

**From roots to fruits -
Developing communications in a small
expertise growth company**

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<p>This thesis is a development project describing the development of communications in a small expertise growth company operating in B2B niche climate market. The nature of communications had previously been reactive and actions not very systematically executed or measured. Company strategy and main market area have changed which means communications must also change.</p> <p>The thesis begins with an introduction to the topic and to the case company and its communications. Theoretical part forms frames for corporate communications, corporate brand and reputation management, corporate social responsibility and stakeholder communications. Also cultural variables affect communications in today's global world. Instead of considering communications a minor back-office supporting function, it should be clearly linked and integrated with strategic thinking. Largely due to digital platforms allowing stakeholder empowerment, communications has turned into a dialogue to and with stakeholders.</p> <p>The writer works for the company in focus so action research approach is used, i.e. studying current situation while improving existing practices. The perception of company's communications was examined through management interviews, and observations and further suggestions are based also on previously executed internal surveys and writer's own experiences. Thesis work itself started in late autumn 2013.</p> <p>The study shows that the current level of communications is clearly better than before and more on agenda. The visibility is higher and channels more diverse which is also expressed outside. Many improvements have already been made during the process, development naturally being continuous. The things company should pay more attention in the future are communications in the main market area China, internal communications including corporate culture and linking digital communications to the strategy.</p>	
<p>Keywords corporate communications, stakeholder communications, development, action research, tools, tactics</p>	

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1 Introduction to the topic of the thesis

This thesis describes the development of communications in a small expertise growth company. The company is based in Helsinki, Finland, having offices also in Germany and China. In previous years the company has not planned and executed its communication actions systematically and has had rather a reactive approach. There has been no communications department or professional, and communications per se not very well linked with strategy. It has been mostly thought that the business speaks for itself and that there is no need actively to communicate to stakeholders.

Two years ago the company strategy and key market area experienced a turn. Messages and stakeholder groups changed which means communications must also live and change, many times rapidly. The main focus of company's current business lies in energy efficiency business in China, however, this thesis is not a communications plan for China but an action research studying the development of company's overall communications while improving existing practices. The nature of action research is cyclical, reflective and dynamic.

I have worked nearly three years for the company of which the last two I have concentrated more on communications and marketing. During the time I have identified areas that need improving, taken actions and created change at the same time when studying it. I have researched how current state of communications is perceived through management interviews and formed communications guidelines for the company based on the interviews linking the outcome with previous internal surveys and my own experiences and knowledge. The guidelines will include messages, tools, and tactics.

This thesis is a development project for the company in focus. The end product of the thesis is to produce usable and upgradable information of the current situation, identify key stakeholders, point out areas needing improvement, give suggestions for the future and continue the cycle of development.

2 Case company background and structure of the thesis

2.1 Introduction to the company in focus

GreenStream Network Plc was founded 2001 in Helsinki, Finland by three climate enthusiasts. GreenStream operates in niche business-to-business (B2B) climate and environmental markets with a clientele consisting of domestic and foreign electricity companies, ministries, international energy associations, financial institutions, industrial sector, technology providers and governmental bodies. It is not a publicly listed company.

GreenStream started with intermediary in the European green certificate and green electricity markets but it has been focusing on international markets from the day one. Since 2006 the role of China has steadily grown in company's business and is now the key target area. The company is putting its most efforts in delivering energy efficiency projects in China with Nordic technology companies. The business model is called EMC (Chinese name for ESCO, Energy Service Management Company) and basically it means that GreenStream buys the equipment from its technology partner, delivers and helps installing it to an industrial client in China, and in return gets energy savings and profit generated by the equipment together with the project owner.

Group's headquarters are located in Helsinki and its other offices in Europe are in Germany and Ukraine. Through joint ventures the company has also a Beijing-based team, Beijing WFOE (wholly foreign owned company) called Finnish Carbon Asset Management Consultation Ltd. (Beijing) and new Hong Kong and Shanghai free trade zone joint ventures. The group employs altogether around 35 experts and its official language is English. Company structure is still under transformation.

GreenStream's vision is a world in which climate change has been mitigated to a sustainable level through determined and co-operative action by responsible nations, businesses and people.

GreenStream's mission is to become, by the end of 2015, a major provider of energy management services in China and remain a leading developer of emission reduction projects in China and other targeted countries.

China is still one of the largest growing economies and the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases. China has many serious air, water and soil pollution problems that also affect its surrounding countries, but also enormous targets to achieve a low-carbon economy. China presents good opportunities for sustainable growth, and officials have set up a functioning system for approval towards a low-carbon economy.

In achievement of the mission GreenStream will ensure that all activities reflect company's core values:

Professionalism, all activities and communication should be undertaken with the highest levels of professionalism and expertise.

Team work and dedication of GreenStream's employees and their burning desire to make the World greener are the building blocks of the GreenStream spirit.

Innovation, a culture of fostering new ideas and creative solutions is the foundation of our company.

Accountability, taking responsibility for delivering agreed outcomes enables all employees to contribute the company's mission.

(<http://www.greenstream.net/company-overview>.)

2.2 Communications at the case company

GreenStream has had a tendency to focus on its core business and move on strategy in front. The responsibility of communications lies most with the CEO, a native English speaking general counsel and experts on focus. I worked first as an Assistant in the company but during the last year I have actively developed and taken part in company's communications and marketing actions and my title has been changed into Marketing and Communications Coordinator. Like many smaller companies in my understanding, GreenStream has never employed an in-house communications or marketing professional. Some outside help has been used once in a while mainly for designing marketing material and websites. The company has always relied more on the actual

hands-on work and trusted that the result would speak for itself, thus having thought that's enough. Highlighting and systematically communicating achievements and engaging stakeholders, including employees, have not been in priorities.

A lot of the company's communication has been more or less strategic and mainly reactive. There has been no internally defined and written communication plan which states key messages and stakeholders, nor any systematic evaluation or measuring of communications (and marketing). Channels being used have included mainly occasional press releases, face-to-face business, investor and shareholder meetings, obligatory reports, expert events, employee team and monthly meetings, Email and Skype.

GreenStream operates in B2B market and is not an information provider per se. China creates its own limiting cultural, language and censorship factors. Communications in China is mostly networking and relationship building; other actions have been remote and not very well connected to Helsinki office. The history shows indeed that communications has previously been considered rather a separate, minor back-office function and it has not been very well linked with strategic planning.

However, a clear advance and several improvements have already taken place during last two years. Many of them are initiated, lead and/or executed by me as the focus of my work has allowed me to concentrate more on communications and marketing. The help and cooperation with a few colleagues has had a significant impact and new ideas are waiting to be carried out. Most of all, raising the meaning and understanding of sufficient, timely, transparent and targeted communications internally and externally has been on the core.

2.3 The goal of the thesis

The goal of this thesis is to give an overview of the development and keep developing case company's communications in ever-changing situations. The thesis aims at helping the company, first of all to understand the meaning of communications, and secondly to carry out planned and systematic communication activities and show their impacts in overall strategy work. The thesis is meant primarily for the case company to find out

where it stands, as well as for a tool to keep on building cohesive actions during transformation stage, and in the future, both in Europe and China.

2.4 Research questions

The thesis aims at showing the trajectory of communications during past two years. Strategy change has naturally made communications to live and change so the thesis is aiming at answering the following research questions:

- How is the current communications situation at the company in focus perceived by the management?
- Who are the (key) stakeholders and quarters the company wants to engage?
- What has been done and with what means to develop communications further in a small expert company in a transformation stage?

2.5 The challenges for communications

The case company is a small expertise company that operates in complex niche B2B environmental and climate markets. I have worked almost three years in the company of which two first as an assistant in the back-office and one year as a marketing and communications coordinator. I do not work at the managerial level having access to all information or possess expertise of the core business per se which creates certain challenges for communications and content creating. I also have other duties alongside communications and marketing.

Other challenges are the still changing company structure and key market area being China. Both limit creating a proper communications plan; company being in a transformation stage and a territory where I don't work and deal with Chinese stakeholders. I neither have Chinese language skills; only few employees do. This research echoes the situation also within company's China team and gives suggestions but can't serve as a 360° plan. It can be, however, used as a base for additional research focusing on China where communications and stakeholder engaging clearly need improving. China communications cannot be lead or successfully executed from Finland.

Most of all, as there exists no previous stakeholder analysis or communications strategy, written and available for everyone in the company, the work has been started at a very ground level. The situation lives constantly but even though there are many challenges, agile development of a small company is a true virtue.

2.6 The structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of 8 chapters. First chapter is an introduction to the subject of the thesis. Chapter 2 presents the company in focus and the purpose, research questions, challenges and the structure of the thesis.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 provide the theoretical framework. Key elements and definitions are explained; chapter 3 outlines corporate communications, corporate image, brand management and corporate social responsibility.

In chapter 4 stakeholder communications and stakeholder approach are presented. Chapter 5 handles cultural variables affecting communications and especially Finnish-Chinese cultural differences in business environment.

Chapter 6 tells about conducting the research and research methods as well as answers to the research questions. Chapter 7 focuses forming the guidelines, tools and tactics as well as gives further suggestions and recommendations. The final chapter 8 forms conclusions.

3 Theoretical framework and key definitions

In the following I will present definitions that are the most essential concepts to understand related to the thesis. This chapter deals with corporate communications, corporate branding, reputation management and corporate social responsibility. Stakeholder communications and the content of a stakeholder analysis is presented in the following chapter.

3.1 Corporate communications

In earlier literature corporate communications has been considered more as public relations, simply meaning informing the public, before it grew up within organizations to meet the need of responding to stakeholders and developing relationships via communications. Today it is strongly outlined that corporate communications of 21st century has more aspects than before. The “vaccinate-model”, which is based on the assumption that the messenger gives information and the receiver interprets it as meant, cannot be expected to work, especially in today’s global environment where the revolution of information technology plays a big role. (Argenti & Forman 2002, 17-18; Juholin 2009, 77.) Professor Betteke van Ruler (in Juholin 2002, 31) shares the view by saying that instead of one-way informing and pursuing, communications are transferring into a dialogue and search for consensus.

Corporate communication can have several meanings and can be interpreted in many ways. One sees it as a series of actions that professionals do and through those individual actions the wanted objectives will be achieved. Some think communication is primarily interaction between humans. Most commonly it is considered a function that can and should be planned and lead, and where not only those in charge execute those actions, but managers and employees collectively. (Juholin 2009, 76.)

Brad Whitworth (2011, 197-198) describes manager’s communication role by saying that employees expect immediate managers to share important company information and put it in context. Some managers are natural communicators but often it is not an easy thing to do if manager is promoted rather for technical skills and expertise than

interpersonal and leadership skills. Managers and supervisors should continually engage in a two-way dialogue and remember to listen as much as talk. Flattening the hierarchical structures leads to improved internal communications, thus allowing employees to make informed decisions and to turn them into active advocates for the company. Any successful corporate communication originates inside.

According to Cornelissen (2011, 3), “corporate communication is a management function that offers a framework for the effective coordination of all internal and external communication with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favourable reputations with stakeholder groups upon which the organization is dependent”. Cornelissen (2011, 84) views that communication practitioners are directly involved and can support strategic decision-making in terms of how corporate mission and vision are concerned. They can also bring identity questions and a stakeholder perspective into the strategic management process. Corporate communication can develop communication programmes towards different stakeholders to achieve the vision and to support corporate objectives in the corporate strategy.

Corporate communications refers to the corporation’s voice and to the image it projects of itself to its constituencies. It means also processes a company uses to communicate its messages in areas of corporate reputation, advertising, advocacy, employee communications, investor, media and government relations, and crisis or issue communication. It has a direct impact on work, results and relationships both internally and externally. Corporate communication can be viewed as an attitude towards communication affecting corporate culture. (Argenti & Forman 2002, 4-5.)

Often there is a discussion of communications and marketing communications; where is the line if such exists? Authors in general agree on the meaning given to marketing communication, which is product-related and directed at customers. As a consensus the concept of integrated marketing communication has been developed, meaning organization’s commercial communication is integrated to create more consistent messages and benefit from greater efficiencies. (Brun 2002, 134.)

I agree with the understanding that communications is not just a backroom supporting function but should be considered in alignment with and in business strategy. Successful companies create a competitive advantage through their communications and communications impact on corporate culture. In my experience, smaller companies in particular, often implement communications without effective planning. In order to utilize communications as part of their competitiveness, companies should plan and execute comprehensive communications as with any other business operations. According to Argenti & Forman (2002, 39-45), the strong partnership between communication and strategic planning and the place of corporate communication as core organizational value are the essentials in today's corporate communication.

3.2 Digital era in communications

Companies, thus also communications need to change and evolve with the surrounding world. Business environment has changed largely due to the Web, transforming internet from a technological interface to a dynamic platform. Organizations from governments departments and corporations to small businesses are increasingly using digital platforms for strategic communication and public relations (Macnamara & Zerfass 2012, 287). Digital platforms have transferred corporate communications from a monologue into a dialogue allowing stakeholders to create content and involve.

It might be that not all businesses need to use several digital tools but the power of digital communication channels and social media in today's global world and 24/7 news-cycle is inevitable. As these digital channels allow stakeholders, important constituencies to a company, organization or institution, "talk back" and thus require active participation and dynamic and proactive approach from an organization, digital communications platforms have collectively enabled stakeholder empowerment. This is why digital communications should be integrated into all business strategies and applied across every business function. (Argenti & Barnes 2009, 3-11.)

Digital media, many times referred as social media, is defined by Kaplan and Haenlein as internet-based applications built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 (Macnamara & Zerfass 2012, 292). Even though social media is everywhere, it

can still be described somewhat rather a new phenomenon in corporation communications. This is to show in a study by Macnamara and Zerfass (2012, 298, 303); only a bit more than 20% out of 871 European and Australasian organizations say to have a social media strategy or policy outlining the objectives of social media use. It was shown to be mostly experimental and ad hoc rather than strategically planned. Specifically, it seems to be most often undertaken without clear objectives and key performance indicators.

No doubt has digital media created complexity but at the same time it has put a potentially powerful array of new tools into the hands of communicators. Digital platforms are, or should not primarily be sales channels; instead, networks and relationships are built and maintained through these digital platforms. More and more of customer service, recruitment, influencing, storytelling, and creating own tone, is happening in and via digital platforms. Even crisis situations can well exploit digital channels. Yet digital communications possess huge opportunities, it requires active presence, skills, rehearsal and digital strategy to be used as a part of successful corporate communications.

3.3 Corporate image, identity and branding

Branding is not an emerging phenomenon but can be traced to centuries ago Egyptians marking animals and English bakers attach distinct symbols to their products. Until industrial revolution, branding was widely spread with the development of marketing, management, manufacturing, communication etc. (Shamoon & Tehseen 2011, 435-441.) Through brands we also talk of corporate image, identity and reputation. In today's society the future of any company depends on how it is viewed by its key stakeholders, in this context meaning groups or individuals who can affect company and thus are significant even in terms of survival.

Among the changes that businesses make as they move towards globalization, the closer thinking of corporate images and branding comes along. Marketing emphasis transfers from product brands to corporate branding. Whereas product branding could be handled within the marketing department of a company, corporate branding requires

organization-wide support. The whole organization from top to bottom and across functional units is involved in realizing the corporate brand, along with the audiences the brand is meant to attract and engage. (Hatch & Schultz 2003, 1045.)

The importance of strategic vision to corporate identity and branding as a means to integrated brand building is widely acknowledged. In order to create a strong and coherent corporate brand, the ground work starts by analyzing these questions: Who are we as a company? What do we stand for (to our stakeholders)? (Hatch & Schultz 2003, 1041-1042.) Common for successful brands is that they are being put effectively into operation meaning organizations are brand-driven. Even B2B companies are coming more to realization they need to differentiate themselves not only through their technical performance of their products but also through the services they offer during. Behavior and actions of its own people and employee's attitude play critical role in influencing trust and corporate brand. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 125.)

The importance of employees, being one of the key stakeholder groups, to corporate branding and the need to better understand their behavior and thus the organizational culture of the corporation have received particular emphasis in recent studies. Strategic vision and organizational culture are strongly linked and there is a need for perceived long-term mutual support between them. (Hatch & Schultz 2003, 1046-1047.)

The term "corporate image" has been widely used in literature. Image is defined as the set of meanings by which an object is known and through which people describe, remember and relate to it. It is the net result of the interaction of a person's beliefs, ideas, feelings and impressions. Scholars have argued on the multidimensional concept of image; it can be viewed on product, brand, country, corporate and sector, among others. Good image can be seen as a strategic asset, competitive advantage and an investment for the future. It is presented that more and more the term "image" has been replaced with reputation, arguments remaining the same. (Brun 2002, 136.)

"Corporate identity" is central to the creation of a favorable company image. Corporate identity is defined what organization is, i.e. its innate character. Brun presents it

“the way in which company presents itself to its target groups”. Everything organization says, does, and has an impact on its identity. Some authors have introduced the idea of “corporate identity mix” including personality, behavior, communication and symbolism. (Brun 2002, 136.)

Balmer (2001, 734) notes the importance of corporate branding to a multiplicity of stakeholders: customer attractiveness, investor confidence and staff motivation among others. Balmer labeled a “vision driven approach” to management. The vision approach expands the concept of corporate identity into a much more comprehensive mix of “mind, soul and voice”. Corporate branding brings to marketing the ability to use the vision and culture of the company explicitly as part of its unique selling proposition (2001, 734-737.) Researchers Brown and Dacin claim (in Hatch & Schultz 2001, 1041) that strong corporate brands create positive perceptions among its stakeholders.

To successfully manage corporate branding and identity including verbal and visuals, communications leans heavily on the elements of stability and coherence, while preserving fluidity. The latter enables organization to confront diversity of activities and environments and prepare for the future. Visual identity can be seen integrated with brand identity and brand strategy in a global approach. (Brun 2002, 153.)

Corporate branding is not only about differentiation but also about belonging, emotions and stories. When corporate branding works, it is because it succeeds in expressing the values and desires that attract key stakeholders to the organization, which encourages them to feel a sense of belonging to it. This applies also to B2B business. Emotions are not only triggers but also vital to decision-making. Cultures that largely emphasize emotions and mutual trust when doing business might lead cases where emotional brand attributes can even be the determining factors; vendors that meet rational criteria, might lack emotional connections. Also business decisions are subject to human factors. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 29, 58.)

3.4 Reputation management

Company's reputation is considered to be critical and one of the most important strategic objectives; building, maintaining, and protecting it is a core task (Cornelissen 2011, 3). Reputations are established when organizations consistently communicate authentic, unique and distinctive corporate identity towards their stakeholders. Strong reputations also give organizations "first-choice" status among stakeholders and allow some minor flaws organization might make. (Cornelissen 2011, 59.)

Company' identity is the concrete, often visual manifestation of its reality, including names, brands, symbols, self-presentations, sponsorships, and most significantly company vision. Company vision is supported by its core values. Company's image is a reflection of an organization's identity, i.e. how stakeholders view the organization. Each stakeholder may have a different perception and those associations and impressions shape up the corporate image. When images of the organization align with the organization's reality, reputation management is successful. Problems occur when perceptions differ dramatically. Many organizations still focus more on external constituencies' perceptions but it is primarily important to notice of those held by own employees, who should act as ambassadors for the organization. (Argenti & Forman 2002, 68-69, 86.)

In order to manage company's reputation it is strategically important for an organization to achieve alignment or transparency between its internal identity and external image. Hatch and Schultz's (in Cornelissen 2011, 69) toolkit for analysing the alignment between an organization's vision, culture and image or reputation consists the following elements:

- **vision:** senior managers' aspirations for the organization
 - **culture:** organization's values and beliefs as felt, experienced and shared by all employees
 - **image:** views and impressions of the organization developed by its stakeholders.
- (Cornelissen 2011, 69.)

Through consistent actions and communications and their quality, one can strive to have an influence on images and reputation. What comes to a brand, it differs most clearly from other image concepts having consumers as its target group, and brand communications is most of all considered marketing communications. Corporate brand can be interpreted only as visual identity and logos, or as reputation including values, vision, strategy, products, services and social corporate responsibility. (Juholin 2009, 187.)

Figure 1 shows how corporate reputation is formed through its identity, images and culture and how they all walk hand in hand. Corporate reputation is based on how others view it and what they talk of it, not what the organization talks of itself.

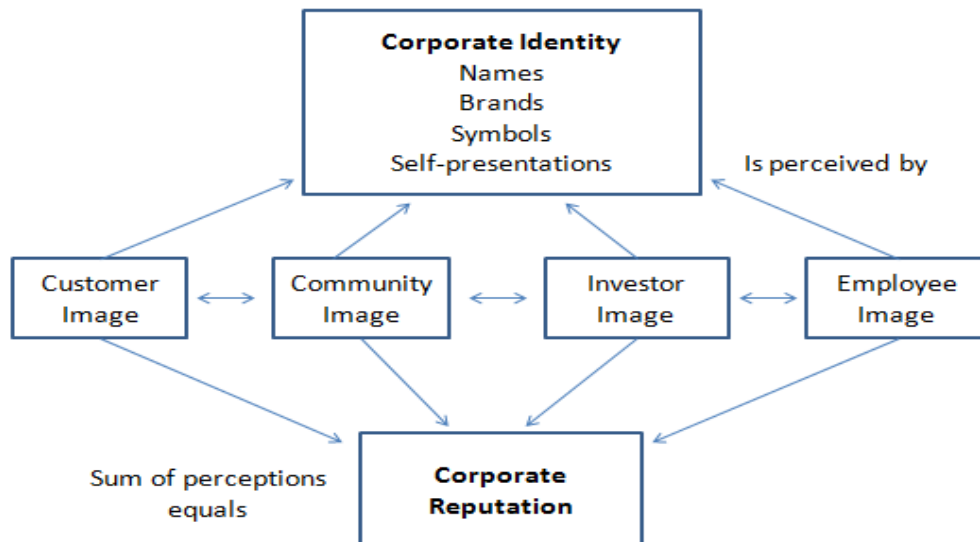


Figure 1. Corporate identity, image and reputation (Argenti & Forman 2002, 69.)

“Character is like a tree and reputation like its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing.”

Abraham Lincoln, 16th president of US

3.5 Corporate social responsibility (CSR)

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is not a new concept in business but as an element of strategy is becoming more and more relevant in 21st century. Signitzer and Prexel (in Shi 2012, 19) proposed that CSR is an umbrella term for various concepts referring to the role of business in society. These concepts include but are not limited to; corporate governance, corporate citizenship, corporate accountability and sustainability development.

Holme and Watts (in Cornelissen 2011, 236) define CSR as “continuous commitment by business to contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the community and society at large”. In recent years CSR has become pertinent and the need is voiced by European Council and United Nations to make businesses to contribute to the building of equitable and sustainable societies (Cornelissen 2011, 236).

Werther and Chandler (2006, 10, 19-20) write that CSR is not about saving whales or ending poverty but it is about the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary issues stakeholders view as affecting the firm’s plans and actions. Hawkins (2006, 5) describes the concept a trinity of people, planet and profits. Werther and Chandler (2006, 10, 19-20) insist that CSR influences all aspects of a business’s daily operations and is increasingly crucial to success because it gives companies a mission and strategy around which multiple constituencies can rally. Ecological sustainability, changing social expectations, environmentally aware consumers, globalization and free flow of information are the reasons making CSR more and more a significant issue.

In literature when scholars speak of corporate social responsibility, cultural, moral, rational and economic arguments are brought up. Carroll (in Juholin 2003, 29) has set out a four dimensional corporate social performance definition as follows: total corporate responsibility = economic responsibility + legal responsibility + ethical responsibility + philanthropic responsibility. Today a wide range of competing stakeholders exist, demanding transparency and accountability from organizations. Corporations

values have become a topic that require them publicly to state their principles of doing business.

In many cases corporate responsibility has been often linked with reputation and is regarded as a dimension of it. Numerous companies use good citizenship as the core of their reputation management or image building. (Juholin 2003, 40.) Mayasari (in Shi 2012, 20) sees that communication of corporate social responsibilities can create trust between organization and stakeholders. When trust is defined as the faith in the practices of behaviors, stakeholders become aware of the ethical activities of the companies through information delivery. Juholin (2003, 33) suggests that codes for implementing ethics and values in organizations approach organizational communication, and they are strongly linked with management and particularly with leadership.

CSR communication can be, however, challenging. Cornelissen (2011, 238) points out that many organizations put out fancy social and environment reports focusing more on style than substance. CSR can be viewed more of a matter of boosting brand and PR tactics and communicating SCR is for image and reputation-building purposes. Werther and Chandler (2006, 25-26) ask if stakeholders do care? “.. In reality there is a limit to how much society and stakeholders are willing to impose their views and affect corporate actions”. That puts also ethics versus costs, which is a dilemma in today’s global work. What is ethical enough if there is, let’s say, a chance to save money?

Advancing knowledge and practice creates a competitive advantage for corporation’s actions. “Innovation drives productivity in the nonprofit sector as well as in the commercial sector. The greatest advances come not from the incremental improvements in efficiency but from new and better approaches. The most powerful way to create social value, therefore, is by developing new means to address social problems and putting them into widespread practice.” (Porter & Kramer 2003, 50.)

Literature of 21st century outlines that companies need to view CSR through a strategic lens and reflect it to the reason of being and needs in society. Globalization and revolution of communications technology have made CSR more relevant today than ever.

Empowered stakeholders and instant communications put firms under lens and CSR has become somewhat of a millstone creating a whole new raft of pressures. At the very least, there are economic disadvantages for firms that act contrary to the expectations of key stakeholders. (Werther 2006, 25, 43-44; Juholin 2003, 31.)

3.6 Summary

In this chapter I have presented aspects affecting corporate communications and discussed their role and importance in understanding and executing successful corporate communications. The nature of today's corporate communications has changed from a monologue into a dialogue where the company alone just isn't informing its stakeholders and constituencies and telling them what it wants to tell, instead, stakeholders are acting as much as content creators as organizations. This is largely due to globalization and the revolution of information communications technology, which on the one hand has put a wide range of new communications tools and channels into the hands of communicators but at the same time require skills, time and knowledge to use them.

B2B environment has its own determining factors. Strong corporate identity, culture and brand are great assets and employees can act as the best advocates. Careful stakeholder identifying and continuous analyzing and stakeholder relationship management, i.e. creating and maintaining relationships and trust are crucial. In the next chapter I sink more thoroughly into the concept of stakeholder thinking and approach.

4 Stakeholder communications

4.1 Stakeholder theory – who is a stakeholder

In the previous chapter the term “stakeholder” occurred several times and in this chapter the term, theory and analysis is explained more thoroughly through theoretical framework.

Stakeholder theory is fundamentally a theory about how business works at its best, and how it could work. It is about value creation and trade and how to manage a business effectively where “effective” can be seen as “create as much value as possible” (Freeman et al. 2010, 9.) The actual word “stakeholder” first appeared in the management literature in early 1960’s and was meant to generalize a notion of stakeholder as the only group whom management needs to be responsive. In this sense the concept of a stakeholder originally referred to “those groups without whose support the organizations could not survive, i.e. shareowners, customers, employees, suppliers, lenders, and society”. (Freeman et al. 2010, 30-31.)

Since then, there are several definitions for a “stakeholder” in the literature. According to Professor John M. Bryson (2004) the word “stakeholder” has assumed a prominent place in public and nonprofit management theory and practice in the last 20 years. The most famous and widely used and cited definition is still R. Edward Freeman’s stakeholder theory originating from the 80’s. Freeman, in his classic book ‘Strategic Management: Stakeholder Approach’, defines a stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives". (Freeman 1984, 64.)

Rhenman (1964) defined stakeholder as follows: “stakeholders are the individuals and groups who are depending on the firm in order to achieve their personal goals and on whom the firm is depending for its existence” (Freeman et al. 2010, 48). Johnson & Scholes (2002, 206) describe stakeholder quite similarly: “those individuals or groups who depend on the organization to fulfill their own goals and on whom, in turn, the organization depends”.

Even though Freeman's definition is still most widely used and referred to, it has later been argued that Freeman's definition is too broad – anybody can be a stakeholder, and not all stakeholders are equally important. Mitchell (1997, 857) insisted that a stakeholder is rather someone who has a lot at stake, for instance a severe chance to lose money, power or job.

In 1984 Freeman (in Cornelissen 2011, 43), considered three types of stakes: equity, economic or market, and influencer stakes. Shareholders, for example, having direct ownership of the organization, hold equity stakes. Economic or market stakes are held by those who do not have an ownership interest but an economic interest, such as employees and customers. Influencer stakes possess nor ownership or economic interest but interest, or possibility to influence, on organization's actions, i.e. trade organizations or governmental bodies.

In literature it can be seen the stakeholder categorized also as economic and moral stakes, i.e. primary and secondary groups (Cornelissen 2011, 43). Clarkson (1995) has introduced the division by the principle that primary groups are those who are necessary for an organization to survive. Secondary groups influence or are influenced by the organization but are not engaged in essential actions in terms of organization's existence and survival, such as financial transactions. Secondary stakeholders can be, however, capable of affecting public opinion. (Mitchell 1997, 856-857.)

4.1.1 Stakeholder approach

Stakeholder thinking has since 1960's provided an appropriate framework for organizational communication and reflection of social responsibility. As we have now learned, stakeholder is a person, group or organization that has interest or concern in an organization and who can affect, and be affected by the organization. As it decades ago had been thought that stakeholders are only dependent on an organization and there's no need for a dialogue, now there is a need for two-way interaction. Freeman et al. (2010, 24) call it as "stakeholder mindset", stating that business can be comprehended a set of relationships among groups which have a stake in the activities that make up the business. To understand a business one needs to know how relationships work. "Business

is about how customers, suppliers, financiers (stockholders, bondholders, banks, etc.), communities, and managers interact and create value. It is executive's or entrepreneur's task to manage and shape these relationships.

A stakeholder approach emphasizes active management of the business environment, relationships and the promotion of shared interests. It is rather a strategic management process than a strategic planning process, considering how the firm can affect the environment as well as how the environment may affect the firm. Central concern of stakeholder approach is the survival of the firm, and therefore understanding stakeholder relationships is a crucial factor and a matter of survival. Good stakeholder management develops integrated business strategies that are viable for stakeholders in the long run. (Freeman et al. 2001, 192-194.)

Stakeholder groups and defining naturally varies within companies depending their business and objectives. Each group behaves differently and has their own stake at the company. Failure to attend to the information and concerns of stakeholders clearly is a kind of flaw in thinking or action that too often and too predictably leads to poor performance outright failure or even disaster. Any successful firm, institution, NGO etc. who wants to engage their audience makes a stakeholder analysis where the first step is to identify key stakeholders. (International Finance Corporation, 2007; Cornelissen, 2011; Juholin 2009.)

4.2 Stakeholder analysis – identifying and mapping

Organizations nowadays live with and from their stakeholders. Their interests, concerns and needs vary and to be able to analyse them further, it is important to understand each group's perspectives starting by identifying the respective groups. This produces lists of different stakeholder groups and individuals after which they are analysed more thoroughly. (Juholin 2009, 199-203.)

There are several techniques for positioning or mapping stakeholders. The most commonly used techniques put the stakeholders on a matrix which has two key attributes as its axes. Groups (or individuals) are being mapped, for example, on the basis of the

power and/or influence they possess and the extent to which they are likely to have or show interest in organization's activities, see figure 2 below. (Cornelissen 2011, 42-48.)

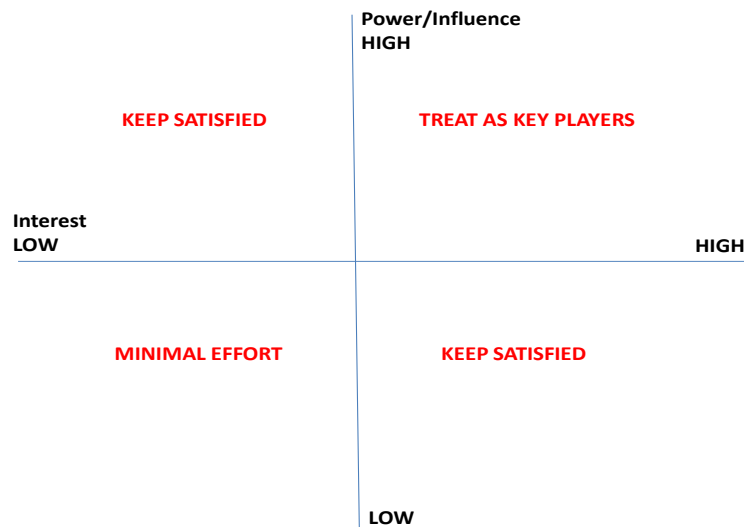


Figure 2. Two-dimensional Power/Interest Matrix
(Adapted on Cornelissen 2011, 48.)

Positioning stakeholders to the power/interest grid's axes:

High power, interested people are the one you must fully engage and make the greatest efforts to satisfy.

For **high power, less interested** group you need to devote enough to keep them satisfied, but not so much that they become bored with your message.

Low power, interested people require being informed. Talk to them to ensure that no major issues are arising.

Low power, less interested group is to be monitored but do not bothered with excessive communication.

(Cornelissen 2011, 45-47.)

Another standard mapping technique presented in the literature is called **stakeholder salience model** where stakeholders are identified and classified on the basis of their salience to the organization. The more salient or prominent stakeholders have priority and therefore need to be actively communicated with whereas smaller salient stakeholders hold less priority. Mapping is done by prioritizing stakeholders according to the presence or absence of three key attributes being:

- **power** (stakeholder has upon organization)
 - **legitimacy** (of the claim upon the organization)
 - **urgency** (degree calling for immediate action).
- (Cornelissen 2011, 45; Mitchell et al. 1997, 865-870.)

Salience model produces seven+1 groups as shown in the figure 3 below.

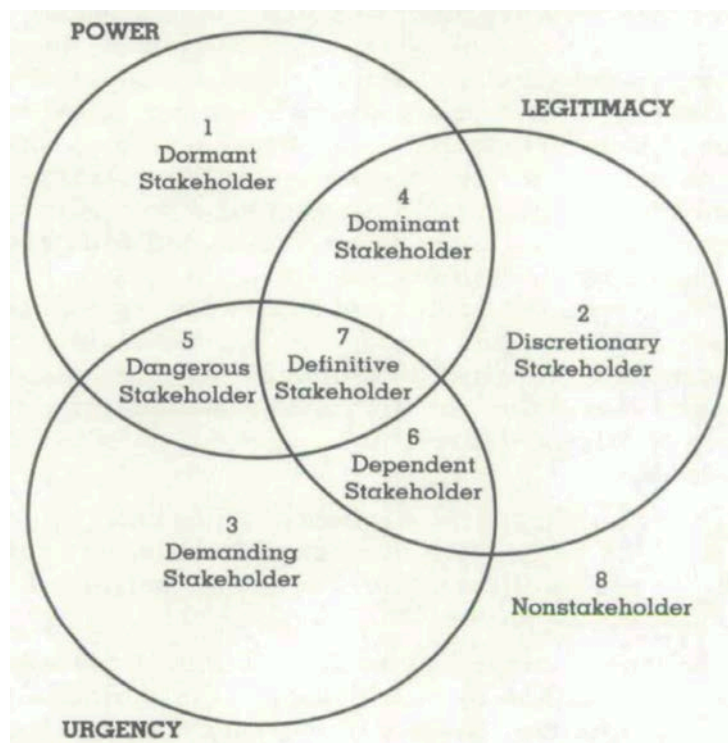


Figure 3. Salience model mapping

(Cornelissen 2011, 45-47; Mitchell et al.1997, 865-870.)

- 1. Dormant stakeholders:** power but not a legitimate relationship or urgent claim, little or no interaction with the organization but a potential to acquire a second attribute.
- 2. Discretionary stakeholders:** possess legitimate claims but no power to influence and no urgent claims.
- 3. Demanding stakeholders:** urgent claims but no power or legitimacy.
- 4. Dominant stakeholders:** both powerful and legitimate and have a strong influence on the organization.
- 5. Dangerous stakeholders:** power and urgent claims but lack legitimacy.
- 6. Dependent stakeholders:** lack power but have urgent, legitimate claims.

7. Definite stakeholders: all three attributes.

(8.) Nonstakeholders.

Groups 1-3 possess only one attribute and are classified as latent stakeholder groups. Groups 4-6 have two attributes and form expectant stakeholders. Seventh group with three attributes is identified as definitive stakeholder group requiring on-going communication, as well as expectant group. Additionally, there might be groups that the organization is not aware or do not want to take into account, as well as some marginal groups. Nevertheless, continuous stakeholder analysis, especially in transformation and changing situations inside or outside the company, is extremely vital. (Juholin 2009, 204.)

4.3 Stakeholder engagement and relationship management (SRM)

More than any other subject in business, stakeholder management has profound implications for corporate communication and requires managers thinking strategically about their business overall and about how they can effectively communicate with stakeholders (Cornelissen 2011, 39). Stakeholder management suggests that managers must formulate and implement processes which satisfy all and only those groups who have a stake in the business (Freeman et al. 2010, 104).

There might not always be priority to start engaging stakeholders early but one should never wait until there is a problem to engage. Firstly because communities and their representatives are more likely to doubt a company they don't know, or have not had regular contact with. Secondly, when trying to initiate contact with affected stakeholders when the company is in a reactive, defensive or crisis management mode is not ideal, and can create lasting negative perceptions that are difficult for the company to later overcome. (International Finance Corporate Handbook, 2007.)

In addition, reaching out to third parties such as local government officials or NGOs for assistance as allies only after a problem occurs may be more difficult due to perceived reputational risks of being associated with the company. Engaging with stake-

holders from the start – as part of your core business strategy – enables a proactive cultivation of relationships that can serve as “capital” during challenging times. (International Finance Corporation Handbook, 2007.)

I see that managing stakeholder relationships requires good analysis, continuous evaluation, action and long-time horizon that are demonstrated in the figure 4 below. Once the analysis is done, it will be reviewed and adjusted as necessary, and the process will be repeated regularly.

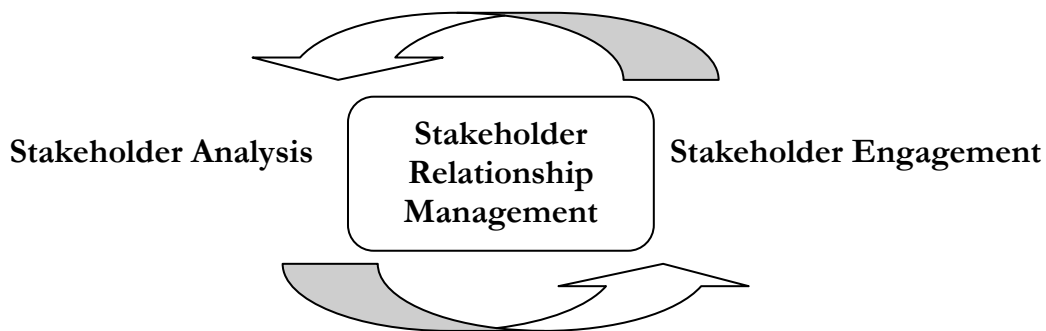


Figure 4. The continuous circle of SRM

4.4 Summary

The idea of stakeholders, stakeholder management, or a stakeholder approach to strategic management suggests that managers must formulate and implement processes which satisfy all and those groups who have a stake in the business. The central task is to manage and integrate the relationships and interests of stakeholders, employees, customers, suppliers, communities and other groups in a way that ensures the long-term success of the firm.

Like any other business function, we now know that stakeholder engagement needs to be managed. It should be driven by a well-defined strategy and have a clear set of objectives, timetable, budget, and allocation of responsibilities. Figure 5 on the next page shows the pillars that aggregates the core processes I feel are the most important concerning stakeholder relationship management.

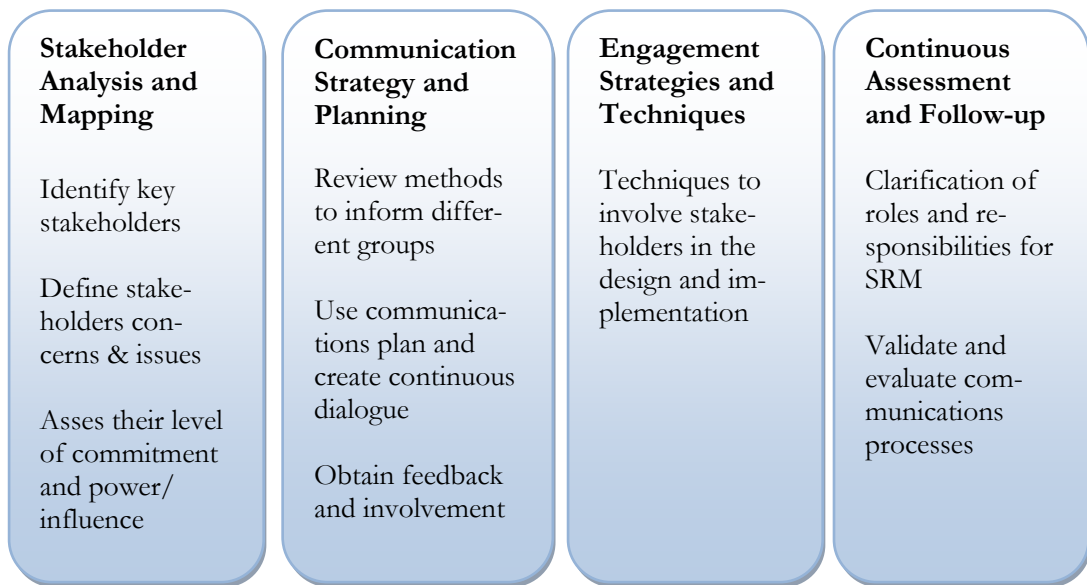


Figure 5. Stakeholder relationship management framework

Carefully done stakeholder analysis can truly be a valuable tool. It consists of identifying and analyzing the stakeholders, deciding on approach and planning the tools and tactics, and finally reviewing and updating on continuous basis. Stakeholder analyses are now arguably more important than ever because of the increasingly interconnected nature of the world. Networks of shareholders are becoming at least as important as markets, not to forget digital platforms where stakeholders also act as content creators.

5 Cultural variables

In this chapter I will give an overview of cultural dimensions and variables affecting international business and communications. As the case company has a Chinese office and business heavily targeted to China, the characteristics of Finnish-Chinese business cultures are introduced in paragraph 5.1.

When communicating globally one is also facing variables that affect communication, such as culture and media. In that sense, management of international business means also management of cultural differences, meaning successful managers practice people skills as well as technical excellence. According to Helen Deresky (2002, 83), “international managers can benefit greatly from understanding the nature, dimensions, and variables of a specific culture and how these affect work and organizational processes”. Target group defining and observing is a basic rule and most of the services and products are tailored for certain group, institute or nation which can be seen also in how they are marketed. There is no reason to underestimate the impact of culture when doing business; lack of cultural sensitivity costs businesses money and opportunities. (Deresky 2003, 83-84.)

Richard Gesteland (1999, 15), who is specialized in negotiating and managing across cultures presents “Two Iron Rules” of international business:

- In international business, the seller is expected to adapt to the buyer.
- In international business, the visitor is expected to observe local customs.

Gesteland (1999, 16-17) also states patterns of cross-cultural business behavior:

- Deal-Focus vs. Relationship-Focus Cultures as the “Great Divide”
- Informal vs. Formal Cultures
- Rigid-Time vs. Fluid-Time Cultures and
- Expressive vs. Reserved Cultures.

Other well-known pioneer in his research of cross-cultural groups and organizations is Geert Hofstede, who has done systematic developing framework for assessing and differentiating national cultures and organizational cultures. In 1980's, Hofstede (2001,

18-36) developed a four, later five dimensional national culture model, also known as Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions:

- Power distance (PDI)
- Individualism vs. collectivism (IDV)
- Masculinity vs. femininity (MAS)
- Uncertainty avoidance (UAI) and
- Long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation.

In many sources the same thing was emphasized but to quote Hofstede, "culture is foremost learned, not inherent". (Hofstede 2001, 20.)

Simply put, the most conflicts arise as a result of differences in the four basic values; values of time, change, materialism and individualism. It is extremely important for a company to develop a cultural profile. Cultural knowledge can be a valuable resource to a company and understanding of organizational culture is imperative for effective communication in business both externally and internally. It increases mutual understanding of behavior and allows us to see how good communication effects on business in a positive way. According to Deresky (2002, 82), knowledge of the cultural variables is a critical skill for managing people and processes in other countries.

5.1 Finnish Chinese business culture differences

Finland and China are apart from each other not only geographically, but also historically and "mentally". Dong & Liu (2010, 225) write that traditional Chinese culture is highly influenced by the principle of Confucianism, which emphasizes hierarchical interpersonal relationships and that the structure of the Chinese organization consists of two systems: the business system and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) system. This article also states (2010, 234) that cross-cultural issues are the biggest challenge for international business and can cause conflicts that could create fatal problems.

Gesteland says that Finnish business culture follows a Deal-Focused (DF) – Moderately Formal – Monochronic – Reserved pattern where Chinese business culture follows a Relationship-Focused (RF) – Formal – Monochronic – Reserved pattern. Where Finnish are more deal oriented, straight forward, less top-down and prefer fast approach,

Chinese value relationships, high hierarchy and politeness; sometimes even at frustrating levels to the (western) counterpart. Negotiating usually takes long and networking, building relationships, greeting with gifts and wining and dining are a crucial part of business communication before any idea of deal making can be even considered. Mutual trust must be achieved. (Gesteland 1999, 23-26.)

Finnish communicate directly what they want to say, Chinese avoid saying no because they think it's impolite, and rather say maybe even though meaning no. These different kinds of behaviour patterns must be taken into consideration when wanting to understand the counterpart and cherish the existing relationship. Knowing your counterpart is extremely important for the Chinese as is the search for harmony, trust and the idea of never losing their face. (Gesteland 1999, 27-30.)

Term "guanxi" is a word well-known throughout East and Southeast Asia and cannot be unknown to a western businessman. Gesteland (1999, 23) explains that "guanxi" means knowing the right people and having the right connections; it's who you know that counts. Success can be explained entirely by "guanxi". In cultures where relationships are valued over a deal, initiating a business relationship can only be done if you know the right people. That means also that when wanting to communicate to a potential client, the message needs to reach the right level, i.e. the decision making level. "Guanxi" has a huge impact.

5.2 Summary

There are many factors to be taken into account in international business world to be a successful and respectful player and partner. Cultural variables and their influence on communications are one of the most crucial ones to understand in today's global world. In the worst case, a total disregard can lead into fatal mistakes. One of the greatest cultural dividers is the variable of deal-focus versus relationship-focus cultures. Scandinavians belong to the more direct and deal-oriented group whereas Chinese, for example, a key target group of the company in focus, tend to be more reserved and cherish mutual trust and personal relationships. With this relationship-focused group

negotiating and reaching a consensus might take a long time and hierarchy is very important.

What comes to China, it is geographically huge territory where business environments vary widely between different areas. Finnish companies wanting enter and operating in China must understand the regional nuances and diversity between provinces. It is worth hiring local directors for different operational environments, people who know the stakeholders' language and culture. GreenStream has done business in China and with Chinese already many years so cultural understanding is a base for any kind of business interaction and successful communication. Management of international business is also management of cultural differences.

6 Conducting the research

In this chapter I will introduce my research method and data gathering process, discuss reliability and validity issues and present the outcome of the management interviews. The company has changed its strategy two years ago and is aiming at improving its communications and marketing actions and sharpening its messages according to the new strategy. The goals were to find out how company's current communications situation is perceived by the management, and identify the current key stakeholder groups, and quarters the company wants to engage with. Groundwork material consists also analysis of previously made internal surveys.

6.1 Action research method

This research has been executed at the same time while working for the company in focus. As this is a development project, action research approach is been thought to be the best suitable method. The emphasis on action research is on studying and simulating change. Action researchers are highly involved in studying communications and as well as simultaneously participating in it. They are in strong position to uncover what really goes on and how things are done. Researchers have different reasons for choosing action research as a methodological approach of which the instrumental reasons, i.e. to improve the communications practices of an organization that applies to my work and approach. (Daymon & Holloway 2011, 198.)

One of the action research challenges might be its difficulty carrying out due to its complex and democratic nature; not everyone in the focal organization wants to be involved, or power relationships may generate problems. Completing action research also takes time because of its cyclical nature. Some criticize it for not being generalizable. (Daymon & Holloway 2011, 204.)

The process of doing action research comprises the following steps:

- **groundwork:** identifying and diagnosing the problem;
- **intervention:** planning new strategies, taking action, intervening and reflecting;

- **evaluation**: evaluating and revising understandings, formulating action-based models that provide practical solutions, and reflecting the process; and

- **continuing the cycle** of above.

(Daymon & Holloway 2011, 202.)

Action research is used in real situations. It aims at improving existing practices after problem(s) is identified, and is the best of use in a specific context where a local problem or situation needs a solution or change. Characteristic for action research is cyclical, reflective and dynamic nature. Action research has positive effects for many reasons, the most important being that action research is always relevant to the participants as the research project is determined by the researcher, who is also the primary consumer of the findings. (Daymon & Holloway 2011, 201-205.)

6.2 Research process

The groundwork of my thesis is based on my own observations and experiences at the company while working there as well as internal surveys and management level interviews. After integrated into the work place in autumn 2011, I started noticing flaws in the way company handled communications and especially internal communications. The turning point was summer 2012 when the strategy change was decided at managerial level but not communicated through the group. The nature of GreenStream's management team at that time was strongly strategy-oriented and decision-making happened inside management team behind closed doors. I could see my colleagues were unsatisfied, frustrated and confused and that the information did not flow down from the management.

Communications actions in general were hasty and corporate communications often being considered same as marketing, so the basic understanding and knowledge were not on a solid ground. People also resigned, which can be interpreted as a sign of a problem. I also had personally identified the problems and noted the need for tackling them as had many of my co-workers.

Firstly, to be able to study and to demonstrate to the management that there are internal communications issues I created and conducted an internal personnel satisfaction survey. Advantages of surveys are that they are very common, they obtain current information, and they are inexpensive and usually not as time-consuming for the respondent as an interview situation. Disadvantages might be that people refuse to participate that leading to a small percentage of returned questionnaires. People also might make mistakes or not being honest when answering. A vital step in conducting a survey is drafting the questions; poorly written or not focusing on the objectives of the research, it can produce useless data. (Berger 2002, 229.)

The first personnel satisfaction survey was conducted on my initiative in January 2013 reflecting the situation in the previous year. Management did not answer to the survey. I analyzed and reported the results and they were said to open the management's eyes. Results were also taken to the board meeting. The survey clearly showed that internal communication and management were areas needing most improvement. Company strategy, messages and values showed not to be rooted internally, implicating communications have not been sufficient during and after the change. People were fairly content with their work, though felt that work load was too heavy and that they needed more support and feedback from their supervisors.

All figures were, however, improved in the next personnel satisfaction survey conducted in December 2013 (questions in Attachment 2, slightly revised from the previous year's survey) but they require constant attention. Human leadership approach is still quite weak and it is hoped from managers they would pay more attention to their subordinates and individual skills they possess that could be used in favour of both the company and the employee. Also integration between offices was wished to strengthen.

Besides the two personnel satisfaction surveys I have studied the needs of internal communications more thoroughly (questions in Attachment 3). Sufficient, transparent and open communications was inevitably the most emphasized need. "Openness" got the highest votes, 80%, "being available" and "consistency of information" were right

behind with both 70%. Employees felt that the existing channels, i.e. e-mail, Skype, team and monthly meetings, web pages and press releases were adequate but wished for more interaction in the forms of internal planning sessions, internal newsletters and meeting colleagues from other offices. A traditional channel, bulletin board, was also among the highest voted preferred channels.

According to the internal communication needs survey, 80% of the respondents considered that social media as an employee communication channel would benefit him/her at work. 20% thought it wouldn't make a difference. The majority said they would follow GreenStream in social media but only a few were interested in updating the accounts. LinkedIn and Twitter were mentioned to be the channels the company should use.

Tough I have not been able to see or improve communications specifically in China, I took lead in the web site renewal project when also Chinese sites were set up alongside the existing, also refreshed English ones. It is a must to communicate in the target language. In order to be able to engage Chinese stakeholders better, I wanted to know how the Chinese sites should be tailored for them and for that I sent out a questionnaire to the company's Chinese team only (questions in Attachment 4). Their view was that Chinese stakeholders appreciate most certificates and references, product and service information, press releases and bulletins, and company history, vision and values on the sites.

The internal surveys I have conducted during 2013 have been self-administered questionnaires consisting both quantitative and open questions. The surveys were executed by using a free online survey tool SurveyMonkey. Ten questions maximum were asked per survey and the survey link was sent via e-mail. All answers were given anonymously. Results from the previous surveys have been used as background information when outlining problem areas presented in paragraph 6.5, and as a base for forming the guidelines and giving out recommendations in the chapter 7.

To be able to continue the development process, I wanted next to examine the perceptions of communications at managerial level after above mentioned surveys and several improvements already made during the last years. I chose personal, individual face to face recorded interviews. Literature reviews interviewing to be one of the most commonly used methods of data collection in research. Face-to-face interviews can not only be an excellent source of material but they allow you to get information directly from people who have substantial experience and knowledge of your topic. (Jensen 2012, 270; Rouse 2002, 34).

Interviews also exposure people's ideas, thoughts, opinions, attitudes, and tells what motivates them. Interviews are one of the most fundamental techniques researchers can use to get information (Berger 2002, 137, 151). The difficulty in an interview situation can be the fact that people do not always say what they think or mean what they say. All interview statements are actions in a context, arising from the interaction between interviewer and interviewee(s). (Jensen 2012, 270.)

My interviewees all operate at managerial level. As being my co-workers at Helsinki office, they were easy to reach and the transcribed interviews and notes available for further detailed analysis. I wanted to examine the current impression of the company's communications and stakeholders so I executed face-to-face interviews separately with six of the management team members (questions in Attachment 5). Interviews took place in November 2013, so by the time this thesis is completed the view might have changed. Two out of six answered via e-mail.

One of the respondents was female and five were male, one of them located and leading his team in China. The interview form consisted of four questions which the respondents had seen beforehand. Interview situations allowed us to discuss more freely also outside the topics. One interviewee has since left the company.

6.3 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity questions are linked to the assumption how reliable and valid the researcher's data and analysis techniques are. This research is an action research and conducted to examine the development of communications and the current level of communications at the company in focus. Based on the outcome it also allows give out suggestions for further actions.

The researcher and all interviewees have worked for the company when being interviewed. All sessions were recorded alongside taking notes. One of the interviewees is the founder and many have worked for years at company's service. Taking that into consideration, answers could be interpreted very honest and reflected well the current situation, meaning the results can be considered valid and reliable for the time being. Interviewees answered to the questions asked. The same applies also to the surveys; employees were keen to share their opinions and participate in development processes. The response percentage was over 83% in all surveys conducted so they can be considered valid as well.

Situation at company naturally lives and changes, and so do communications. More improvements have been made since interviews and surveys, and the development is continuous. When the research was to be repeated, hopes are of course not to receive the same results but ones that indicate the continuous development of different areas in communications and corporate culture, specifically the identified problematic ones. The structure of management may change and the composition of long-term managers vs. newer ones can also have a changing impact on the outcome when the research was to be renewed. The company's success and future strategic alignments may also affect the outcome when repeated, as well as the matter of the group of interviewees were expanded to reach also employees or only China, for instance.

The thesis benefits from the fact that I have been working for the company from August 2011 having a lot of background information and knowledge of the history, current situation, problems and processes. I have also been actively involved in developing and carrying out most of the communications actions. Then again, I do not have per-

sonal experiences or deep knowledge of company's China business or communications. The danger of not being objective enough is kept in mind. This thesis is not a commissioned work by the company but has been raised by my own interest and observation it could be of use for my employer, who has noted it with appreciation.

6.4 Perception of the company's current state of communication

The research wants to examine how management sees the current state of communications after several actions and improvements have been carried out during the last year. GreenStream's all communication has been, and still is to some extent, fragmented. It was said to be a built-in problem due to the complex nature of business. Interviews showed that the company has rather having carried out communication activities out of necessity and been reactive in its actions. For example, big things have happened on the markets but the company has not known how, or seen a reason to communicate to its stakeholders. GreenStream has prerequisites to communicate and market its actions and expertise much more but it must start identifying the difference in "what interests GreenStream vs. what interests the rest of the world".

Having said that, things are going towards better. "I feel it is only now crystallizing whereas it has previously been very impulse-driven and coincidental", says one of the interviewees. Other management team member shared the same view saying that during the previous years communication had not been that much on hand like now. "Our communication is on an upbeat note. We are noted and have had good visibility recently; that has also been expressed outside."

In general the management thought that company's current communication is strong compared to company's size and that the right levels (in Europe) have been reached. External communication is said to work better than average and is now more target-oriented. Informing and marketing point of view is not on a bad level, however it is stated many times that the core message needs to be sharpened. "We must know into which direction we want the company image to be changed."

6.5 Problem areas

Three clear problem areas have arisen through interviews and earlier surveys; unclarity of the key message, corporate culture and low integration between offices, especially between Helsinki and Beijing.

During the transformation and strategy change the company has not paid enough, if at all, attention to communicating the new strategy to its stakeholders. It was doubted the company's view to be subjective - do people really know what GreenStream is doing and what we speak about? This would imply that there are mixed messages flowing and those should first be clarified internally. Management seems to have a clear vision but unfortunately it does not reach all employees. Keeping inside people on track is extremely important as the perception of the employees of the company and vision will determine the caliber of work they will do.

Another problem area within external communications is, not namely China, but more the distance. Marketing and communications have their own characteristics in China and in Europe; it can't be assumed identical strategies functioning in both countries. Relationships and networks are the key factor through which communication mainly happens in China. Even though GreenStream has succeeded in establishing wide networks, it leans too much only on the network thinking. CRM and customer relations are still considered to be at very poor level in China. Customers are not known thoroughly and there's no systematic approach to customer relationships. "The emphasis of operations should be entirely moved to China", says one.

The distance causes difficulties also internally. That shows as a low integration between two offices, especially between Helsinki and Beijing. Each location on its own is functioning quite well but in the big picture they are not connected. In China it is found problematic that communication is taken care from the Helsinki headquarters and it feels the China team is "isolated" in a way. This is a clear sign of the fact that successful communications in China cannot be lead from Helsinki.

Language barriers come also along. Company’s official language is English. It is rational when business targets abroad. Then again, there are no Chinese speaking western leaders, and Chinese people’s English skills are not excellent. However, the company has Finnish roots and plenty of current and potential domestic customers, who not necessarily are experts on the field and don’t get the idea when all information is provided in English.

Another internal communication issue was still mentioned to be the composition of management versus rest of the personnel and managers tendency to keep information to themselves. It was described as a chronic matter related to corporate culture and was emphasized that work needs to be brought closer and information must flow down. To keep the own staff onboard and well informed makes them to act as ambassadors for the company. “Working together with hands-on style is the best internal communication.”

6.6 Stakeholder identification

The interviews produced mainly similar lists when being asked of company’s most vital stakeholder groups. Some variation was noticed depending on the business unit orientation but the table 1 below indicates the groups that are identified as GreenStream’s stakeholders from the management point of view, key groups being bolded:

Table 1. GreenStream’s stakeholder groups

External stakeholders	Internal stakeholders
Chinese industry and state-owned companies	Personnel
European technology companies	Board
European and Chinese investors	Owners
European and Chinese authorities	
Chinese project owners	
Current customers	
International opinion leaders	
Shareholders	

It is clear that various Chinese groups are recognized as key stakeholders as the business is heavily targeted to China. Chinese industrial sector is considered the most po-

tential customer base and thus the most essential stakeholder group. Current customers there, i.e. factory and plant owners, and leveraging existing relationships form the other key group. European technology companies, with whom GreenStream has already started to cooperate, create another significant stakeholder group and are extremely important in terms of carrying out the new strategy direction. Tekes, ministries and other current customers in public sector are a remarkable group in Finland and Europe. Domestic and foreign financiers are stakeholders who are extremely important to raise interest among in order to survive. Full communications canvas can be found in Attachment 7.

GreenStream states that personnel are its most valued asset but only two persons listed it as a stakeholder group in the interviews. I see a relation on this to the issue of unsatisfactory level of internal communications and corporate culture that are presented in the problem areas in the previous paragraph 6.5.

6.7 Intensity and accuracy of communication

The interviewees shared the opinion that GreenStream is not an information provider which means the company is not responsible for informing and communicating of international climate laws, policy etc. The company communicates towards its stakeholders at weekly, monthly and quarter of a year level. That contains general reporting, press releases, e-mails, newsletters, business meetings, events, lunches, investor committees, internal monthly meetings, annual general meetings, and social media posts starting autumn 2013 onwards.

The current aim is to be visible in media one to two times per month where investors, shareholders and technology companies are on the target audience. The latter group might seek info more eagerly. The quarters towards which communication is not at sufficient level were said to be Chinese customers and investors. Reporting processes and procedures need also improving, some new ones have been created recently. Follow-up is often insufficient as well as internal communication within and between offices as stated in the previous paragraph. Employees' continuous demand for more timely and transparent communication is in the air.

6.8 Wanted levels and networks to get engaged

China scope and Europe centric are the current business cornerstones. China-specific players in Europe, such as technology companies, financial institutions, authorities and chambers with Finland-China connections are the quarters GreenStream wants to create connections with. To make these key groups interested and engaged happens through highlighting more deliberately own achievements and on-going projects, and more introducing storytelling style in communications. “It’s about what we have done and what we are actually doing and achieving – real stories of our track record.”

Yet, and as mentioned earlier, many general improvements have already been made during last year. For example, presence in social media has been activated and more proactive approach towards media and in seeking for new contacts and channels initiated. Press releases have been distributed with a sense of direction and by using social media and existing wide networks. More work on developing and harmonizing internal processes, improving the websites and refreshing the overall look and general marketing material is being constantly done.

6.9 Future goals and objectives

Management wished communication to be much more focused from now on and in the future, and that communication would be implementing the new strategy. As GreenStream wants to be known worldwide as a China EMC (Energy Management Contracting) expert without losing the previous stamp of emissions trading expert, the branding must be more consistent from now on. One of the objectives is that GreenStream is mentioned when talking of China in Finland.

“As a small-sized company, especially compared to our rivals, the aspect of credibility needs to be fulfilled. What comes to China, it is the personal connections and our networks there, such as Cleantech China support person who can help us at that end.” Communications should get the company more into the customer’s skin and lift the company profile keeping eye on future recruitments. In Finland, on the other hand,

raising personnel's motivation and building the GreenStream brand were seen as the most important matters by an interviewee.

One interviewee's insight was that communications strategy has succeeded when the whole group is confident about it and when stakeholders are more positively informed, thus leading company into financial success. One clear objective the company must accomplish in the near future is creating metrics and KPI's to measure success. "We need to have a direction, internally define the objectives and set the goals when the evaluation is also possible."

6.10 Summary

Action research allows studying current situation while improving existing practices. As being part of the company in focus and aiming at developing its communications after identifying problems, action research method suits my thesis work the best. In addition my own experience and observations, management level interviews, personnel satisfaction surveys and other internal questionnaires have provided me with necessary and sufficient information after which I have been able to plan, take actions, reflect, evaluate, and continue the cycle of development.

It can be seen that company's current communications has clearly improved and it is more on agenda than two years ago. Personnel satisfaction survey show better results and the more proactive approach towards communications are also noted externally. It can be still seen that the strategy change is not crystal clear throughout the company; management vision does not meet the one employees have and the composition of management versus the rest of the personnel was described as "a chronic matter of corporate culture".

Being on the same page internally unifies and eases messages communicated outside. As the company is still in a transformation stage, it is very important communicate to and with the employees during and after the change and make sure the whole group shares the same vision. That way the company can change its image and brand itself as the China expert it wants to be and engage the wanted stakeholders with clear message.

7 GreenStream communications guidelines, tools and tactics

Based on the analysis of the research, this chapter builds communications guidelines for the company. It also presents the trajectory of tools and tactics and gives further recommendations.

7.1 Communications guidelines

It is important to keep in mind that corporate communications is no longer just informing, public relations or reputation management as defined decades ago. It is more and more listening and having a dialogue to and with stakeholders, including employees. Corporate communications should either be mixed with marketing communications or promotion. The core questions to start building any effective communications and marketing strategy are: **Who are we as a company? Why do we exist?**

Based on the research analysis and to get entirely rid of the fragmented feeling of communications I see the most important steps for GreenStream's communications guidelines to be the following:

- 1. Establishing common view throughout the group:** It is clearly expressed from the management that GreenStream is today an EMC company. This reflects, however, that company's other businesses are not considered as important and it affects also communications and core messages.
- 2. SMART approach and goals:** Specific – measurable – attainable – relevant – timely communications. Country and language-wise, thinking of the end user. Carefully considered content is wiser than the aim to reach the widest possible audience.
- 3. Tone and style:** Even an expert company can use its own, distinguishable tone. Many of stakeholders are also experts, but as many of them are not. Using storytelling in communications and highlight own achievements with concrete case examples and showcasing more the doers makes them approachable. People deal with individuals.
- 4. Digital strategy:** Digital communications channels are taking over. GreenStream needs to understand that and include it also in strategic planning and communications. In doing so, strategies are aligned with the organization's identity, mission, and goals. This requires targeted skills with Chinese digital channels.

5. Everyone's business: Communications is not just a matter of named people responsible for the area. Everyone is a communicator and an ambassador of reputation.

7.2 Communications objectives and key messages

Approving and owning key messages and values with the whole personnel, or co-creating and adjusting them together, they will be implemented and rooted in the hearts and minds of all personnel and thus serve as the base for all actions, communications and reason for being. Empty phrases given from the management is not the way to engage personnel. Consistent messages and corporate branding can only start when the inner image is clear from the front line to the back office.

Usually, when business enters foreign markets, there are dozens or hundreds of similar companies with similar devices and technology so the added value has to be created from somewhere. GreenStream's story is different and thus it can be described the greatest competitive edge. Suggested core messages and communications objectives can be found in full communications canvas in Attachment 7.

China and cleantech expert

Align with new strategy the company goes China in front and highlights its China centric and expertise. GreenStream already has a foothold and networks in China, so emphasizing it can provide the gate to Chinese markets, for example to a cleantech company who wants to enter China but lacks know-how, is significant and creates the image of credibility. The power of existing networks could be communicated more through references and case examples.

Climate markets veteran

According to the management, the level of company's expertise is well-known by existing clientele. It is up to management to which extent communications and marketing efforts are being put into other business areas than EMC. As the aims to increase sales are high, communications could be better supporting in raising interest among new customers. This requires cooperation with the respective team.

Sustainable actor

Sustainability is an integral part of a successful business strategy. The idea of perceiving the company as an enabler could be taken further in (CSR) communications as well; how hard and soft values meet and how the company helps China in its enormous pollution problem. Sustainability is topical and the company could re-think how well it shows in its own actions. I see the company could use the sustainability factor a lot more but not just as a posh “add-on” element.

Dynamic and caring employer

GreenStreamers are true experts and committed to their work. As turned out from the surveys, many times employees feel that there are too many layers in a small company and employees don't see the value thinking in practice. People want to be given more possibilities and be involved in processes and in decision-making. Transparency, timely informing and greater integration within work community would be keys to success and personnel's motivation and well-being. The level of internal communications affects directly company's culture and unity, personnel's satisfaction and commitment, thus the ability and interest to act as company advocates.

As mentioned in the theory part of the thesis, corporate communication can be viewed as an attitude towards communication affecting corporate culture. Communications can, at its best, only reflect the company's reality. If the image is fake, it will exposure ruthlessly. Company ethics is paid more and more attention to and sustainable leadership gets positive publicity. The logical conclusion is that communications cannot be developed separately anymore.

7.3 Tools and tactics

In the following I am going to give an overview of the tools that GreenStream now uses to communicate and how it has evolved in a couple of years. The needs differ between countries and it must be remembered that not all channels are allowed in China due to Chinese government's censorship demands and tight internet policy. Also as described in the communication challenges in paragraph 2.4, I am not able to cover

China situation too deeply. Communications in China is handled in paragraphs 7.16 and 7.17 and further recommendations are presented in paragraph 7.18.

“Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory.”

The guru of strategists, a Chinese military general and philosopher Sun Tzu

7.4 Internal

The most central and used internal tool is e-mail. I don't consider e-mail the primary channel of communications but it seems to be the most reliable and best-working one between offices. Yet, the whole personnel find the high amount of e-mails problematic. There is no intranet in the company. Alongside e-mail, web pages, monthly meetings, team meetings, Skype, teleconferences and common document storage are the most used internal tools. Yet again, several locations and internet bans restrict the range of channels. Proper video conference equipment is to be set-up during this year.

I have purchased a bulletin board to the office, set up an internal LinkedIn group, and created and up-dated common documents in the areas of human resources, travel, general admin and meetings hoping the general information to be easily found and accessible to all. Those platforms would allow us to share also more informal content but for some reason people are not using them very effectively. We are a small company so the personnel are well built-in and used to certain manners.

Summer recreational days, Christmas parties and occasional cake and sparkling moments to celebrate successful work, birthdays and other special days are always well-received. Suggested ways to improve internal communications and build corporate culture could be workshops and internal planning sessions, (bi)weekly joint breakfast, flexible office, management hot seat, and an innovation box, for example. Though the company is small, higher interaction over business teams, managers being available and better planning of up-coming actions would improve the situation even tools remaining the same.

7.5 Web pages

Clear, well-functioning, customer-serving and visual web pages that follow the company overall look are an essential means of communications. In the end of 2012 I have lead the web pages overall look and content refreshing project with a new service provider. The focus was to define more of company's achievements by emphasizing the track record and creating an interactive project map. During the process also Chinese sites were set up alongside English ones. A year later I started web sites mobile optimization project. The aims are constantly to develop the sites more user-friendly and content more engaging. I have, for example, added company history and a media kit for the press.

Depending on the future of the European business, I would recommend to establish also Finnish sites to lure more and serve better domestic customers, media and employees/teams, whose work does not focus on China. Moreover, Chinese sites must be fixed to serve and engage Chinese stakeholders or preferable set up new separate ones in China when also maintaining them is easier and more spot-on. A replica of the English sites does not work; instead, it must be tailored for keeping Chinese stakeholders in mind. In an internal survey I asked from our China team what Chinese customers appreciate most on the sites, and the most significant items were said to be company history, vision and values, certificates and references, press releases and service or product information. The further development will be made this in mind once resources are available.

7.6 Marketing material

Last autumn in 2013, when mobile optimization and web page platform update were made, I also managed the project of company overall look refreshing including templates, business cards, folders, pens, graphic guidelines etc. Company wants to reflect Nordic design with China connection, i.e. light, edgy, simple and oozing expertise. There are two styles; one for EMC business with China visuals and one for intermediary using renewable energy theme. Both have own slogans.

In addition, I keep brochure content up-to-date with the help of managers and design new ones by myself and with the help of a creative agency. I hope to be able to co-create a proper range of marketing material, though the challenge is the rapidly changing environment and data. I have arranged two kinds of visually good looking and practical business gifts that go along with the same style.

7.7 Newsletters

Company provides a few newsletters to its stakeholders. One is a weekly newsletter provided to subscribers. It is an important stakeholder communications channel providing latest news on CER (certified emission reduction) prices and market analysis at Europe and global level. It is made by using a ready-made template which look was also refreshed with other material. Other project-related newsletter is targeted to companies that participate in a certain project, providing info and topical news on China and the development of the project. This monthly newsletter is created by CampaignMonitor online tool and other material is also provided via Dropbox.

7.8 Press releases and media

Among web pages, press releases used to be the most important and most used means of external communications. Now the aim is to send one press release a month and be visible in media twice a month. As media is overloaded with press releases and news texts I strongly recommend localizing and always providing a translation. Including a good picture will raise a much bigger interest than a brilliant text. Media is also interested in concrete data. If there's no time to do that in-house, I'd suggest using our creative agency or B2B press that works with media campaigns and trade media at industrial services.

Media lists are actively updated by me and I also draft and send out press releases. GreenStreamers have personal journalist contacts and managers often provide new names to put on the list alongside me and a colleague constantly finding new contacts. Company has organized a targeted media breakfast and similar events will be held in

the future. It would be excellent to be able to create personal media contacts also in China.

7.9 Investor relations

GreenStream has long-term investors. They are being met quarterly in investor committee meetings and they are provided information mostly via e-mail but now they can also follow and discuss with us in social media. As new investors have come along, and will in the future as well, the need for more professional and targeted investor communications has been raised. Chinese investor relations must be handled via the highest management personally cultural variables in mind.

7.10 Shareholder communications

This is an area where GreenStream communicates only at the obligatory level through interim and annual reports, extraordinary and annual general meetings, and the CEO meets them more or less monthly during lunches. Press releases are also delivered to the shareholders and some of them follow us in social media. It is expressed there is no necessity to increase shareholder communications at the moment.

7.11 CSR communications

Corporate social responsibility communications an area GreenStream could include more in its communications. The company compensates its own carbon footprint comprised of the personnel's travelling and a release about it was one of the most popular and most read pieces of news the company provided last year. Cooperation with a few different quarters relating to offsetting has been initiated which might be possible to use for marketing communications in the future. Case stories are relatable and often raise more interest than a very technical one.

7.12 Expert events and networking

GreenStream has wide networks, relationships and partnership contacts which definitely are a huge communications asset and an advantage in the markets the company op-

erates. The company participates in targeted events, market meetings and expos in Finland and abroad that are important PR and networking platforms. When the situation allows, company runs simultaneously an own side event. A recently held webinar together with EU SME Centre reached good success and company spokespersons and other experts often give speeches, presentations and lectures of which we could more actively promote and share as much as the content allows.



Picture 1. Events organized by partners and co-operative organizations are also important arenas, such as Finpro's events for Chinese media.

The need for communications and marketing actions for each event is evaluated and planned separately. I consider it important to have good material to go with, possible also some giveaways depending on the nature of event. However, the experts are the best ambassadors.

7.13 Employer branding communications

In management interviews, raising employer brand image was mentioned to be one of the most important things to consider. This is something I reckon the company has not thought at all. Previously I heard many saying that they have sent an application

but received no reply. I take care of the careers mailbox and personally reply to everyone. Even these small things influence on the employer brand image, as well as how applicants, interns, students and other potential future employees are greeted, welcomed and treated.

We do get open applications and calls evenly where people mostly say they have read about us somewhere or pumped into us in social media. GreenStream is such a niche company that mostly experts already know it at least in Finland. Most likely recruitment needs increase in China and for that it might be good to consider other channels besides friends and relatives. Social media can definitely be used to strengthen employer branding.

7.14 Social media

The uses of the social network are based on stakeholder communication, brand exposure, site traffic and SEO (search engine optimization). Some experts suggest that social media channels should be managed according to a brand-oriented approach. Social media as a communications channel is relatively new to GreenStream. I dived with the company into social media during Q3/2013. As the company operates in specific B2B markets, not all channels are relevant. The fact that many of the stakeholders the company wants to engage with are located China, is also challenging. I describe communications in China and Chinese social media closer in paragraphs 7.16 and 7.17.

Through GreenStream's social media channels, LinkedIn, Twitter and SlideShare at the moment, the company can not only easily inform, but raise awareness, impressiveness, interest and build engagement among employees, investors, shareholders, media, opinion leaders, and current customers and potential new customers, to the extent as it is possible taking into consideration censorship issues, for example. I would emphasize its importance and role in informing and sharing GreenStream's own and other topical news in climate markets, thus leading to true engaging and dialogue between stakeholders, also potential ones.

I am in charge of GreenStream's social media channels with occasional help from colleagues. I have defined the main objectives for GreenStream being present in social media to be as follows:

1. Increase digital footprint and online visibility
2. Increase awareness of the company and its services and reason for being
3. Build engagement and dialogue with stakeholders.

Despite the progression in diving into social media as a whole, company is lacking the engagement and interaction aspect. I have created social media guidelines (Attachment 6) but a proper social media strategy should also be created and then included in company's communication strategy implying how that is relevant for different stakeholders.

As we know, the impact of social media today is inevitable. It's not there to exclusively drive sales or marketing, but for authentic engagement. Organizations need to be closer to people's discussions. People are not that into the fancy values but they are interested in how organizations are having a dialogue with them. Most of all, social media is not only a tool but also largely a culture maker.

The rule of thirds is also popular. The $\frac{1}{3}$ rule in content sharing says that $\frac{1}{3}$ of your social content is to promote your business, convert readers, and generate profit. $\frac{1}{3}$ should surface and share ideas and stories from thought leaders in your industry or like-minded businesses, and $\frac{1}{3}$ be based on personal interactions and build your personal brand. (Milbrath 2014).

Facebook is not relevant for GreenStream due to its consumer-oriented nature. It wouldn't fully serve internal communication either as it's forbidden in China. Pinterest, Flickr and Instagram fall into the non-relevant category as well, though their use in employer branding could be an option. As not many GreenStreamers actively use social media or even have other accounts than a personal LinkedIn profile, we should as well engage employees as external constituencies. Our experts raising and involving in discussions would definitely engage more the wanted stakeholders. EveryoneSocial, for example, is a tool to help employees to become good social media marketers; amplify

and share their unique voices with relevant, focused information about business with a simple dashboard.

All in all, despite social media belongs to every modern organization's tool pack and I want to develop the channels to raise awareness and promote company's business, more meaningful than create a huge follower base is to hit the right channels at right levels. In that sense earned media - the ones who share our content – is an important part of stakeholder communications strategy. The goal of social media isn't how much attention you can get there; it is how much attention you can get outside of it.

LinkedIn has 300 million registered users and more than 3 million companies have LinkedIn company pages. It is gaining two new members every second. LinkedIn is profiled as professional, business-oriented platform allowing not only individuals, but corporate brands to connect and network. 79% of users are 35 or older. (LinkedIn press center, 2014.)

GreenStream had a quiescent LinkedIn profile that had been set up by a former employee which I activated in September 2013. It is now used actively as professional social networking channel for sharing mainly press releases and reports to the followers. It is via managerial level and other employees' connections how the message spreads to the 2nd and 3rd level and thus gives the story an excessive visibility. I have also set up an internal LinkedIn Group that would allow us to easily share information between offices and reduce the amount of e-mail, also to post informal content and engage more with each other.

Company profile follower base has steadily increased and it serves well also as an internal information provider as everyone has a LinkedIn profile but not necessarily other social media accounts. LinkedIn would be great for announcing open jobs in the future and build employer brand. Western platform is also allowed in China but in the beginning of 2014 LinkedIn has launched a simplified beta version to offer a more localized service to China members.

“With 500 million Tweets a day and 560 million active users, people turn to Twitter to bring them closer to the things they care about, whether it’s the news that affects their lives or the businesses down the block.” Twitter is a never-ending story which requires active presence, real-time tweets and a dialogue. Transparency, motivation, knowing your stuff, seeing what competitor are tweeting, searching for keywords and monitoring reputation are also listed as valued things to be successful in Twitter. (How Twitter can help your business 2014.)

I recreated company’s Twitter presence in late 2013 and since then the follower base has risen from zero to nearly 120. However, this channel is not allowed in China and it is not likely that a Chinese factory owner or government member would read of GreenStream in Twitter and get interested. Via corporate twitter account the company can anyway profile itself as a China and energy efficiency expert sharing mainly content related to those areas. Press and media releases, news and greetings from events are also tweeted. I follow trending environment-related hash tags and weekly digests of company’s success; what got people excited and engaged and where we were mentioned.

Brand float in twitter flow together with individuals. Even though GreenStream tweets under the name of a company, it does not have to be too serious. Personal approach often raises more interest than the stiff corporate style with maneuvers. Surely it needs to be in line with the wanted vision but I have recognized that the posts that got people most engaged are not news and reports right to the point, but stories and pictures of the personnel in front of a new installation, for example, CEO shaking hands with a Chinese minister after an agreement signing event or a valentine’s day wish with a personal tweet.

There is a ready-built blog platform on the company web pages created in summer 2013 that should finally get into constant use. We could share CEO’s greetings, experts’ insights, opinion writing, own achievements and so on. The process of making the habit regular and not feel like an unpleasant extra task is probably harder than the actual writing. The content should be provided by an expert but I could draft, edit and

distribute the posts. Blog would get us even more visibility when easily linked and shared in various channels, thus directing traffic to our web pages. Blog also allows to use the wanted GreenStream tone, it does not need to be boring expert jargon. I would say, however, that a boring corporate blog's value is zero so it really requires some effort. It would also be a great tool to strengthen employer brand.

Chad Pollit, a member of a Forbes Top 100 list and the VP of Marketing at DigitalRelevance describes SlideShare “the undisputed heavyweight champion of B2B social media marketing” due to its biggest conversion rate (25.32%). With 60 million visitors at a page rank of 8,130M page views there is plenty of potential to draw people to the web sites. It is also great for leads and referral traffic. (Pollit 2014).

SlideShare, the “Youtube of presentations”, is the recent channel in our communications tool kit. The first slide show I posted there from our energy efficiency webinar got 100 views in a couple of hours. I reckon it as good a tool both for marketing and communications, also educational-wise, and through the SlideShare hits we will get even more visibility and possibilities to raise awareness of the company's services by driving traffic to the web sites - SlideShare is very search engine friendly. Company's experts continuously give speeches and presentations so material is available so it requires only a coordinated process of collecting and sharing.

Youtube (marketing) communications is the next strongly recommended step when resources allow. We have a few YouTube videos of the experts speaking in events or webinars but we could use video marketing much more for the sake of effectiveness, engagement and dialogue. A company trailer is on agenda and we have a creative agency partner to go with it.

7.15 Measuring communications

Creating metrics and KPI's was said to be one of the future objectives in management level interviews. There is still room for further development but now at least some kind of auditing and measuring is taking place. I do media follow-up with the help of a colleague on a regular basis and collect hits into a media and reference book I have set

up. Sometimes problems are that online publications need authorized log-in credentials which I don't have, and should obviously be changed. Managers have also learned a bit better to inform and circulate news of them being interviewed or the company mentioned in media. We have well reached the target being visible twice a month in media.

To measure social media effectiveness I use Klout, SumAll and Tweetdeck that are free tools helping to influence and drive action. Klout suggests sharable content and measures online impact. The more influential you are, the higher your Klout Score on a scale from 1 to 100. I have started to use Klout in Q1/2014, SumAll and Tweetdeck during Q2/2014. With Klout I can also schedule tweets, another good tool for that being Hootsuite. SumAll summarizes the actions from wanted platforms daily, Twitter in this case, and via that I can automatically thank my top followers, for example, and thus improve building engagement. Web site traffic and analysis is done monthly by me via GoogleAnalytics, yet I should create a routine of sharing the data with management.

The company runs no campaigns, sells via web sites or serves consumers. In a way, number of signed agreements can be considered an indicator of successful communications as well as other nailed deals and contracts. The views of employees, as well as other stakeholders, should be regularly and systematically obtained. Internal communications are now measured through personnel satisfaction surveys that I initiated 2012, and have now conducted and reported twice. One-to-one discussions with supervisor take place twice a year and when necessary. Internal monthly meetings are also situations when issues can be raised. There personnel can also hear greetings and feelings from shareholders, board and investors that have being met in director meetings.

A stakeholder audit for also other groups than employees could be in place and used as a teaching tool. Feedback is essential for effective performance and benefits both parties.

7.16 Communications in China

According to the company CEO, “China is a mystery”. Even though being experts on the business we do, at the moment we don’t have enough knowledge and information how communications works and what channels to use in China. According to The National Bureau of Asian Research report, China has set an objective to become an “innovative society” by 2020 and is rapidly moving towards it which shows in information and communications technology (ICT) and other high technology sectors (Kennedy, S., Suttmeier, R. & Su, J., 2008, 1).

However, as we do know and I have many times mentioned throughout the thesis, the personal relationships, “guanxi” and local references count the most in China. It is about face and reputation; a repetitious counterpart who can deliver reliably. Chinese “Gentlemen Marketing Agency” claims that public relations in China are one of the most cost-efficient communication leverages to work on the image and reputation of a company, a product or a brand. Chinese media represents important relays of information for the promotion of a company in the entire country. (Olivier 2013.)

Company’s China team’s communication towards potential clients is said to be mainly wining and dining. Best visibility would likely to be attained in high-profile events where there is a chance to have GreenStream leaders pictured with Chinese government or other right-level representatives. During autumn 2013 GreenStream succeeded in raising media attention through agreement signing events but not in the mainland China, where we must think of our media strategy and build relationships.

Picture 2. GreenStream CEO shaking hands with Chinese paper company Zhuhai Hongta’s director. Picture by HS Mikko Paakkanen.



Pure Finland¹, for example, is one of the events we could consider in the future. The price is high so the ROI must be carefully considered (Hytti, J. 2013). Also strengthening the relationships with and “digging” more info from the communications and branding professionals in EU SME Centre, the Embassy of Finland in China, Team Finland, Tekes, Cleantech Finland & China, Finpro and EMCA, for example. Relationship building takes time but as GreenStream already is in China and has valuable networks, it could benefit us in the way of making GreenStream widely known and promoting the business in China.

Matti Nojonen, Professor of Helsinki Aalto University advises to engage with stakeholders in their own communities and emphasizes the importance of understanding regional nuances. “What works in one Chinese province doesn’t necessarily work in the next one”. (Leppänen 2013, 63.) China and other parts of the world prefer to communicate in their native language, particularly in a business context, so fluency in Chinese would definitely be a communications asset.

7.17 Chinese social media – arena to conquer

GreenStream does not currently have any digital communications strategy in China. This is to present what could be done in the future after examining the subject more thoroughly. In China, online social media has already linked over 1 billion people together. However, they are using different form of social media. That restricts basic “western” social media communications and marketing actions and raises the question how to develop social media marketing on “Chinternet” where Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are totally blocked. In order to know digital marketing in China, first, it is necessary to know the Chinese specific context of Internet.

¹ Pure Finland project is about brands, destination, innovations and creativity. The event takes place in Beijing and elsewhere during the second half of 2014. Project is managed by Pure Finland in Beijing ry and is a Team Finland project. The participation cost is around 30 000 – 50 000 Euros.



Picture 3. Social, digital and mobile in China 2014
(China digital landscape 2014.)

80% of Chinese “netizens” are using social media. Twitter has been blocked in China since 2009, due to government concerns: fears that social media could be used to coordinate protests against the government are alive and well in China. “Chinese Twitter”, Sina Weibo instead has huge success and is the most important web portal in China. Sina is described as a successful case of micro-blogging marketing and opinion leaders and has 129,000,000 monthly active users. (China digital landscape 2014.) To demonstrate the power of digital platforms, Shanhua Wu, Greater China Director of The Climate Group, is an opinion leader and has 160,000 followers on her Chinese social network Sina Weibo.

Table 2. How Weibo compares with Facebook and Twitter

Company	2013 Revenue	Monthly active users (2013 avg)	Revenue per user*
Weibo	\$188 million	113 million	\$1.66
Facebook	\$7.87 billion	1.14 billion	\$6.89
Twitter	\$665 million	213 million	\$3.12

*-Based on WSJ calculation

(WSJ China Real Time Twitter 2014.)

When Sina Weibo is titled as “Chinese Twitter”, Baidu is “Google”. Baidu is the leading search engine in China with over 400 million of active users and it has been

crowned as the website with the most traffic in China since eight years ago. Even though Baidu might be more consumer-oriented, by examining on Baidu's options, PPC (payment per click) and SEO (search engine optimization) we could be able to direct much more traffic into our Chinese sites. Baidu plays the part of Google and its by-product "Baidu Encyclopedia" is similar to Wikipedia. Having a page there is an indicator of possession of certain reputations and authentication for a person or a company. (Philip 2014.)

WeChat, a counterpart for western WhatsApp, is a popular platform at the moment with 400 million subscribers. WeChat, used within company's China team, would possibly be a suitable tool for all internal use. Other Chinese social media channels are Renren as Chinese Facebook and Youku as YouTube. IWOM, Internet word of mouth marketing, E-commerce and app-marketing are also bubbling under, but not channels GreenStream should dive into.

In 2012, according to a market study led by the European Chamber of Business, 90% of the companies with foreign capital want to develop commercially on the Chinese market and thus should be interested in search engine optimization in China. Companies which are dynamics and which want to increase their sales will need to invest to appear the maximum on Internet. 85% of the Chinese Internet users don't go further than the first page of the search's results.

At the moment the majority of the social media power undoubtedly falls upon consumers but I would strongly recommend researching the subject further and finding out how social media could benefit our business there and how the industrial sector could be reached. I'm sure activating presence and following Weibo as an information provider and a channel to share corporate news would produce and increase knowledge and understanding. Whenever the digital awakening will happen, also Chinese websites have to be in the best shape possible.

7.18 Further recommendations

Here I give my suggestions for further thinking and actions based on the interviews and surveys outcome, my background knowledge and my own work for the company since August 2011. Many of the recommendations below have been noted at least at some extent and some are on the agenda. GreenStream has already developed a lot during the last years so it has all the potential in growing into the communicator and marketer it wants to be.

From backroom to boardroom. First of all, throughout the group, communications must be started to seen as a part of the strategy; a strategy function that will serve the strategy and is aligned with it. That also means that every manager as well as employee needs to understand corporate communication, not just those officially in charge of networking, marketing and communications. Nonetheless, the company's identity must be first internally clear in order to be able to communicate it successfully and consistently outside. There has to be named responsible persons taking care of certain stakeholder group communications and that cannot be continuously delegated or neglected. This is also largely a matter of managerial mindset.

Go digital. I really do suggest investing time in learning more on digital communications and marketing, both managers and employees. I find it hazardous if management level is not aware of what is happening in corporate accounts. That way they also waste the power of social media. Examining Chinese platforms and the options they could offer for GreenStream's business and relationship building would be the next digital step. Alongside basic wining and dining, in which the company should not alone trust too much, information and digital era brings a great revolution in the Chinese market in the field of marketing and communications. In order to adapt to this trend, marketers and communicators should be rapidly able to take advantage of new techniques such as social networks and media to promote the brand and establish good reputation.

Corporate culture. Less top-down, more all-around. It is understandable that not all information can be distributed but employees continuously demand that management

shares in to personnel better than now. However, it does not mean that information is just cascaded downwards and then expected to be implemented. Corporation culture shapes up of organization's values and beliefs as felt, experienced and shared by all employees. Co-creation could be a productive way to root messages and values to all. "Taking into consideration company's aims to grow I want to emphasize the meaning of internal communication. Right hand needs to know what the left hand is doing, otherwise it won't work", says one of the management team members.

When the transformation is finalized and company structure clear, it is extremely important first to communicate it to each and everyone within the group. Not via e-mail and not just showing organizational charts but really listening to employees and interacting with them. Is there one, two or three GreenStreams, how and if they are linked to one another and who are responsible persons for human resources, communications and marketing in each company?

Resources re-allocation. I would underline the management to re-think all the resources that are now available for professional marketing and communications. What is needed in Finland and what in China, and what are the priorities? Is there enough skills and time in-house? Are management members and personnel representing the company coherently? I would see the best solution to be a pair working and co-operating in communications and marketing, one in Finland and one in China, both having sufficient knowledge and skills, time and back-ups.

The overall communications responsibility lies on the CEO who must see communications as a part of the strategic work. This includes also creating KPI's and following, measuring and evaluating communications actions, including social media. I would also emphasize the importance and possibility of employees to act as ambassadors and exploit their personal social media profiles in favor of the company. When is the satisfaction of each stakeholder group being examined last time? More importantly, did something get actually done afterwards?

Be present. One thing to consider is if and how quickly the operative leadership should be taken wholly to China. When that's the territory the company wants to grow and make business, it is hard to see how China operations and communications can be successfully led from Helsinki. It would require an equally powerful director for both countries with sufficient language and cultural skills and knowledge of corporate communications, including digital marketing. When the boss is not present, is too busy to see what's happening around or just simply does not understand the language, it allows employees a chance to form their own cliques and act independently which can be totally out of company's alignments.

Emphasis on sustainable business in favor of good. Even though GreenStream is a business aiming to make profit, I think it could and should take more advantage of its sustainability approach and ethics in communications and marketing. The company is determined to fight against climate change, promotes renewable energy and green values and helps China to meet its energy requirements. SCR (social corporate responsibility) communications would be a good point to take into consideration. However, is the inner image in line and do GreenStreamers acting that way them in business environment?

8 Conclusions

This research indicates that the company in focus has evolved from its previous non-planning and reactive role of communicator to execute more systematic and proactive communications actions. The outcome of the thesis shows that many improvements have been made in terms of tools, tactics, stakeholder engagement, and measuring communications. Company's communications is on upbeat note which has been expressed internally and outside. Instead of being active in all possible channels, it is more important to create good content in the relevant ones end users kept in mind.

As it should be, the company has started to view communications more as a part of the strategy than a separate minor supporting and marketing function. That, in many cases, is also largely due to a change of managerial mindset and attitudes towards communications. Strategy turn-around, transforming company structure, complex business area, cultural, language and censorship barriers and communications resources are still challenges in the case company's communications but on the other hand, it has the benefit of agile change and development.

An important area of corporate communication involves communicating to stakeholders during and after a change. Not succeeding well, it leads to unclear strategic direction, incoherent branding and disunited messages. When a common vision throughout an organization exists and the outside given image matches corporate culture, employees can act as the best advocates. Digital platforms have put a new array of tools into the hands of communicator and transferred the nature of communications into a monologue to a dialogue.

Focusing on communications in China, developing digital communications strategy and continuously improving internal communications are essential next steps for the case company in its development curve. Less top-down, more all-around and timely, transparent and sufficient communications are the keys to success.

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Attachment 1. List of figures

Figure 1. Corporate identity, image and reputation

Figure 2. Two-dimensional Power/Interest Matrix

Figure 3. Salience model mapping

Figure 4. The continuous circle of SRM

Figure 5. Stakeholder relationship management framework

Table 1. GreenStream stakeholder groups

Table 2. How Weibo compares with Facebook and Twitter

Picture 1. Partner's events for Chinese media are important arenas for visibility

Picture 2. GreenStream CEO shaking hands with Chinese paper company's director

Picture 3. Social, digital and mobile in China 2014

Attachment 2. Personnel satisfaction survey 2013

1. How meaningful do you find your work?

- Extremely meaningful
- Very meaningful
- Moderately meaningful
- Slightly meaningful
- Not at all meaningful

2. How challenging is your work?

- Extremely challenging
- Very challenging
- Moderately challenging
- Slightly challenging
- Not at all challenging

3. How would you rate your overall work load?

- Way too much
- Slightly too much
- About right amount
- Slightly too little
- Could do more

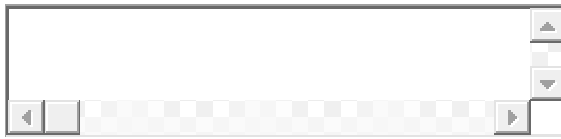
4. Do you feel having opportunities to develop your skills and grow professionally at work?

- A great deal of opportunities
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A few
- None at all

5. Are you satisfied with your job?

- Extremely satisfied
- Moderately satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Moderately dissatisfied
- Extremely dissatisfied

6. What have you done to improve your satisfaction and working atmosphere and what changes should take place in general to make you (even more) satisfied?



7. Do you feel you get support and feedback from your supervisor relating to your work and your ambitions?

- Too much
- Very much
- Enough
- Enough but would appreciate more
- Not very much
- Not at all

8. Do you know the strategy, message and values of the company?

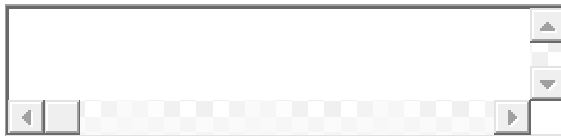
- I know them inside out
- I know them fairly well
- I have an insight of them
- I don't know them very well
- I have no idea

**9. What area(s) do you think need the most improvements in the company?
(you may pick several)**

- Management
- Colleagues
- Strategy
- Human resources
- Administration
- Respecting colleagues
- General procedures
- Marketing
- External communication
- Internal communication
- A. Transparency and openness
- B. Introduction to new job/task
- C. Integration between offices

*

10. What has improved since last survey? What has not?

A rectangular text input field with a light gray border. On the right side, there is a vertical scrollbar with a white track and a gray slider. On the bottom side, there is a horizontal scrollbar with a white track and a gray slider. The input field is currently empty.

Attachment 3. Survey of internal communication needs

1. Communication especially between mgmt and the rest of the personnel does not seem to work. What do you consider to be the main problems? You may pick several.

- Sufficiency of information
- Timely communication
- Consistency
- Openness
- Being available
- Other (please specify)

2. Where do you get info about our business and topical issues at the company now?

3. What kind of internal communication tools would you prefer to have? You may pick several.

- E-mail
- M-files
- Newsletter of topical issues
- Employee publication
- Monthly meetings
- Weekly meetings
- Team meetings
- Web pages
- Intranet
- Internal planning sessions and workshops
- Bulletin board
- Social media
- SlideShare
- Idea/innovation/suggestion box
- Blog on company website
- Meeting colleagues from other offices

- Dataroom
 - Document storage system
 - Other (please specify)
-

4. How much do you think you could benefit at your work GreenStream being active in social media?

- Very much
- Quite much
- It wouldn't make a difference
- Not very much
- Not at all

5. What channels in social media should GSN use to be able to improve employee communication? You may pick several.

- Twitter
 - Facebook
 - Blogging
 - LinkedIn
 - YouTube
 - Flickr
 - Other (please specify)
-

6. Would you be interested to update GSN social media accounts?

- Yes
- No

7. Would you be interested to follow GSN in social media as a channel of internal communication?

- Yes
- No

Attachment 4. Survey of Chinese website

1. Have you ever visited GSN Chinese websites? <http://www.greenstream.net/cn>

- Yes
- No

2. How would you rate the current Chinese sites?

- 5 Very good
- 4 Good
- 3 Decent
- 2 Poor
- 1 Very poor

3. Have you ever contributed in updating the Chinese sites?

- Yes
- No

4. Have you ever distributed the Chinese website link to a customer/colleague/lead?

- Yes
- No

5. Have you received any feedback from a client of the Chinese sites?

- Yes
- No

6. If so, what kind of feedback? What other ideas the sites awake in you? How should the sites to be modified to serve better Chinese clients and to promote our business in China?

7. What, in your opinion, do Chinese and our target clients value most on a company's website? Please tick three most important ones.

- Pictures and visuals
- Data
- Financials
- Company history and values
- Certificates and references
- Press releases and bulletins
- Product/service information
- Product/service prices
- Contact details
- Info of management
- Something else, what?

Attachment 5. Management interview questions

To find out how the current communications situation is perceived by the management team and to be able to identify key stakeholder groups the following questions were asked:

- What perception do you have of company's communication now and what is wished for?
- What are the most crucial stakeholders from the management's point of view?
How do you communicate to them? Do they need to ask for more information?
- What intensity and what accuracy do the company/you communicate?
- To which quarters are you trying to connect and network with?

Attachment 6. GreenStream social media guidelines

These are guidelines for participating in social media for GreenStreamers and corporate accounts' holders.

Digital communications is taking over and social media is here to stay. It is changing the way we work, network, build relationships and engage. It is highly encouraged to take part in social media; indulge in discussions, share knowledge, promote and represent the company and expertise. Through wide networks our message spreads to 2nd and 3rd level constituencies thus giving us more visibility and name and direct traffic to our website.

The main objectives for GreenStream being present in social media are:

1. Increase digital footprint and online visibility
2. Increase awareness of the company and its services and reason for being
3. Build engagement and dialogue with stakeholders.

GreenStream as a company is present in LinkedIn, Twitter and SlideShare at the moment. In social media the active and continuous presence is the key. Company LinkedIn profile is updated around weekly basis and Twitter daily. There is a strong China scope as we want to profile ourselves as a China expert but we also want to include the carbon and emissions trading side of us. Content forms of our own output, highlighting our achievements, sharing knowledge, interesting topics, links, pictures and events, and building Finland's national brand.

When swimming in social media as the voice of the company GreenStream, and employees via their own personal accounts, all company, brand and work related stuff should be shared with the below guidance in mind. Employees can act as the best ambassadors for the company.



Attachment 7. Communications canvas

Target groups	Key message	Channel / tool	Objective	Frequency	Responsible
Personnel	Team work, trust and respect drive us to work as a global team. We care.	Web, e-mail, skype, SoMe, monthly and team meetings, bulletin board, one-to-one discussions, internal planning sessions and parties, newsletters	To listen, engage and commit personnel, to support individual skills, to build employer brand.	Daily, continuous	Management, supervisors, marketing and comms coordinator, all employees
Chinese industry and state-owned companies	We offer a unique story and business model that supports China in building greener future with world-class technology.	Personal relationships, winning and dining, local references, signature events with China high-level officials, Chinese (digital) media, exhibitions	To build and maintain personal relationships and trust. To promote our sustainable business model and aim to support China to meet its energy requirements.	Continuous	CEO and other management, EMC team
European technology companies	We are your gate to China.	Networks, web, SEO, press releases, SoMe, events, references, media, screening, newsletters	To create business opportunities and build successful, sustainable business.	Weekly	CEO and other management, technology origination team (+ marketing and comms coordinator)
European and Chinese investors	We offer a unique story and business model. There's no other Western player around.	Personal relationships, meetings and networks supported by (local) references, registration to EMCA	To invest in growth potential with win-win-win method.	Long-term processes, targeted	CEO and other management, EMC team

Target groups	Key message	Channel / tool	Objective	Frequency	Responsible
European and Chinese authorities	We provide the highest levels of professionalism and expertise.	Personal relationships and meetings, networks, references	To get support in our projects, data collection, visibility and network extension.	When necessary	CEO and other management, General Counsel, China team
Current customers	We provide the highest levels of professionalism and expertise.	Web, press releases, SoMe, events, meetings, references, media, newsletters	To leverage existing relationships.	Weekly, monthly, quarterly	Project managers, employees
International opinion leaders	An innovative forerunner of EMC business in China. Doing good things and profit in a rational and ethical way.	Networks, partners, events and meetings, opinion writing, web, press releases, SoMe, media	To increase visibility, to network and show expertise.	Monthly, quarterly	CEO, general counsels, experts
Shareholders and Board	Unique business model that attracts investors and enables growth.	Reports, meetings, e-mail, lunches, press releases, SoMe	To keep them up-to-date and satisfied with GSN business environment, direction and financials.	Monthly, quarterly	CEO, general counsels, marketing and comms coordinator
Media	An innovative forerunner of EMC business in China. Doing good things and profit in a rational and ethical way.	Press releases, SoMe, web pages, success stories with concrete data, maintain media relations, targeted media events	To increase visibility and build and maintain media relations.	Monthly	CEO and other management, experts, marketing and comms coordinator