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Meeting Optimizing – A Content-centric Approach to Meeting Effectiveness

Case Danfoss

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Tämä opinnäytetyö tehtiin toimeksiantona Danfoss Oy:lle. Opinnäytetyössä tutkittiin Regional Task Force – kokouksen vanhentunutta asialistaa ja kartoitettiin mahdollisia parannusehdotuksia osallistujille tehtävän kyselyn avulla. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on auttaa toimeksiantajayrityksen alueellista työryhmää Regional Task Force – kokouksen sisällön tarkastelussa ja mukauttamisessa niin, etta se vastaisi paremmin kokouksen osallistujien tarpeita. Tutkimuksen avulla luodaan lisäarvoa kokoukselle ja sen osallistujille sekä tuodaan esille tarkempia näkökulmia kokouksien suunnittelu- ja toteutusprosessista.

Teoreettinen viitekehys koostuu tämän tutkimuksen tarpeisiin liittyvistä käsitteistä. Tähän kuuluu esimerkiksi teoriaa kokouksista, painotuksena verkossa tapahtuvat palaverit, sekä teoriaa kokouksen suunnittelu- ja toteuttamisprosesseista. Tutkimus toteutettiin kvantitatiivisena eli määrällisenä tutkimuksena, jonka tutkimusmetodina kätettiin kyselylomaketta.

Tutkimuksen perusteella Regional Task Force – kokousta on syytä jatkaa. Tämä kuitenkin edellyttää muutoksia asialistaan sekä diaesitykseen. Kyselytutkimuksen tuloksien perusteella osallistujat pitävät kokousta tärkeänä työkaluna niin tiedonsaannin kuin verkostoitumisen väylänä. Kokouksen sisältöön tehtiin muutoksia mm. toimitus- ja saatavuustietojen yksityiskohtaisuuteen sekä lisättiin asialistaan aiheita, jotka osallistavat kokouksen yleisöä.

Avainsanat kokous, tehokkuus, verkkopalaveri, logistiikka

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis was commissioned for Danfoss Oy. In this thesis, the outdated agenda of the Regional Task Force – meeting was studied and possible suggestions for improvement were mapped using a questionnaire for the participants. The aim of the study is to help the commissioning company in reviewing and adapting the content of the meeting so that it better meets the needs of the participants. With the help of the research, added value is created for the meeting and its participants, and more detailed perspectives on the planning and implementation processes are brought up.

The theoretical framework consists of concepts related to the needs of the research. This includes basic theory about meetings with an emphasis on online meeting form, and theory of planning and execution processes. The research was carried out as quantitative research and the research method was a questionnaire.

Based on the research, the Regional Task Force meeting should be continued. However, this requires changes to the agenda and the slide show. Based on the survey results, the participants consider the meeting a valuable tool for obtaining information and networking. Changes made to the content were, for example, more detailed information about the delivery and availability situation and the agenda was modified to be more engaging for the audience.

Keywords meeting, online meeting, efficiency, logistics

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1 INTRODUCTION

Meetings are considered as the foundation of organizational communication. It brings the company and its teams together and builds the corporate spirit. But what are meetings for? While they are a big and important part of many white collar's workday, they are sometimes considered a waste of time. Thousands of unnecessary meetings are held daily around the world and the expectations for them are sometimes exceptionally low. Attending meetings is necessary but the value received from them remains low. Many meeting leaders have a mindset that there is no point in trying to make the sessions engaging or interesting. (Allen & Reed, 2023, Chapter 1.)

Because of the pandemic, the online meeting form has become the new normal. Scheduling an online meeting is easier than ever and that has skyrocketed the number of meetings that people have every week. Even the slightest opportunity for a meeting is used to fill up employees' days with sessions that with a little more consideration could have been an e-mail. (Wilson, 2009, Chapter 1.)

In this developmental work study, the meeting as a concept is defined and the purpose is described. In the literature review, the focus is mostly on the online meeting form. The study will review how to plan and execute an efficient meeting that is engaging and keeps the participants interested. With the help of the literature review and the survey this research will renew the Regional Task Force – meeting by modifying the agenda and slide show to better meet the needs of the participants and add value to their work. This research will also question the need for meetings, especially when the only purpose is to spread information and there is little to no discussion or input from the audience.

Through the survey conducted during this research the needs of the participants will be mapped and they will have an opportunity to give their thoughts and wishes regarding the agenda and slide show. The aim is to cut down on unnecessary information and keep the meeting compact but useful with input from the audience as well.

1.1 Client introduction

Danfoss is a multinational industrial equipment concern based in Nordborg, Denmark. It was founded by a Danish engineer Mads Clausen in 1933. Danfoss employees almost 42 000 people around the world with 97 factories in over 20 different countries. Danfoss manufactures sustainable and energy efficient solutions for different industries like food retail, transport, and construction. Danfoss' core strategy is sustainability. They want to help customers and other stakeholders in the green transition and build a better future for everyone. Danfoss has three different businesses that have a leading position within their markets: Power Solutions, Climate Solutions (Cooling & Heating) and Drives. (Danfoss, 2024)

The whole Danfoss organization is working towards a more efficient tomorrow, and this does not only mean their products. (Danfoss, 2024) With a more efficient way of working comes more efficient products. In today's world, big organizations are estimated to spend over 200 million dollars per year on unnecessary meetings. (Lehmann-Willenbrock, et al., 2017, p. 1) Meetings are a waste of resources too and as an organization that aims to create energy efficient solutions for customers, the work should start from inside the organization. By eliminating unnecessary tasks from employees' workday, they have more time to focus on the important tasks that take the company further. The organization can save money and employees save time and energy by eliminating unnecessary meetings and modifying necessary meetings to be more efficient.

1.2 Background

Regional Task Force – meeting was established right before COVID-19 to communicate with sales and other frontline departments about the delivery situation in the frequency converter factories. Due to material shortages the delivery times of the frequency converters were lengthened by months. All the Danfoss teams working in the client interface had to stay on top of the current situation, so this meeting held a highly significant value especially to sales but also other departments like logistics and customer service. (M. Petersen, private discussion, 12.5.2023)

As the market situation is getting better and settling down this meeting does not hold as much value as it used to. Because of this decrease in value the meeting organizer wanted to have the meeting's content re-evaluated and modified to meet the needs of the participants. It is still considered an important meeting since the competition in the market is getting tougher and delivery times are a particularly valuable tool when the customer is comparing the candidates. (M. Petersen, private discussion, 12.5.2023)

1.3 Research questions and goals

The goal of this thesis is to redesign the Regional Task Force – meeting to better meet the needs of the company and the participants. This involves not only the content but also the slide show and other qualities like timing and the invitation list. This thesis includes the theoretical framework, evaluation of the current state of the meeting, research execution, and applying the research results to produce innovative ideas to transform the meeting agenda and the presentation. The thesis goal is to evaluate if the meeting should still be held and if so, how can it be made worth the time of the participants and how it could lure in more interested people. The research's goal is to bring value not only to the meeting leader and participants but also to the Danfoss organization as an example that old meeting concepts could be transformed to something more interesting and valuable. It is supposed to raise questions and make team leaders challenge their old perceptions about meetings.

This research has been made as an assignment for Danfoss and the main focus is on the Regional Task Force – meeting and how to increase the participation by updating the agenda and slide deck to better answer to the requisites of the current participants and potential new participants. The research questions revolve around these same topics.

1. How can the contents of the Regional Task Force – meeting be improved to meet the needs of the participants and increase participation?
2. What qualities are important when planning and executing a good meeting?

1.4 Theoretical framework

Theoretical framework typically involves gathering relevant sources, with a crucial emphasis on selecting content. Studies are chosen based on their connection to the topic and the resulting research question. The purpose of the theoretical framework is to highlight the theoretical point of view of the research. (Vilkka, 2023, Chapter 1.4)

Theoretical framework limits the literature review selected to the research to a certain theoretical tradition. It helps to make observations from different studies, analyze and make connections between them. It explains and interprets them through comparison and evaluation. The theoretical framework supports the explanation of what can be expected from the research. It also helps to understand and deepen previous knowledge about the research topic. Theoretical framework is a useful tool throughout the research process as it can be a good support for example during the material search process. (Vilkka, 2023, Chapter 1) Theoretical framework determines what kind of data to gather and which kind of collection method to use in the research. Using a proper data collection method that fits well with the theoretical framework makes the research process flow easier. (Alasuutari, 2011, Chapter 4)

The theoretical framework of this research includes basic theory about meetings with emphasis on online meetings as the Regional Task Force - meeting is executed online. The main theory chapter is about planning and executing an efficient meeting. It works as a guideline for the meeting redesign process in the research part of this thesis. It touches on topics like how to decide if a meeting should be organized and how to make participants an active contributor in the meeting. This theoretical framework creates a foundation for the survey that will be conducted in the research part of the thesis and later in the conclusion chapter where new development ideas are proposed.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter the literature used in the work study will be presented to create a foundation for the research chapter.

A literature review is a research approach that involves investigating and analyzing the existing studies about the research topic. It is conducted to discover and assess the knowledge already available. The purpose of a literature review is to steer practices, offer guidelines, and find new research topics and possibilities. It also involves summarizing existing knowledge and identifying information gaps in the topic's research. (Vilkka, 2023, Chapter 1)

2.1 Meeting as a communication tool

Every day there are more than 50 million meetings all around the world. Depending on their role in the organization, employees and managers spend on average anywhere from 6 to 23 hours per week on meetings and on top of that all the preparation that goes into organizing a meeting. Managers can sometimes spend over 80% of their work time on tasks related to meetings. So, it can be said that meetings have a significant role in many organizations. (Lehmann-Willenbrock et al., 2017, p. 1) A meeting is a purposeful gathering of two or more people. All attendees have been invited to the gathering by the organizer. The purpose of the meeting varies depending on the context. In this research, the focus is on business meetings. Business meetings happen within an organization and the purpose is usually to, for example, make decisions, discuss changes, and exchange information. (Allen & Reed, 2023, Chapter 1)

A meeting is an extremely adaptable concept that can be tailored to fit all kinds of occasions. The most significant difference between a casual chat and a meeting is that there is a leader. A casual discussion is almost always unofficial whereas a meeting is usually formal. (Allen & Reed, 2023, Chapter 1) There is no predetermined agenda for a casual discussion, so topics are flowing and changing without a plan. Whereas in a meeting the purpose and topics are predetermined, and the meeting leader keeps the discussion on track and in accordance with the agenda. (Svennevig, 2012, p. 7) In this study, the terms meeting organizer, meeting leader and meeting facilitator are used interchangeably although in other research the descriptions might vary.

A well-planned meeting brings value to the organizer but also for the participants. A good meeting can for example bring to the table knowledge that is otherwise unavailable, build trust among the group, give leaders a clearer overview of the group and its' qualities and create interesting and enlightening conversations. While not all meetings have these outcomes, the organizer must have a goal for the meeting. Whether it is to produce innovative ideas or to inform participants about upcoming events it is recommended to have an agenda and a goal for every meeting, and these should be informed to the group prior to the meeting. (Danskin & Lenny, 2014, Chapter 1)

Meetings play a significant role in job satisfaction that can be shown not only in internal functions but also on a macro scale, for example in customer value creation. (Lehmann-Willenbrock, et al., 2017, p. 4) Positive meeting experiences are linked to employees’ overall job satisfaction, their level of engagement, and job performance. But simply, effective meetings lead to happier, more motivated employees. Poorly conducted meetings, however, result in dissatisfaction, reduced engagement, and decreased job performance. This can lead to feelings of frustration and even employee exhaustion and potential burnout. That is why organizations should consider more carefully before scheduling meetings. While it is a great tool to communicate, make decisions, and build connections throughout the organization, it is also a danger to organizational well-being. (Allen & Reed, 2023, Chapter 1)

In today's environment, organizations lie under intense pressure because of the growing competition in the markets. Having a competitive edge is becoming harder and harder to achieve and maintain. This requires lots of cooperation, an innovative atmosphere, and dedication from the employees. Working as a team or as a unit is more important than ever. This is where the meetings come in handy. (Danskin & Lenny, 2014, Chapter 1) Meetings are a key place to spread the company's knowledge and form the culture. It is considered the foundation of organizational communication. (Svennevig, 2012, p. 1) Having an efficient meeting culture in the organization is seen as a great advantage. Efficient negotiating, decision-making and communication are vital traits when trying to survive with the fast-paced changes in the market. (Danskin & Lenny, 2014, Chapter 1)

2.2 Online Meetings

The force behind the growth in online meetings is the constantly increasing remote work possibilities. Working from home has become the new norm since the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Even though the employers are trying to bring the workforce back to the office, the hybrid workstyle is here to stay. (Wilson, 2009, Chapter 1) In this research we will focus on online meetings since the Regional Task Force - meeting is always held online. It is the only available option since the participants come from all around the globe. Due to different time zones this is also the easiest way to record the meetings so it is also available to those who cannot take part in real time. (M. Petersen, Private discussion, 12.5.2023)

Online meetings are in many ways easier to execute but they do require at least the same amount of preparation as face-to-face meetings. (Wilson, 2009, Chapter 1) The key features of good online meetings are efficiency and adaptability. Online meetings are the most successful when they are purposeful, strategically aligned with specific objectives, and directed towards achieving a particular goal or outcome. (Allen & Reed, 2023, Chapter 1) There are both good and bad sides to online meetings. It is a terrific way to connect people around the world and communicate very easily. The place does not matter since anyone can attend from anywhere, which makes the working life much more flexible. (Wilson, 2009, Chapter 1)

2.2.1 Advantages

Online meetings are a great way to connect people around the world. It makes everyone's lives easier because an online meeting can be participated in from anywhere. All you need is a computer and an internet connection. Now that remote working has become more common, online meetings are also a new norm. It is much easier to schedule an online meeting on short notice rather than a face-to-face meeting. If all the participants are available at the time, it is not a problem because they can participate from wherever they are. There is also no need to book meeting rooms or other physical resources that might be required in a face-to-face meeting. (Wilson, 2009, Chapter 1)

Online meetings offer flexibility as they are not bound to a certain location. Having the freedom to attend meetings and work remotely has positive effects on employee satisfaction and productivity. It also reduces costs when no commute to the office or meeting place is needed. This also makes it easier to stay in contact with distant customers and stakeholders. (Bacarra & Decenorio, 2020, p. 2427) Online meetings can also be recorded, which makes it easier to prioritize tasks and other meetings. If one is not able to participate in real time, the recording is available to be watched later. This is an important aspect when the meeting invitation list includes people from different continents. It also creates an opportunity to fully focus on the meeting when the employee has a better time for it. (Skrodzki & Damrau, 2022, pp. 267-268)

Remote work and online meetings enable having team members in many separate locations. This is particularly important since not all knowledge is located where the office is. It is also a great opportunity to gain knowledge from all around the world. It applies also to conferences and other larger events. More time can be dedicated to work or relaxation when no travelling is required to attend meetings. (Skrodzki & Damrau, 2022, p. 267)

2.2.2 Disadvantages

Humans crave social connections which can only happen through face-to-face encounters. When individuals interact online, they lack the ability to convey messages through nonverbal cues. Nonverbal communication is crucial because humans typically seek indications of agreement or disapproval by observing facial expressions and body language of others. Individuals who exhibit high self-monitoring tendencies are particularly attuned to how they are perceived by others, even in the realm of online interactions. These individuals promptly engage in asking questions and offering validation, enabling them to adjust more seamlessly to online meetings compared to those with low self-monitoring tendencies. (Wilson, 2009, Chapter 1) It is recommended to organize face-to-face meetings in cases where it is possible. For example, team meetings when everyone works in the same office there is no reason to meet online. Working at the office and meeting colleagues regularly has positive effects on interpersonal skills. It is easy to forget how fundamental social interactions are to human beings. (Bacarra & Decenorio, 2020, p. 2428)

Due to multitasking, people who exhibit low self-monitoring tendencies can sometimes appear disengaged during meetings. Especially in more counteractive meetings it is important to get everyone involved and active as early as possible. To achieve this the facilitator should provide basic information about the meeting beforehand. It is also vital to keep up an encouraging environment so that everyone feels welcome and safe to participate in discussion and give opinions. With online meetings it is hard to keep at least most participants involved and interested, let alone everyone. Whether people are at home or at the office, the physical environment offers limitless number of distractions. The facilitator is in charge of keeping the participants engaged and interested. This usually comes from discussion rather than keeping an hour-long monologue. (Wilson, 2009, Chapter 1)

Meeting participants are more prone to multitask if there is no requirement to have a camera on. To keep participants engaged and concentrated, the meeting organizer should ask everyone to turn on their cameras if possible. Another good opportunity to multitask are long meetings. Online meetings in general make it harder to focus and meetings over 60 minutes long do not make it any easier. Meeting organizers should consider this and either try to keep breaks during a long meeting or schedule a few shorter meetings to cover many topics. The best way to have everyone focused on an online meeting is to keep the audience engaged and by requesting input. Inactive participants are more likely to multitask so organizers should ask questions and create discussion to keep everyone engaged. (Cao, et al., 2021, pp. 6, 10)

Technology can also be an issue in online meetings. A bad internet connection, faulty equipment, or software fault kills the mood easily. These could be fixed with good preparation before the meeting, but sometimes it is unavoidable. Maybe a participant is having a connection issue, or the meeting platform does not open correctly. In these cases, the facilitator should address the problem and try to produce a quick solution, even if it is just for that one meeting to get everything running smoothly. (Wilson, 2009, Chapter 1)

The online environment also creates leadership challenges. When communication happens entirely online, it is hard for the team leader to monitor if and how well the team members carry out their tasks. This can cause for example delays in decision making as it is harder to confirm project results online. It is important that the manager is regularly in touch with employees and makes sure that everything is running smoothly. There are also many good reports and statistics to use to follow employee activity. (Wilson, 2009, Chapter 1)

2.3 Planning and executing an efficient meeting

In this chapter the focus is on the process of planning and executing a meeting. This will be a very crucial part when redesigning old meetings like the Regional Task Force meeting. The first section is about the planning process that starts from deciding whether a meeting should be organized in the first place. After a careful planning stage comes the execution phase where the emphasis is on the roles of the meeting organizer and the audience.

2.3.1 Planning

Planning a new meeting creates the foundation for a great execution. No good meeting comes from neglecting the planning stage. While there are many ways to get a good outcome from a meeting, it should always be mapped out well. (Rubinger, et al., 2020, p. 3) There are a number of points to consider while planning a meeting and here are a few of the key points.

First, it is important to define the goal of the meeting. This helps with deciding whether a meeting should be organized in the first place. The ultimate goal of meetings should be integrating the organization and its' employees closer together. This includes, for example, experiences, passion for innovation and relationships. Beneath this general goal, meetings also should have a more specific goal related to the meeting topic. If the goal is to communicate news to your team, it might be more time-efficient to send an email rather than gather everyone to a meeting to tell the news. If the goal is to brainstorm innovative ideas for the upcoming social media campaign, a meeting is a good idea. That said, information sharing can also be part of a good meeting. But that should not be the main point. In a good meeting, information sharing also includes conversation of some kind. This could be for example sharing ideas or making decisions. (Allen & Reed, 2023, Chapter 7)

Meetings should be planned with the assumption that participants are actively engaging in the discussion and that the meeting goal will be achieved. It is also assumed that the participants will give their best effort to make more value to the organization through the meeting. This requires that the meeting agenda is engaging and innovative. These assumptions also apply to the meeting organizer. The participants assume that the organizer has put their best effort when planning and executing this meeting. The assumption is also that the organizer has carefully considered if the meeting holds enough value to be organized. (Allen & Reed, 2023, Chapter 7)

After deciding that the meeting should be organized, the organizer produces a plan to reach the meeting goal. Producing the plan includes deciding the topics that are discussed and the expected outcome. The topic order should be carefully decided to create a natural flow throughout the agenda. It is recommended to use old meetings and meeting formats as a guideline to structure the new meeting. The plan should also have suggestions on how to engage the participants and what is expected from them. (Wilson, 2009, Chapter 2)

The agenda should be created with the assumption that it is followed during the meeting. This ensures that no one's time is being wasted and everyone knows what to expect from the meeting. The facilitator is in charge of keeping the discussion revolving around the meeting topics. This again saves everyone's time. Having an agenda also means that the organizer has a plan of how they want the meeting to progress. (Wilson, 2009) Having a pre-structured agenda ensures that no issues or topics will be forgotten. It provides an overview of the meeting, and it is easier to keep the discussion revolving around the right topics. (Metz, 2021, Chapter 5)

Having an agenda also ensures that the meeting stays within the time limit. If the meeting is scheduled to last 45 minutes, it should not go on longer than that since it can mess up someone's schedule. Also, a lot of essential information might be left unsaid if the meeting runs long because the agenda was not followed. (Allen & Reed, 2023, Chapter 7)

When it comes to scheduling the meeting, the first thing to consider is the meeting platform. There is a significant difference between having an online meeting and having it face-to-face. The online meeting should be compact and quick because the participants have a harder time focusing. Looking at the screen for a long time can be draining compared to in-person meetings. Video meetings make it harder for people to read the body language which takes up much more energy. If the online meeting is preferred, it is recommended to break up a long agenda to a few manageable pieces with breaks in between or have couple separate meeting. It does take some extra time but is more efficient overall. (Allen & Reed, 2023, Chapter 9)

With scheduling, it is also important to consider the location of the participants. If there are people from around the world, the time zones are a significant factor. There is no such thing as a time suitable for everyone, but the scheduling should suit at least the majority of the invited people. (Allen & Reed, 2023, Chapter 9)

For the meeting to make sense, it needs to have participants. This should be considered while planning the agenda. What kind of people are fit for the topic? Who could bring more value to the meeting and produce fresh ideas? Maybe also someone unexpected should be included that could be an immense help. The participants are even more important than the agenda, but it is also important to remember to only invite the necessary people. Too many people in one meeting are worse than too few. (Allen & Reed, 2023, Chapter 2.) Large group meetings are more likely to start late and have more invitations declined. Small meetings are also usually rated more efficient and higher quality. (Odermatt, et al., 2015) The potential participants can be consulted if they think they would be a good fit to take part in the meeting and you can decide together what to do. (Allen & Reed, 2023, Chapter 2) Employees are more prone to be excited about meetings that are relevant to them. For example, people with more experience about the meeting topics are usually more involved in the discussion. (Odermatt, et al., 2015)

Before the meeting, any necessary information should be sent via email to the participants beforehand so they can, for example, prepare questions or discuss ideas with other stakeholders to bring them up in the meeting. This information should include the planned agenda, and any tasks to complete before the meeting. It will speed up the meeting as the input made by the audience is more relevant and it also keeps them engaged and interested. (Leach, et al., 2009, p. 66) It also ensures that everyone is up to date about the topics in the agenda and that the meeting can start more efficiently when everyone knows what will happen. Also, it creates a sense of security when everyone knows what is coming and can prepare what they want to say during the meeting. This is important for the quieter participants and is a way of considering the various kinds of people working in the organization. (Allen & Reed, 2023, Chapter 2)

The participants are as responsible for the meeting's success as the leader. But here it is important to consider that the meeting organizer oversees making the participants accountable for their responsibilities. This includes making sure that the necessary materials are available for the audience on time and that any pre-meeting tasks have been assigned. If the meeting organizer has any other requests for the participants, these should be communicated to them directly and well in advance. However, the participants can also push the meeting organizer to prepare better for the meetings and make them more prepared. Having participants in the preparation process makes them feel more important and responsible for the meeting's outcome. Including participants early on the meeting planning process takes more time in the meeting's preparation phase, but it has positive effects on participant engagement and overall job satisfaction. (Odermatt, et al., 2015)

Many meeting leaders use slide shows to have something concrete to show during the meeting. The slide show makes it possible to have the agenda on display and the progress of the meeting is easier to follow. But the slide show is different from the meeting. It is not vital and there can be a meeting without one. Meetings are all about dialogue, engagement from the participants and active interactions. Slide show is only a tool to help execute the meeting. (Allen & Reed, 2023, Chapter 8) But this does not mean that slide shows can be neglected. If it is decided that a slide show is used to support the meeting, it should be done well. A well-made slide show adds participant engagement and comfortability. (Reynolds, 2011)

To design a good slide show, there are a few key points to look out for. It should be in line with the meeting agenda. Slides should directly contribute to the meetings' objectives. They should have a clear structure that supports the agenda and proceed in a logical sequence. Slide shows should be visually appealing with professional design elements like consistent fonts and pictures. Using the company's branding elements adds a professional touch. The slide deck should have a minimal amount of text. It is recommended to use bullet points and short sentences. Instead of excessive amounts of text it is suggested to use charts and pictures. This makes the slides more engaging and interesting. To ensure discussion in the meeting, there could be questions or discussion topics added to the slides as well. (Reynolds, 2011)

These material preparations also include testing any links, videos and documents used during the meeting. It is important to test that they work and are visible to all the participants after the meeting. After the meeting, it is recommended that the slide deck is shared with the audience to give them the opportunity to review it later. This could also be done before the meeting so participants can see in advance what is coming and decide whether they should attend the meeting. (LaBorie, 2021, Chapter 8)

2.3.2 Execution

After the planning stage, it is time to execute the meeting. The meeting organizer should be the one to start the meeting session. Whether it is held online or face-to-face, the meeting organizer should be the first one present. This gives a good indication to the participants that the leader is consistent and aware of their position. A good first impression is important and will set the mood for the rest of the session. (Rubinger, et al., 2020, p. 1465) Starting the meeting on time also positively affects on meeting effectiveness, participant engagement and overall satisfaction. It also increases trust between the meeting organizer and the participants. Costs are also saved since the time reserved for the meeting is used effectively right from the start. (Odermatt, et al., 2015)

After starting the meeting, it is good to give some time for small talk and introduction. This is vital for ensuring that the participants stay engaged during the meeting. A light atmosphere and a little bit of humor make it a long way. It also gives some time for the late comers to jump in the meeting. (Rubinger, et al., 2020, p. 1465) Pre-meeting small talk is shown to have positive effects on meeting effectiveness and the outcomes of the meeting. It is a great way to build social connections and trust between participants and the meeting organizer. (Odermatt, et al., 2015) Once everyone is present, it is time to start the formal part of the meeting. First, it is suggested to go through the agenda. This does not only mean reading the agenda but also describing the reason behind the meeting. Every agenda step should be introduced separately with a brief description of what is coming and how every step relates to another. It is also good to explain the flow of the agenda and how it will help the participants understand the expected outcome of the meeting. (Allen & Reed, 2023, Chapter 10)

During the session, the meeting leader has a crucial role in ensuring the discussion follows the agenda. Everyone should be respectful of each other's time and effort they are putting in when attending the meeting. This means staying on the correct subject, so the session does not run long. That said, it is also important to provide a safe space for the participants to communicate their thoughts and ideas. (LaBorie, 2021, Chapter 8) The meeting leader is also responsible for listening actively and asking more questions. The leader manages all the material that is presented during the meeting like the slide show. The leader is also observing the group dynamics, making sure that everyone gets an equal opportunity to participate and engage in discussion. (Metz, 2021, Chapter 3)

While the meeting leader has a key role in the meeting execution, the participants are also in a significant role. The participants are expected to engage in conversation by bringing up ideas and problems. They are expected to listen to others, ask questions and answer. They should prepare for the meeting beforehand by reviewing the meeting materials and doing research about the topic if needed. These are all things that show respect to other participants and the meeting leader because the meeting will flow more smoothly when everyone does their part. (Allen & Reed, 2023, Chapter 9)

The last part of the agenda should be the conclusion. That means going through what was achieved during the meeting and what the next steps are. Especially in longer meetings, all the topics will be blurred together after looking at the computer screen for a long time. Having a compact debriefing about the results of the meeting will give a clear picture of the outcome afterwards. When the agenda has been gone through the meeting should end. It is important to make sure that no topics outside the agenda are discussed. The meeting leader oversees keeping the discussion within the topic area. A good sign of an efficient meeting is that it ends when the agenda is achieved. (Allen & Reed, 2023, Chapter 15)

After the meeting, a follow-up e-mail should be sent to all the participants. It should include a summary of all the discussed topics, any decisions that were made and the next steps. This helps everyone to prepare for the coming meetings and keeps them accountable for the next steps. Follow-up e-mails are shown to positively effect on participant dedication. It is also a great tool to remember what has been discussed and decided before the next meeting. (Odermatt, et al., 2015)

After the meeting, a survey or a feedback session is a great tool to evaluate the meeting performance. The meeting organizer should also evaluate their own work, but studies show that meeting organizers usually rate their meetings higher than the participants do. This gap in evaluation can be eliminated by gathering feedback from the audience. The survey or an interview should be conducted right after the meeting when the opinions are fresh, and the memory of the meeting is still strong. (Lehmann-Willenbrock, et al., 2017, p. 6)

3 REGIONAL TASK FORCE MEETING - SITUATION ANALYSIS

The Regional Task Force meeting was established just before the COVID-19 pandemic hit to communicate the capacity situations in the six biggest Danfoss factories around the world. The most vital information was regarding the estimated delivery times of each product line. The delivery situation changed constantly so the meeting held a significant value to sales and customer service teams in each region. The meeting was held weekly, sometimes daily to ensure that everyone had firsthand information to communicate to the customers.

Now, the meeting is held bi-weekly because of the improved delivery situation. Delivery times and material availability have been stabilized so the meeting does not hold as much value anymore. This is why the meeting organizer has been exploring new ways to adapt the meeting to the changed situation.

Since the delivery and availability situation has improved after the pandemic, it is no longer a concern, and the attention has shifted to other topics more relevant in today's market. The writer of this thesis participated as an observer to the meeting over summer and fall 2023. In this chapter, this meeting's current situation is evaluated and any aspects that are no longer relevant and need improvement are pinpointed.

3.1 The Meeting

The meeting takes place on Thursday every other week at 15 o'clock CET (+2 hours) and it is scheduled to last 25 minutes. The scheduled time is usually enough to cover the agenda of the meeting. When there is no additional discussion, the meeting will take around 15 minutes. With some discussion and questions, 25 minutes is not always enough. This variation in duration cannot always be predicted. The meeting usually only involves the meeting facilitator’s monologue. There is sometimes discussion during the topic 'Voice from the market' or at the end of the meeting, if there are any questions. Other than that, the audience stays quiet.

This is a fantastic opportunity for improvement. As stated in the literature review, a meeting without discussion is pointless. It would be more time efficient to, for example, send an e-mail including all the relevant information rather than scheduling a meeting. The meeting leader should try to engage the audience more with, for example, pre-planned questions or ask a guest speaker to visit and give a presentation about a specific topic to foster a sense of variety in the meeting. The guest speaker could come from different departments within the Danfoss organization, or it could even be a supplier or a customer. This could increase participant engagement ja make the audience more interested in attending the meeting. Having no input from the audience is a big issue as said in the literature review and finding a solution for that should be a top priority.

3.2 The Slide Show

The meeting follows a specific agenda with a slide show that has been the same for the last few years. The slide show has lots of content that was relevant during the pandemic but not anymore since the situation does not change as rapidly as it used to. Lead times stay the same when looking at them in general. If there were more specific product lines and products, there would be more variation and the information would be more relevant.

The slide show is aesthetically pleasing. The color scheme of red, white, and black represents Danfoss and the slide deck also has Danfoss logos on every slide. The charts are nice and colorful, and they cheer the presentation up. A little concern is if there are too many charts but when covering a broad amount of information for regions around the world, it is hard to do it with just one or two charts. It is also clearer to have a few charts rather than a slide full of text. Some slides have too many different topics at once and they look a little messy. But in general, for a business meeting slide show, it is well thought of. The font 'Verdana' looks professional and is easy to read.

Because the delivery situation is currently stable, the meeting is very repetitive and could use some variation. Instead of focusing on what is going well, the meeting could focus more on any problems that are emerging. For example, if there is a particular product line that has delivery problems or if there is a significant problem with a specific supplier. This could also engage the audience as different regions or departments can give guidance to others on how to solve different problems. The slide show could also use some variation. This could be something simple like adding a few pictures and updating the charts.

4 SWOT-ANALYSIS

SWOT-analysis is a basic and generalized square field analysis method used in, for example, business activities. It is a strategic tool used to improve business processes, but it can also be applied to situation analysis that is assessing capabilities. With this method it is convenient to sort out the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threads of the analyzed activity. It is supposed to produce an overall picture of the situation to bring up problems and support new development ideas. With the help of the SWOT-analysis a few key points or themes should be picked to focus on. In the business world the first two measures (strengths and weaknesses) are usually considered as the internal factors and the other two (opportunities and threads) are the external factors. (Vuorinen & Huikkola, 2023, p. 97)

When analyzing a meeting with SWOT-analysis, it is important to think about its goal. The goal of this meeting is to bring information about the factories' delivery and availability situation and their development to the relevant stakeholders and departments. The purpose behind making a SWOT-analysis for the meeting is to map out the advantages and disadvantages of it. With the help of analysis, it is easier to point out the problems and successes of the meeting and that will help to make improvements. The weaknesses and threads sections will give us a good outlook on the problems that need to be addressed and the strengths and opportunities measure whether the meeting has enough good qualities to keep it going. When comparing the positives and negatives, the positives should stand out more. (Vuorinen & Huikkola, 2023, p. 98)

Figure 1 Regional Task Force – meeting SWOT-analysis.

4.1 Strengths

The first section of the SWOT-analysis is Strengths. It showcases what kind of aspects are to be used as an advantage and what qualities to highlight. (Vuorinen & Huikkola, 2023, p. 98)

The biggest strengths are the networks built through this meeting. It brings together all kinds of departments from sales and customer service to logistics and fulfillment teams. The participants were pleased with how they have gotten important contacts through the meeting. This could be taken forward with adding guest speakers to the agenda to build the network even more. Another idea could be to expand the invitation list or make changes to it every now and then to build connections. This could mean for example that every relevant team and department would have one representative for a certain period and then a new one would replace them. This would not only build the network but also give new points of view for the topics discussed in the meeting.

The purpose of the meeting is also great. Competitive delivery times are particularly important for the business so information regarding it is vital. Danfoss is a company that manufactures and sells products to customers, so it is important that the relevant departments, like sales and customer service, are aware of the current delivery times. So, there is a reason for the meeting to continue. As the market situation is getting better all the time, the competition is also getting harder. Just a one-day difference in delivery times between competitors can be crucial. (M. Petersen, private discussion, 12.5.2023)

Because this meeting has audience from all over the world, not everyone can participate in real time. Another strength is that the meetings are recorded, and the record is available to everyone who has the invitation to the meeting. So, this way anyone can watch it when they can or come back and watch it again if they like. Also, a short e-mail is sent to the participants after the meeting with the slide show and any other relevant information attached. This way everyone stays on top of things even if they do not attend the meeting. Having a recording to watch and a short follow-up e-mail makes it easier to share the information with other relevant teams and stakeholders who do not have the invitation to the meeting.

4.2 Weaknesses

The second section of the SWOT-analysis is Weaknesses. These are the aspects that should be eliminated or at least modified as soon as possible. (Vuorinen & Huikkola, 2023, p. 98)

The biggest weakness is the constant topics of the meeting. Everything stays the same every week since the delivery situation is stable. The meeting does not hold enough value to the audience. This also applies to the slide show. It stays the same from week to week. The slide show is quite simple with a limited number of pictures and a lot of text. It could have some variations to it each week to keep it interesting. The solution to this could be a renewed slide show. The slides could have a little bit less text and more charts and pictures to make it clearer and easier to follow. Also, the meeting could have a weekly changing topic like case study or guest speaker to have some variation and make participants more interested.

In the meeting there are usually 10 or fewer participants. The invitation was sent to over 30 people, so the participation percentage is not remarkably high. This could be a result from having people from different time zones that cannot participate in real time. But based on the list of participants, more than 10 people come from time zones that enable participation to the meeting. So, from this information it can be concluded that the meeting does not seem important to some of the invited people. The meeting lacks excitement, and it reduces attendance. The participants should have a chance to request topics they want to see in the meeting. The audience needs something new and exciting to make them come to the meeting. This could be for example case studies, interesting guest speakers or problem solving together. Another option could be to reschedule the meeting when most of the audience is able to join but this could be risky since then the meeting might also lose participants.

Another weakness is the lack of discussion. This makes it hard to schedule the meeting with enough time since sometimes it takes only 15 minutes to go through the agenda and sometimes it goes overtime when there is discussion or questions. The meeting could be a forum for innovative ideas that would help with the problems with the delivery times. Sharing problems and solutions with other departments can spread knowledge and help other regions with similar setbacks. This would create discussion and engage the audience. The facilitator could ask the audience to send any questions or problems in advance that could be a could point of discussion during the meeting.

Another weakness is that the information about the delivery situation is too generalized. If there is only a global or region-wide estimate of the delivery times, it is too generalized and does not tell us anything about a specific product. And it does not give any usable information. It would be better to have only a limited amount of information if it is specific and could help at least someone. Since the delivery situation is stable, it would be more efficient to focus on products and product lines that have problems. This would narrow down the information, make it more valuable and keep the slide show clearer.

4.3 Opportunities

The third section in SWOT-analysis is Opportunities. These are things that can be important to implement in the future. It is important to consider how the opportunities are secured. (Vuorinen & Huikkola, 2023, p. 98)

Through this research, there is a good chance to upgrade the meeting and agenda to better align with the audience's needs. The agenda can be changed by applying the feedback gathered through the survey and using the literature review to make the meeting more efficient. By changing the agenda, the meeting can lure even more interested people to take part. Delivery times are valuable information to any department in contact with the customers.

And, because this meeting is held online, people from all around the world can take part. This ensures that when having discussions, there are people with different opinions who give different points of view on the topic. This is also a terrific opportunity to use the broad competence that the participants have, to come up with solutions to problems in other regions.

4.4 Threads

The last section of the SWOT-analysis is Threads. It is important to start taking actions to avoid these threads as early as possible. The threads can also be turned into opportunities. (Vuorinen & Huikkola, 2023, p. 98)

The biggest thread for this meeting is that the audience does not get any value from this meeting and stops participating. Without participation there is no reason to keep organizing this meeting. This could lead to not organizing this meeting anymore and just sending the relevant stakeholders an e-mail about the information. This could be avoided by renewing the slide show and agenda to make the more interesting and engaging. The meeting leader should invest more time to come up with topics and questions to engage the audience and receive input from them.

Also, too much information can be a threat to losing participants. Even though almost every different product has a different delivery time, it is too much to go through all of them. It is important to find the middle ground to deliver information that is usable and not too generalized but still not too specific. Information should be narrowed down to any changes or problems that are arising. There is no point in discussing things that have been working well for a long time. This can also engage the audience to think about solutions for the problems.

Because this meeting is held online, there is a chance of technical issues occurring either from the facilitator's or participant's side. But these issues are sometimes inevitable, and the meeting must still go on. Constant technical issues can have a toll on participation engagement and overall communication. Having a back-up plan for simple IT problems could help and make problem solving easier. This includes having IT support close by at any point of the meeting if any questions or problems arise. (Wilson, 2009, Chapter 3.) The plan should include quick solutions to basic IT problems but also workarounds for more significant issues. It is also recommended to have a back-up facilitator if the meeting leader is disconnected during the meeting. Before starting the meeting, it is important to check that everything is working properly. It is suggested that the meeting leader is prepared to help the participants with basic technology issues. This means that the meeting leader should have at least some knowledge about technology. (LaBorie, 2021, Chapter 5)

5 RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Research method can be either quantitative or qualitative. Before selecting a method, it is important to consider what would fit the best with the goals of the research. Quantitative research methods offer more possibilities for predictable outcomes as the methods are more standardized. It is recommended to use quantitative research method when there are many respondents. (Vilkka, 2007, p. 17) Quantitative studies are more helpful when generalizing different topics. (Holton & Burnett, 2005, p. 30) Qualitative research methods give more specific information and offer more possibilities for variation. They also require more preparation and studying beforehand. (Hakala, 2022, Chapter 7)

The biggest difference between the research methods is the data's essence. Qualitative research uses so called soft data which means words, photos, and symbols. This requires various kinds of collection methods than hard data, which the quantitative research method uses. Both methods have their own strengths and weaknesses. With every research, it is important to evaluate the study's needs and goals when deciding which research method to use. (Choy, 2014, p. 100)

Quantitative research was chosen as the preferred method in this thesis and data collection method of choice is survey. The strengths of quantitative study suit well with the goals of the thesis and with the client's wishes. As the client wanted as many responds as possible and within a limited period, the survey was the most efficient way. There was summer vacation period going on during the time of the data collection, so survey was a good option in the matter of timing as well. All the respondents could answer the survey at their own pace and edit their responses later if needed.

5.1 Quantitative research

In quantitative research, data is commonly gathered through methods like surveys or systematic observation. Regardless of the data collection method, the subjects include, for example, people and/or cultural products. Quantitative research examines the information numerically. This means that the subject and its characteristics are viewed in general description through numbers. The purpose of a quantitative research study is to for example predict or compare properties and phenomena concerning humans and nature. (Vilkka, 2007, p. 28) Quantitative studies help better to generalize different topics. The most significant advantage of quantitative research method is its' ability to utilize smaller target groups to make assumptions about large batch of people more time and cost efficiently. (Holton & Burnett, 2005, p. 30)

The quantitative research method answers questions like how many and how much. An example of a quantitative research method is a survey. The common characteristic of a survey are standardized questions. This means that all the respondents are asked the same questions in the same order. Survey is used when the observation unit is a person, and the research questions are for example about opinions or qualities. (Vilkka, 2007, p. 28) The success of a survey requires that the researcher considers the respondent's willingness, and skill to answer the survey. The form should be carefully designed and tested beforehand. This has a considerable influence on the success of the study. (Ellonen, et al., 2021)

The strength of quantitative research method is its reliability by critically analyzing the data. Quantitative research method is easier to conduct in a brief period of time and the data is facilitated in numerical form which is easier to picture and compare. Still, it should be considered that quantitative research also has its limits. Quantitative studies don't always take into account the characteristics of the respondents since usually there is no way of turning them into numbers. The study could also be limited if the number of respondents remains low. (Choy, 2014, p. 99)

5.2 Data collection methods

The research was conducted as a quantitative study as the goal was to get information from as many participants as possible and because the target group was spread all over the world.

A questionnaire is the most generic form of data collection in quantitative research. The advantage of the questionnaire is that no scheduled meetings with the survey respondents are needed, and the respondents stay anonymous. This form of data collection suits best when the target group is large and widely spread. (Vilkka, 2021, p. 28)

The purpose of this research was to gather information from the meeting participants about how they view the Regional Task Force-meeting and see if there are any points of improvement to make the meeting more valuable and engaging. As stated before, the meeting does not hold any significant value to the participants anymore, so the meeting organizer wanted to change the content according to the participants' needs.

The target group consisted of all the people invited to the Regional Task Force – meeting. This means that the target group has people from all over the world and from many different departments. The target group was kept broad so the survey results would reflect the thoughts of the whole meeting group rather than just, for example, the sales department or customer service. As this was a standardized questionnaire, all the participants got the same questions. Due to the broad scale of various kinds of professionals and cultures the survey results gave a diverse image of how the participants view the meeting.

The meeting organizer did not see it particularly important to know any personal information about the respondents, so the survey answers were anonymous. The survey was planned together with the meeting organizer Michael. He had a general idea of what he wanted from the research, but the author of this thesis got free hands with the questions. After the body of the survey was ready, Michael and his supervisor's opinions were heard. The latest changes were made based on the feedback and the last version of the survey was complete.

The survey was conducted using the Microsoft Forms program. The link to the survey and instructions were sent to all the participants via e-mail and they were able to complete the survey at once or in pieces and there was also a possibility to modify the answers later. The participants had four weeks to complete the survey and were given one extra week due to the low number of responds.

It was considered that too many questions would negatively affect the survey engagement. The survey had 16 questions, which took about 15 minutes to complete. The questions progressed in a logical order with one topic at a time. The three main categories were content, time and slide show. The questions consisted of multiple-choice questions and open questions. The open questions gave the responders the chance to write their thoughts freely and dive deeper into the issues.

The main focus of the survey was to get information about how the respondents view the meeting. The survey was constructed to get information about not only the content of the meeting but also the other aspects, like timing and slide show aesthetics. This was so that the research would be as thorough as possible and would raise points of improvement otherwise left unnoticed.

6 RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the survey answers will be looked over with a summary of the key points at the end.

6.1 Survey answers

As no personal information was needed, the survey started with questions about the meeting. The purpose of the first few questions was to figure out how much value the participants receive from the meeting. As seen in Figure 2 (Overall, how relevant are the topics discussed at this meeting to you?) The participants see the meeting topics relevant or somewhat relevant to them. This indicates the meeting's overall purpose is still significant in their job.

Figure 2 Overall, how relevant are the topics discussed at this meeting to you?

Next question presented in Figure 3 (How would you rate the value you get out of this meeting?) was also about building the understanding of how the participants view the meeting. 85% of the survey respondents rate the value they get from the meeting as high or exceptional. This also indicates that the participants do want to continue participating and wish this meeting to continue.

Figure 3 How would you rate the value you get out of this meeting?

Next, the survey focused on the content and its advantages and disadvantages. Almost all slides got praise from at least a couple of respondents. The general opinion was that the delivery and availability status slides were the ones most liked. General factory updates were also seen as a great part of the presentation and the spare part availability slide got praise from a few responders. This broad deviation in responses indicates that the meeting has little something for everyone. Even though not everything is important to everyone, there is not a lot that is completely unnecessary, which is what the meeting is aiming for. This is great news regarding the continuation of the meeting.

The deviation is also shown in the next question about the things the responders dislike about the meeting and want to remove. The answers varied but for example factory lead time slides and availability slides were seen as unnecessary. This variation again shows that there is something for everyone, but some slides are more relevant than others. This could be a potential point of improvement. The less relevant slides could be combined with more compact information. This would save time for more important topics without completely erasing the slides.

Also, these questions raised some negative feedback about the quiet audience and monologue of the meeting organizer. Many responders wished for more discussion during the meeting. This topic is very important since without any discussion the meeting could be turned into an e-mail. As previously mentioned in the literature review, meetings should be more than just a monologue to be relevant. The feedback on this topic should be taken seriously and made a top priority when considering the changes to be made to the meeting.

Another thing that appeared from the responds was the too generalized information. Most of the information is on a regional or global level which is too broad and does not hold any value to a specific country or team. The responders thought that it is better to have less information that is more specific rather than lots of numbers representing the whole region. Also, some of the information is easily available for the participants anytime so it is unnecessary to have them in the meeting. This feedback is mostly relevant to the slides considering the delivery times. This could be solved by only focusing on the product lines that are causing the problems. Especially now that the delivery situation is fairly good, there is time to focus on more specific problems rather than what is going well. That would also make the information more specific.

Something that was suggested was more short-term predictions and possible logistics issues. The problem with these kinds of suggestions is that the information might reach the customer negatively. Informing the customer about possible issues that might never happen can negatively affect the order intake because the customer is afraid of the risks. Even though this meeting is internal, there is still much information the participants use when communicating with the customer. This applies to issue predictions but also for example lead time prognosis. (M. Petersen, private discussion, 12.5.2023)

Next question was about how the participants communicate the information received from this meeting onwards. With this question, the author wanted to see if the meeting provides information that the participants see as valuable for other departments. Most of the respondents said that they communicate the information to the regional sales teams, customer service teams and other local stakeholders. The meeting slides are a beneficial use in customer interactions and meetings with relevant stakeholders. The delivery performance information helps when negotiating with the customers. Every responder said that they communicate the meeting information onwards. This shows that the information is valuable and helps many people and teams outside the participant circle.

This was the content section of the survey. Next section was about the timing. Currently, the meeting takes place every other Thursday at 15 pm CET (+2 hours) and is scheduled to last 25 minutes. The first question of this section was about how the participants feel about the meeting's length. 77% of the responders would keep the meeting length as it is. This is a tricky question because if there are many changes to the meeting agenda, which could also affect the meeting's length. The current 25 minutes might be too long or short. But as 25 minutes is seen as a good length, that is a good sign of what the target duration should be even after the changes. 25 minutes has been working well with this meeting so it is something that should stay as it is, according to the respondents.

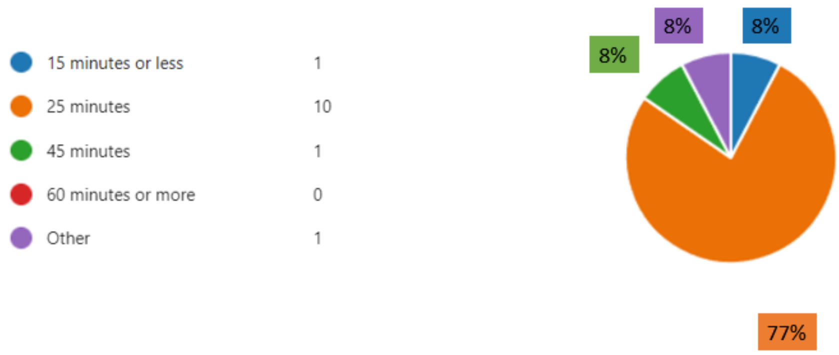

Figure 4 How long should the meeting last?

Continuing the same theme, the next question was about the meeting occurrence. Currently the meeting occurs every other week. During the pandemic it was held weekly or even more frequently. According to the meeting organizer, now that the delivery and availability situation is stable, there is no point in having the meeting more frequently. This was also the opinion of the survey responders. 62% agreed that the bi-weekly meeting is a good occurrence that should be continued. There were also a few suggestions that the occurrence should change according to the delivery situation. Whenever there is an emergency or considerable fluctuations in, for example delivery times, the meeting should be called together more often and in times like now, a monthly meeting would be enough. This was done when the situation leveled off. The meeting organizer sees the bi-weekly occurrence as the best solution for now. According to him, monthly meetings would be too rarely because no one would remember what was discussed last time and there might be too much information to cover in the short amount of time that the meeting lasts. As a major part of the responders still support the bi-weekly meeting that is the occurrence that will be used also in the future.

Figure 5 How often should this meeting occur?

The last question regarding timing is whether the meeting time is a good fit for the participants. 7 out of 13 respondents said that the current timing fits well to their schedules. As this meeting has participants from all over the world, there is never going to be a timing that fits everyone. According to this survey the current timing is good for at least half the respondents. And as previously stated, there is the possibility to review the recording after the meeting is finished, so the people who cannot take part in real time can watch the recording. Of course, this is not ideal but something that must be accepted.

Next three questions were about the slide show. In Figure 6 (Do you check the slides / watch the recording if you do not attend the meeting?) 77% said that they go through the slides and/or watch the meeting recording if they do not attend the meeting in real time. Only one respondent admitted that they do neither of those. This showed that the participants find the meeting information valuable for them and that they value the effort that the meeting organizer puts in when sending the recording and the slide show to everyone. Even if the meeting itself would not be valuable, the slide show has important knowledge that interests the participants.

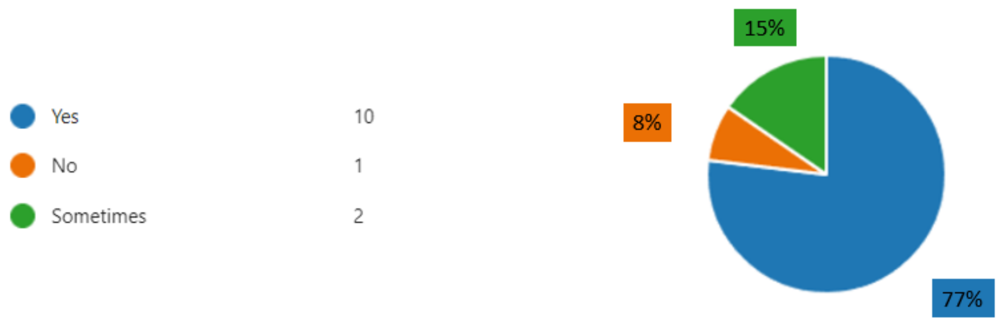

Figure 6 Do you check the slides / watch the recording if you do not attend the meeting?

The respondents found the slide show aesthetically pleasing but also pointed out that they do not see it as an important aspect. Many said that the information in the slides is the key and that the aesthetic part is irrelevant to them. A few respondents wished for more simplified slides, and some praised the graphics and charts. Overall, the respondents are pleased with the look of the slides and find them simple and full of useful information. This shows that the participants value quite simple and straightforward themes in the slide show. As the slide deck could be sent onwards it is still important to make it look professional with Danfoss logos and brand colors.

The last question of the survey was all about the improvement ideas that the participants have. This was the most important part of the survey since the respondents had free writing space to express their viewpoints and wish what they would like to see more. There were some options but also space for writing freely. Guest speakers and problem solving got the most votes but there were lots of other ideas as well and all kinds of suggestions got votes. From this we can deduce that the content of the meeting needs updating. Lots of answers here involved suggestions to give more specific information about the lead times and delivery times. There were also many wishes to have guest speakers from other departments to better understand, for example, factory planning and supply chain strategies.

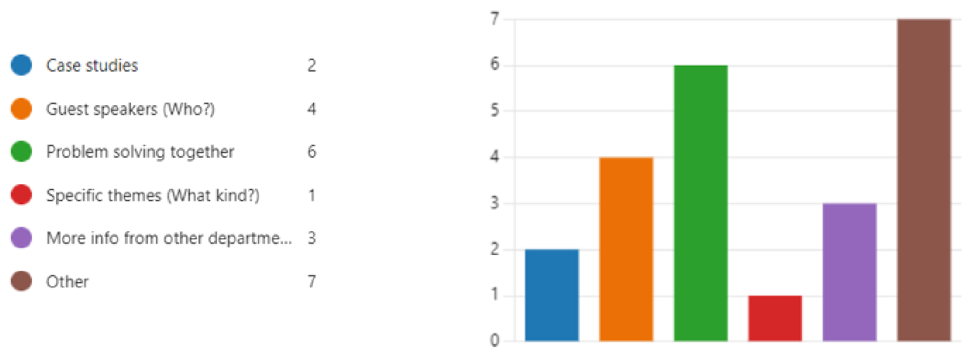

Figure 7 What themes/concepts would you like to see more of in this meeting?

6.2 Summary

The survey provided a lot of information about the meeting participants' opinions. The main focus was to get as much information regarding the content of the meeting as possible and this goal was reached. The survey gave a lot of information about the points of improvement in the meeting agenda and slide deck. The meeting is viewed as an important source of information for many different departments, but the content should be updated to better support, for example, the sales teams and other departments working on the front line.

Looking at the overall survey results and feedback, one of the biggest problems in the meeting is too generalized information. This is a complex problem to tackle since there is a lot of information to cover with six different factories and many different product lines. As the delivery situation of most of the product lines is stable, there is a chance to focus more on the problematic products and product lines.

Another point that stood out was the lack of input from the audience. The meeting is mostly meeting leader’s monologue and the participants wish to have more discussion. This problem could be solved by adding some engaging topics to the agenda. That could be, for example, case studies or problem-solving together. The meeting leader could also produce questions and discussion topics to keep the audience engaged.

These points stood out in many answers and will be used as the guide when updating the meeting agenda. It was also noted in the survey that no topic is relevant to everyone. There are always people who find some topics unnecessary while others view it particularly important to them. This is a great challenge to balance between having something for everyone and keeping the meeting compact and efficient.

The theoretical part of this research creates the foundation for updating the meeting to become more efficient and evaluate more critically the process of meeting planning and execution. Even though the meeting has already gone through the planning process, this should be repeated occasionally, to keep the meeting up to date and evolving.

7 CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, the conclusions based on the results of the study will be reviewed, and development ideas which appeared during the survey process will be presented. The chapter also reviews the validity and the reliability of the thesis. Lastly, at the end of this chapter, the compiled development ideas for the commissioning company and proposals for further research will be presented.

The research problem of the thesis was related to redesigning the Regional Task Force – meeting according to the meeting participants' wishes and needs. The purpose was to use the survey as a guideline and gather as much information as possible on what the participants expect from the meeting.

7.1 Research conclusions

Based on the survey results, it can be concluded that the meeting was found interesting and valuable to the participants. Overall, the topics are relevant, and the meeting holds high value to the participants, but a few improvement points emerged in the survey responses. In general, the meeting is important for example to the employees working in the client interface. Even though the market situation is evening out, the meeting is still helpful when interacting with the customers. The meeting also holds the value of important contacts. Different Danfoss teams and stakeholders around the world are in touch with each other through this meeting and can together solve problems and spread knowledge. The meeting leader Michael is also an important contact, and he helps the participants with their problems and answers any questions that might arise during the meeting. Even though this is possible to do also without the meeting, the conversations during it can be valuable to many different people and departments so this way they are available to all the participants.

The survey respondents view the meeting as a valuable tool for problem-solving through discussion with other participants and the meeting leader. The respondents are pleased with the meeting leader and how things are handled during the meeting.

The biggest points of improvement are the lack of discussion during the meeting and too generalized information in the slide show. The meeting is considered as the meeting leader's monologue, and this is something that the respondents would like to change. Even though the meeting is mostly about sharing relevant information, the discussion is a crucial part of any meeting, and it makes it more interesting and engaging. (Allen & Reed, 2023, Chapter 1) Trought this research the meeting took many big steps forward to become more informative and valuable to the participants. The survey gave a good outlook on the problems and key points to target during the redesigning process.

The goal of this study was to come up with new innovative ideas to transform the meeting to bring more value to the participants and for the Danfoss organization. By modifying the content and the agenda, the meeting will hold more value to the participants as their wishes have been heard. The agenda was modified according to the survey answers so the meeting will better meet the needs of the participants. From now on, the participants are more involved in the planning process of the meeting agenda since their wishes regarding for example guest speakers are taken into account. This can make them more excited to take part in the meeting. This research also encourages the meeting organizers to think more thoroughly about whether the meeting should be organized. Having fewer meetings saves resources and, in this way, brings more value also for the Danfoss organization.

7.2 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability together measure the quality of the research. Validity defines if the research measures well what it is aimed to measure and if the means of the measurement are precise enough. (Golafshani, 2003, p. 599) Validity also measures how trustworthy the results are. If research is valid, it is considered to measure well what it is supposed to measure, the means of measurement are accurate, and the results of the research are precise. In valid research the conclusions are suitable, relevant and they can be used in future research. (Bose & Mohideen, 2013, p. 2755)

Reliability measures if the research is consistent and how well it can be repeated without errors or major differences. Repeating the research would enhance the results as they would be similar to the previous research. Research is reliable when it can be repeated without major differences in responses if it is conducted to objects or individuals that have equal values and characteristics. Reliable research is also consistent with collateral testing instruments. (Bose & Mohideen, 2013, p. 2753)

This research's purpose was to improve the Regional Task Force–meeting contents. The research was conducted as quantitative research through a survey. The goal was to get information about how the audience views the meeting and what points of improvement there is. The data collection method of choice was survey, because of the tight schedule and broad target group. The questionnaire was created based on the literature review, situation analysis and the goals of the study. Based on the answers the respondents had understood the questions and carefully thought about their answers. The responds had lots of similarities and were an immense help with the outcome of the research. No major differences in the responds were discovered. The client was very happy with the results gained from the survey. The goals of the research were achieved and based on all the factors listed above, the research has a good validity.

As this survey was based mostly on opinions of the respondents, the research is not fully reliable. Opinions change over time through, for example, further education, public opinions, personal growth, and new company policies. (Gardner, 2006) Even if the survey was conducted later to the same target group, most likely the answers would vary due to above listed reasons. The market situation is constantly changing, and the needs of the employees change over time so the survey would reflect the current opinions of the respondents at the current time. But it is also important to take into account that it is inevitable that the variables change over time. Also, if the survey is conducted with the same respondents again after some time, they might remember their previous answers and use them to make their answers more consistent and the reliability would not be genuine. (Kitchenham & Pfleeger, 2008, p. 70)

7.3 Development ideas

During the research and the survey, a few things emerged that could be presented as development ideas. The development ideas came to light when the survey respondents were asked to name any negative aspects regarding the meeting. In figure 8 (Points of development) there are shown three main points that emerged repetitively from the survey answers.

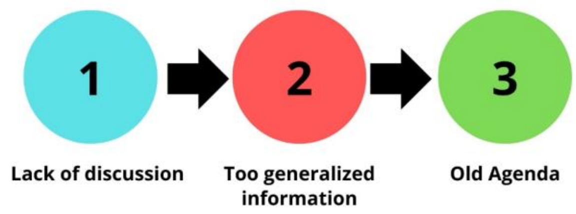

Figure 8 Points of development.

Many respondents were overall pleased with the current state of the meeting but from the survey responds can be seen that there is always something to improve.

The first point of improvement was lack of input from the group during the meeting. This point stood out the most in the survey and the respondents wished more discussion during the meeting to make it more engaging and interesting. This would mean that the meeting organizer must initiate discussion during the meeting by asking questions and requesting opinions. This point of improvement also requires actions from the participants, but the meeting organizer should be the driving force. The meeting organizer could invite guest speakers to talk about different topics revolving around, for example, factory management, supply chain management or logistics. Another good development idea would be case studies. Different regions might have different policies and ways of working, so the meeting could be used as a forum to share and implement new, more efficient ways to work.

The second point of improvement was to have more specific information. Currently, the information on the slide deck is on a global or regional level which is not specific enough to provide relevant information for the participants. This can be solved by modifying the slide show content. As the delivery situation in the world is stable, the content could focus more on problems the factories face. Now is the time to shift the view from what is working well to what is not working. The delivery charts could focus more on product lines that have long delivery times and the root causes of the late deliveries.

The third improvement idea was to generally update the agenda. The respondents had many ideas what to add to the agenda. The most suggested addition to the agenda was guest speakers. The respondents wished to gain more knowledge, for example, about supply chain visibility and prioritization process through a guest speaker from a relevant department or stakeholder. It is important to have the participants request for the guest speakers rather than the meeting organizer. This way they are more relevant and create value for the meeting. The meeting leader could make the participants request for a certain guest speaker or a topic of conversation a couple of weeks in advance or create a list where the participants can write down their wishes.

With the findings from this study the Danfoss organization receives many good aspects to improve their meetings. As meetings require a great amount of resources every day, making them more efficient and eliminating waste saves those resources and creates more value inside but also outside the company. The meeting organizers are provided with new ways to improve their meetings and question the need for new meetings. The Danfoss organization could come up with a checklist for new meetings to make sure that they check all the required boxes. Check list would include points like having a relevant topic that needs a meeting, an agenda that is well planned and an invitation list that only has the required people. This research could also be a foundation for training material for managers. When managers are made aware of all the things that need to be considered before scheduling a meeting, they could question the need for it and try to come up with other solutions to pass down the information. This is a great way to eliminate waste and become a more efficient organization.

7.4 Further research proposals

This research showed that it is important to include the meeting participant in the meeting planning. At the end of the day, the meetings are for the participants, and they are the best judges of the content. The needs of the participants are not always fully considered when organizing a meeting and the organizers might not think to ask for feedback. As said in the literature review, the gap between how highly the meeting leader thinks of the meeting and what the participants think is huge and the only way to close the gap is to ask for feedback.

It is not always needed to conduct a survey to gather feedback but to simply ask for it from the participants before or after the meeting. Further research proposal could be to have bi-annual or annual feedback sessions to keep up with the needs of the participants. This could be qualitative research with a short interview with a few key participants. It raises questions like whether the meeting is needed, are the meeting topics up to date and do they create value for the participants. In the end, the meetings are for the participants and tailoring them to serve their needs is the ultimate goal.

Another research proposal could be to conduct a survey like the one in this research in other meetings within the Danfoss organization. It could help to point out any unnecessary topics and improve the meeting quality. That could also potentially reduce unnecessary meetings and make the necessary meetings more efficient. This will also question the need for meetings and help the managers understand that not every topic needs a meeting and that there are other forms of information sharing that are just as effective or even more effective and more time efficient.

The Danfoss organization could come up with meeting policies. This could include filling out an evaluation form about the importance of the potential and/or already existing meeting. The form would then have to be accepted by a higher-level manager. This would make the meeting organizers think more thoroughly if the meeting is important or if there would be another form of information sharing that is a better fit for the topic. This will rule out any meetings that would only be information sharing and will cut down on time that employees spend attending meetings. This saves resources and gives employees time to focus on other tasks.

Meeting policies could also define, for example, specific days during the week that meetings are allowed to occur. This would make it easier for employees to dedicate full workdays to work without distractions. Organizations with hybrid working styles could recommend that their employees stay at the home office during meeting days and come to the office when there are no meetings which means more time to socialize with colleagues. This could have a positive effect on social well-being and enhance the development of the office culture as the schedule is more flexible on office days. Also, when everyone knows that the number of meeting days during a week is limited, it again makes the organizers question the need for the meeting. It also makes the employees prioritize meetings if there are too many.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1.

Questionnaire

Section 1: Content

1. Overall, how relevant are the topics discussed at this meeting to you?
2. Do you find this meeting helpful / informative / important to you?
3. What aspects do you like about the meeting?
4. What aspects do you dislike about the meeting?
5. Is there anything you would like to add to the meeting?
6. Is there anything you'd like to remove?
7. How would you rate the value you get out of the meeting?
8. How do you use the information you receive from this meeting?
9. Do you communicate about the information you receive from this meeting to for example your colleagues? If so, how?

Section 2: Time

10. How long the meeting should last?
11. How often should this meeting occur?
12. Does the timing of the meeting (Thursday 3:00 PM, UTC+2) fit well to your schedule? Why or why not?

Section 3: Slide show

13. Do you go through the slides / watch the recording if you do not attend the meeting?
14. Does the slide show have content that you find helpful in your job?
15. Is the slide show aesthetically pleasing?
16. What themes/concepts would you like to see more in this meeting?