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Building the Internal Customer Feedback Process

A Case Study of a Global Service Company

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Writing this thesis has been an unforgettable experience. Four months time is not long; since I changed my job in the middle of the thesis project, life became extremely busy and I had to work very hard to manage both job and the study. However when this challenging task is finally to be completed, I feel really relieved and grateful for what this excellent journey in Metropolia has brought to me. I am happy that through this thesis writing I have the chance to apply what I have learned in the industrial management program to propose some constructive suggestions and recommendations to the department I have been working with in the past 1,5 years. This thesis serves not only as an outcome of this Master program, but also as a feedback, a return to my previous employer, which I consider as one of the best employers I have ever worked with.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my managers in the case company. Most part of the thesis has been written after I left the case company, however big support and guidance have been provided by the management of the case unit. Furthermore, I want to thank my instructor Zinaida, who is the most patient and committed teacher I have ever met. Without her instruction and encouraging, I would not be able to finish my study in such short period. Last but not the least; I want to thank my husband, who is going to graduate with me at the same time. What a coincidence!

Weijing Shi
Helsinki, 5 May 2015
This thesis aims to improve the internal customer feedback process for the case unit, who is a supply unit in a global service company. The business challenge lies in the fact of lacking a formal customer feedback process to standardize the customer feedback activities and ensure their quality. As a result, the research questions of this study are formed as 1) How to improve the existing customer feedback activities and 2) How to build a formal customer feedback process. The objective of this study is the proposal accepted by the management of the case unit.

Qualitative case study is selected as the research design of this study, since the implementation of the proposal is beyond the scope of this thesis.

A comprehensive current state analysis was conducted and the data was collected by means of interviews, group discussions as well as supported by internal company documents and email exchanges. The output of the current state analysis is the seven gaps identified in the existing customer feedback activities. It is assumed that a standardized process in place can improve the current situation for the case unit.

With the help of the three best practices in the existing knowledge, the conceptual frame is established as a five - stream model of building an internal customer feedback process. It guided the proposal building of this thesis, which is also the outcome of this thesis, consisting of a visualized customer feedback activity calendar, the detailed process description as well as a tool for process evaluation. The proposal was accepted by the management of the case unit.

**Keywords** internal customer , feedback, customer centricity
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1 Introduction

In today’s business world, the understanding of customers becomes to a critical factor for companies to differentiate in the competitive market and ensure the sustainable growth of their business. As a result, companies are dedicating considerable resources and efforts to listen to and analyze their customers, aiming to obtain a full perception of their customers and therefore deliver the superior customer experiences.

On the other hand, the voice of internal customers sometimes does not acquire the attention as much as it should and is easily underestimated by the management. It makes a dilemma since most of the staff in a company do not have direct interaction with external customers. Therefore, for people who work in the departments such as supply chain, HR, finance, and other not front lines departments, the output of their work is used as an input of others in the company; in other words, they serve the needs of end customers. As Schall argues, “internal customer also matters” (Schall, 2011). Listening to internal customers promotes the interdepartmental communication and cooperation and therefore harmonizes the processes and increases the productivity. The most important benefit of excellent internal customer service is that it helps drive the better service to the external customers (Peters-Atkinson, 2013).

Therefore, this study focuses on the internal customer feedback activities of one supply unit in a global service company. The objective of this study is to improve the internal customer feedback activities of the case unit, due to the comment of the management that there is a lack of visibility on the customer perception of the service quality provided by the case unit.

1.1 Case Company Background

The case company of this study is a global leading service provider in a heavy equipment industry that was found at the beginning of the 20th century in Finland. The case company is well-known for its service excellence and it differentiates itself by positive user and customer experience. By the end of 2014, the case company had the annual net sales of EUR 7.3
billion and had over 47,000 employees globally. The case company is listed on the NASDAQ OMX Helsinki Ltd. The business areas of the case company include operating in the new equipment, maintenance and modernization business areas.

The unit for this case study is one of the global supply units in the case company, called Global Modernization Supply Unit (later on in this thesis the abbreviation SSE will be used to stand for this case unit). The main responsibility of SSE is to supply the modernization materials to the sales offices in the case company globally and to provide technical support for the engineering of the solutions. The function and position of SSE in the case company can be seen from the organizational chart in Figure 1 below.

![Organizational Chart](image)

**Figure 1. Organizational chart of the case unit of this study.**

As shown in Figure 1, the case unit is one of the global supply units located in Finland, who is serving its internal customers globally within the same corporation, providing the supply service for modernization business.

1.2 Business Challenge

The business challenge to be discussed in the thesis concerns the internal customer feedback (ICF) process of SSE. The feedback particularly relates to the supply service provided by the case unit, mainly included in two types of activities: order handling for modernization projects and packages, and engineer tendering for customized products and solutions.
The feedback comes from the SSE’s internal customers who include the case company’s frontline sales offices located globally.

Currently, there is no formal customer feedback process defined in the case unit. The feedbacks are received either fragmented or transactional, without a systematic way to analyze and organize the feedbacks. Three customer feedback activities are running in the case unit at the moment, which include the Customer Focus Survey, the Collaboration Meeting as well as the transactional feedback handling. However, due to the lack of a formalized process to support the feedback activities, the result revealed by the existing activities does not shed enough light for the management about the customer perception of the supply service of the case unit. Thus, it is difficult for the SSE management to engage in practical actions, from the continuous improvement point of view, and improve the weak points.

1.3 Objective, Outcome and Scope of This Study

The objective of the thesis is to improve the internal customer feedback activities as part of internal customer service of the case unit. The outcome of the thesis is a proposal which consists of: 1) build an official internal customer feedback process for the case unit, including the recommendations to improve the identified gaps in the existing feedback activities, and 2) develop an internal tool to evaluate the process. Therefore, the research questions for this study are formulated as:

How to (a) improve the internal customer feedback activities of the case unit and (b) build an internal customer feedback process?

The new process and recommendations will be proposed to the management of SSE; however, the implementation of the proposal is not included in the scope of the study. As a result of this proposal, an increasingly objective and transparent understanding of the supply service should be achieved for the management as well as the team members of the case unit. Consequently, the scope of the thesis is limited to the case unit (SSE), one of the global supply units of the case company, and includes the case analysis and proposal building.
2 Method and Material

This section describes the research approach, methods and materials utilized in the thesis. The detailed contents including research approach, research design, data collection as well as validity and reliability plan presented in the following sub sections.

2.1 Research Approach

The case study approach can be defined as an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources (Baxter and Jack, 2008: 544). By adopting the case-study research, the researcher is supposed to obtain a deep understanding of the specific phenomenon in the real world, based on data gathered from multiple sources (Bodil Stilling Blichfeldt, Jesper Rank Andersen, 2006: 3). In this research, the case study methodology was selected to enables the researcher to achieve a profound perception of the existing ICF process by analyzing the data collected from various sources.

According to Yin (Yin, 2003), the research question plays an important role when the research approach is decided among the various research strategies. The case study research is particularly useful when a how or why question is being asked and relates to a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control. As specified above, the research question of this study is a ‘how’ question – how to improve the ICF process of the case unit. Therefore, a case study was selected as the research approach for this thesis.

As argued by Yin (Yin, 2003), five components of a research design are especially important for case studies. The first component is the study questions of the research, which should be clarified at the very beginning of the paper what exactly the nature of the study is about. The second component is the study propositions. The study propositions ought to point to the actual items to be studied and examined within the scope of the research, which will lead the researching into the right direction so as to answer the study questions raised. The next component is the unit of analysis of the research, which is fundamental for define what the case is for
the case study. For each topic to be investigated, concrete or less concrete, a different unit of analysis can be selected from different angles and thus result in distinguished cases to be studies. The definition of unit of analysis also determines the limits of the data collection and analysis. With above three components of the research design, the researcher should be able to describe precisely what is studied, what the case is and what the current state is. In addition, the fourth and fifth components are also important in the research design as it tells what is to be done with the data collected.

The remaining two components are linking data to propositions, and criteria for interpreting the findings. Campbell (1966) suggests one approach of ‘pattern-matching’ to link the data to proposition, where evidences with similar information from the same case could be direct to one theoretical proposition. Campbell also claimed currently there is no precise way of setting the criteria for interpreting the type of findings. One potential way could be comparing at rival theoretical propositions when interpret the findings. These principles relevant to the research design are applied in the research design of this study, as pointed out next.

2.2 Research Design

A research design lists the element used to structure a study and show how all the major parts of the research project — the data, steps, and methods — are designed to address the central research questions (Dawson R. Hancode and Bob Algozzine, 2006). The research design of this thesis defines seven main steps to guide the research and structure the whole study, with reference to the five elements discussed above. In addition, three rounds of data collections were conducted in the research, which have been marked in the corresponding design step in the research plan. The research design of this study is illustrated in Figure 2 below.
As can be seen from Figure 2, the research design starts from identification of the business challenge and ends with the final proposal to be presented to the management of the case unit. Each stage of the research design is introduced in the following paragraphs.

At the Business Challenge Clarification stage, the research starts with an overview of the existing business challenges in the case department. Afterwards the current state analysis is carried out to understand the existing feedback activities and as-is situation from different stakeholder perspectives. The first data collection (Data 1) is carried out at this stage along with data analysis and interpretation. As the outcome of CSA, the gaps are identified in the current feedback activities. The existing literature
and best practice are afterwards reviewed aiming to search for the findings related to the service business and especially the internal customer feedback process. A conceptual tool is then built as a guidance for building a feedback process for the case unit.

For building the proposal, Data 2 is conducted as interviews and group discussions in order to collect suggestions and recommendations from the relevant stakeholders. Based on the knowledge and data obtained as Data 2, the preliminary proposal is then drafted, which consists of a defined internal customer feedback process and an internal tool for process evaluation. Subsequently, a meeting is arranged with the management of the case unit to validate the proposal, as Data collection 3. The proposal is then finalized through modifying the preliminary proposal according to the comments received from the management. The finalized proposal makes the final outcome of this thesis.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis
Since the case study relies on the rich sources of the data, a hallmark of case study research is the use of multiple data sources, a strategy which also enhances data credibility (Pamela Baxter and Susan Jack, 2008). In this study, three rounds data collections, with different purposes and content, were carried out as introduced below. The main focus of data collection in each round is summarized by one simple question, as illustrated in Figure 3 below.

- **Data 1**: what is the problem?
- **Data 2**: how to improve the problem?
- **Data 3**: how do you see the proposal?

Figure 3. Three rounds of data collections.

As shown in Figure 3 above, the purpose of Data 1 is to identify the business challenges; Data 2 is to seek the suggestions, and in Data 3 is to validate the preliminary proposal. The key data for the study was collected
from the interviews and discussions in the case company. This data collection was supported by the scrutiny of internal company documents, such as unit reports and emails. These data sources are described in more detail below, according to the data rounds in which they were collected from.

**Data 1 (Interviews, internal document and emails)**

The interviews conducted in the first round of data collection (Data 1) aimed to understand the existing internal customer feedback activities of the case unit. The details of the interviews are illustrated in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person, position</th>
<th>Content, topics</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 SSE customer service team members (3/3 people) | - How do you see the current customer feedback process in SSE?  
- How do you handle customer feedback? | Group Discussion | 12.2014 | 1h       |
| 2 SSE Customer Service Manager | - How do you see the current customer feedback process in SSE?  
- Which areas should be improved from management point of view? | Face-to-Face Interview | 12.2014 | 30 min   |
| 3 SSE Director | - How do you see the current customer feedback process in SSE?  
- Which areas should be improved from management point of view? | Face-to-Face Interview | 12.2014 | 30 min   |
| 4 Supply Operation Finland Survey Coordinator | - What is the background of the survey? (purpose, methodology, owner, target audience, scope) | Face-to-Face Interview | 11.2014 | 1h       |
| 5 Operation manager, Frontline France | - How do you usually give feedback to SSE?  
- What kind of response do you expect to get from SSE? What is the current situation? | Interview by call | 01.2015 | 30 min   |
| 6 Engineering Head, Front- | - How do you usually give feedback to SSE? | Face-to-Face | 01.2015 | 30 min   |
As seen from Table 1, the interview involved the key stakeholders in the ICF process of the case unit, such as the management and team members of the case unit, the customer survey coordinator, as well as managers from two selected frontlines. More details of the topics and interview questions are given in Appendix 1.

a) Emails

SSE is utilizing one common shared email address as the first contact point for taking care the customer requests, feedbacks and other inquiries from FL’s. For this research, email exchanges from 12.2013 to 11.2014 were collected and analyzed.

b) Company Reports and Documents

Currently, there is an annual survey conducted among Frontlines to evaluate the supply service of all the corporation supply lines. SSE is one of the supply lines in the survey scope which is surveyed every year. For this research, the survey result for the past 5 years are utilized.

Data 2 (Interviews, discussions)

At the second round of Data collection (Data 2), the target was to obtain the suggestions from relevant stakeholders in terms of the feedback process of SSE. Interview was the main method applied for Data 2. Details of Data 2 collection are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Data 2 for building proposal for the improved ICF process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SSE customer service team members (3/3 people)</td>
<td>• BEST PRACTICE: Any advice from you to improve customer feedback process in SSE?</td>
<td>Group Discussion</td>
<td>12.2014</td>
<td>1h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SSE Customer Service Manager</td>
<td>• What is your suggestions concerning improvement actions?</td>
<td>Face-to-Face Interview</td>
<td>12.2014</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3  SSE Director  • What is your suggestions concerning improvement actions?  Face-to-Face Interview  12.2014  30 min

4  Operation manager, KONE France  • What kind of response you expect to get from SSE and in fact how it is like at the moment  Interview by call  01.2015  30 min

5  Engineering Head, KONE Finland  • What kind of response you expect to get from SSE and in fact how it is like at the moment  Face-to-Face interview  01.2015  30 min

As seen from Table 2, the participants of the interviews are same as in Data 1, since for many participants both Data 1 and data 2 topics were discussed together.

Data 3 (Interviews)

The final round of data collection (Data 3) was carried out to validate the preliminary proposal for the improved process. The SSE management was the target group for this data collection and the validation was conducted by two bi-monthly meeting reviews, the detailed arrangement can be seen from Table 3 below.

Table 3. Data 3 for validating proposal for the improvement plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SSE management</td>
<td>How do you see the proposal?</td>
<td>Group Discussion</td>
<td>2.2015, 4.2015</td>
<td>30 min each time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, the data collection also involved the scrutiny of email exchanges between case unit and the frontlines and internal company documents.

Data Analysis

In this research, thematic analysis was applied to analyse the raw data collected from the interviews, emails and company internal documents. Thematic analysis is largely used in qualitative research and it focuses on examining themes within data. Data associating to each research question are grouped as one single theme and become the unit of analysis.
The theme of data gathered in this research is defined and illustrated in Table 4 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Angle</th>
<th>Feedback Activity</th>
<th>customer focus survey</th>
<th>Collaboration Meeting</th>
<th>transactional feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>challenges</td>
<td>theme 1</td>
<td>theme 2</td>
<td>theme 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suggestions</td>
<td>theme 4</td>
<td>theme 5</td>
<td>theme 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from Table 4, the current internal customer feedback process of the case unit consists of three main activities for feedback collection. They are Customer Focus Survey, Collaboration Meeting and transactional feedback. Both challenges and suggestions of each approach were gathered during data collection actions and similar information was grouped together as one theme. For instance, the data relating to the challenges existing in Customer Focus Survey is collected as theme 1. Similarly, other five themes of data can be obtained after analyzing the raw data with such logic.

2.4 Validity and Reliability Plan

Validity and reliability plan plays an important role in qualitative research since they determine the quality of the research result in terms of, first, whether the findings in the research respond to the research question, and, second, whether the same findings can be achieved by another researcher (Sarah Quinton, Teresa Smallbone, 2006).

Validity is the instrument measures what it is intended to be mentioned (Sarah Quinton, Teresa Smallbone, 2006). The construct validity is one of the classical validity methodologies to be used in this research. Constructs are the interpretations made by researchers based on their observations upon data collection. To validate the construct, collected data should be well documented and checked in detail. For example, in this study, field notes and tape scripts for interviews will be recorded. To increase validity, data should be directly quoted in the report and researcher ought to avoid research’s bias by keeping an open mind and less predictions. Finally, an
explicitly described research design should indicate and link to the research question and research conclusions to verify the consistency of research.

The test for reliability verifies that the research procedures and findings can be replicated by other parties (Yin, 2003). Three principles of data collection argued by Rowley (Rowley, 2002: 16-27) are applied to verify the reliability of this research. First, it is triangulation. Triangulation of data sources, for example, ensures that the study obtains opinions from different people/group to corroborate the same fact or finding. In this thesis, multiple key stakeholders are approached for data collection in order to establish the reliable chain of evidence. In addition to interviews and discussions, other types of data including company internal documents and relevant email exchanges across a long period are investigated for the same research question. Secondly, for the case study especially, the database comes as an important source of reliability. The data collected for the case will be well-organized and documented in one database which can be beneficial to increase the transparency of the findings and enhance the replication of the research. Finally, a reliable study should establish a chain of evidence. The researcher needs to maintain a chain of evidence in terms of the logic, constructs, appropriate citation of documents, and data collection, interpretation and evidence in the report.

The execution of validation and reliability plan will be further discussed in Section 7.3 at the end of this thesis.
3 Current State Analysis

This section discusses the current state of the internal customer feedback activities in SSE. A general picture of the existing process is built based on Data collection 1 which included interviews, discussions and examination of internal company documents (reports and emails). At the end of the section, a SWOT analysis is conducted to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the existing process before proposing the improvements.

3.1 Background of the Case Unit

The case unit of this study (SSE or “SOF Modernization”) is one of the global supply units in the case company, whose responsibility is to supply elevator modernization products and solutions and delivery to the frontlines around the globe. The modernization business is one of the three major business units in the case company. By modernizing the aging elevators, the equipment can work safely and reliably, and can save money in the long run by reducing maintenance and energy costs.

At the moment, the main modernization business of the case company is in Europe, and SSE serves around 30 European frontlines. In addition, it is also supplying Asian & north American frontlines with small volume orders. The value chain of modernization business in case company is displayed in the flow chart below.

![Figure 4. Case unit in the company value chain.](image)

As can be seen from Figure 4, the end customers such as building owners and real estate managers are ordering modernization products from the
frontlines – the sales offices in case company located globally. The frontlines will then pass the order to SSE – the case unit, who clarifies the order requirements including materials, requested delivery date, etc with frontlines and release the order to material management department to procure the products from internal factories or external suppliers.

Currently, there are about 30 team members working with SSE. The team structure is displayed in Figure 5 below, including the key teams in the case unit.

Figure 5. Organizational structure of case unit.

As seen from the figure above, there are two teams in SSE work closely with frontlines. The first team is the Customer service team which is mainly responsible for handling customer requests and incoming orders; and the Technical support team that is providing on technical support for complicated customized products and solutions.

3.2 Overview and Mapping of the Current Feedback Activities

The internal feedback process in this study means the activities of collecting feedback from the inter-company customers -- the sales organizations (all called ‘frontlines’ in this paper) located globally, which are buying the equipment modernization packages and components from SSE, the case unit of this study. This feedback from these internal customers relates to the quality of supply service provided by SSE. The supply service here
concerns two types of activities: order handling for modernization projects and packages, and engineer tendering for customized products and solutions.

The current regular activities related to the internal customer feedback process in the case unit can be categorized into three main areas. These areas include transactional feedback, Collaboration Meeting and the customer survey. The current three activities are shown in Figure 6 below.

![Figure 6. Current sequence of the internal customer feedback activities.](image)

As shown in Figure 6, currently there are three activities included in providing internal feedback. The first channel of providing feedback is called transactional feedback. It is typically the feedback provided by the frontlines, via an email or call and triggered by each specific case. Depending on the importance of the issue, the feedback could be either sent to SSE customer service common contact point (a shared email inbox) or escalated to SSE management.

Second, it is the type of feedback activity called a Collaboration Meeting which happens between SSE and some of the Frontlines who are ordering from SSE. SSE is the initiator of such meetings, with aiming to increase the mutual understanding and benefit their collaboration. The meeting can be held as a conference call or a face to face conference, and the frequency of them is typically twice or four times per year, depending on the requirement and preference of each FL.
Thirdly, it is the *Customer Focus Survey* which is arranged by the management of Group Supply Units. The objective of the survey is to monitor the perceived quality of the supply service and the consequent satisfaction of the Frontlines with the relationship between the Group Supply Units of the case company. Since SSE is one of the group supply units, it is consequently included in the scope of the survey. The survey is held once a year and the results are communicated back to SSE management via a local survey coordinator.

In Data collection 1 of this research, the key stakeholders in SSE, the frontlines and the group supply unit, were interviewed to identify the challenges and suggestions for these three existing activities in the current internal feedback process. The results, supported by the evidence from the internal document analysis, are presented below.

### 3.3 Analysis of the Current Feedback Practices: Challenges and Suggestions

The challenges and suggestions of the current feedback practices were collected and analyzed according to the type of activities used in the existing internal feedback process. The results are discussed per each activity as followed.

#### 3.3.1 Customer Focus Survey

The Customer Focus Survey is conducted annually aiming to monitor the service level and consequent satisfaction of the frontlines with the relationship with the internal supply units in the case company. The survey is owned by the management of the group supply units, and is executed by an external consulting company in Italy. A local survey coordinator is nominated in each supply unit country in order to facilitate the survey activities between the local supply unit and the survey agency. His job includes collecting the list of the frontlines informants that are going to answer the survey from each supply unit, and presenting the survey result to the management of the supply units in their particular area.

Below, the scope, model and methodology of survey are first introduced and the challenges existing in the current survey process are then discussed.
a) Survey Scope, Model and Methodology of Conducting the Survey

Currently, the owner of the survey is the management of the corporation supply units in the case company. The scope of the survey therefore relates to the six supply units under the management of the group supply units in case company, including the supply units Finland, Italy, China, etc. The organizational hierarchy of the corporation supply units in the scope of the survey can be seen from Figure 7 below.

Figure 7. Organizations within the Survey Scope.

As showed in the Figure 7, there are six supply units in the scope of the survey. The case unit SSE is one department under supply unit Finland, and thus it is included in the scope of the survey.

The survey relies on Customer service indicator (CSI) to evaluate the satisfaction of the internal customers with the internal services. In order to achieve the quantifiable result of CSI, the survey model is built by defining five touch points of relationship area between the frontlines and supply units, in terms of supply service, logistics, quality, products and support tools. These five areas are shown in Figure 8 below.
As shown in the Figure 8, due to the functionality of the case unit, SSE is categorized under the supply service area and their result will be included into the final results of CSI (customer service indicator) of these group supply units.

The survey has been carried out using CASW (computer assisted web interview) as its methodology, with dedicated software and servers. The questionnaire is published online and available for about 1 month for concerned people to respond. In 2014, 481 interviews (1 interview for 1 supply unit) are collected from 291 respondents, as one respondent can be working with multiple supply units. The response rate was thus 32%.

b) Challenges in Customer Focus Survey

Based on Data collection 1, the management of the case unit does not see this Customer Focus Survey as an effective way to obtain the feedback from its internal customers. The main challenges in the Customer Focus Survey come from the following two areas: 1) limited information from the Customer Survey regarding the case unit; 2) the low response rate.
The biggest concern of the survey is about the limited information revealed from the results of Customer Focus Survey. The actual information derived from the presentation of its results contains only but limited information on the actual problems. In the presentation of the survey results in the year 2014, there were more than 100 slides created for the whole organization, which covered all the supply units in the survey scope. However, only 1 slide was related to the case unit, SSE, out of these 100 slides. This one slide is displayed in figure 9 below.

**SOF Modernization: lead time of material delivery remains critical**

![Figure 9. SSE result from Customer feedback survey 2014 (internal documentation).](image)

Figure 9 shows the results for “SOF Modernization” which stands for “Supply Operation Finland”, the case unit in this research, who is responsible the modernization products supply. This diagram presents the survey results received by the case unit management. These fields are: (a) Technical competence, (b) Availability of the personnel, (c) Response time to questions/problems, (d) Lead times of material deliveries, (e) Courtesy of the personnel, (f) Reliability of answers/plans, (g) Reliability and flexibility in managing technical modifications, (h) Easiness to man-
age the order with current ordering tools, (i) Easiness to manage the order with current tendering tools.

The results in the nine fields are presented in a diagram format and indicate the informants’ responses as for the quality of the supply service over the past five years, and the average score of these nine areas is marked with the red dot line standing for the overall performance of SSE. The questionnaire content (Appendix 2) is rating questions on the scale from 0 to 10 in the nine areas plus give the overall evaluation of the ordering process and the tendering process. The same questions have been asked every year, which makes it possible to trace the changes in each field over the recent years.

As shown in Figure 9 above, Variable 1 (Technical competence) was fluctuating over the 5 year around the score of 70 (which is considered as “good”). The scores for technical competences have changed within the range of 64 (in 2010) up to 73 (in 2013), which was the highest score so far. For the year 2014, technical competence scored at 70 points, which is considered as “good”.

The same logic of fluctuations relate to variables 2 (Availability of personnel), variable 7 (Reliability and flexibility in managing technical modifications), variable 8 (Easiness to manage the order with current ordering tools), which demonstrate the same dynamics. All three demonstrate the good performance. On the other hand, some variables show lower scores. The three most problematic areas are: a) the Lead time of material deliveries (scored 51 for the year 2014), b) Easiness to manage orders with the current tendering tools (scored 56 in the year 2014), and c) the Response time to questions and problems (scored 58 in the year 2014).

Although the Survey shows only these relative results (over the 5 years), indicating the pain points in the SSE activities, it does not provide much information on the steps that the internal customers see as desirable for them and which, from their view, could benefit the current process and improve the situation. According to SSE management, the information
contained in the results is too generic and limited, therefore it is difficult to identify the practical actions for SSE and make improvements accordingly.

“I don’t know how to do with this survey result. Where to start. For example there is a small decline of courtesy of people from 2013, what does it mean?......I am not going to engage any activities based on this survey because I don’t know what to engage.”

-SSE management member

As seen from this response, the SSE management would rather expect the result to be further divided based on different frontlines or geographic areas, such as WSE (West and South Europe) or CNE (Central and North Europe), so that they are able to narrow down the scope and identify some specific frontlines, in order to take the follow up actions.

In addition, in the current feedback summary which is delivered to the SSE management group, the feedback of two sub-teams in SSE – the Customer Service Team (responsible for order handling) and the Technical Support Team (responsible for engineering support) – are not separated. This mixture of results from the two different processes prevents the management from making better sense of the current state of the order handling and the engineering support, and thus does not allow to takes actions based on the current understanding.

Moreover, according to interview with the survey coordinator of Supply operation Finland, SSE is not the only unit facing such problems.

“Other supply units in Finland for example NEB (new elevator business), logistics, quality, they have the same problem as SSE to utilize the survey result and arrange effective actions.”

-Survey Coordinator, Supply Unit Finland

As seen from this response, regarding the practical utilization of the survey outcomes, this current feedback activity does not seem to provide the intended help and lead to improvement efforts. Since this practice of collecting and analysing the survey results is not only applied to the case unit of this study, but to many other units as well, they are also facing the similar problems and the corrective actions in the survey methodology should be taken on the larger level, than just the case unit level. In other words, for this feedback activity to become beneficial for the case com-
pany, the survey responses should be analysed (and probably collected) in a differentiated way, so that the outcoming result would lead to the possibility of specified, differentiated analysis. The results would then lead to better understanding of the current challenges and the possibility to target the continuous improvement actions specifically, based on such results.

The second challenge in the survey refers to the low response rate. In the Customer Focus Survey in 2014, the response rate is only 32% [KSU Customer Focus Survey, March 2014], which is quite low comparing to another inter-company surveys (for example, the Corporation employee satisfaction survey, called Pulse Employee Survey). In the year 2013, 92% employees responded to the Pulse employee survey. (Website, 2015) This high level of the response rate allows building firm conclusions regarding the challenges and the problems areas which need improvement. It also allows planning for specific actions, based on these results.

On the contrary, the low response rate in the Customer Focus Survey can lead only to a limited vision of the current situation. The fear of this low a response rate relates to a possible lack of important, informative feedback. The fear is that those relevant people, who are closely involved in the order handling and tendering process (which make the key focus for SSE), might have not participated in the survey. The anonymity of the survey does not allow for any check as for the representation. However, the low response rate points to a high probability of such a loss in the responses from the most knowledgeable, closely involved stakeholders. Unexpectedly, the SSE management was not aware of this low response rate in this and earlier surveys.

*I didn't know earlier that rate of that survey is so low.*

-SSE management member

Thus, this limited outcome dues to a low rate of responses undermines, to a certain extent, the value of the survey results. This limited outcome can only be mended by additional steps, aimed to support and clarify the obtained survey results. In needs corrective actions, for example, interviews, discussions or other possible measures.
In summary, the current results of the Customer Focus Survey cannot be considered sufficient without additional actions for collecting more reliable and specific internal feedback. From the supply units’ perspective, the survey results do not provide practical enough diagnostics and suggestions to take subsequent actions. On the other hand, the survey should not be dropped since it does collect some general and comparable results. If some measures are taken to increase the response rate and differentiate the results, the survey may still be a useful activity in internal feedback. Among such challenges is, for example, the lack of motivation in the frontlines which seem to lack the motivation to answer the survey. In other words, it is necessary to further develop the methodology of conducting the survey, collecting and analysing its results (survey arrangements), if more value is expected from this feedback activity. Otherwise, the disappointment of the survey owner may reach such a level that they can start even considering cancelling the survey due to the poor practical outcomes.

3.3.2 Collaboration Meetings Organized by the Case Unit

The second main type of internal feedback activity is the quarterly Collaboration Meetings. The Collaboration Meeting between modernization supply unit (SSE) and Frontlines is organised by SSE and aims at continuous improvement of the collaboration with the frontlines. This collaboration is specially aimed at providing a platform for open and direct communications between SSE and frontlines.

a) Meeting Arrangements and Preparation

The quarterly Collaboration Meeting is initiated by the case unit by sending the meeting invitations to certain selected frontlines. The meeting is held as a telecom-conference or a face to face conference, depending on the locations and the frequency of the meeting is typically twice or four times per year, depending on the requirements or preferences of each frontline.

The meetings are usually prepared by one Customer Service specialist from the case unit. This work is rotated among all the team members and is taken in turns. Before the Collaboration Meeting, the customer service
specialist on duty will prepare a general information package for the specific frontline which contains the points that will be discussed in the meeting with these frontlines. This information package contains a certain supply line KPI reports, with such information that the frontline is able to evaluate the quality of the supply service provided by SSE in the past few months. For example, this information package contains the on-time delivery rate, lead time reduction, and other metrics. In addition, the customer service specialist will also typically invites any additional topics to discuss in the meeting invitation to the frontline participants.

b) Challenges in Collaboration Meeting

The Collaboration Meeting is specially aimed at providing a platform for open and direct communications between SSE and the Frontlines. Both sides, however, have their concerns as for the efficiency of the current arrangements in conducting Collaboration Meetings.

From the SSE perspective, one important purpose to organize the meeting is to obtain the constructive feedbacks directly from its internal customers. From the frontlines perspective, the goal is to reach the mutual understanding of certain special cases, and to obtain more practical information at Frontline level.

“More practical FL level info about product changes should be given to FL engineers (either from SSE or global TRB business). (We want to know) the information that is important to us.”

-Head of Engineering, FL Finland

“What actions SSE did to avoid the delay of next order. (We want to understand) why the order was delayed. …. We are far away. We don’t speak same language. Most cases they are complicated to understand. We want to understand you. We can support. We really like to share the knowledge, so we can know you better, what you do.”

-Planning Manager, FL France

However, as understood from these citations from the meeting participants in both Frontlines and SSE, the benefits resulted from the meetings vary quite considerably among different frontlines. If summarized, there are quite a few areas can be improved from the efficient and effectiveness point of view.
According to the results from the interviews and group discussions from Data 1 collection, the biggest problems of the Collaboration Meetings at the moment can be summarized into the following areas: a) challenges related to the limited representation in these meetings, b) challenges in the meeting agenda and preparation, and c) challenges in following up the issues raised in these meetings.

First, in terms of the meeting representation, currently the Collaboration Meetings are arranged with less than 10 Frontlines out of 30 in Europe. Some of the Frontlines are visiting the case unit regularly, yet some others never do.

“We are asking for feedback whenever we are meeting one FL face-to-face. It’s not fair to others for whom we never meet in person. It is also not a full picture we are getting.”

-SSE management member

This comment points out that currently the regular Collaboration Meetings are only held with the biggest Frontlines who have a big order volume. Thus, for those smaller frontlines a regular feedback meeting procedure is missing, which means that for these frontlines, any additional internal feedback collection method is missing, except for the survey (discussed above).

Secondly, from the preparation point of view, both the frontlines and the case units mentioned the content of the meeting should be further developed. Both sides refer mostly to the unspecific agendas that Collaboration Meeting typically have. Figure 10 below contains an example of the agenda of the meeting held between SSE and its biggest frontline, France, in the second half of 2014.
Figure 10. Agenda of FL-SL Collaboration Meeting (Internal documentation).

As seen from the agenda above, the content of this meeting only consists of very general points. It does not specify either who or what issues will be discussed; thus, the whole meeting is built around the general information package provided by the case unit, and does not indicate specific enough issues for the discussion to become more prepared or problem-based. As a result, it is only one party that comes prepared and leads the discussion on the specific issues brought up by this one party. As pointed out by the Engineering Head of the frontline Finland, in order to have an effective Collaboration Meeting, the agenda of the meeting should be checked with the frontline beforehand.

Please check the Frontline needs for the topics before the meeting. We want to know what is important to us, not those general information.

-Engineering Head of FL Finland

Two problems can be detected from above comments of the Frontline manager: (a) the miscommunication between the frontline and the case unit, and (b) the mismanagement in the meeting preparation. Regarding the first problem, the meeting organizer actually does typically invite topics from the frontlines to discuss before the meeting (in this case, for instance), but the message either did not reach the right person, or was ig-
This small issues, however, points to an internal communication problem between the frontlines and the case unit, which need to be carefully examined. Secondly, the general information package designed by the case unit can be shortened and re-organized in order to point clearly to the issues that SSE wants to get feedback to. Presently, the reports included in this document more concern the KPIs from the SSE’s perspective, rather than raise the issues or provide metrics related to the interests of the frontlines. Therefore, the case unit need to think about identifying and addressing the true interests of the frontlines in SSE-FL collaboration (more generally) and in the Collaboration Meetings specifically. The hope is that if the frontlines interests are addressed, and specific, well-arranged information is provided beforehand, the feedback outcome from the Collaboration Meetings can be increased. These two issues pointed above need to be investigated more specifically.

This issue is, however, further complicated by the different views which exist internally, in the case unit, regarding the frontline’s role in the Collaboration Meeting. On the one hand, the case unit management expects more interaction during the meeting.

“SSE is running the show, focus on KPI and statistics, improvement request and development proposal from Frontlines are not brought up. What kind of development actions we can do, not just lead time or response time”.

-SSE management member

On the other hand, according to SSE management, currently most of the time is spent on explaining the KPI reports by SSE, while the constructive feedback from the frontlines is, in fact, missing, which is needed to improve the collaboration between two units. This misunderstanding in the meeting preparations and procedure can be explain, to a certain extent, by the conflicting expectations from the Collaboration Meetings outcomes within the case unit. For example, one customer service specialist who prepares these meetings expresses the view that:

FL does not have to prepare for the meeting, they are not expected. The meeting is organized by SSE.

-SSE Customer Service Specialist

Shortly, this example presents the views that the party that organizes the event has a bigger stake in it and should pursue its interests, even at the
expense of the other party; while the other side should take its own efforts to pursue their interests more actively. Such a view, which is legitimate, for example, for negotiations with external parties, can hardly be considered collaborative and justified for treating the internal customers. On a practical level, this attitude results in preparing the meeting agenda which stresses the interests of the organizers and leaves it to the frontlines to contribute to the meeting agenda every time, though the meeting is called Collaborative. Thus, the results of the meeting analysis pointed to an obvious gap, on the SSE case unit side, between the management expectations and the individual executioner's perception.

Finally, the last weak point of Collaboration Meetings concerns the follow up of the issues raised in the meeting. Currently, after the meeting, the SSE meeting organizer will deliver the FL information package including the meeting minutes to all the meeting participants. The meeting minutes might contain some issues that should be solved; however, there is no formal process to monitor and review the progress, even if someone is really working on it. This challenge is reflected in the following comment:

We made meeting minutes each time for Collaboration Meeting, however not sure if anyone is following the issues raised.

-SSE Customer Service Specialist

Summing up, this lack of follow up, from both sides, points again to the challenges in the Collaboration Meeting arrangements, missing interest from the frontlines in the current arrangement, and some inconsistencies in the case unit operations related to the internal feedback management. On a more general level, the issues detected from the Collaboration Meetings indicate a lack of customer focus in the case unit, in terms of the collaboration between case unit and its internal customers, the frontlines, as well as the internal challenges within SSE.

3.3.3 Transactional Feedback

The transaction feedback refers to the feedback triggered by each specific event. It relates mostly to certain unsatisfied cases from the customers.
Currently, the most common approach to dealing with transaction feedback is through email or phone call. The contact point of SSE to receive feedback is clear to frontlines.

*We know who in SSE is our contact person and to whom we can escalate the urgent issues.*

- Head of Engineering, FL Finland

One sample of transaction feedback in email could be one complaint from one Frontline, concerning their urgent request was not responded by the SSE customer service specialist and caused the delay of the delivery. The feedback was escalated to the management of the case unit by the angry customers for further clarification and a solution to prevent similar cases to happen again.

The area of transaction feedback that could be further improved is related to the subsequent actions on feedback collected, because the process/system of feedback management is missing. According to the group discussion with SSE customer service specialists, there could be a platform to collect the customer feedback. And the responsible person should be nominated who should produce the lessons that have been learned from the feedback. SSE director also mentioned that the collection of feedback would be valuable for newcomers and temporary workers, for example, summer trainees can use these lessons to manage their work.

3.4 Summary of the Key Findings from the Current State Analysis (Data 1)

Based on the analysis on the current internal customer feedback activities of the case unit, the gaps between the desired and the real situation have been marked on the current process map, as shown in Figure 11 below.
As displayed in Figure 11 above, the internal customer feedback process currently has three main activities: (a) Customer Focus Survey, (b) quarterly Collaboration Meeting, and (c) transactional feedback. All these activities have certain challenges, which were identified in the current state analysis. They are marked with numbers and pointed to in the corresponding feedback activity. Although some gaps are detected in all the existing feedback activities, most of the challenges relate to Collaboration Meetings. The detailed content of each challenge is listed in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Key findings of current state analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nr</th>
<th>GAP</th>
<th>Feedback Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current State</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The information revealed from the survey is general and limited.</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enough information can be obtained to detect problems and arrange actions: with differentiated results, specific to each frontline, supported by concrete suggestions and complemented by other means of feedback collection (to guarantee that all involved stakeholders have expressed their opinions)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The response rate of survey is low (32%).</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As internal survey the rate is expected to be much higher.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Regular Collaboration Meetings are arranged with less than 10 Frontlines.</td>
<td>Collaboration Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of methods to approach the rest of Frontlines in terms of regular collaboration activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4 | The meeting is mainly running by the case unit, the input from Frontline is limited and the interaction is low. | **SSE Management**: Frontline should prepare for the meeting also and provide constructive feedback in the meeting.  
**SSE meeting organizer**: Frontlines are not expected to prepare for the meeting as the meeting is called by SSE. | Collaboration Meeting |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | Not all the content in meeting agenda is interesting to Frontlines. | **One Frontline Manager**: the meeting agenda should be checked with Frontline beforehand.  
**SSE meeting organizer**: It is asked in meeting invitation for Frontline desired topics to be discussed. | Collaboration Meeting |
| 6 | There is no systematic way to follow up the issue raised in the meeting. | The process of issue solving should be monitored. | Collaboration Meeting |
| 7 | There is no feedback collection platform to share the lessons learned. | The feedbacks should be collected and shared as team knowledge. | Transactional Feedback |

As can be seen from Table 5, in current situation gaps exist in all the feedback activities, and mainly owe to the lack of a defined process to standardize the activities in the internal feedback and ensure their effective implementation. The gaps detected in the internal customer feedback also reveal the lack of collaboration between the case unit and its internal customers in terms of the missing channels for effective feedback collection. This lack of collaboration, for the case unit SSE, also signals about the lack of the customer orientation (towards the internal customers) and the customer focus attitude can be further developed. In addition, there is apparently considerable improvement space to enhance the existing feedback activities and explore a new approach for feedback collection and management from the practical perspective; an approach that would form a holistic internal feedback process.

Therefore, the research focus of this study has been further specified into this research question:

How to build an internal customer feedback process for the case unit?
It is assumed that by further focusing this question the customer feedback activity in the case unit would be better defined into a holistic process and the identified gaps in the existing activities can be improved and incorporated into the new, better defined Internal feedback process.
4 Existing Knowledge / Best Practice

In this session, literature related to customer orientation in service business and internal customer feedback process is reviewed, aiming to obtain the existing best knowledge for the two research questions came up at the end of the current state analysis: what is the feedback process and how to build the feedback process.

4.1 Service Dominant Logic and Customer Experience

As the world’s major economies have matured, they choose to become service-oriented businesses (Frei, 2008).

One of the key features in service business is the adoption of a service dominant logic. The service dominant logic is defined as a business perspective which is based on the notion that ‘potential value for customers is embedded in all types of resources used by customers and that such resources are used as service that renders value for them’ (Grönroos, 2011). For example, in service dominant logic the value iPhone brings to its user is how the sense of convenience and joyfulness has been experienced during usage, rather than how much money has been paid for the phone. People might spend the same amount money but the value created for each individual differs a lot. In other word, value emerges during customer’s usage and is determined by the user alone.

From service provider’s perspective, in order to engage the value creation process and promote the value to be created by its customers, a service business can appreciate the customer experience through actively interacting with its customers. As stated by Grönroos (Grönroos, 2011), where ever direct interactions occur, the firm has opportunities to co-create value with its customers. This opportunity is unique to suppliers defining themselves as service business and thus a service provider. By improving the understanding of the customer experience the firm is able to adapt its offering and process to provide better service to its customer and differentiate itself in the market.
4.2 Customer centric culture and internal service quality

By adopting the service dominant logic, service is not anymore a type of products to be sold to the customers, but an attitude of customer centricty and should be possessed by every employee in the company, from top management to the execution level. In a company with a customer centric culture, customer experience permeates through all core business functions (Vesterinen, 2014: 44). Understanding the customer experience is critical for a service business, since it brings the opportunity for the service provider to differentiate in the market by offering superior user experience products. Furthermore, delighting the customer is not only the target of the sales or marketing department in a service business, back offices, for example HR, IT, are all required to engage the activities of promoting the customer experiences. Knowing what is delightful, what is satisfying, and what is dissatisfying to your customer is high critical for success in the increasingly competitive marketplace of today (Cole, 2001).

However, for those departments who do not directly interact with the customers, how should they behave in a service business and promote the customer centric culture? To push a customer and market orientation deep into the organization, many firms have adopted systems by which internal customers evaluate internal suppliers. (John R. Hauser, Duncan I. Simester, and Birger Wernerfelt, 1998) As a result, the internal service quality can be assessed, and the high quality of internal service directly impact the satisfaction and loyalty of external customers, according to the model of service profit chain proposed by Loveman (1998).

As depicted in Figure 12, the quality of the service provided by the internal departments within same company determines the employee satisfaction and loyalty, which naturally affect the service value delivered to the
external customers. As a result, the customer satisfaction and loyalty are affected accordingly and finally decide on the revenue growth of the service provider. Therefore it can be concluded that a high internal service quality can result in satisfied customers and lead the company to the sustaining competitiveness in the market place.

4.3 Feedbacks from Internal Customers

Although it is widely accepted that internal customer service quality leads to internal customer satisfaction and in turn external customer satisfaction, the issue of internal customer service has received relatively little attention from researchers (Minjoon Jun, Shaohan Cai, 2010: 205) One method of measuring the quality of both service relationships and performance in these types of situations is through individualized feedback methods (e.g. commonly referred to as self-other and/or 360° rating systems) (Church, Javitch and Burke, 1995: 29). Establishing a feedback process between internal supplier and internal customer can be considered as a practical way of hearing the voice of internal customers, which can bring the insight about customer problems and internal inefficiencies (Brigman, 2013). In below session the intra-company feedback process is discussed along with the systems and tools which can be used to facilitate the feedback process.

4.3.1 The voice of internal customers

In today’s challenging business world, companies want to differentiate themselves by providing superior customer experience. Therefore, the term-voice of customer (VOC) has become increasingly popular as it describes the customers’ needs and their perceptions of the products and service that can be translated into specific product/service requirements for improvement efforts. (Schall, 2011) By collecting VOC data the companies are able to better understand their customers and thus deliver the superior customer experience. VOC can be used with both external and internal customers and involves both reactive and proactive sources of information.

However, internal customers matter too. As argued by Schall (Schall, 2011), customers are recipients of products or services. The difference between internal customers and external customers lies in that internal
customers use the output of provided product or service for their processes while external customers pay the bills. The voice of internal customer efforts can provide insight about customer problems and internal inefficiencies. (Brigman, 2013) Voice of Internal Customers (VOIC) typically examines both infrastructures — the policies, procedures and systems by which staff are required to operate — and the individual staff themselves. It’s through VOIC that challenges in departmental cooperation — and their reasons — typically surface.

4.3.2 Best Practice: VOIC data collection plan

Due to the importance of VOIC introduced above, an ever more practical issue to the companies is how to effectively obtain the voice of internal customers. Schall (Schall, 2011) proposed one VOIC data collection plan as shown in Figure 13 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customer</th>
<th>What &amp; Why</th>
<th>Reactive Sources</th>
<th>Proactive Sources</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is your customer - internal and/or external?</td>
<td>What do you want to ask them and what information do you need to probe for?</td>
<td>What reactive actions will you take to gain the information - customer complaint data, monthly scorecard information, customer feedback, etc.</td>
<td>What proactive actions will you take to gain the information - surveys, interviews, customer focus groups, meetings, etc.</td>
<td>What information did you gain from the probing? What does the customer need from your process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why are you asking these questions - what information are you expecting to gain?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 13. VOIC data collection plan.

As seen from Figure 13 above, the VOIC data collection plan consists of five key elements: customer, what & why, reactive sources, proactive sources and summary. In the following paragraph each element is explored one by one.

The first element is to define the exact internal customers whose voices are important to listen to. It is necessary to target the management of the internal customers as well as the frequent contacts who work closely with your unit in routine basis. In addition, defining customer segmentation by means of ordering volume, physical locations or service requirements can increase the effectiveness and efficiency of feedback activities, since the
specific and suitable approaches can be designed to effectively probe for the voice of customer for each customer segment.

Secondly, it is important to clarify what information is needed from internal customers and why to ask these questions to gain such information. In other words, the second element is to clarify the goal of the feedback activities. For internal customers from HR department or finance department, different information might be expected to gain. Also the goal of anonymous survey and face to face customer interview can differ largely. In summary, simple but specific goals should be setup for the exact customer (segment) and the feedback activity.

The third element is reactive sources, which is referring to the reactive actions to be taken on the received customer feedback, for example the customer complaints and the monthly scorecard information. One effective approach could be translating the voice of customers into the exact customer requirement. For example one customer complained ‘the remote does not work!’ The issue in such case is in fact that the customer does not understand the operation of the remote. To further address the issue as a general customer requirement, following conclusion reveals - all remote functions are usable with little or no instruction. Shortly, the key is to probe for the root cause of the received customer feedback and make improvement accordingly.

In contrast with the reactive sources, the next element is called proactive sources, relating to such actions that are taken proactively to gain the feedback. The most common proactive sources could be survey, customer interview, customer focus group, etc. Customer interview is an important information gathering technique to understand the voice of customer; in addition such direct communication can also foster the cooperative working relationship with internal customer. Customer Survey is also an effective way to listen to customer, as of its wide coverage and fact of anonymous. Customer focus group is useful when desired information about behaviors and motivations is more complex than a survey is likely to reveal and when the dynamic interchange between the group members
may result in more and depth and unbiased information than one-one-one interviews. (Schall, 2011)

Last but not the least, a summary is expected to be achieved including what information was gained and what customer requirement revealed. A good summary of VOIC can lead to effective follow up actions such as Analyze and Act of the customer feedbacks.

4.3.3 Best Practice: Three angles of customer feedback

As the focus of this study, different approaches of listening to customers for their feedbacks are further discussed in this session.

The first approach for listening feedback is from the angle of feedback type which can be quantitative or qualitative feedback. Quantitative feedback can be understood as numeric data for example how many scores customers answered in the survey to represent the customer satisfaction. It is usually used for understanding status, trends or comparisons. On the other hand, qualitative feedback could be opinions from free text data in the survey, which can be used for understanding reasons behind scores (Vesterinen, 2014).

The second method for collecting customer feedback is to gather solicited and unsolicited feedback. According to Vesterinen (Vesterinen, 2014), solicited feedback is gathered from customers by asking for their opinions via different feedback channels, for example online surveys, email or face-to-face interviews, it is typically useful to obtain the feedback on the specific topics which are interested to the feedback collector. In contrary, unsolicited feedback is referring to those customer opinions which are not asked. From internal customer feedback point of view, unsolicited feedback can be the comments from internal customers which are submitted in the intranet team page.

The third angle of listening to customers is to understand the relationship and transactional feedback. Relationship feedback is the perception of one object, for example the internal supplier, it tells the general opinion the internal customer thinks about the service and comparing with other internal service providers in the same company. On the other side, trans-
action feedback is triggered a specific event such as the delay of one important order. Based on transaction feedback it is able to know whether the customer is satisfied with the ability of incident or emergency handling of its supplier.

In summary, various feedback collection activities for example surveys, interviews or emails can be arranged to listen to the internal customers through three different angles introduced above, it can help the organization to collect the comprehensive and objective internal customer feedback.

4.3.4 Best Practice: General Feedback Processes in Organizations

Business practice suggests that feedback makes a crucial component of the intelligence cycle – it can help practitioners to highlight specific areas for improvement, identify gaps in intelligence output, as well as providing insight into how the intelligence function is perceived by internal stakeholders in the organization. (Finnegan, 2015)

Establishing a formal and systematic process of feedback collection can help the organization to listen to its customers effectively. For this end, various models are suggested in discussed in literature. Among them, the most influential are the ten-step approach proposed Peter Donovan (Peter Donovan and Timothy Samler, 1994), to delight the customers and build a customer-driven organization. The model is displayed in Figure 13 below.
As can be seen from Figure 14, the model is built for external customers. However it can also be used as a standard framework to enhance the internal customer relationship and delight internal customers. Here it will be adapted into a model applying for internal customer feedback process.

The first three steps are designed for starting phase. A vision ought to be defined to guide the process setting and execution, and secondly gaining the commitment from management is critical to the implementation of the process. A go/no go decision then can be made with risk management of the whole project plan. As commented by Peter (Peter Donovan and Timothy Samler, 1994: 38), the decision should be made carefully. Because once such customer-orientation program is launched, the expectation from customers as well employees will be increased largely. The failure of delivery will be dangerous regarding the collaboration between two units in the same corporation.

The purpose of the next phase is to measure what is important to internal customers, which includes the next three steps. Step 4 is to segment the customer base. Even for internal customers, they can be further divided in groups by means of ordering volume, physical locations or service requirements. Based on the customer segmentation the success criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Setting the vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gaining commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The go/no-go decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Segmenting the customer base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Defining the success criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Customer feedback systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Analysing results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Making change happen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Communicating the changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Choosing where next to compete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 14. Ten-Step Approach (Peter Donovan 1994).
can be defined to measure the quality of the customer feedback process. With known target audience (customer defined in step 4) known target (success criteria defined in step 5), the customer feedback system can be built to practically fetch the feedback from customers.

Once the feedback is collected, it is time to delight the customers by making a change based on their requirement. The collected feedback should be carefully analyzed and arrange actions to make the change happen. The communication of the result is equally important, since it will delight the customers immediately by making them aware of the fact that the improvement actions are completed per their specific requirements.

Last but not the least; the customer feedback process is considered as continuous improvement actions. The process should be reviewed regularly and update the process accordingly to make sure its validation with the latest business process and organizational structure.

4.4 Conceptual Framework of This Thesis
This section summarized the approaches and tools of internal customer feedback process that have been discussed in the existing business and academic literature. As a result, the conceptual framework of this research has been designed as shown in Figure 15 below. The conceptual framework designed in Figure 15 merges the ideas from: 1) A 5-Step Model for Delivering Great Customer Experience (Vesterinen, 2014), 2) Ten-Step Approach (Peter Donovan and Timothy Samler, 1994: 38) as well as 3) the VOIC data collection plan (Schall, 2011). The resulting construct is designed to show the logic of an internal feedback process.
Figure 15. Conceptual Framework of building the internal Customer Feedback Process.
As illustrated in Figure 15 above, the conceptual framework of this thesis contains five elements: Commitment, Listen, Analyze, Engage and Act, as displayed in the arrows in each separate block. In addition, one or more sub-items are defined under each element, highlighting the most important practical tasks.

First, element *Commit* refers to the leadership commitment to the customer-centricity within an organization. On the operational level, it can be realized by setting up the proper vision which aligns with the company strategy and fits also the goal of the unit. Besides, a process owner should be nominated to manage the entire process and initiate the implementation of the activities defined in the process.

Second, *Listen* concerns the activities arranged to obtain the feedbacks from the customers. The sub-items under Listen include the specific goal setting of each feedback activity, as well as the appropriate arrangements to fetch the feedbacks proactively for example conduct surveys or interviews to actively probe for the feedbacks and to respond to the complaints or feedbacks reported by the customers.

Third, *Analyze* the collected feedback is the next step to further interpret the result. Quantitative and qualitative analysis should be decided and applied for the collected feedback results from various feedback activities. The key in this step is to turning the text into insight by transferring the complaints of customers into actual customer requirements. Furthermore, it is suggested to carry out the customer segment analysis to categorize the customers by certain criteria’s, due to which the results achieved from above quantitative or qualitative analysis can be presented by customer segment, so that facilitate the following Engage and Act actions.

Fourth, in the *Engage* stream, the relevant stakeholders ought to be motivated to contribute to the customer feedback activities, where the stakeholder analysis plays an important role because it helps to identify the needs and interest of the various stakeholders. People are willing to take the actions and accept the changes only if they know they can benefit from the changes.
Finally, the engagement of everybody fosters the collaboration between different stakeholders which makes the last stream - Act - increasingly effective. The internal communications should be considered as part of the actions to notify all the relevant parties before and after the changes, that what will happen and what has been achieved in the customer feedback activities.

In summary, the suggested five-step approach to build the internal feedback process lists the most important elements which need to be realized in an internal customer feedback process. The model will be used to analyze the gaps identified in the current state analysis and to build a formalized customer feedback process for the case unit.
5 Building Proposal for the Case Company

In this section, based on findings from best practice merged into the conceptual framework in Section 4, a proposal is built to define a formal process for the case unit, as well as include a tool for process evaluation.

5.1 Overview of Results of the Current State Analysis (Data 1)

The results of the current state analysis specified the three current activities related to internal customer feedback in the case unit, SSE. They also pointed to the gaps in each of the current feedback activity. Figure 11 reminds about the results of the current state of internal customer feedback.

![Figure 11. Gaps detected in the current ICF process.](image)

Figure 16. Current internal customer feedback activities and their gaps in SSE.

At the end of the current state analysis, the research question of this study was specified into a more narrowed question ‘How to build an internal customer feedback process for the case unit?’ This overview, presented in Figure 16 above, served as a starting point also for the discussions which elicited improvement suggestions from the interviewees and participants of the discussions. Their suggestions, merged with the findings from best practice from Section 4, served as an initial draft of the proposal which was then further discussed and specified with representatives of the case unit.
5.2 Findings from Stakeholders Suggestions (Data 2)

In addition to the findings from CSA and best practice, Data 2 made another important source for proposal building showing the suggestions from the relevant stakeholders regarding the existing internal customer feedback activities. Data 2 was collected in the same interviews and group discussions as Data 1, but was separated logically. After the interviewees’ reported a problem in the existing process, their suggestions were asked separately for each specific topic. As a result, the findings of Data 2 relate to the problems identified per each feedback activity.

Table 6. Suggestions collected from Data 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback Activity</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customer Focus Survey</strong></td>
<td>SSE management suggested the survey result should be further developed so that more useful information can be revealed and utilized by the management. For example, more questions can be asked in the questionnaire. In addition, it would be good to have the result presented by physical areas e.g. Central and North Europe, South East Europe etc. Regarding the low response rate, SSE management wished to have a meeting with the survey owner and co-ordinator to discuss the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaboration Meeting</strong></td>
<td>One frontline manager advised the agenda of the Collaboration Meeting should be checked with the frontline before the meeting so as to ensure the topics to be discussed are interesting to both SSE and frontlines. SSE management commented that the frontline should prepare for the meeting also with at least one real case to be discussed in the meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transaction Feedback</strong></td>
<td>One SSE customer service operative suggested that one workspace could be established to record all the complaints received as transactional feedback, including the way it is managed and the lessons learned; and subsequently share this information internally for the team knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Others</strong></td>
<td>One SSE management member has mentioned that the face-to-face customer interview is the best way to get feedback. “Face to face is the best way to get feedback….Meet people once, that’s enough. It’s easier for them to call you. If they don’t know your face, they won’t talk much on the phone.” -SSE Management Member</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen from the table above, in Data collection 2 the suggestions from the stakeholders have been collected per each feedback activity. Among them, a few suggestions to address the gaps in the existing feedback activities and one suggestion for a new approach were collected.

5.3 Improvements to the Current Feedback Activities

Recommendations to the existing feedback activities are included as part of the proposal in response to the seven gaps identified in the current state analysis. As the output of the current analysis, the seven gaps are further analyzed by the conceptual tool synthesised from the best practice. In addition, Data 2 as for the suggestions by the stakeholders is also incorporated as one of the sources for building recommendations.

5.3.1.1 Applying Conceptual Framework to Improve the Gaps Identified in the Current State Analysis

In this Proposal, seven gaps identified in the existing feedback activities were treated by utilizing the five-stream model built in the conceptual framework. The seven gaps of the current customer feedback process were analysed through the relevant elements of the five-stream model, with the results displayed in the table below.

Table 7. Seven gaps mapped with the five stream conceptual tool.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nr</th>
<th>GAP</th>
<th>Feedback Stream</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The information revealed from the survey is general and limited.</td>
<td><strong>Listen</strong>: The questionnaire used in the survey cannot obtain enough feedbacks.</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Analyze</strong>: The analysis result presented does not provide practical information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The response rate of survey is low (32%).</td>
<td><strong>Listen</strong>: The survey did not manage to collect sufficient feedbacks.</td>
<td>Orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Engage</strong>: Frontlines are not highly motivated to answer the survey.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lack of methods to approach the rest of Frontlines in terms of regular collaboration activities</td>
<td><strong>Listen</strong>: Only few frontlines’ voice is heard in such regular meetings.</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Engage</strong>: Not all Frontlines are engaged.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The interaction in the meeting is low.</td>
<td><strong>Listen</strong>: the meetings failed to get much input from the frontlines.</td>
<td>Orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Engage</strong>: the engagement of frontlines is not enough.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Meeting agenda is not interested to Frontlines.</td>
<td><strong>Listen</strong>: the meeting preparation can be further developed. <strong>Engage</strong>: the need of frontlines is not fully considered into the meeting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>There is no systematic way to follow up the issue raised in the meeting.</td>
<td><strong>Act</strong>: This gap concerns a lack of process defined to monitor how actions are taken on the feedbacks collected from the meetings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>There is no feedback collection platform to share the lessons learned.</td>
<td><strong>Act</strong>: Once transactional feedbacks are received and handled, a platform is needed to share the lessons learned internally.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from Table 6, the gaps identified in the existing feedback activities are mainly concerns the Listen & Engage steams; with Analyze and Act also mentioned as related to one or two gaps. The importance of the gaps have was also evaluated and presented through “the traffic lights” in the right column of the table. Red light indicates that the gap should be fixed as soon as possible as the problem makes a considerable business impact. Yellow light means the importance of the gap is medium, and green light implies the gaps are considered as improvements rather than an issue for immediate fixing.

Based on the findings above, a meeting was arranged with the SSE management, including the SSE director and the SSE customer service manager, in order to decide the most critical area to be targeted in this research. As a result, the area of LISTEN - ‘how to effectively collect the constructive feedback from the internal customers’ turned out to be the preferred development area to be focused, from the SSE management point of view.

*The coverage of frontlines is not a problem, if we know how to collect the feedback; we can just apply the best practice to those FL’s we think are needed. ..... Regarding the Analyze and Act, I think we know what to do with the feedback collected, if we know what the feedback is. The most important thing to us is how to get those valuable feedbacks from FL’s.*

-SSE management member
As seen from this citation, the management selected a proposal to concentrate on the Listen stage: “How to listen to the internal customers effectively so as to obtain the desired feedbacks and information?”

This narrowed focus for the Proposal stage changed the earlier research question from the initial and widely formulated question of (a) How to improve the current internal feedback activities? to a more specific of research question of (b) How to build an internal customer feedback process? The company suggestions how to build this process were identified from the Seven Gaps improvement suggestions for the current three existing feedback activities. In addition, a proposal of a more formal internal customer feedback process was drafted to standardize and enrich the customer feedback activities in the case unit. Thus, the next part refers to the specified research question, namely How to build an internal customer feedback process.

5.3.1.2 Improvement Suggestions to the Seven Gaps

The improvement suggestions to the seven gaps are proposed below based on the input from Data 2 and the five-steam ICF model developed as the conceptual framework of this study.

The first two gaps are related to the Customer Focus Survey. Gap 1 relates to the limited information revealed from the result of the survey. Currently, the questionnaire for the customers of SSE is designed to consist of eleven questions covering different fields of supply service. It means there is no setting in the survey at the moment to obtain the information concerning the motivation and reasons behind the scores for each question. To improve this situation, this study would propose to add two additional questions to the questionnaire, which are:

1) what is your most satisfied service area, why? and
2) what is your least satisfied service area, why?

The answers to the above ‘WHY’ questions are supposed open up the motivation behind the responses. Therefore in the data processing, the analysis of the free text will be included in the survey result package. Free text analysis makes qualitative research richer by providing meaningful
responses and allowing the categorization of reported issues. It is believed that such a method would help to bring some clues to the management about the underlying reasons behind the scores.

Gap 2 related to the low response rate of the Customer Focus Survey. In year 2014, the rate was about 32%, comparing to another internal survey Pulse with the response rate of 92%. The low response rate would cause the result bias and impact the reliability of the survey. The response rate of the survey points to the low engagement of all the stakeholders. Therefore, in this study it is suggested for SSE management to arrange a meeting with the owner of the survey, with the purpose of addressing the concerns of the response rate and requesting for practical actions to improve the current situation by better engaging and motivating the frontlines.

GAP 3 to Gap 6 related to the Collaboration Meetings. In Gap 3 it was noticed that presently, the regular customer Collaboration Meetings are arranged with about 10 biggest frontlines, among more than 30 in total. It is understandable that different types of customers should be treated in a different way; however, it is necessary to develop an approach to facilitate the regular collaboration with all the customers. Nowadays, however, the Collaboration Meetings seem not running well and effectively, though they are considered as a good way of internal communication. Here the proposal would be to promote the Collaboration Meetings and involve more customers. The frequency, however, should be planned according to customer relationships. For frequent customers, Quarterly meetings can be scheduled as more issues and topics need to be addressed. For normal customers, Annual meeting should be enough; while for random customers, one-time info sessions can be arranged to introduce the basic information on SSE.

Gap 4 is largely caused by Gap 5. The topic discussed in the meeting cannot provoke the interest of frontlines (gap 5), therefore the interaction in the meeting is not as effective as expected, and most of the time SSE is running the show alone (gap 4). As a result, the recommendation here is to ensure that the meeting agenda should satisfy both frontline and SSE is the key to fix these two gaps.
Gap 6 and Gap 7 relate to the follow-up actions on the feedbacks once received, either from Collaboration Meetings or by transactional feedback triggered by certain specific case. As one of the findings of Data 2, this study would suggest to setup one internal web-page (workspace) to record all the feedbacks or complaints, including the way it is managed and the lessons learned. The information in the site would be useful for team knowledge, and especially valuable to new comers and temporary summer workers. In addition, all team members shall be encouraged to contribute to the site content.

These recommendations to the seven gaps addressed the first research question of this study: (a) How to improve the current customer feedback activities. Based on both the improvements and new suggestions, the next proposal suggests a new feedback process, thus responding to the second, specified research question of: (b) How to build the new internal feedback process.

5.4 Proposal Draft
The content of the preliminary proposal discussed in this section, in order to serve the second research question: b) how to build an internal customer feedback process. The proposal contains the following areas: 1) build a formal internal customer feedback process for the case unit, including improve the existing customer feedback activities as well as implement two new feedback collection approaches, and 2) develop an internal tool for feedback process evaluation. The detailed proposal is described in below.

5.4.1 Formal Internal Customer Feedback Process
The proposed internal customer feedback process is extended from the former three to the suggested five types of activities. These five activities for feedback collection include: three existing feedback activities (a) Customer Focus Survey, (b) Collaboration Meeting, and (c) Transactional feedback collection, along with two new proposed activities: (d) Customer
Focus Group and (e) Customer Interviews. The TO-BE internal customer feedback process of the case unit is illustrated in Figure 16 below.

Figure 17. TO-BE Internal Customer Feedback Process of SSE.

As can be seen from the figure above, the proposed ICF process will contain five feedback collection activities. The process description of each activity is stated in Table 8 below, which gives details for the new activities and also suggests improvements for the existing ones.

Table 8. TO-BE ICF process: Description of five activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 1</th>
<th>Customer Focus Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target Customers</td>
<td>All the Frontlines that order from SSE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Monitor the perceived quality (service level) and the consequent satisfaction of the Front Lines (FL) with the relationship with SSE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Annual (every Spring)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>On-line Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>The Customer Focus Survey is owned by the management of group supply units and executed by an external consulting firm. The survey is targeting all the sales organizations globally that have the work relationship with the global supply units. SSE is considered as one department under supply unit Finland and its supply service quality is interviewed among the frontlines. The names of Frontline referents that will answer the survey are provided by SSE customer service manager. The result of the survey is analyzed by the external consulting firm and presented to the SSE management.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity 2 | Frontline-Supplyline Collaboration Meetings |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Transactional Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target Customers</td>
<td>All the Frontlines that order from SSE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Take good care of each transactional feedback and learn a lesson from it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Differs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Emails; Calls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Transactional feedback is the only reactive feedback activity among the five approaches in the proposed feedback process. The activity refers to the actions taken by SSE staff in responding to the customer complaints or suggestions actively reported by the customers. Three necessary steps should be followed to settle every customer feedback that is received, which are including Listen, Analyze and Act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listen: ask open-ended questions to probe for as much as information related to the feedbacks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analyze: study the feedback thoroughly so as to discover the root cause and transfer the complaints into customer requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Act: make sure the improvement actions to happen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After all, the lessons learned from the feedbacks should be communicated internally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 4</td>
<td>Customer Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Customers</td>
<td>A small group of people from different frontlines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Through dynamic interchange between the group members, more in depth and unbiased information is revealed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>once per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>face to face workshop; video conference; tele-conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>A face to face workshop is to be arranged by inviting selected key persons from different frontlines. In the meeting people are asked their perceptions and suggestions towards the product and service of SSE. One SSE staff should observe and record carefully the meeting status. The output of the workshop would be a meeting memo plus action plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 5</th>
<th>Customer Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target Customers</td>
<td>selected Frontlines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Understand the supply service perceived by the customer and fetch the constructive feedbacks; foster the working relationship with customer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>once per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>face to face; tele-conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>One to one interview provides the possibility to have the direct communication with the target customer in a private way. The interviewers should ask more open-ended questions to guide the conversations. The output of the meeting should be a meeting minutes including action plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen from Table 8, it shows the TO-BE internal customer feedback process and starts with specifying the customer survey, its content, target customers, objectives, methods and frequency.

The first three activities: Customer Focus Survey, Frontline-Supplyline Collaboration Meetings and Transaction Feedbacks are the existing feedback activities. The suggestions to these activities were discussed in Section 5.3.1.2, which responses to the seven gaps indentified in the current state analysis. The process description stated in Table 8 merged some of the recommendations and is supposed to be used to guide the activities in future as standard approach.

As the new activities, the Customer Focus Group is proposed, inspired by Schall (Schall, 2011). Customer Focus Group is especially useful when more complex information is sought for about behaviours and motivations, which can be revealed from a survey, and then the dynamic in-
terchange between the group members may result in more in-depth and unbiased information than from one-to-one interviews.

Finally, another, fifth, new feedback activity is proposed called Customer Interviews. This approach was identified from the stakeholders input (as Data 2). For example, one of them mentioned that one-to-one interview is the best way for feedback collection.

“Face to face is the best way to get feedback….Meet people once, that's enough. It's easier for them to call you. If they don’t know your face, they won’t talk much on the phone.”

-SSE Management Member

In summary, as the first part of the proposal, a new customer feedback process containing five customer feedback activities is proposed for the case unit, which addressed the second research question of this study:

(b) How to build a formal internal customer feedback process.

5.4.2 A Tool for Process Evaluation

In addition to the process described in the previous sub-section, this study also proposes an internal tool for the management or process owner to evaluate the process regularly. The tool is designed as a questionnaire and guided by the conceptual framework, the five-stream model to delight the customers. The questionnaire is displayed in Table 9 below.

Table 9. Process Evaluation Questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SSE Customer Feedback Process Evaluation Questionnaire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stream</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen from Table 9, the tool for evaluation of the new Internal customer feedback process is made of a questionnaire to check the state of the process internally. The questionnaire is divided into five blocks related to five steps showing the logic of the internal customer feedback process, as built into the conceptual framework in Section 4. The steps and related questions are meant to check if the process meets the logic of *Commit, Listen, Analysis, Engage and Act* actions from the case unit. These are the five elements in the conceptual framework which were identified as defining an effective customer feedback process. Under each step, one or more questions are designed to evaluate the current status of the feedback process in this specific area.

In block one, *Commit*, the questions relate to checking the vision and initiative from the management. These questions intend to evaluate the management commitment in the customer feedback process.

In block two, *Listen*, the questions are intended to verify whether the goal of each feedback activity has been setup specifically, and examine whether both proactive and reactive feedback sources are covered by the existing feedback activities.
In block three, *Analyze*, the questions are designed to check the quantitative and qualitative analysis methods are applied separately for quantitative and qualitative feedback activities analysis. In addition, customer segmentation analysis is also mentioned in this block in order to ensure the current state of customer segmentation.

In block four, *Engage*, the questions relate to stakeholder analysis since only by understanding the unique interests and demands of each stakeholder, they can be motivated and engaged in the feedback activities.

In block five, *Act*, the questions check the actions taken on the feedbacks received and internal communications conducted for the changes happened.

In summary, the preliminary proposal is composed of three parts: 1) a process description for the new, more formalized process, 2) a tool for internal process evaluation, and 3) recommendations to the 7 Gaps identified in the existing activities. The validation of the preliminary proposal is discussed in the next section.
6 Validation of the Proposal

This section discusses the validation of the preliminary proposal and presents the final proposal for the management of the case unit.

6.1 Findings from Data Collection 3

A meeting with the case unit was arranged to validate the preliminary proposal which consists of the formalized feedback process description, the recommendation on the gaps identified in the existing feedback activities as well as the tool for internal process evaluation.

The management of the case unit accepted the process in general. Yet several comments were made to further modify the preliminary proposal. The comments are described below. The first comment concerned the recommendation for the Collaboration Meeting. It is suggested in the preliminary proposal that the most frequent meetings should be arranged with the closest customers and for random customers, a one-time information session is enough. However, the opinion of one SSE manager stressed the important of informing random customers as well:

“I have a different view on this. I think for those close customers, we already have enough interactions and communications in our daily work. However for those customers we are not familiar, we should spend more time on them.”

--- SSE management member

Similarly, he also commented that the regular meeting could be even reduced as people usually lack motivation to prepare and participate in such meetings when missing a critical objective. Instead, those meetings triggered by specific cases or targets always get a full attention from participants and reach fruitful results.

The second comment concerned the Customer interviews as one of the newly proposed feedback activities. The management agreed it would be an effective approach for feedback collection and mentioned there are already similar actions ongoing and can be carried on as part of the new feedback process. However it needs to be clarified from which level the people should be involved in the interviews. Manager vs. manager or operative vs. operative or some other alternative, since it is believed that in-
formation from both management and operative level would be valuable for the case unit.

Thirdly, regarding the Customer focus group, management admits it was an interesting idea. The problem is, in practice, how such workshops can be arranged. The most ideal method of holding a customer focus group would be by inviting people from different frontlines to attend the face-to-face meeting and exchange their ideas directly. However, the supply lines of the case unit bear the strict cost control policies which make the face-to-face meetings unfeasible. The management wanted to know what would be the second best solution to facilitate the Customer focus group.

Last but not least; the management requested an annual calendar, which would indicate when and what customer feedback activity should be initiated. Such a visual tool would help the management to easily plan, implement and monitor the feedback activities.

6.2 Final Proposal
According to the findings from Data 3, the final proposal is designed as a Feedback calendar clock where the key dates for various feedback activities are marked and presented on the clock. This Feedback calendar clock is displayed in Figure 18 below.
As seen from Figure 18, the calendar is divided into twelve months as of the twelve hours on the clock. The key dates of the proactive feedback activities are marked in the corresponding month in order to provide a clear view to the management and remind the case unit when the important day is coming.

*In January,* the final year review of the feedback process is scheduled to review all the feedback activities of the case unit from the previous year. The evaluation tool introduced in the preliminary proposal can be utilized for the process evaluation.

*In February,* a kick-off session should be arranged for the Customer Collaboration Meeting in the coming year. The purpose of this session is to discuss the execution plan of the collaboration meeting, for example clarify the goal of the meeting internally, which frontlines should be involved, and how frequent the meeting should be held, etc.
In March, the Customer Focus Survey initiated by the management of the group supply units is started. There is no action needed for the case unit at this point.

In April, the survey results are delivered to the management of the case unit. Further analysis of the result should be conducted and action plans to be made in order to improve the weak points revealed in the survey.

In May, the midyear feedback process review is planned. The team can sit together to review the feedback activities, results and actions happened in the first quarter.

In June, July and August, there are no special feedback activities since these are quiet months due to the summer holidays.

In September, the Customer interviews should start. Two kinds of interviews ought to be arranged in both management level and operative level.

In November, the annual Customer focus group ought to be held. The selected frontline representatives are invited for a SSE-Frontline customer relationship workshop.

In December, there are no special feedback activities and it is time for the Proposes Owner to prepare for the yearly review meeting in January.

The detailed description of each activity can be referred to from Table 8 in Section 5.4.

In addition, the tool for internal process evaluation proposed in the Preliminary proposal is also included into the Final proposal. The questionnaire is provided again in the table below.
Table 10. SSE Customer feedback questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stream</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commit</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>Does our team have the clear vision of the current feedback process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commit</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Initiate</td>
<td>Has the process owner initiated and implemented FB activities in the past one year? Have we made improvement due to these activities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Have we achieved the goal of each FB activity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Proactive Sources</td>
<td>What activities we have arranged to proactively probe for the FL feedback and how do they work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Reactive Sources</td>
<td>Do we manage to react and well handle on the received FB?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Quantitative Analysis</td>
<td>Have we conducted effective quantitative analysis based on quantitative FB approach e.g. Customer Focus Survey?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Qualitative Analysis</td>
<td>Have we conducted effective qualitative analysis based on qualitative FB approach e.g. FB received in Collaboration Meeting and interviews?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Customer Segmentation</td>
<td>Is customer segmentation established and up-to-date?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Stakeholder Analysis</td>
<td>Do we have a good understanding of the needs of each stakeholder in the feedback process such as the management of SSE and frontlines?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Action Taken</td>
<td>Have we performed actions based on feedback analysis?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Internal Comm-</td>
<td>Do we have transparent internal communications on the FB activities that are going to happen and have happened?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 10, the tool is designed as a questionnaire including 11 questions across the five streams referred to the conceptual framework of this study as *Commit, Listen Analyze, Engage, and Act*. 
In summary, the final proposal of this study consists of (a) a visualized Feedback activity calendar, serving as a practical process map as well as (b) a questionnaire as an internal process evaluation tool.
7 Discussion and Conclusions

This section presents the summary and conclusions of this study. Afterwards managerial implications are discussed based on the vision for next steps for the management. Finally the thesis is evaluated at the end of the text.

7.1 Summary

This thesis focuses on developing the internal customer feedback process of the case unit. The case unit is a supply department responsible for modernization products and solutions supply for its internal customers located all over the world. The business challenge lies in the lack of a defined feedback process for internal customers. Currently, the feedbacks are received transactional and fragmented, and there is no standardized approach to manage the feedback activities. As a result, the understanding of the internal customers’ perception regarding the service quality of the case unit is quite vague, as noticed by both the stakeholders and the management of the case unit. Therefore the objective of this study is to improve the internal customer feedback activities in the case unit. Two research questions have been formed in the course of this study. Initially, the research quested was formulated as (a) How to improve the existing customer feedback activities; which was subsequently specified into b) How to build a formal ICF process to standardize and guide the customer feedback activities in the case unit.

The current state analysis was conducted in three rounds (Data 1-3) and based on three data sources: the interviews, company internal documents, and the email exchanges between SSE and frontlines over the 12 months. The output of the current state analysis pointed to the seven gaps identified in the existing feedback activities. When collecting Data 2 for proposal building, it was assumed that building a formal feedback process can both cover the gaps and improve the customer feedback activities into the new, well-defined and coherent process of Internal customer feedback.
Therefore the existing knowledge and best practice were reviewed and the conceptual framework developed which showed a five-stream model of building an internal customer feedback process. This model was built by merging from three best practices: 1) A 5-Step Model for Delivering Great Customer Experience (Vesterinen, 2014), 2) Ten-Step Approach (Peter Donovan and Timothy Samler, 1994: 38) as well as 3) the VOIC data collection plan (Schall, 2011).

The existing process was then approached with the conceptual framework and enriched with the suggestions from the stakeholders and the management (as Data 2). The proposal included a feedback activity clock, a detailed description of the new process and each feedback activity there, and a process evaluation tool. This tool was developed as a questionnaire, with the aim to be used for internal evaluation of the state of the proposed feedback process. With the proposal described above, a formal feedback process can be established in the case unit. The proposal was accepted by the management of the case unit.

7.2 Managerial Implications

The managerial implications of this study relate to three general practical recommendations for the case unit, from the customer feedback perspective.

First, the recommendation is to define a role of the Process Owner, whose responsibility would include overseeing the whole process, monitoring the process implementation and evaluating the process quality regularly. This person ought to have considerable customer service experience and a customer oriented mindset. In addition, effective communication skills and aptitude for process thinking and continuous improvement can ensure the success for this role.

Secondly, it is recommended to carry out the internal communication regularly for the customer feedback related topics, and align the views within the department towards the vision of the feedback process, with setting a clear goal for each feedback activity. A special clarity is necessary from the management side, to translate clearly their expectations for the out-
comes of the feedback process. As noticed in the current state analysis, regarding one existing feedback activity (the Customer Collaboration Meeting), the expectation of management and the understanding of the operatives varied very much from each other. As a result, the meeting organizer did not see the low interaction in Collaboration meeting as a problem and did not realize that the management is not happy with this situation.

Thirdly, once a feedback is received, it is important to keep an update to the customers about the progress, if the problem cannot be solved immediately. As one Frontline Manager commented in the interview, they would appreciate a regular update on the feedback they report. It is understandable especially for complicated cases where the solution might take a longer time. However, a confirmation or a message notifying the customers that their requests is being taken care of can really delight the customers since they know that their case is processed and their requests are appreciated.

In a nutshell, the managerial implications of this study include these three recommendations: (a) setting a process owner, (b) carrying out internal communication, and (c) updating the progress to the customers.

7.3 Evaluation of the Thesis

This sub-section evaluates the outcome of this study compared to its objective, as well as the reliability and validity of the entire study.

7.3.1 Outcome versus Objective

The objective of this study was to improve the internal customer feedback activities for the case unit. Two research question was initially formed in the beginning of the study as (a) How to improve the existing customer feedback activities? and then specified as (b) How to build a formal customer feedback process? It was assumed that solving these two questions can effectively improve the current situation with the internal customer feedback activities in the case unit.
The outcome achieved in this thesis addressed both research questions. The improvement suggestions to the seven gaps discussed in Section 5.3.1 is related to the research question (a) aiming to improve the three existing feedback activities in the case unit. The feedback activity calendar (Section 6.2) and the process description of the TO-BE ICF process (Table 8) proposed the intended answer the question (b), building a formal process to guide and standardize the customer feedback activities in the case unit. In addition, this study also suggested one tool for the process evaluation to keep the process up-to-dated in a good shape.

7.3.2 Reliability and Validity

The construct validity was used in this study to assure the validity of this thesis. The first rule requires that the collected data is well documented and checked in detail. During the data collection of this study, field notes and tape scripts were recorded for all the interviews and group discussions. The second rule specifies that the objective statement should be clearly formulated for data collection and research process; and the bias of the researcher’s interpretation should be avoided. As a result, the interpretations and quotations were separated in this thesis in order to precisely reflect the original data source. Last but not least, as discussed in Section 7.3.1, the outcome of this thesis is aligned with the original research objective which shows the consistency of this study.

Regarding the reliability, the triangulation is implemented in the data collections stage. Multiple stakeholders were approached for data collection in order to establish the reliable chain of evidence. In addition to interviews and discussions, other types of data including company internal documents and relevant email exchanges across a long period of time were investigated for the same purpose of strengthening reliability.

In summary, the outcome of this thesis matches the original objective formulated in the beginning; with two research questions answered by the final proposal. In addition, the validity and reliability of this study were ensured, which assures the quality of the findings in the study and pointing to the way how a similar process can be developed by another researcher.
References


## Appendix 1

### Interviews for Data 1 round: Questions, topics and details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1  | SSE customer service team members (3/3 people) = case unit | • How we usually receive feedback from CS?  
• What are the feedback usually about?  
• How we handle the feedback?  
• How do you see the result of pulse survey 2014 - the feedback part?  
• BEST PRACTICE: Any advise from you to improve customer feedback process in SSE?  
• Comment to the CFS survey content | Group Discussion | 12. 2014 | 1h |
| 2  | SSE Customer Service Manager = case unit | • How do you see the current customer feedback process in SSE?  
• Which areas should be improved from management point of view?  
• CFS survey, what information is missing from current result?  
• What is your suggestions concerning improvement actions? | Face-to-Face Interview | 12.2014 | 30 min |
| 3  | SSE Director = case unit | • How do you see the current customer feedback process in SSE?  
• Which areas should be improved from management point of view?  
• CFS survey, what information is missing from current result?  
• What is your suggestions concerning improvement actions? | Face-to-Face Interview | 12.2014 | 30 min |
| 4  | SUF Survey Coordinator | • What is the purpose of the survey? (who gets benefits and who was surveyed)  
• How frequent the survey is conducted?  
• What is the content of the survey? choice/free text  
• By which method the survey is delivered and result is collected? | Face-to-Face Interview | 11.2014 | 1h |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operation manager, France</th>
<th>How do you usually give feedback to SSE?</th>
<th>Interview by call</th>
<th>01.2015</th>
<th>30 min</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>how other SL, e.g.: KSS respond to the result of the survey?</td>
<td>What are the feedbacks usually about?</td>
<td>Face-to-Face interview</td>
<td>01.2015</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How it is like at the moment?</td>
<td>What kind of response you expect to get from SSE? (based on your feedback)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you see the Survey content (9 areas)?</td>
<td>Suggestions and improvements to the current internal feedback activities?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= internal customer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engineering Head, Finland</th>
<th>How do you usually give feedback to SSE?</th>
<th>Face-to-Face interview</th>
<th>01.2015</th>
<th>30 min</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>how other SL, e.g.: KSS respond to the result of the survey?</td>
<td>What are the feedbacks usually about?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How it is like at the moment?</td>
<td>What kind of response you expect to get from SSE? (based on your feedback)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you see the Survey content (9 areas)?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= internal customer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2  
Questionnaire of CFS SURVEY

CSSOF=3, SSE Modernization Team

Thinking about the **Supply Service colleagues** you talked with more frequently over the **last year**. How would you rate the following on a scale of 1-10, where 1 means “very bad” and 10 means “excellent”, DK = don’t know.

**RANDOM ITEM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SSTF</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Rating 1-10</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSTF1</td>
<td>Availability of the personnel</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTF2</td>
<td>Response time to questions-problems</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTF3</td>
<td>Reliability of answers/plans</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTF4</td>
<td>Easyiness to manage the order with current tendering tools</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTF5</td>
<td>Easyiness to manage the order with current ordering tools</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTF6</td>
<td>Technical competence</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTF7</td>
<td>Reliability and flexibility in managing technical modifications</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTF8</td>
<td>Lead times of material deliveries</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTF9</td>
<td>Courtesy of the personnel (service attitude)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTF10</td>
<td>Tendering process (Overall)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTF11</td>
<td>Ordering process (Overall)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>