires continuous information flow of what results the new action model produces and how things are being done differently.

The management can not transfer the responsibility of communication to others. They are the pioneers of change and they are the ones who need to address commitment to it with their own example. Authenticity will be revealed in real life so communication needs to be credible. When things are told openly and continuously the personnel will feel that the management understand their responsibility, anticipate problems and needs, and act according to them. This does not of course mean that the personnel don't have to take any responsibility of their own; on the contrary, the new theories suggest that each person should carry their own responsibility in a situation of change but the management is still the key to the change. (Juholin 2006, 321-322.)

2.3.3 Strategies in communicating change

In a change there are different things required from the communication compared to a normal situation. Typically the communication has been reactive which means that things that are already happened are commented and explained afterwards. Reactive communication is generally written or formal, and it is normally unable to respond to the information need of the personnel. It is typical that “the correct” action model is being “sold” to the organization. (Juholin 2006, 325-326.)

An option for reactive communication is the opposite of it, proactive communication. Proactive communication is prepared in advance for situations and uses communication skilfully as a tool to control the change. Proactive communication is a process, not a single event. It is also interactive and uses a lot of face-to-face communication instead of one-way communication from top to bottom as reactive communication does. The idea is not to sell something already decided but it is looking for the right model together with open mind.

The idea of the proactive communication is to achieve agreement of what is behind the change and what the community is trying to accomplish. It also tries to create and maintain conversation and give each a possibility to understand their role in taking through the change. From the communication’s point of view the only argument powerful enough is to courage people to face the change that has origins in the markets or in the environment; if customers or environment requires change there are no other possibilities but to change. (Juholin 2006, 325-326.)

2.3.4 Contents of the message

Contents of the communication of the change require consideration of what is said and how it is said so that people would understand. In the situation of change the organization is easily drowned in information because the organization tries to inform the personnel effectively and keep them up to date all the time. This is when information overload is born which then produces more confusion than understanding. That is why it is extremely important to recognize the right questions that puzzle the personnel most. These questions are normally related to everyone’s own work. (Juholin 2006, 326-328.)

When planning the contents one should consider these; a) Argue simply and clearly why the change is necessary and how it will affect the organization, b) Inform how the organization encounters those factors that affect the activities of the organization and also how those fac-

tors work, c) Explain the new action model or plan, d) Outline the consequences of success and failure to the organization and the personnel, e) Repeat, repeat and repeat in all possible situations, f) Let people tell about their feelings and suggestions, g) Emphasize everyone's own input and the importance of it, h) Discuss about the effects of the change and try to improve practices. (Juholin 2006, 326-328.)

2.3.5 Channel choice for change

Communicating change requires more face-to-face communication than the routine communication because there is interaction between the co-workers and management. Face-to-face communication should be the most important and the most used channel.

Since one of the basic requirements of communicating change is the continuity and process-likeness, using multiple channels is a chance to respond to a need for information and interaction. When face-to-face communication is used for discussing things deeply, electronic media on the other hand is fast. By using intranet and e-mail it is possible to communicate and interact continuously as long as people learn how to use those channels. Inside the company, radio and television can be used as complimentary channels and when there is a need for absolute speed mobile phones and text messages are the best choice. Also written channels have their role in the process of change. For example the company's own magazine can make a special issue about the reasons and consequences of the change or things can be reviewed from different points in each issue. (Juholin 2006, 330-331.)

2.3.6 The follow up

In a situation of change, which sometimes progresses very fast, it is important to secure that the information has gone through and is understood. It is not always possible though to ask everyone if they have understood the message correctly but the organization just needs to trust that the matter has been understood. People don't even know how to ask always if the matter seems very hard to understand at the first sight. In a situation of change it is also worthwhile to follow the atmosphere and moods.

Since the feedback is needed constantly there is no time for throughout investigation. Therefore it is reasonable to use fast questionnaires instead that can be done on a regular basis or in a certain situations by using e-mail, intranet or forms. In either case there should be only few

questions and they should be very clear ones. The questions can regard the feelings and attitudes of the personnel or what they think is required from them for instance. If the questions are formed openly so that people can answer to them by using their own words, it is more probable to get more information which is also better in quality that would be available with structured forms. (Juholin 2006, 332.)

2.3.7 Factors to consider when choosing media

When it comes to the message and choosing the channel for it, the communicator needs to balance both his/her and audience's needs. Also the channels needs to be chosen so that the advantages fit with the situation and audience as well as possible. But there are also other important factors affecting the choice.

Media richness

As already discussed earlier, the media richness refers to the ability of the medium to convey a message through as many informational cues as possible, facilitate feedback, and give the message a personal focus. In order to get the message through exactly as the sender would wish, it is important to use the richest possible communication medium, that of course being the face-to-face communication if only possible. This is especially important when sending messages that are nonroutine and complex in order to humanize the presence of the sender throughout the audience, to communicate caring and to gain commitment. If the question is about simple, routine messages, one can use leaner media. (Bovée & Thill 2005, 99-100.)

Message formality

Choosing a certain media to deliver the message affects the style and tone of the message. For instance, an e-mail message does not normally contain the same level of formality than a letter. Thus, if the purpose is to share simple information with the audience, such as inform employees about the changes in the cafeteria hours, it would be ideal to use e-mail message rather than a formal letter or face-to-face presentation. (Bovée & Thill 2005, 99-100.)

Media limitations

All the mediums have their own limitations. For example, even though the face-to-face communication is generally the richest medium there is, it is still very restrictive when it comes to the fact that the sender of the message needs to be in the same place at the same time with the audience that the message is addressed. (Bovée & Thill 2005, 99-100.)

Sender intentions

The medium that the sender chooses influences the perception of the audience about the sender's intentions. If the sender needs to emphasize the formality of the message, she/he should use a formal medium, for instance a memo or a letter. If the sender wishes to emphasize the confidentiality of the message, using voice mail would be better than using a fax or discussing about the matter in private conversation rather than in a public meeting. In case the sender wants to generate an emotional commitment to corporate values for instance, a visual medium such as a personal speech or a video conference should be considered. Face-to-face meeting, a phone call or instant messaging are valuable when instant feedback is preferable. But then again if the sender requires a written record of the communication, then a written media or an electronic equivalent would be more useful. (Bovée & Thill 2005, 99-100.)

Urgency and cost

If the message is urgent, one would of course use those mediums that are fast such as telephone or instant messaging for example. But the sender should not forget to weight cost against speed. For example, if a company would have sent a wrong product for an important customer to the other side of the world, one would and should telephone for the important customer to inform them immediately about the matter but if the question is about routine order acknowledgement for instance then it would be enough to send the customer an e-mail or fax perhaps. (Bovée & Thill 2005, 99-100.)

Audience preferences

The sender should also consider which media the audience expects or prefers. For instance, if a person had successfully completed a training program and is about to receive a diploma, it would be rather strange to receive the diploma by fax for example when people are used to receive them by post or so that someone will hand it to the person at the graduation ceremony. Moreover, in some cultures people tend to favour certain channels over others. For

example, in the United States, Canada and Germany people tend to favour written messages, whereas in Japan people prefer oral messages. This may be due to their high-context culture in which nonverbal cues are a huge part of the message. (Bové & Thill 2005, 99-100.)

3 Empirical part

The empirical part concentrates on the data gathered by questionnaires and interview from the employees in the organization. The empirical part includes collection and handling of data, methods used and presentation of results.

3.1 Collection and handling of data

The data was gathered by using two different methods: questionnaire (Appendix 1.) and interview. The data collected by questionnaire was handled in three different ways. First the answers were divided for two parts according to the gender of the respondents, and then the answers were compared with each other in order to look for differences and similarities between the two. Then the information gathered from both was combined into one and conclusions were made from the results. Also, a comparison between the responses from both female and male and all the responses together was made in order to reveal all different aspects of the data. The only respondent related information that was asked in the questionnaire was the gender because almost all the employees belong to the same age group, they all live in the capital area and almost all have also the same education and so on. This means therefore that the only possibly meaningful difference between the answers is the gender.

Most answers were numerical so the idea in most cases was to sum up the numbers and in that way find out the preferences and importance of matters. The smaller the sum of the numbers was the more important or preferred the matter was, and the bigger the sum of the numbers was the less important or preferred the matter was. Some data was collected from the CEO by interviewing him. The purpose of this data was to compare it with the theory but also with the responses gathered from the employees by the questionnaire, as well as to get general information about the company and its strategies. Then all the data was analysed and conclusions were made from it.

Data was gathered from all the employees available at the work place during November 9, 2009. The data was collected from nine employees out of ten of which five were females and four were males. It was decided to collect the data from all available employees because the company is so small in the general scale, and all the employees are at the same premises therefore making it easy to arrange. Another reason for collecting the data from all the employees was to get a comprehensive picture of the company's communication habits.

3.2 Methods

As mentioned already, the data was collected with two methods: questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was handed on paper to all the employees available during one day at the premises of the company. All together eight employees out of nine filled out the questionnaire. The questionnaire was used because it was perceived to be an easy and fast way to get the required information. The questionnaire included 12 questions regarding all the areas presented in the theory part; communication tools, structure of the organization and content of the message. The purpose of the questionnaire was explained beforehand to all the respondents and help with the filling out of the questionnaire was provided in case needed. The questions were designed to be very clear and self-explanatory, and also extra information was provided after each question in order to help the respondent to understand the question correctly and as intended. That is also the reason why all the questions were closed ones and choices were limited instead of open questions.

The other method used to collect the data was an interview. Only one interview was made with the CEO because the interview is very time consuming and it would have been hard to arrange a schedule for the interviews of all the employees. Moreover, the idea of the interview was to get information from the management's point of view – the interview surveyed partly the same things that were asked from the employees with the questionnaire and partly the interview was used for gathering general information about the company emphasizing of course those matters that are related to the theory. The interview was less structured than the questionnaire because with a free flow of discussion it was possible to gather more relevant information.

3.3 Results

The results are presented in two parts, first the results gained from the questionnaire and then the results gained from the interview.

Questionnaire

The first four questions of the questionnaire were designed to gather data about the channel choice, the following six questions were used for mapping the corporate structure and the last two questions were related to the content of the message.

The first question regarded preferences when choosing a channel for giving information to other co-workers. The respondents were asked to number their choices in order of preference from one to five, where one meant the most preferred channel to communicate with other employees and five was the least preferred channel. There were five choices: telephone call, e-mail, memo or note, informal meeting and formal meeting. Women preferred equally e-mail and informal meeting to be used when giving information whereas memo was the least preferred channel. Men agreed with the opinion of women but they chose unanimously the e-mail to be the most preferred channel and informal meeting was the second best choice. When looking all the responses together they kept exactly the same line as the responses of both women and men.

The second question regarded factors that affected the choice of the channel in the first question. The respondents were asked to number the factors in order of importance from one to five, one being the most important factor and five being the least important factor. In case the respondent felt that there was some important factor missing from the choices they had a chance to write one factor of their own choice. In that case they were asked to number the factors from one to six by using the same principle as earlier. The given factors were fast delivery time, easy to use, availability/accessibility, possibility to get feedback, possibility to record and in case needed the choice of their own. Women felt that fast delivery time was the most important factor and the second most important choice would have been easy to use. The least important factor was the possibility to record. Two of the women also used the possibility to name a factor of their own, and they were clearness (meaning that no misunderstandings would occur) and interactivity. Men also chose the time to be the most important factor but unlike women they chose the possibility to feedback and possibility to record to be the second most important choice. Moreover, the least important factor for men was the easy to use which women felt was the second most important choice therefore making the opinions to be quite the opposite of each other. When considering all the responses together the time remains to be the most important factor but then the easy to use and possibility to feedback are sharing the second place. The least important factor was the possibility to record because women felt it to be so strongly the least important factor of all the choices given.

The idea of the third question was exactly the same as the idea of the first one but with such a difference that it measured the channel preferences when it comes to getting information from the co-workers instead of giving information. The idea was to measure if there was a difference in the channel choice when the employee was a sender and when he or she was a receiver of the information. The choices were exactly the same as in question one and also the instructions were the same. Women preferred e-mail and informal meeting here as well as in question one, e-mail being the first choice. But informal meeting shared the second place with a telephone call this time. The least preferred channel was the memo again. Men chose exactly the same channels as in question one, e-mail being the first choice and informal meeting being the second. However men did not share the opinion about the telephone call with women, they ranked it to be the second least preferred channel in this case. When considering all the responses as a whole, the results were exactly the same as in question one.

Question four was also a repetition of question two but with the same difference as question three had with question one. The fourth question measured the factors affecting the channel choice when it comes to receiving information from the co-workers. The choices and instructions were the same as in question two. In this case the responses were quite different from the responses of question two. Women chose possibility to give feedback to be the most important factor when choosing a channel and fast delivery time came second. The least important factor was availability/accessibility. Two of the women decided to use again the possibility to name one other factor beside the given factors. Both of them marked this extra factor to be the most important one for them, and these factors were clearness (meaning that no misunderstandings would occur) and interactivity. Men agreed with women and chose also the possibility to give feedback to be the most important factor and time was the second choice for them as well. But unlike women men felt that availability/accessibility was an important factor and they chose it to be the second most important factor together with the fast delivery time. Moreover, men felt that possibility to record was the least important factor. When looking the answers as a whole the most important factors were possibility to give feedback and fast delivery time, feedback being the most important one. The least important factor was the possibility to record.

The fifth question measured whether the employees felt that they were able to influence the general decision making related to internal matters or not. They were asked to number their choice from one to five, one meaning that they totally agree and five meaning that they totally

disagree. The average for women was 2.8 and for men 2.7 but the answers varied from two to four.

The question six measured whether the employees felt their co-workers were listening to their ideas, suggestions and opinions or not. They were advised to number their choice from one to five, where one refers to that they totally agree and five means that they totally disagree. The answers varied from two to four with women and from one to two with men. The average for women was 3.0 and for men 1.7.

The question seven measured the same thing as question six but with such a difference that the question was about the management instead of co-workers. The respondents were asked to number their choice again from one to five where one means they totally agree and five means they totally disagree. Women numbered their answers from two to four and men from one to two again. The average for women was 2.8 and for men 1.7.

The eighth question regarded participants in communication chain. The question measured how many participants there are in one internal communication chain normally when it comes to everyday communication of each employee. The choices were 1-2, 2-3, 3-4, 4-5 and more than 5, and they were asked to mark their choice with an X. Both women and men stated that there are two to three participants in each communication chain.

The ninth question regarded team working. The question measured if the employee felt that he or she had a clear understanding about what he or she was expected to do when it comes to working in a team. The choices given were always, often, sometimes and rarely. The employees were asked to mark their choice with an X. Women were practically unanimous with their responses and they answered to have a clear understanding of their task often. Men on the other hand stated that they always reach a clear understanding of their task.

The question ten was related again to management. The question measured whether the respondents felt that they were receiving enough instructions, information and supervising from the management or not. They were asked to number their choice from one to five, one meaning that they totally agree and five meaning they totally disagree. The average for women was 3.4 and the answers varied from two to four, although four was the most frequent answer. The average for men was 2.3 and their responses varied from two to three.

The question 11 concentrated on channel choice again. The question measured through what channel the employees would prefer to get information from the management if the company was about to face changes. The respondents were advised to number their choices in order of preference from one to five, where one is the most preferred channel and five the least preferred. The choices were the same as earlier; telephone call, e-mail, memo or note, informal meeting and formal meeting. Women chose formal meeting to be the most preferred channel and e-mail and informal meeting shared the second place. The least preferred channel was again the memo or note. Men also preferred e-mail and formal meeting and they shared the first place. The second place went for informal meeting. The least preferred channel for men was the telephone. When looking all the responses together, the most preferred channel was the formal meeting and e-mail came second. The least preferred channel was the telephone.

The question 12 was related to question 11. The question regarded factors that affected the choice of the channel in question 11. The respondents were asked to number the choices in order of importance from one to four, one being the most important factor and four being the least important factor. In case the respondents felt that there was some other factor that they thought was important they were able to include that to the list. In this case they were advised to number the choices from one to five using the same idea as in earlier questions. The choices were possibility to interact, possibility to record, fast delivery time, accessibility and other factor in case needed. Women chose the possibility to interact to be the most important factor and time was selected to be the second most important factor. The least important factor for women was the possibility to record. Two of the women chose to use the possibility to name an extra factor and they were understanding and everyone getting the information at the same time. Men agreed totally with women in this question choosing exactly the same choices in the same order. Therefore, also when looking all the answers together the same trend continues with the importance of factors.

Interview

From the communication's point of view, the basic idea in the company is to share information as much as possible. In the case of the company this means that information is circulated through the organization in order to ensure that. This happens in different ways. The management for example is divided between the two partners and the CEO so that each of them has certain areas that they are in charge of, for instance accounting, insurances and purchases but of course the CEO is ultimately responsible for everything. Each of them can separately

make certain decisions on their own but bigger decisions are made in a group. The basic rule though is that one must always inform the other ones of what has been decided. Also, since most of the employees in the company are specialists in certain field of law, they are all independent and each of them is responsible for themselves. This is why each employee is obligated to inform about their tasks all the other members of the organization because no one else can know what the other one is doing unless they inform each other. This is true as well in team working; each perform their own task but inform the others about the progress which then allows others to give feedback and the information runs throughout the organization up and down and also horizontally. Of course each team still has a team manager that controls and advises when needed but otherwise the communication flows quite freely. The reason for this kind of information sharing is that in case the specialist is for some reason unavailable to perform his or her tasks, other specialists can to some extent perform the other one's job because each has informed others about their tasks. Also, another reason is that if the information is for some reason incorrect or it is distorted, it is easy to fix because so many people are involved in the communication chain, therefore securing and controlling the quality of the information. This reduces the possibility of misunderstanding. But despite all the independence and responsibility sharing, the CEO is ultimately always responsible for the supervising and controlling of the employees. (Kallio, J. 9.11.2009.)

It is difficult to describe any typical communication process in the company because they tend to change constantly because tasks change constantly. But the participants normally include someone from the administration, someone from the management and some specialists. Sometimes the communication process is already defined to begin with meaning that all the participants are known before the process or chain even begins but sometimes the communication flows through different persons and channels that were not known in the beginning. This means that the communication varies greatly from occasion to another. When it comes to communication in teams, there are normally 2-5 participants involved – from 2 to 3 if the project is small and 3-5 if the project is big. In this case the communication process is to some extent structured referring to for instance reporting progression but partly the communication flows freely meaning for example asking questions and advice from others.

As the company is facing changes, also the communication flow will change. The company has developed a product family of their services and the idea is to make each specialist responsible for certain areas of the services, and also create teams that are responsible for certain services. This is done in order to grow and to get more customers but also because there is a

need to specify what is being done and by whom. This is important because the company is rather large in the field of law meaning that the company employs more personnel than a medium-sized law firm. Also, mostly the work is done by the demands of the customer which generally means that there is a need for speed and that gives all the more reason to change the processes applied at the moment. The use of the product family gives the customer as well a more understandable and clear view of the services available. (Kallio, J. 9.11.2009.)

4 Discussion

The discussion part begins by explaining the findings in detail in the same order as the research questions are in the beginning. The first research question was about the most effective communication tool, the second regarded the effect of structure on information flow and channel choice, and the last one was about the effect of content of the message on channel choice. After this the discussion presents a short summary of these findings, and the conclusions follow after that. At the end of the discussion, limitations are presented along with the recommendations for the further study.

4.1 The most effective communication tool

When looking the answers in question one, it seems that both men and women are quite unanimous about the most preferred channels. They both preferred e-mail and informal meeting, although men seemed to be more eager to use e-mail than women in general. This appears to be due to the time factor as can be seen from the question two, where both men and women chose the time to be the most important factor to affect the channel choice. When it comes to women, the popularity of informal meeting can be due to the fact that women want to share information face-to-face and have interaction, as one of the respondents replied. Men don't seem to address so much interaction as women do but it appears that for men the possibility to record plays an important role in the communication. Perhaps the possibility to review the information later on is the key here. Men also ranked the possibility to get feedback as an important feature for channel choice. This might be due to that men communicate more those kind of things to which they expect to get feedback and think certain type of things on their own. Women on the other hand totally disagreed with men on this matter and the possible explanation for this could be that women use communication to generally interact and the feedback comes along there without a need for actually specifying which part of the communication is feedback and which part is just the normal interaction. The feedback is in some sense already wrapped in to the interaction. Women also disagreed with men on the possibility to record. Women chose possibility to record to be the least important factor in channel choice. This might be due to that women rely again on interaction and therefore, with a continuous interaction, the matter stays all the time fresh on the mind as long as needed and there is no need for recording. Women and men also disagreed on the easiness to use the channel; women perceived it to be important and men did not. This might be due to that men are gen-

erally more interested in technical matters than women and they are therefore more willing to use more time and effort to learn to use the channel effectively.

To get back to question one, in addition to that both women and men agreed on the most preferred channels to give information to be e-mail and informal meeting, the least preferred channel was the memo or note. This is probably due to that memos are not that much used in the company so they are not perceived to be that important tool for the employees. Another reason for the low popularity of the memo is the nature of the work referring to the time aspect. Memos are not the first choice when there is a need for speed. Moreover, it can be argued that part of the reason for the success of e-mail and informal meeting is that they are quite often used simultaneously to communicate with other people, therefore in a way being complimentary to each other.

When looking the answers for the questions three and four, women preferred also telephone call which suggests along with other preferred choices that women prefer using richer communication channels perhaps because of the verbal and physical cues they provide as was stated in the media richness theory. In general, when getting information from the co-workers it seems that both genders value highly the possibility to give feedback. And as already stated earlier the success of the time factor can be mainly explained again by the nature of the work. There was a big difference between the answers of women and men when it comes to the availability/accessibility factor because men felt it was important and women felt it wasn't. It seems that men value the fact that they are available to receive the information without complications, or in other words they can access the information without any greater efforts. Women on the other hand seem to be ready to make an effort to find the information.

In general, it does not seem to matter whether the question is about sending or receiving information when it comes to channel choice, but there is a possibility though that the respondents did not understand the difference between the questions one and three. Anyway, the basic conclusion here therefore is that both women and men prefer mostly the same channels but the reasons for preferring them are rather different from each other.

4.2 The effect of the structure on information flow and channel choice

In question five the average was pretty much the same with both women and men but the answers varied from two to four meaning that some of the respondents felt that they were

able to influence the decision making quite a lot and some felt that they were not able to influence it so much. It seems that men felt to be able to influence decision making slightly more than women. But in general when looking the average it appears that employees believe they can to some extent influence the decision making but the duality (average being close to three) might be due to the fact that the employees feel that they are able to influence some things but unable to influence some other things.

In question six the average varied significantly between women and men. The answers of women varied from two to four meaning that some of them felt that their co-workers were listening to their ideas, suggestions and opinions quite well and some of them felt that this was not the case. The average therefore suggests that women neither agree nor disagree. This is rather puzzling since mostly the women have more or less the same education and they are more or less the same age. Therefore this may be due to the fact that they all perform different kinds of tasks in the company and perhaps sometimes the personal traits don't match with the personal traits of other team members. Men on the other hand either totally agreed or mostly agreed because their answers varied from one to two only. This means that men felt that their co-workers are listening to their ideas, suggestions and opinions. This difference in answers between women and men can be due to personal traits or the difference in tasks performed in the company, or perhaps a difference between women and men to perceive things.

When it comes to question seven it seems that it does not make any difference whether the question is about co-workers or management when it comes to listening to ideas. Some women felt that the management is mostly listening to their ideas, suggestions and opinions and some felt that the management didn't listen to them so much. The average of women though was slightly better with management than it was with co-workers. Men did not find it to make any difference between co-workers and management when it comes to listening to ideas. Their average was exactly the same in question six as it was in question seven. The conclusion here then is that the management seems to listen to more men than women. This may be the fact but it is also possible that this is due to sheer misunderstanding or misinterpretation of cues, gestures and words.

Question eight did not actually measure anything but it surveyed the average amount of participants in each separate communication chain. This information will be used for researching the information flow related to the structure of the company. The ninth question also relates to the information flow and structure of the company. Women felt that they had often a clear

understanding of what they were expected to do in a team and men felt that they understood always their task. This suggests therefore that there are some times when women do not have a clear understanding of their task. This does not necessary mean that there should be more information or that the information should be somehow better, although this can also be the case, but perhaps the information should be presented in a different way. When the question is about team work, there should always be some consideration paid to individual differences in communication in order to ensure that everyone understands their task.

Question ten measured whether the respondents felt that they received enough instructions, information and supervising from the management or not. The average for women was 3.4 and the most frequent answer was number four. This means that women mostly disagree, which then of course refers to that women feel that they don't receive enough instructions, information and supervision from the management. This kind of result is very worrying when considering the general communication process in the company. Men on the other hand did not share the opinion with women. Their average was 2.3 which means that men felt that they received enough instructions, information and supervising from the management. This raises a question how it is possible that the difference between the opinions of women and men is so big. This can be due to many things of course. Also, the word enough can be misleading to some extent because it is rather subjective what each person perceives to be enough.

4.3 The effect of the content of the message on the channel choice

The question 11 mapped the respondents' channel preferences when it comes to getting information from the management if the company is about to face changes. Women preferred the most formal meeting and the second best choice for them was e-mail and informal meeting with equal preference. The least preferred channel for them was the memo. Men shared the opinion with women but with such a difference that men preferred equally formal meeting and e-mail as the first choice and informal meeting came second. The least preferred channel for men was surprisingly the telephone instead of memo as it has been in all other cases. This means that both women and men agreed that when the question is about informing change the best channel is the formal meeting perhaps because the question is about something that does not happen in everyday and it requires more interaction than other type of informing. Moreover, change is more like a process rather than just a piece of news that needs to be informed to the employees. The success of e-mail could be explained with the possibility to give feedback but also to avoid at the same time giving the feedback immediately. The same thing

could be the reason for the telephone to be so unsuccessful – telephone allows immediate feedback but if the person is unwilling to give it immediately it is not a good channel to use. Meetings and e-mail allow the feedback and are interactive channels but they also give some time to think things through.

In question 12, when naming the factors in order of importance relating to the question 11 both women and men seemed to be unanimous with their choices. They all chose the possibility to interact to be the most important factor. This is most likely due to the fact that when facing change people require information, they want to ask questions and they want to give feedback. The reason why possibility to record is perceived to be the least important factor is perhaps because the change will make things different anyway so there is no need to record that because the person can see the changes live.

4.4 Summary

The summary will present shortly what were the goals of this paper and how the goals were reached. The summary also includes some of the key findings.

This paper researched the best communication channel to spread information in an organization, and this was done from the company's point of view for which this research was made for. This paper had three research areas which all included few sub questions to focus the research to those matters that were important for the company. These research areas were effectiveness of different communication tools, structure of the organization and content of the message. When researching the effectiveness of different communication tools, the idea was first to map what communication tools were available in the company and then to find the most effective tool or a set of tools to get the information through from the management to the employees in the organization. The second objective was related to the structure of the organization. The goal was to find out how does the structure of the organization affect the information flow and channel choice. The third objective was related to the content of the message. The idea was to find out how does the content of the message, informing change in the organization, affect the channel choice.

In order to get an answer to the first research objective, the CEO was interviewed and employees filled out a questionnaire. In the questionnaire they answered to questions regarding channel preferences and importance of different factors related to channels. The most pre-

ferred channel for both women and men was the e-mail and informal meeting came second. With women the telephone shared the second place with informal meeting. The reasons for selecting these channels were the possibility to give feedback and fast delivery time. Men also felt that availability / accessibility was an important factor.

For the second objective many questions were asked in the questionnaire from the employees and CEO also gave important insights for this in his interview. According to the CEO, the employees in the company are specialists and therefore work rather independently and each of them is responsible for themselves. Due to this employees are obligated to inform others in the company of what they are doing because otherwise the information could not be shared as the idea in the company was. Also employees answered to many questions in order to create a coherent picture of the company's structure. When asking about the possibility to influence the decision making both women and men felt that they neither agreed nor disagreed, meaning that they felt partly to be able to influence the decision making and partly not. When asking whether they felt that their co-workers and management were listening to their ideas, suggestions and opinion, the answers were scattered quite a lot. Men felt in either case that they were listened to but women felt in both cases that they were partly listened to and partly not. Moreover, women did not felt that they received enough instructions, information and supervising from the management, but men tended to agree with each other that they did receive enough instructions, information and supervising. In order to map even more the information flow and channel choice related to structure, the respondents answered unanimously that the normal communication chain includes 2-3 participants. Also related to participants in the communication chain and team work, women answered that they had often a clear understanding of what they were expected to do when working in a team. Men on the other hand answered that they had always a clear understanding of what they were expected to do.

All these matters discussed earlier regarding the structure are affecting the channel choice. Both women and men seemed to agree that it does not make a difference whether the question is about sending or receiving information when it comes to channel choice because in both cases the most popular channel was e-mail and the second best choice was informal meeting. The reasons though varied, but both were able to agree that fast delivery time and possibility to feedback were important factors affecting the choice of the channel.

In order to get an answer to the last research objective, the questionnaire was used again. Employees were asked to choose a channel through which they would prefer to receive informa-

tion if the company is about to face changes. Compared to earlier responses regarding the channel choices, the answers were somewhat different. Instead of choosing e-mail or informal meeting both genders chose formal meeting to be the most preferred channel when it comes to informing change. The e-mail and informal meeting came second and third. Factors that affected the choice mostly were possibility to interact and fast delivery time.

4.5 Conclusions

The conclusions are presented in the same order as the research questions were presented at the beginning in order to make them clearer. The conclusions were made based on the key findings and theories related to them, and therefore some of these are also mentioned in the following paragraphs in order to give justification for the conclusions.

The most effective tool or set of tools to get information from the management to the employees in the organization is to combine e-mail and informal meeting. E-mail was the most preferred channel to get information and informal meeting came second. The reasons for selecting these were the time factor and possibility to feedback. Also the theory supports this combination because they complete each other. E-mail is regarded to be probably the fastest communication channel in today's work life meaning that it provides the necessary information for the receiver almost immediately regardless of where the receiver is. It is very cost-effective for companies, it provides record and it can be used for numerous purposes. It possesses some good qualities from the written media as well because after all e-mails are partly also written media. The informal meeting completes the use of e-mail with a possibility to use face-to-face communication which provides verbal and visual cues, facial expressions and other physical gestures to the receiver. Also in the case of informal meetings the receiver is a sender as well because it allows continuous interaction and immediate feedback. This is supported by the media richness theory as well because the other one, informal meeting is considered to be the richest possible medium and the most effective one and e-mail belongs to the less effective and leaner mediums. The ideal situation in general therefore would be that the information would be shared first through e-mail with an idea that all can get familiar with the information, and after that the information would be handled in the informal meeting with the idea that the matter is openly discussed and some conclusions are made. If it is considered that there is no need to use both at the same time, e-mail could be used for routine messages and information, and when something non-routine needs to be communicated informal meeting

could be used for that. Either way, these two channels do not prevent the use of the other one in anyway but they rather complete each other.

The structure brings certain advantages and disadvantages to the company regarding the information flow as well as the channel choice. When comparing the information received from the CEO with the theories regarding structure, it seems that the closest choice for the company is the matrix structure. There specialists are combined into teams in order to complete a project and projects always have a project manager. Teams are assembled and broke down but during the existence they are dynamic and the people bring different viewpoints to the matters. In this kind of structure it is difficult to monitor people because they are independent. It could be stated that the organization is also decentralised because the responsibilities are spread and they are able to respond to changes with a fast tempo. Employees also have more understanding of the work and their input increases, and the CEO can concentrate on to the most important decision making.

Other factors affecting the structure are for example size, product or service, skills of the employees and corporate culture. In this case the company is small in general meaning that the communication chain is flatter and does not include so many layers. Skills of the employees are high so the matrix structure is more than suitable for the company because this way the skills are evenly distributed throughout the company. The communication is successful if the corporate culture encourages employee contribution by letting the communication flow freely up, down and across the organization. Also if employees are allowed to disagree and express their opinions, this makes the communication more effective.

As already stated earlier the idea in the company was to share information as much as possible. According to the answers from the questionnaire this seems to work only partly. When it comes to team work the information seems to flow well between the team members because the number of participants in the communication chain is small. However, women felt that they did not receive enough information from the management even though men felt they did, and women also felt that they were listened to only partly by co-workers and management even though men again thought that they were listened to. These results need to be connected somehow to the gender because the difference was so big between the answers. In order to make good reasoning for this, it would require more research on the matter. It could be though perceived then that the communication from up to down and from down to up would require more interaction in order for the communication to succeed and flow freely. This

might be the reason behind the channel choice as well, because the e-mail and informal meeting were chosen here to be the most preferred and the factors affecting the decision were again the time and possibility to feedback. Perhaps the importance of feedback refers to the need to have more communication flowing up and down.

When the question was about informing change in the company, employees chose the formal meeting to be the best choice. The e-mail and informal meeting came second and third. Factors that affected the choice mostly were possibility to interact and fast delivery time. These results are totally supported by the theory of Juholin (2006). In a situation of change the interaction and listening are essential in order to get people to understand of what the change is all about. It is also important to research how employees are relating to the matter. A lot of time is also needed and things can't be rushed. And even though in a change continuous information flow is required the idea is not to drown people into information. Communicating change requires more face-to-face communication than routine communication because there is interaction between the management and co-workers. Face-to-face communication should be used the most. The formal meeting fits to the description perfectly; it is interactive and all face-to-face communication. But since one of the basic requirements of communicating change is the continuity and process-likeness, using multiple channels is a chance to respond to a need for information and interaction. When face-to-face communication is used for discussing things deeply, electronic media on the other hand is fast. Other factors to consider regarding the content of the message are for instance media richness, message formality, media limitations, sender intentions, urgency and cost, and audience preferences.

4.6 Limitations

In this case the data acquired from the questionnaires should be reliable and valid because practically all the employees filled out the questionnaire therefore meaning that all the opinions are represented in the results. The possibility though is that the employees did not understand all the questions for example or that they misinterpreted the numbering in the questionnaire. Also the information gained from the questionnaires and interview is reliable and valid only for the case company and not for any other company as such. The information gained can be applicable to some extent to other companies but it can only be used as a guideline nothing more. It is possible as well that the data has been interpreted and analysed wrong or as always, it is possible that wrong kind of questions were asked in the questionnaire or in the interview.

In case the results are totally reliable and valid, this has significance to the company X because they can use the information to become more effective as a company. They can better their communication and information flow, and they can use the available channels more effectively. This will affect eventually to the success of the whole organization. Moreover, when there is a need for change again, this paper can be used as a guideline for the planning and implementation of the new change. For others the information has no significance. The information gained here is neither significant nor valuable to the theories regarding communication channels because this paper was researching a highly specialised small company. What comes to the value of this paper in practice, for the company it has value and the reasons are mostly the same as when it comes to significance.

What comes to solving the research problems, it can be said that the first and last objective were fulfilled and the research problems were solved because the paper introduces very clear answers to those questions. The second objective and research problems can be considered to be solved as well even though the explanation was perhaps not that straightforward. This was due to the fact that the company does not have a clearly defined structure where the research could have started from. Also the theories applied support the findings. In general it can be said that the paper adapted the theory but it contributed very little to the topic all in all. The results can not be generalised because the data was gathered, interpreted and analysed from the company's point of view.

4.7 Recommendations

As already stated the findings can be used for improving the communication and information flow in the company and they can use the available channels more effectively. They can also learn about the effect of structure or content on channels, and perhaps change the structures and processes so that they enable the information to flow more freely and the communication to be more effective. For the future, perhaps one could research the overall communication in the company or concentrate on the opposite, external communication. One could also research more the structure of the company and the relations it has with the communication.

Bibliography

Asianajotoimisto Jukka Kallio Oy, BT-Power

Bovée, Courtland L. & Thill, John V., 2005, Business communication today, 8th edition, Pearson Education International Prentice Hall, United States of America

Learn Management 2, Centralised and decentralized organization,
<http://www.learnmanagement2.com/centraliseddecentralised.htm>, 29.10.2009

Asianajotoimisto Jukka Kallio Oy, ChannelPower

Juholin, Elisa, 2006, Communicare! Viestintä strategiasta käytäntöön, 4.painos, Elisa Juholin ja Inforviestintä Oy, Porvoo

Flatley, Marie E., Communication channels, <http://www.answers.com/topic/communication-channels>, 30.10.2009

Asianajotoimisto Jukka Kallio Oy, ContractPower & CorporatePower

Learn Management 2, Flat structure organisation,
<http://www.learnmanagement2.com/flat%20structure.htm>, 29.10.2009

Asianajotoimisto Jukka Kallio Oy, GrowthPower, <http://www.growthpower.fi/growth.html>, 11.10.2009

Learn Management 2, Hierarchical organisation,
<http://www.learnmanagement2.com/hierarchical%20structure.htm>, 29.10.2009

Asianajotoimisto Jukka Kallio Oy, ICT-Power, IdentityPower, InfoSecPower

Asianajotoimisto Jukka Kallio Oy, International recognition for Kalliolaw,
<http://www.kalliolaw.fi/acq.html>, 12.10.2009

Kallio, Jukka, Interview, 9.11.2009, CEO, Asianajotoimisto Jukka Kallio Oy, Helsinki

Learn Management 2, Matrix (or project-based) organisations,
<http://www.learnmanagement2.com/matrix%20structure.htm>, 29.10.2009

Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., Media richness theory,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_richness_theory, 27.10.2009

Learn Management 2, Organisational structures: Introduction,
<http://www.learnmanagement2.com/organisational%20structures.htm>, 29.10.2009

Asianajotoimisto Jukka Kallio Oy, Overview, <http://www.kalliolaw.fi/index.html>, 4.10.2009

Asianajotoimisto Jukka Kallio Oy, PersonnelPower, Real EstatePower, Start-upPower

Learn Management 2, Tall structure organisation,
<http://www.learnmanagement2.com/Tall%20structure.htm>, 29.10.2009

Bowman, Joel P., 21.8.2002, Telephone skills,
<http://homepages.wmich.edu/~bowman/phone.html>, 31.10.2009

Asianajotoimisto Jukka Kallio Oy, TransactionPower

Gerson, Sharon J. & Gerson, Steven M., 2007, Workplace communication: process and product, Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey

Appendices

Appendix 1. The questionnaire

Questionnaire

This questionnaire will be handled anonymously and will be used only for thesis purposes. Please read the questions carefully.

Sex: Female Male

1. What channel do you prefer to use when you need to communicate (give information for) with other co-workers?

(Number the choices in order of preference from 1 to 5, where 1 is the most preferred and 5 the less preferred)

Telephone call Informal meeting (e.g. in the kitchen, hallway)

E-mail Formal meeting (e.g. Monday meeting, other work related meetings)

Memo/note

2. What factors affect the choice of the channel? (related to question 1.)

(Number the choices in order of importance from 1 to 5, 1 being the most important factor and 5 being the less important factor, if you have some other factor, specify it and use numbers from 1 to 6)

Fast delivery time Possibility to get feedback

Easy to use Possibility to record

Availability/accessibility Other factor: what? _____

3. Through what channel do you prefer to get information from your co-workers?

(Number the choices in order of preference from 1 to 5, where 1 is the most preferred and 5 the less preferred)

___ Telephone call ___ Informal meeting (kitchen, hallway etc.)

___ E-mail ___ Formal meeting (Monday meeting etc.)

___ Memo/note

4. What factors affect the choice of the channel? (related to question 3.)

(Number the choices in order of importance from 1 to 5, 1 being the most important factor and 5 being the less important factor, if you have some other factor, specify it and use numbers from 1 to 6)

___ Fast delivery time ___ Possibility to give feedback

___ Easy to use ___ Possibility to record

___ Availability/accessibility ___ Other factor: what? _____

5. Do you feel that you are able to influence decision making in internal matters? ___

(Answer with numbers from 1 to 5, 1 meaning that you totally agree and 5 meaning that you totally disagree)

6. Do you feel that your co-workers are listening your ideas, suggestions, opinions etc.? ___

(Answer with numbers from 1 to 5, 1 meaning that you totally agree and 5 meaning that you totally disagree)

7. Do you feel that the management is listening your ideas, suggestions, opinions etc.?

(Answer with numbers from 1 to 5, 1 meaning that you totally agree and 5 meaning that you totally disagree)

8. In your everyday communication, how many participants there are in one internal communication chain normally? (Mark your answer with X)

1-2

3-4

more than 5

2-3

4-5

9. When working in a team, do you have a clear understanding what you are expected to do? (Mark your answer with X)

Always

Sometimes

Often

Rarely

10. Do you feel that you receive enough instructions, information and supervising from the management? ____

(Answer with numbers from 1 to 5, 1 meaning that you totally agree and 5 meaning that you totally disagree)

11. If the company is facing changes, through what channel would you prefer to get information from the management?

(Number the choices in order of preference from 1 to 5, where 1 is the most preferred and 5 the less preferred)

Telephone call

Informal meeting

E-mail

Formal meeting

___ Memo/note

12. What factors affect the choice of the channel? (related to question 11.)

(Number the choices in order of importance from 1 to 4, 1 being the most important factor and 4 being the less important factor, if you have some other factor, specify it and use numbers from 1 to 5)

___ Possibility to interact (ask questions, give feedback etc.)

___ Possibility to record

___ Accessibility

___ Fast delivery time

___ Other factor: what? _____