Tampere University of Applied Sciences

Internal Communication at Tanssistudio Razzmatazz

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BACHELOR'S THESIS
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Bachelor's Degree Programme in International Business

ABSTRACT

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This bachelor thesis looked at how the internal communication is currently implemented at Tanssistudio Razzmatazz form the employee perspective. This thesis sought to identify the current level of internal communication within the organization and any potential issues. After the problem areas were located, potential fixes and development ideas were presented. The theoretical framework of this thesis focused on internal communication theories and channels. The research methodology, findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future are all covered in the empirical section.

In this thesis, both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used. Employees were questioned about the effectiveness and issue areas of the company's internal communication using an electronic questionnaire that was produced for the employees. The survey covered internal communication and its channels, the effectiveness of internal communication, issue areas, and recommendations for improvement after providing background information. The questionnaire also offered the chance for open discussion of the claims stated therein, allowing for more honest and individualized responses.

The results indicated that the biggest issues at the moment is the lack of transparency, employee participation and lack of guidelines. The most effective communication channels for employees are text messages personally or to a group and face to face meetings. Many of the employees would value more one on one meetings with the employer. The use of too many communication channels and too many messages are at present affecting many employees in a negative way. It is clear that the employees want to feel sense of belonging and by having more meetings and activities among employees the work community would be improved.

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Key words: communication, internal communication

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

TAMK   Tampere University of Applied Sciences

HR   Human Resources

1 INTRODUCTION

Businesses who want to lead their industry in this decade are prioritizing employee involvement, communication, and collaboration. Businesses are investing more and more in internal communications as they become aware of the many advantages it has and employers cannot undervalue the importance of employees who feel like their ideas are valued and that their opinions matter.

Internal communication can be described as a way of managing a relationship between employees and their employer. Internal communication impacts the well-being of employees and companies have recently started prioritizing it higher. By conducting a survey for the employees of the case company Tanssistudio Razzmatazz it is possible to find the problems with the current status and make recommendations and possibly a plan for the future.

The case company Tanssistudio Razzmatazz is aiming to be a workplace that cares for its employees therefore it is important to review how the employees see the internal communication and how it can be improved, these are the reasons for implementing this research. Getting answers to the objectives is done via an internet survey consisting of both qualitative and quantitative questions.

2   THESIS PLAN

2.1   Thesis topic

This thesis is about how internal communication is perceived by the employees of Tanssistudio Razzmatazz. Organizations are embracing digital solutions to maintain contact between employees and supervisors remotely while face-to-face meetings are already declining or even disappearing in some circumstances. Open and coordinated communication is valued by employees and organizations with a strong internal communication are able to recognize early warning signs of impending crises and take benefit of the expertise of their colleagues and are more likely to outperform their competition (Dahlman and Heidi, 2020).

2.2   Thesis objective, purpose and possible research questions

Tanssistudio Razzmatazz aspires to be an employer of choice, which implies engaged workers and a desirable employer. The aim of this Bachelor's thesis is to study how internal communication can be improved in the case company Tanssistudio Razzmatazz. The purpose is to identify the current level of internal communication within the organization and what are the challenges from the employee position. The main objective of this thesis is to discover what is great internal communication and how to achieve it. This is done through the employees' perspective.

The main research question is:

'How to improve the internal communication in the organization''

The two supporting sub questions are:

''How is the current state of internal communication perceived by the employees in the case company?''

''Which communication channels are used and are preferred by the employees?''

Internal communication is handled in many organizations in a conventional manner which means that there is no room for employees' involvement and sense-making since the focus is often much on technical solutions and digital communication channels. A powerful leadership is something that many companies value but improving managements internal communication can often be seen as limited to only improving IT and computer skills, or how to give feedback to employees. Managers cannot perform to their maximum ability if they are not given assistance in all communication procedures. Nowadays employers are required to spend more time cultivating and maintaining strong relationships with external parties and concentrating on social media and brand building rather than internal communication (Dahlman and Heidi, 2020).

2.3   Concepts and theory

The purpose of the concepts and theory is to familiarize readers with the fundamental definitions of communication and internal communication. The theoretical concepts are communication, internal communication, communication channels and the effect of communication on well-being at work. In addition, there will be an introduction of two different Theories of Communication, which are Shannon and Weaver's view of communication and Laswell's model of communication. A solid foundation for writing the thesis is created by clarifying the concepts and learning about earlier research on the subject.

2.3.1   Communication

Harold D. Lasswell a communication theorist, created the Lasswell communication model in 1948. One of the most important communication models is Lasswell's model of communication, often known as the action model, linear model, or one-way model of communication (Bairacharva, 2018)

According to Lasswell communication is best explained by asking: Who? Says what? To whom? In what channel? With what effect? Five components are included in Lasswell's communication model, which is used as an analysis tool to

assess the components and process of communication. Lasswell stated that the inquiries that must be made in a particular order to receive responses and maintain communication (Steinberg, 2007).
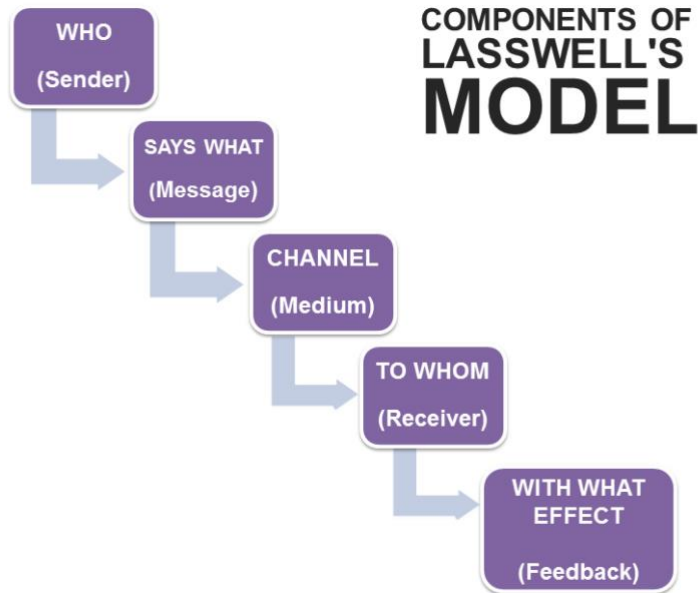

FIGURE 1. COMPONENTS OF LASSWELL'S MODEL (Steinberg, 2007).

It is important to notice that this particular process concentrates on the individual components of the communication process and highlight that the different components happen in a specific chain which starts with the communicator and lastly ends with the recipient. Lasswell sees communication as a one-way process where the communicator affects others with his/her message (Steinberg, 2007).

Shannon and Weavers view of communication is in essence interested in finding solutions to problems with the signal transmission through engineering. The most important mission is to solve how the communication channels can be used most efficiently. In other words, Shannon and Weavers model of communication concentrates on how to send most amount of information through a certain channel (Steinberg, 2007).
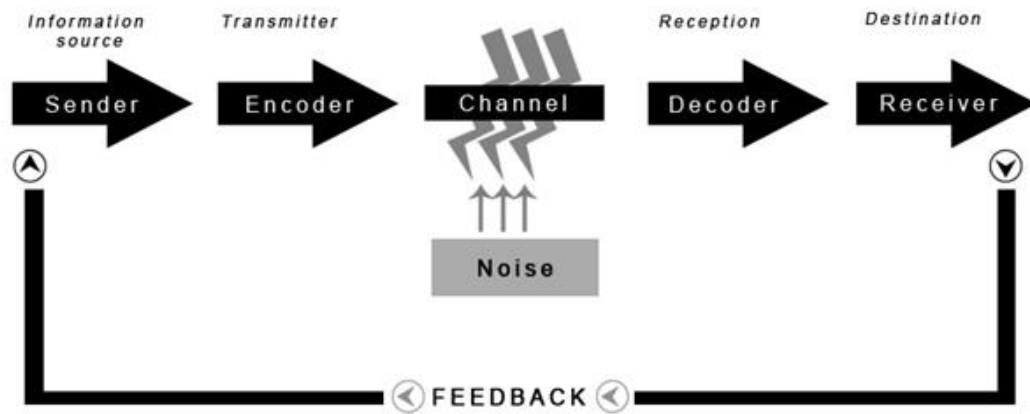
SHANNON-WEAVER'S MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

FIGURE 2. Shannon- Weaver's Model of Communication. (Communication theory, N.d.)

Shannon and Weaver's model, like Lasswell's, shows a sequential process in which each step of the communication process is precisely described. The consequences of the communication and the recipient's comprehension of the message are also highlighted by Shannon and Weaver's approach (Steinberg, 2007).

A more contemporary model is the Transactional Model of Communication proposed by Dean Barnlund. Barnlund created the model in 1970 and it can be seen as a feedback system with multiple layers. In other words, communication is an unbroken process where both the sender and receiver of the message are equally as important. According to Barnlunds model communication should be provided by both parties constantly. There are behavioral clues, private cues, and public cues, according to Barnlund (Businesstopia, 2018). Although we can give vocal feedback, how others receive our messages depends equally on our nonverbal communication, such as our tone of voice, eye contact, facial expressions, and gestures. We also read the nonverbal cues given by others (Wrench, Jason S.; Punyanunt-Carter, Narissra M.; and Thweatt, Katherine S, 2020).
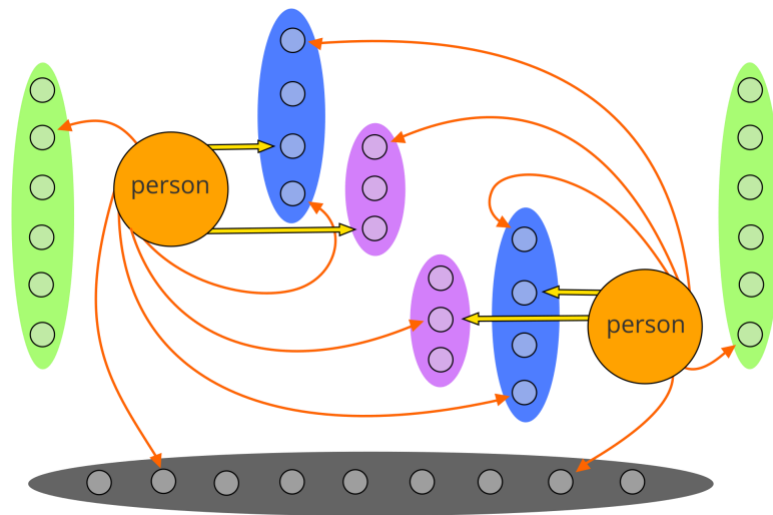
FIGURE 3. Barnlund's model of interpersonal communication (Wikipedia, n.d.).

The communicators are represented by the orange circles. The other colored regions represent other cue types. Communication involves encoding behavioral reactions (yellow arrows) and decoding cues (orange arrows) (Wikipedia, n.d).

There are two types of communication: external and internal communication. External communication is the transmission of information about a company to outside stakeholders, including clients, vendors, investors, and the general public. It is possible to implement external communication, for instance by using print media, television, press releases, events, and websites. Internal communication thus refers to the exchange of information between team members or organizational units. This thesis will focus on internal communication.

2.3.2   Internal communication

Internal communication has been defined as "managing interdependence and building mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and its employees" (Men and Bowen, 2017, 12).

Internal communication involves discussion between co-workers and the management, before and during change, during crises and other situations. As well as participation, transparency and dialogue, these are all something that internal communication requires. Since internal communication includes many

facets such as work-relates, social, formal, informal, vertical and horizontal-working with it can be challenging.

Internal communication is described as ''Strategic internal communication is the conscious and constantly reflective work with communication in the organization that supports, drives, develops and changes the strategic direction of the organization.'' in the book Strategic Internal Communication. A Practitioner's Guide to Implementing Cutting-Edge Methods for Improved Workplace Culture (Dahlman and Heidi, 2020).

Internal communication usually has a bad reputation, mostly because the role is misunderstood. Employees often feel that internal communicators only propagate the ideas that business leaders want the public to think. It may be interpreted as an effort to foster a sense of belonging and establish a culture among employees (Meister, 2021)

Active and honest internal communication is essential. If it is effective, it inspires, engages, and produces outcomes. Running daily operations and creating strong organizations depend on effective internal communication. Effective internal communication is all about motivating managers and employees to contribute towards achieving the organization's goal and all employees are able to fulfil their full potential when the internal communication is successful. In addition, a flourishing internal communication allows employees to be involved in decision making but also gives them the chance to co-create success within the organization. Also, effective leadership and collaboration are made possible through a working internal communication system. Dahlman and Heidi, 2020).

If the internal communication is poor it can reduce the desire of engagement and job satisfaction. It can also cause territorial behaviour among different departments. Organizations should consider if the most important thing is whether to have the most technologically advanced channels to help the internal communication or to focus more on the goals, needs and conditions of the employees. It is crucial to pay attention to the messages or the questions and facts, that the business need to be aware of. As a conclusion more, time and

attention should be paid on discussion and comprehension (Dahlman and Heidi, 2020).

2.3.3   Communication channels

Email

The most popular method of electronic communication between a corporation and its workforce is email. Email typically serves two basic functions: one-way information exchange and interactive message exchange. Email is mostly utilized in businesses to communicate vital information as well as general information. (Juholin, 2013, 222) Communicating by e-mail has made it possible for engagement and information exchange to no longer be confined to one location, but rather are always available in real-time. Although if email has its benefits, it also has drawbacks. The amount of emails can increase owing to the simplicity and speed of information transmission, and needless or less important emails may cause vital communications to be overlooked or lost for extended periods of time. The efficiency that email offers may be diminished by the volume of communications. (Juholin, 2009. 177-178.)

Face to face meeting

Internal communication, which is considered to be the most valued type of communication, operates most quickly and efficiently when done face-to-face. By communicating face-to-face, the information affects the audience right away, and you may get more specific information right away if you need it. As a result, there is very little chance that the workers will be confused. There are two types of face-to-face communication: remote and near. We are in line of sight when communicating remotely, yet there is a mental barrier. Meetings, negotiations, and debates conducted via electronic communication channels are a few examples of these events. (Juholin, 2013, 409.) According to a study made by the Harvard Business Review, employees are more likely to perform the task when they were asked in a face to face meeting than if they were to be asked over email (Bohn, 2017).

Meetings and conferences

Every work community's communication system includes meetings. Meetings are more official, and serious problems are frequently discussed in them. (Juholin, 2013, 220 -222.) Meetings and conferences are crucial communication channels that simultaneously bring essential information to the attention of all staff members. Every company should have a meeting schedule, frequency, and agenda. Meetings are often scheduled once a week, once a month, and once a year. Meetings and workshops ensure that everyone will receive the same information. In order for those who were unable to attend the meeting to obtain official information about the topics and decisions that were discussed there, the material must also be made available in other ways, such as by email or a bulletin board. (Juholin, 2013 220-222)

Online communication

Online communication, often known as digital communication, has become quite important in businesses. Network communication describes the technology resources that an organization's members use to communicate with one another. (Juholin, 2009, 172-176.) The number of communication channels available online requires the development of an effective communication strategy. The goal of the plan is to determine which online communication channels support daily communication within the organization the most successfully. (Juholin, 2013, 310-315). The competency of the staff must be regularly improved in order to maximize the benefits of digital communication (Juholin, 2013, 313). The main benefit of online communication is its lack of commitment to a particular location. This indicates that neither time nor location affect the sending or receipt of messages. The ability to swiftly and simply communicate a message to a large group of people at once increases efficiency inside the workplace. (Juholin, 2009, 95–98)

The benefit of electronic communication is that documents can be saved. This means that the informed information is saved in the memory of the electronic means of communication and can be accessed later if needed. Trust is the

fundamental requirement for effective online communication. Many organizations train their employees in online communication operating methods and security practices. (Åberg 2006, 113-117.)

2.3.4 The effect of communication on well-being at workplace

Supporting employee mental health is becoming a higher priority for many businesses due to the significant impact it has on both workers and organizational performance. Organizations are grounded in a set of values by their purpose, and employees increasingly want to work for a company whose values align with their own (Meister, 2021)

Employees thrive at work in a supportive environment where coworkers encourage one another and respond to one another with empathy (Colbert et al., 2016). Employees can benefit from internal communication with their peers by developing supportive peer relationships that are characterized by task assistance, emotional support, and giving to others. It has been discovered that these social resources are connected to a variety of employee outcomes, including organizational commitment (Colbert et al., 2016).

When employees get their voices heard it can also boost engagement. Higher involvement is more likely in a workplace that encourages two-way communication between coworkers and also between coworkers and management.

2.4 Working methods and data

This thesis is a case study using both qualitative and quantitative research and data collecting methods. Research techniques that gather and analyze numerical data are categorized as quantitative research methods. The term "qualitative research" refers to a broad range of non-numerical research techniques. A survey will be used to gather the data for this thesis. In other words, the data will include anonyms answers given from the employees of the case company. The overall view of how the employees see the current state of the internal communication

and how they would improve it will be answered through the survey. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be produced by the survey. The responses to open-ended questions will comprise the qualitative data. A MS forms survey is conducted and sent to the employees of the case company since not many of the employees work at the same time or even at the same location. Making a face-to-face interview would have been too time consuming since the working hours for everyone differs too much.

When conducting an internal communication plan for an employer it is important to understand what is an effective and employee friendly way of communicating. Through research this thesis is seeking answers to questions such as: What is the problem with the internal communication at the moment? What can the employer do to make it better? How does internal communication affect the well-being of the employees?

2.5 Thesis process

The structure of the thesis will begin with an introduction of the topic and in the second chapter the theoretical framework is established. The theoretical framework, in other words thesis plan will explain the objectives and purpose of this thesis and in addition the theories and methods used in the study. The third chapter will include an introduction of the case company, Tanssistudio Razzmatazz, its history and practices. The study includes both qualitative and quantitative data collection and these will be introduced in the fourth chapter, along with the analysis of the research. By using the data from the research, chapter five will incorporate recommendations and guidelines fort the case company and the conclusion.

3   CASE COMPANY

3.1   Tanssistudio Razzmatazz

Tanssistudio Razzmatazz was founded in 2002 and became an independent dance association in 2004. The company's entrepreneurs Anna Kuulusa and Enja Mörsky wanted to establish a dance school that offers positive and high-quality teaching to everyone. The fundamental purpose of the founding was to establish a community where everyone, regardless of age or ability level, would have the chance to learn. For dancers, the dance studio has evolved over time into a second home where the whole family frequently attends classes. Tanssistudio Razzmatazz offers various services, in addition to regular dance lessons, the customer can buy private lessons, dance performances, etc. for company events, dance birthdays for children and PR services.

The operations are distinguished by a supportive environment, attention to individual needs, group activities, a lively dancing environment throughout the season and numerous performances for all enthusiasts. The company's goal is to become a dominant dance studio in Tampere, to train and develop talented dancers and most importantly to spread the joy and fun of dance to all enthusiasts. Addition to this, the purpose is to grow the customer base, develop the dance teacher's professionalism and become an attractive employer for dance teachers.

The firm employs two teachers full-time who are also the company's owners. In addition to these two full-time instructors, the firm employs 34 temporary instructors, all of whom have training in dance and teaching expertise and one office assistant. Approximately 1400 people are now enrolled in dancing courses at the dance facility. Customers taking dance lessons range in age from 1 year old to 69 years old, and there are courses for each age bracket. The majority of the business's clients are kids and teenagers. The company's revenue was approximately 600 000€ and profit 1000€ in 2022.

3.2   HR and communications

Since the company is rather small there are no separate departments for the human resources, communications, marketing or accounting. Accounting and payroll are mostly outsourced. Most of the employees are young women and the variability among the employees is relatively small. Most of the employees only work part-time while studying or working on another field fulltime

Both internal and external communications are handled by the company's owners along with the office assistant. Social media is handled by one of the dance teachers. External communication currently extends to Facebook, Instagram and E-mail. In urgent matters text messages are used. Tanssistudio Razzmatazz does not provide email accounts to every employee or work phones. WhatsApp and Facebook messages are mostly used among the employees for internal communication. Currently there are no guidelines or instructions on how the internal and external communication should be handled.

One of Tanssistudio Razzmatazz most important values are their employee well-being and they aspire be an excellent workplace. They offer yearly training and education such as lectures about antiracism and employee well-being. The number one goal is to have teachers and instructors who are competent to teach and support kids and young students.

At present the company does not have a strategy for HR or their internal and external communication. Effective internal communication will most likely help to create a positive work environment and culture. The company has challenges in all of these areas but this thesis will focus on their internal communication.

4 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Research objectives

The main research objective of this thesis was to learn more about the current state of the internal communication at Tanssistudio Razzmatazz from the employee point of view. Another objective was to understand what the employer could do better regarding the internal communication from employee perspective. It is also important to understand what could be done in general to improve the internal communication. Obtaining answers to the research questions and fusing theory and concepts with the investigation were two additional goals. The research will help determine the current state and the challenges that the present internal communication has.

4.2 Data collection

The survey was sent out on the 14th of April and it was sent to a WhatsApp group where all the employees are. The questionnaire had 14 mandatory questions and nearly half of the respondents completed the survey on the first day of the five-day response period. The survey had 34 recipient and 19 responded. Due to its simplicity and clarity, 365 Forms was used to create the questionnaire. The questionnaire was written in English. The survey was supposed to be available in both Finnish and English, however due to scheduling constraints, it was only done in English. More language options could have had an impact on the questionnaire's response rate and outcomes. In the qualitative question some of the answers were in Finnish and they are therefore translated by the author. Anonymous responses to the questionnaire prevented linking the responses to the respondents. The average response time for the survey was 8minutes and 20 seconds.

4.3 Quantitative data

Thirteen questions were used to collect the research's quantitative data. The quantitative questions were designed to gather information about the current

state of the internal communication but also to find out how the employees would want the communication to be conducted. No questions about the age or gender were asked to maintain the anonymity in the research.

How informative was your induction?

The purpose of this question was to find out how employees employee life cycle began at the company. An effective induction program assists new employees in settling in and learning about the organization, its culture and policies. An induction program should provide a full review of the critical knowledge that the employee will require to carry out their tasks. Induction can thus be seen as an important factor of how the internal communication is carried out in the beginning (BellCornwall, n.d.).

None of the recipient thought that the induction was not informative at all. Most recipients 53% answered that the induction was okay. 37% of the employees thought that induction was very informative and 11% wished that it could have been more informative.

1. How informative was your induction (perehdytys)?

Lisätietoja   Oivallukset

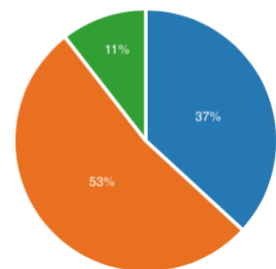|		
● Very informative	7	
● It was okay	10	
● I wish it was more informative	2	
● Not informative at all	0	

FIGURE 4. Question 1. How informative was your induction (perehdytys)?

When informing employees, I wish it would be done through?

The second question of the interview gathered information about through what channel would the employees want to be informed. Six different options were given and the recipients were able to choose a maximum of 3 different options. The options were channels that the company uses at the moment.

All 19 respondents would prefer the communication to be via message to WhatsApp group, and 13 out of 19 would also prefer a personal WhatsApp message. None of the respondents would want the communication to be done through Facebook and only 1 respondent would prefer a zoom meeting. Both email and face to face meeting where also popular answers, out of the 19 respondents' email was selected 7 times and face to face meeting 11 times.
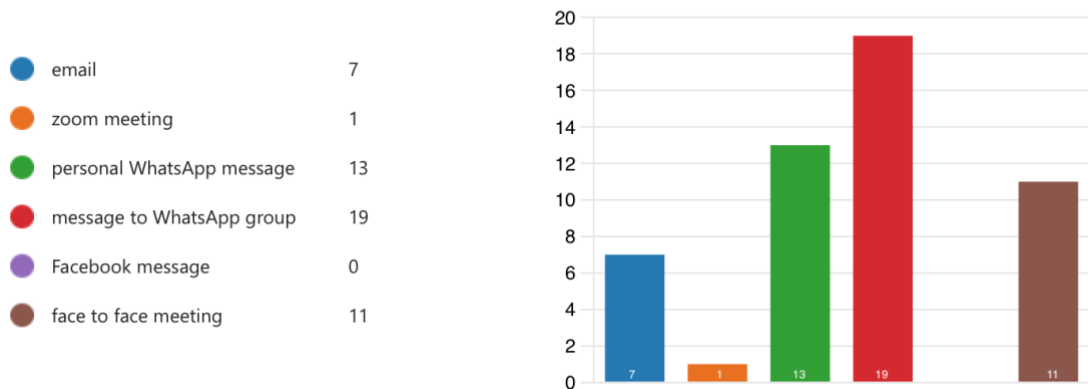

FIGURE 5. Question 2. When informing employees I wish it would be done throught?

At what time do you wish your employer or colleagues to contact you?

Currently there are no usual ''working hours'' at the company so this question was asked to help manage a timeframe for the working hours. As mentioned before there are no guidelines for the internal communication and it could be beneficial to make up a suitable agreement for the working hours. According to Occupational safety and health it is important when signing the employment contract to agree on the working hours (Työsuojelu, 2022).

This question had a lot of dispersion. 32% of the respondents would prefer the working hours to be from 10am to 6pm and as a close second 29% of the respondents would prefer from 2pm to 8pm. 26% of the respondents answered 8am to 4pm and only 13% would prefer 8pm to 12am.

3. At what time do you wish your employer or colleagues to contact you?

Lisätietoja

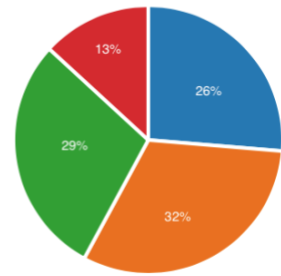|		
🔵	8:00-16:00	10
🟠	10:00-18:00	12
🟢	14:00-20:00	11
🔴	18:00-00:00	5

FIGURE 6. Question 3. At what time do you wish your employer or colleagues to contact you?

Do you know who to contact regarding payroll issues?

This question was asked to get an overview of how well the employees know who is in charge of what within the company. Salary and payroll information that is widely available can provide intelligence to employees and allowing them to make key career decisions. If employees believe that they are being underpaid it should be brought up with their manager and enquire as why (Kelly, 2019). This question is partly linked to the question about inductions, since informing employees well enough for them to know who is in charge of what is vital.

Most of the respondents which accounts for 15 recipients out of 19 answered that they know who to contact regarding payroll issues, only 1 respondent did not know who to contact and 3 respondents are not completely sure.

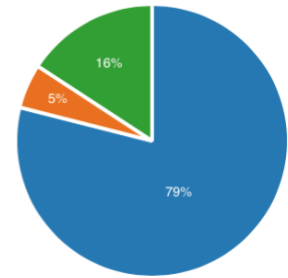4. Do you know who to contact regarding payroll (palkka-asiat) issues?

FIGURE 7. Question 4. Do you know who to contact regarding payroll (palkka-asiat) issues?

Do you know who to contact regarding absence/sick leave?

Fifth question is very similar to the question before, the main reason for this question was to get an overview of how well the employees have been informed of the different areas in HR during their induction. According to the Employment Contracts Act, an employee who is unable to work is entitled to sick pay if her/his work has been prevented due to illness or an accident. If the employee follows variable working hours, the employee is entitled to sick pay when the work shift related to the time of incapacity for work is entered in the work shift list, it has been agreed otherwise, or it can be considered clear that, given the circumstances, the employee would have been at work if he was able to work (Työsuojelu, 2022).

Occupational health care belongs to all employees at work, regardless of the quality and duration of the employment relationship. Occupational health care is an activity that is organized and paid for by the employer (Työsuojelu,2022).

If it is clear for the employee who to contact when it comes to sick leaves they could discover that the employer's assistance can help them cope with their illness and adjust their workload.

As in the previous question most of the respondents know who to contact having 74% answered ''yes'' and only 5% do not know who to contact. 21% of the respondents are not sure.

5. Do you know who to contact regarding absence/sick leave?

Lisätietoja   💡 Oivallukset

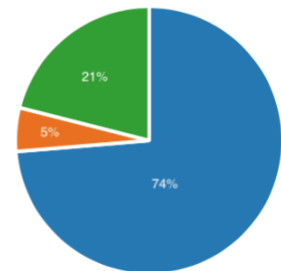|		
🔵 Yes	14	
🟠 No	1	
🟢 Maybe	4	

FIGURE 8. Question 5. Do you know who to contact regarding absence/sick leave?

Should there be more information about current matters (such as offers, Christmas/Sprig show?)

The sixth question was asked to gain knowledge whether the employees feel like they are being informed enough of the annual Christmas and spring shows. Also, since there is currently no marketing team who would inform the employees of campaigns and offers this question was asked to gather information if there would be a need for a marketing team.

This question shared opinions, 9 of the respondents thought that there should not be more information provided by the employer, 6 of the respondents are not completely sure and 4 respondents is of the opinion that there should be more information on current matters.

6. Should there be more information about current matters (such as offers, Christmas/Spring show?)

Lisätietoja

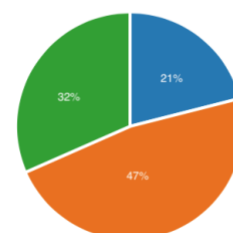|		
🔵 Yes	4	
🟠 No	9	
🟢 Maybe	6	

FIGURE 9. Question 6. Should there be more information about current matters (such as offers, Christmas/Spring show?)

Should there be less messaging of information given?

Information overload is an issue that affects businesses as well as everyday life for most people. Making decisions but remaining productive at the same time are both impacted by dealing with too much information. In today's world it can be challenging to avoid the constant stream of emails, communications and social media.

89% of the respondents said that there should not be less information given overall and 11% thought that maybe. None of the respondents said that there should absolutely be less messaging or information given.

7. Should there be less messaging or information given?

Lisätietoja

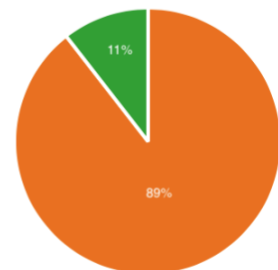|	
🔵 Yes	0
🟠 No	17
🟢 Maybe	2

FIGURE 10. Question 7. Should there be less messaging or information given?

Does the amount of messages cause you stress?

Not only does information overload weaken the decision-making but it can cause employees to feel overly overwhelmed and worried. The company aims to be a workplace were employees well-being is a number on priority and this question was asked to gain information about the current state of employee's stress level.

This was another question that shared opinions which is understandable since people experience things differently. Most of the respondents (37%) answered

that the number of messages rarely causes stress but then again 26% of the respondents answered that it does sometimes. 16% of the respondents answered that the number of messages often causes stress and 5% that it always causes stress. Lastly 16% of the respondents answered that it never causes stress to the employer.

8. Does the amount of messages cause you stress?

Lisätietoja	Oivallukset	
● Always	1	
● Often	3	
● Sometimes	5	
● Rarely	7	
● Never	3	

FIGURE 11. Question 8. Does the amount of messages cause you stress?

Do you get the answers to your questions in time?

The ninth question was asked to get an overview of if the employees get answers to their questions in time. Not having different departments or areas of responsibilities can cause confusion and that the question gets lost when it bounces from different employees looking for the answer.

Most of the respondents answered (53%) ''often'' and second most popular answer was ''always'', which got 32% of the answers. 11% of the respondents answered ''sometimes'' and 5% ''rarely''. None of the respondents answered that they never get answered in time.

9. Do you get the answers to your questions in time?

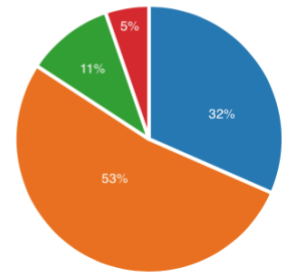| Lisätietoja		
🔵 Always	6	
🟠 Often	10	
🟢 Sometimes	2	
🔴 Rarely	1	
🟣 Never	0	

FIGURE 12. Question 9. Do you get the answers to your questions in time?

How often do you have a one on one discussion with your employer?

When reviewing internal communication is feedback a vital part of it. Having one on one discussions is a key component of a successful ongoing feedback model. One on one meetings allow staff members the chance to discuss potential challenges or issues with their supervisor as they come up. Since there are no communication guidelines this question will provide knowledge of how often the employees have a one on one discussion with the employer.

The answers to this question indicate that there is no plan or schedule from the employer's perspective when it comes to scheduling one on one discussions with their employees. 32% of the respondents according to the survey has a one on one discussion with the employer every week and at the same time 26% of the respondents answered that they only have this type of meeting on a yearly basis. 21% of the respondents answered that they have a one on one meeting on a monthly basis, 5% of the respondents answered ''daily'' and up to 16% says that they have never had a one on one meeting.

10. How often do you have a one on one discussion with your employer?

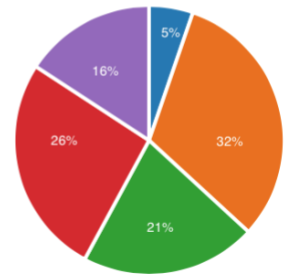|		
●	Daily	1
●	Weekly	6
●	Monthly	4
●	Yearly	5
●	Never	3

FIGURE 13. Question 10. How often do you have a one on one discussion with your employer?

Would you want there to be more one on one discussions with your employer?

It is shown that employers or managers who do not hold one on one meetings frequently enough or who manage them poorly run the risk of emotionally separating their team members (Rogelberg, 2022). There is no one-size-fits-all amount of one on one meetings that should held but this question will provide information whether the employees would prefer more one on one meetings with their employer.

Out of the 19 respondents 9 answered that they would want to have more one on one discussions with their employer and up to 5 respondents answered that they do not want to have more discussions. Another 5 respondents were not sure and answered thus ''maybe''.

11. Would you want there to be more one on one discussions with your employer?

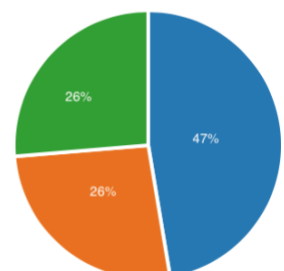|		
●	Yes	9
●	No	5
●	Maybe	5

FIGURE 14. Questions 11. Would you want there to be more one discussions with your employer?

Should there be more general info sessions/meetings about current matters, changes etc.) provided by the employer?

Internal communication can be provided through messages or emails or in a face to face meeting. This question was asked to gather information whether employees would prefer more face to face meetings when it comes to current matters.

The majority (47%) of the respondents agreed that there should be more general info sessions or meeting held about current matters, 32% were not completely sure whether they would want to have more meetings.
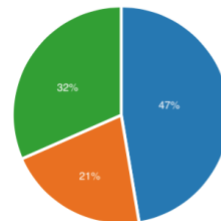

FIGURE 15. Questions 12. Should there be more general info sessions/meeting (about current matters, changes etc.) provided by the employer?

How would you rate the level of internal communication right now?

42% of the respondents would rate the internal communication currently as ''above average'' and ''37%'' as average. Up to 16% rates he internal communication at same time as 5% rates it as below average. None of respondents rated the internal communication as very poor.

13. How would you rate the level of of internal communication right now?

Lisätietoja   Oivallukset

🔵 Very poor	0	
🟠 Below average	1	
🟢 Average	7	
🔴 Above average	8	
🟣 Good	3	

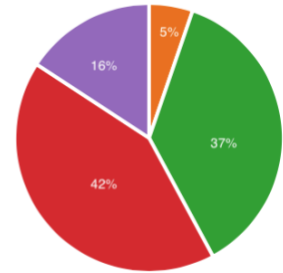FIGURE 16. Question 13. How would you rate the level of internal communication right now?

4.4 Qualitative data

In this survey there was only one qualitative question. Qualitative data can be extremely diverse but what they all have in common is that the data is always examples of human communication. Most of this data is translated to written text for convenience's sake and when analyzing there is usually a substantial amount of material (Gibbs 2007).

How would you improve the communication?

This question aimed to find out how the employees would improve the communication. There were a few answers that indicated that everything currently works well and that they would not change anything or want to improve the communication. One respondent pointed out that the communication has improved compared to how it used to be but still there is a problem with the information flow. There are also many things that are discussed with some of the employees face-to-face and in passing, in which case the information does not reach everyone. Communication should be more up-to-date and equal.

Another common answer or subject was the possibility of having a work phone. The work messages that now comes to the employees' personal phones are a burden, one respondent suggests that it would be good to either find a new channel for this or a specific agreed time when general matter is informed.

Another respondent says that there are currently too many discussion groups and in many different applications. This would require clarity. Would it be possible to offer employees a work phone and a telephone subscription if a large part of the phone's capacity goes to work matters and work-related applications? One respondent points out that number of messages regarding internal communication is not as stressful as the number of messages that comes from students and their guardians to employees own phone. Clearer communication channels and instructions for times could also help in structuring the work and easing workload.

Transparency was a topic that a few mentioned in their answers. The internal communication from the employer is not seen as transparent at the moment. Respondents mention the collective agreement, sick leave, evening allowances, weekend allowances and occupational health. These are all topics that according to these respondents has never been mentioned by the employer. In addition to this, a more open discussion about salary would be preferable.

The main topic that came up was the need of a schedule or guidelines so that employees feel like everything is under control. Too often the discussion happens with only a few people or in certain groups, in this case one respondent suggests that the employer would make sure that everyone gets the information. Informing about future issues in time, e.g. by means of some kind of summary would ease the stress of employees and if the information would reach all employees in advance situations where the students know more than the employee would be avoided.

Some respondents negatively highlighted the internal communication with the employer. Some suggest that the employer's responses to messages should be improved. Respondents say that they do not always get answers to questions, or the tone of the answers may be such that raises the courage to ask. Respondents also point out that if the employer would communicate more with their employees and always include everyone in the discussion that would make the employees feel more like they belong to the group. Employer should provide a more detailed instructions for messages. That is, for example, a notification in messages about

whether you must respond to the message somehow and how urgently you must respond.

4.5   Validity, reliability and limitations

The ability of the research to measure what is willing to be measured is a sign of its validity. This indicates that the research respondents comprehended the questionnaire's questions because they responded in the manner that the researcher had anticipated (Vilkka, 2021).

In the qualitative research paradigm, reliability and validity are again taken into consideration. They are also frequently used in quantitative research. Reliability and validity should be reformulated for use in a naturalistic approach because they have a positivist foundation. Triangulation, which is used in quantitative research to test reliability and validity, can shed light on some ways to test or maximize the reliability and validity of a qualitative study. This is similar to how reliability and validity as used in quantitative research are providing a springboard to examine what these two terms mean in the qualitative research paradigm. Because there are many different approaches to determine truth, dependability and validity need to be reinterpreted, especially from a qualitative perspective (Golafshani, 2003).

A survey on 365 Forms was used to acquire the data for this thesis. The survey was distributed to a broad number of people rather than being sent to specific individuals, and responses were submitted anonymously. No specific person can be named. The theoretical framework for this thesis is based on reliable sources including articles, books, and survey results. A survey about internal communication had never done before for Tanssistudio Razzmatazz which states that the analytical part has not been proven by another author or researcher.

The main limitation was lack of time. There was a lot of work to be done, and the schedule was very constrained. The respondents only had a total of 5 days to answer the survey but if there had been more time, a bigger population might have been guaranteed. Another limitation was the language used in the survey. Most of the employee's native language is Finnish, but the survey was written in

English because the author wanted to avoid having to translate everything. When written text is translated there is a chance that the data analysis and conclusion would not be accurate or be misinterpreted.

4.6   Sampling

Sampling is the process of choosing a sample from a population to be utilized in the research process. The sample is the group of units obtained as a result of the sampling procedure. Sampling is a catch-all phrase for a variety of techniques that can be used to choose a sample. Sampling techniques are essential to doing research because they determine how much generalization is possible beyond the scope of the current study (O'Dwyer & Bernauer, 2014).

The target population of this study were all the employees currently working at Tanssistudio Razzmatazz and the expected number of survey replies was set to 20 replies. The survey was distributed to all the employees in the company except for the employer and office assistant, since she is the author of the thesis. All in all, the survey was sent to a total of 34 people. 19 persons in total replied to the survey. Hence, the response rate is 55,88%. No restrictions were applied to the selected respondents such as employment type or length or working history at Tanssistudio Razzmatazz. Even if the sample size is relatively small, certain generalizations can be made as a result of how similar many answers are.

4.7   Research ethics

Research ethics include the norms of planning, conducting and reporting of research. It is important to know that the ethics should include protection of human and animal subjects. The encouragement of research that guards the interests of general public, study participants, and the researcher themselves is what the field of research ethics is meant to cover (Kalichman, 2010).

The ethical implications of research have been considered when writing this thesis, gathering sources, conducting, and analyzing the survey. Additionally,

TAMK's research ethical rules have been adhered together with the Razzmatazz Tanssistudio's norms. The contract between the student, case company supervisor and thesis supervisor at TAMK confirmed the ethical aspect of this study. The purpose of the contract was to obtain approval to undertake research on behalf of the organization. Sine the study used Tanssistudio Razzmatazz's data and workers, it was utterly important that the responsible person inside the company had to approve it.

The survey's questions were carefully picked to reflect the thesis's goal and purpose. Everyone who responded to the survey did so willingly. Before responding, everyone was made aware of the survey's concept and goal. When conducting the survey confidentiality and anonymity had to be ensured. The survey was done via 365 Forms and the admin and creator cannot see the user name for the anonymous responses when using Microsoft Forms' anonymous function to share a form.

5   DISCUSSION

5.1   Current situation analysis

It is essential to determine the existing condition of the communication in order to respond to the primary research question, "How to improve the internal communication at the company?". The survey consisting of both quantitative and qualitative questions with its answers provided an adequate overview of the current situation.

The answers to the quantitative questions made it seem that the present state of the internal communication is somewhat clear and that the employees are satisfied. Employees know who to contact in different situations, for example when they are absent or when they have questions about the payroll. Most of the employee's state that they often or always get answers to their questions in time and have one on one meetings with their employer on a weekly basis. Up to 42% of the employees rated the internal communication above average which means that almost half of the respondents have more positive than negative experiences with the internal communication, this can be seen as a relatively high grade.

The qualitative question ''how would you improve the communication'' gave more of a realistic overview of the current situation. Qualitative questions help answer the question ''why'' and through them it is easier to gain context about the quantifiable data. Many employees came up with topics that were not included in the research questions such as transparency and employee participation. Some respondents highlighted that the responsibility of getting the message to everyone and including everyone is on the employer. Employees would appreciate if they felt more like belonging to the group. This subject did not only concern the employer but the overall collective spirit could be improved if the communication between employees and also between employees and employer would improve.

Transparency about working hours, benefits, compensation and collective agreement was mentioned as something that had not been communicated well enough. A common factor in many answers were that the stress is mostly due to the fact that the communication is not open and in time, many say that the number

one stress factor is having to communicate with student and their guardians at unreasonable hours.

5.2 Employee participation

When employees surpass knowledge that could help the organization is often called ass ''Organizational silence''. There are many reasons to why employees rather stay silent than open up to their employer. Occasionally, of course, it's because they fear punishment: upsetting the manager or employer can result to the person getting fired. The majority of silence, however, is related to more routine but not necessarily less important matters; by far, the most silent circumstances are concerning more high-stakes but not necessarily less relevant concerns. Employees frequently feel they have little to gain, or possibly anything to lose (status, a promotion, a raise), by pursuing their suggestions for resolving issues, enhancing procedures, or otherwise assisting the firm in competing (Detert, 2010).

A common misunderstanding is when managers believe that by having an open-door policy or by saying ''you can call anytime'' is enough to promote employee participation. However, a research done by Harvard Business Review demonstrates that these types of measures are insufficient because they are passive and call for employees to start the conversation. Therefore, workers understand that speaking up costs effort and may even be risky. Employees are considerably more likely to be candid when their advice is requested (Detert, 2010).

Some of the answers highlighted that employees feel like they are not part of the work community. This can be seen as a factor that needs to be sorted out by not only the employer but also the employees. All employees should be responsible for making one another feel secure and welcomed at their workplace. Employer could for example provide kick offs, team day's or other activities with the employees to improve the team spirit and work community. Many respondents highlighted that they wish to be more included in the conversation and that many discussions are held in smaller groups which results in confusion and uncertainty. At present there seems to be a prevailing situation where employees are too

afraid to ask or comment. Respondents did not give reasons to why they are too afraid to ask or have discussions with their employer. Out of all the respondents 47% would want to have more one on one discussion with their employer, hence there would be a niche for more scheduled one on one meetings with a topic plan. It is also important that the manager or employer know what question to ask in order to lead and open the conversation.

5.3   Transparency

''A lack of transparency results in distrust and a deep sense of insecurity'' - Dalai Lama

As mentioned before, the concept of communication is vast. Speaking, writing, and active listening – basically any action that express your thoughts – fall under this category. It is often reported that managers that have a strategic mindset have all of the necessary communication abilities. They read frequently and widely. They approach individuals and solicit their opinions. Managers with great communication skills. When communication is honest and genuine it is more believable, more frequently heard but also regarded as more reliable. Many effective leaders are not only clear communicators but also excellent listeners. Effective leaders can be identified since their messages are unambiguous, direct and constant. Success in managing and leading as well as building trust others requires open and honest communication (Berkeley, N.d).

Despite appearing simple, transparent communication can be challenging. When the truth is unfavorable or makes us look terrible, there is a tendency to avoid it. Being truthful is more challenging when there is not a foundation of trust (Berkeley, N.d).

Some respondents mentioned that the general discussion should be more open and include all employees. This would reduce confusion and hearsay, if all the employees would hear about upcoming events and all the details it would ease the workload since employees could prepare in advance. Employees currently perceive that many discussions are held in smaller groups or useful information

is given when quickly passing by, instead everything should be written down and the information should be shared to everyone at the same time. It would desirable for the employer to look critically on the communication since some employees currently perceive the answers as rude or impassive, this makes the employees feel like their questions are not important and worst-case scenario they stop asking questions or start conversations.

Transparency regarding compensation and payroll issues was brought up in some answers. Employees are no satisfied with the communication from the employer concerning this topic. Respondents point out that the rights that they have as employees are not fully obeyed by the employer. There should be more discussion in regards of different compensation such as, evening and weekend allowance. One respondent points out that should the employer not provide occupational health care and a paid sick leave. According to the Finnish Occupational safety and health (Työsuojelu, 2022) and Employment Contract Act, an employee who is unable to work is entitled to sick pay if the work is being prevented due to illness or an accident. In accordance with the law, sick pay is provided for the day of illness, if the employee's absence prevented them from working that day, as well as for any working days that fall within the next nine business days. Transparency can thus be seen as the biggest weakness the company currently has, employers should involve the employees more and provide them with the necessary information that every employee is entitled to.

5.4 Current communication channels

When planning or deciding internal communication guidelines it is beneficial to start by choosing the right channels. The most well-known and often used internal communication method is undoubtedly email. Email is flexible and user-friendly and can be applied to a wide range of situations such as when sending meeting invitations or information about current matters. Email is also a tool for two-way communication. The downside with email is that not employee's might not have a quick access to their email inbox. SMS text messaging can be seen as a quicker way to inform and reach all employees. If there is a change in schedule or the matter is urgent, there is no faster way to reach employees than by text messaging them. A company website that is exclusively available to workers is

an internal intranet. An intranet can be used to share files, offer various types of information and provide regular updates. Face-to-face conversation can be done either in the same place or virtually through Zoom. When the conversation is done face to face it is interactive and emotions can be easily understood.

A message to WhatsApp group or a personal WhatsApp message were the most common answers in the survey when asked what channel the employees would prefer to be notified through. Zoom meeting and Facebook messages got the least amount of answers. The answer options were all channels that the company uses at the moment.

It goes without saying that if the employees are required to use their own phone to get and share all the information, it is burdensome and creates additional stress.

5.5   Internal communication guidelines

Responds to the survey indicated that the biggest cause of stress currently is not the internal conversation with other employees but between students and their guardians. At the moment the communication depends 100% on the employees own phone. No one is offered working phones which would desirable according to the respondents. Currently the communication happens at all hours of the day and no set working hours have been decided. When deciding the working hours for informing employees and when employees would answer questions from their students there is no on shoe fits all answers. Most of the respondents answered that they would want to be contacted between 10:00-18:00 or 14:00-20:00, this would already create the working hours to a total of 10 hours. It is understandable that when people work or study elsewhere the answers vary from employee to employee depending on their personal life.

Common guidelines and rules for internal communication has to be carefully planned. It would be useful if the employer considered the possibility of offering either work phones or a phone benefit to some employees that currently use most of their time on their mobile phone for working purpose. Even if the employees mostly feel like the stress of too many messages is caused by external

communication rather than internal communication setting working hours would be beneficial. The internal communication channels need to be carefully observed, is WhatsApp the channel or app that should be mostly used between employees, between employees and the employer and when discussing with students? The advantages of WhatsApp are that it is cost-free, there are no ads and it includes secure end-to-end encryption feature but the biggest disadvantage is that it mixes the employees personal life with their work. Even if working hours are settled the employees would still see the incoming text messages from students when they use their phone or answer personal messages on WhatsApp. Current matters and changes should be informed in advance and this would require there to be a communication plan. A communication plan could be done at the start of the season, this way it would be easier for the employees to plan in advance and ease the workload.

5.6 Suggestion for future research and reflection

The research that was used to create this thesis gave adequate insight into how the organization is currently doing in terms of the main objectives and purposes for this thesis. Similar questionnaire or face to face interviews could be conducted to acquire more information in future. The research that has now been made can be seen as a beginning for a deeper analysis and future research may be taken into consideration. The amount of qualitative and open-ended questions may be added in the future based on the results in this thesis. Employees would feel valued and heard if their thoughts and answers would have the ability to influence the results done by the organization. In addition, having more answers would increase the possibilities for generalization.

As for the author of this thesis, the entire process of writing this thesis taught a lot about the topic communication and more specifically organizational communication but also about conducting research. This thesis provided practical information for the commissioner in addition to reaching its purpose and objectives. The current state of the company is being presented and the information that the research results provided can be used in the company in the future. The theoretical framework was combined with the research answers which gave good answers to the research questions. An internet questionnaire was a

suitable method for gathering data from a workplace such as this since the respondents were able to answer the questions regardless of the place and time. This thesis followed the thesis process well despite the tight schedule. If there had been more time, the questions for the research could have been more carefully picked. In addition to this, there could have been more open-ended questions but overall the answers provided a suitable amount of information to answer the research questions.

6 CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Tanssistudio Razzmatazz served as this thesis' commissioning organization. A survey with 13 quantitative questions and 1 qualitative question was sent to the employees at Tanssistudio Razzmatazz to provide complete answers to the objectives and purposes of this thesis that is stated by the commissioner.

''How to improve the internal communication at the organization?'' from the employee perspective at the case company was this thesis' main objective, the two supporting questions were: *''How is the current state of internal communication perceived by the employees in the case company?''* and *''Which communication channels are used and are preferred by the employees?''*. These questions were mainly answered by separating the main issues that the employees have. The main issues were the lack of employee participation, transparency, current communication channels and internal communication guidelines.

If employees are informed about what is happening within the organization and why, it helps to align them. Employees feel valued by their employer when the employer interact with them in an interesting way, and they are more likely to work more efficiently as a result of active communication. Regardless of the news, transparency is something that employees cherish. When employees learn of significant workplace changes through external sources, it conveys a lack of regard or trust. Only through clarity can everyone's position be understood. It's not good news if communications aren't reaching the intended recipient or get lost. Missed information results in errors, which waste time and money. By creating a foundation of shared understanding, information, and knowledge about what other people are doing within the company, internal communication also strengthens relationships amongst employees. In essence, engagement increases productivity and staff retention.

At present the employees are not satisfied with the transparency within the company. There are issues and questions regarding compensation, employee rights and overall communication. The essential information does not reach everyone in time which create an overall confusion among the employees. Employees also feel overwhelmed since working hours usually collide with their

personal life. The employer has not made any clear guidelines or rules for the communication and the top down communication is sometimes seen as rude and impassive. According to the study many employees would value more one on one discussion with the employer to be able to give feedback and share their ideas.

There are a few recommendations to be given to the commissioner. The recommendations are based on the data gathered from the survey responses.

Scheduled meetings in groups as well as individual one on one meetings should be organized. The meetings should have an agenda and a schedule to follow. The employer should make sure that the questions and subjects are presented in way that the employees feel that their opinion is valued. It is recommended that the meetings should focus on a horizontal feedback model instead of top-down model where the employer is only in charge. The meetings should have room for discussion and include feedback both ways. It is important to remember that feedback is not only vocal but the messages that the employer gives out can be received in very different ways depending on the tone of the voice, eye contact and facial expressions. Even if the feedback or information is given with a certain intention it can be perceived in various different means.

Work phones or phone benefit could be discussed with the employees that now feel overwhelmed with the number of messages. This would ease the workload and help separate the employees working life and personal life. Offering more employees, a work email if wanted could also help in case the employee would want the information to be shared to their email instead of text messages. If the employer is unable to provide these benefits it is crucial that the guidelines of working hours are distributes and followed.

At beginning of the season, well planned guidelines for the internal communication as well as external communication should be implemented. A plan where working hours are set should be the number one priority. In this plan it would be essential to list all the upcoming events and make it clear to everyone who is responsible of what and who to ask when it comes to issues such as payroll, sick leave or communication.

Outsourcing the HR could also a be a possible plan for the future. The core of a modern HR system is a digital employee folder, which compiles all the most important information about the employment relationship into a clear entity. Often there is little information and documents related to the employment relationship here and there - in different systems, folders and email. When there is a real need to find this information, it is crucial for everyone that it can be found easily. There are various apps and software's that provide tools for the different areas within HR. The app or software would also increase or help with the transparency when all the given information is in one place available for everyone. Having a separate software for the communication would decrease the stress of having the work life and personal life mixed all in one place.

Overall the internal communication can be seen as average and the issues that were raised to be improved are issues that are very common within the working life nowadays. By investing in the well-being of the employees, by making them feel like they are valued and heard and making clear guidelines there is a great possibility for the organization to improve its internal communication.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Survey questions

🌐 English (United Kin... ∨

Internal communication employee survey

It only takes a few minutes to answer the survey. Your response is highly appreciated. Your experiences and ideas are valuable to us when improving the internal communication. The results will be summarized and published in a thesis. The responses will be dealt with in absolute confidence, and individual responses cannot be identified from the summary.

Hi, Kajsa-Lotta. When you submit this form, the owner will see your name and email address.

* Required

1. How informative was your induction (perehdytys)? *

   ◯ Very informative

   ◯ It was okay

   ◯ I wish it was more informative

   ◯ Not informative at all

2. When informing employees I wish it would be done through? *

   Please select at most 3 options.

   ☐ email

   ☐ zoom meeting

   ☐ personal WhatsApp message

   ☐ message to WhatsApp group

   ☐ Facebook message

   ☐ face to face meeting

3. At what time do you wish your employer or colleagues to contact you? *

Valitse enintään 3 vaihtoehtoa.

- [ ] 8:00-16:00
- [ ] 10:00-18:00
- [ ] 14:00-20:00
- [ ] 18:00-00:00

4. Do you know who to contact regarding payroll (palkka-asiat) issues? *

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No
- ( ) Maybe

5. Do you know who to contact regarding absence/sick leave? *

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No
- ( ) Maybe

6. Should there be more information about current matters (such as offers, Christmas/Spring show?) *

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No
- ( ) Maybe

7. Should there be less messaging or information given? *

○ Yes

○ No

○ Maybe

8. Does the amount of messages cause you stress? *

○ Always

○ Often

○ Sometimes

○ Rarely

○ Never

9. Do you get the answers to your questions in time? *

○ Always

○ Often

○ Sometimes

○ Rarely

○ Never

9. Do you get the answers to your questions in time? *

- ○ Always
- ○ Often
- ○ Sometimes
- ○ Rarely
- ○ Never

10. How often do you have a one on one discussion with your employer? *

- ○ Daily
- ○ Weekly
- ○ Monthly
- ○ Yearly
- ○ Never

11. Would you want there to be more one on one discussions with your employer? *

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Maybe

11. Would you want there to be more one on one discussions with your employer? *

○ Yes

○ No

○ Maybe

12. Should there be more general info sessions/meetings (about current matters, changes etc.) provided by the employer? *

○ Yes

○ No

○ Maybe

13. How would you rate the level of of internal communication right now? *

○ Very poor

○ Below average

○ Average

○ Above average

○ Good

14. How would you improve the communication? *

Kirjoita vastaus