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Organizational change process – Employees engagement in focus

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Abstract

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The aim of this research is to produce information on the implementation of the change process structured by Kotter's change model in a case company. The change is a strategic organizational change of restructuring the operative model of the company. The same change will be implemented to its subsidiaries in the following years. The goal of the research is to study how the steps of Kotter's change model affect the employee engagement level, which is a driver to succeed in the organizational change better. The research method was half-structured interviews of twelve employees whose work the change mostly affected. The result of the research supports the previous research of organizational change theory: the leadership is the key driver in engaging employees to the change. The change management needs to be present and active by providing information of the change and preventing change resistance. The change management should build a team, change agents, who are the persons to engage and promote the change. They are trusted and they actively manage the change providing support and answers when needed.

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Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tuottaa tietoa Kotterin muutosmallin mukaisesti toteutetusta organisaatiomuutoksesta tapausyrityksessä. Muutos on strateginen organisaatiomuutos, jossa yrityksen operatiivinen malli muutetaan. Sama muutos toteutetaan tulevien vuosien aikana yrityksen sisaryhtiöissä. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on esittää kuinka Kotterin mallin vaiheet ovat vaikuttaneet työntekijöiden sitoutumisen tasoon, joka on yksi avaintekijöistä onnistuneeseen organisaatiomuutokseen. Tutkimusmetodina on puolistrukturoitu haastattelu. Haastateltavina henkilöinä oli kaksitoista työntekijää, joiden työhön muutos vaikuttaa eniten. Tutkimuksen tulos tukee aikaisempaa organisaatiomuutosjohtamisen teoriaa: johtajuus on avaintekijä sitouttamaan työntekijöitä muutokseen. Muutosjohtajien tulee olla aktiivisia tiedottamisessa sekä estämään muutosvastarintaa. Muutosjohtajien tulisi perustaa tiimi, muutosagentit, jotka ovat sitoutuneet muutokseen, edustavat sitä, ovat luotettuja ja he aktiivisesti johtavat muutosta taaten tukea ja vastauksia työntekijöille tarvittaessa.

Forewords

There are no stairways to happiness. The journey has been long and everlasting, but finally I reached the destination. My journey of becoming a Master of Science has been supported by many wonderful persons. Especial thank you goes to my parents and friends. They have brought light into the darkest time and food to the table. A big thank you is also in order for the examiners, professor Pätäri and professor Syrjä, the case company and the case company's employees interviewed to this research. Without your input the journey would still be ongoing.

Now the world is open.

Helsinki 13th of March 2017

Jannina Blomqvist

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background and motivation

Business environment is in constant turmoil. Organizations need to be on the edge of change to find out new innovations, more efficient operating models, new market opportunities and other possibilities to keep up with the competition. When looking back, it is clear that the last years have been revolutionary for organizations because of technological development and growing globalization. Organizations have been forced to implement new technologies on their operations to survive in the competition and to find growth and sustainability. Many organizations have had to make drastic, strategic organizational changes, to survive.

Organizational change is not only last decade's hot topic. The organizational change has been an object of interest from 1949's onwards. The topic was first studied in the areas of psychology and sociology combined to organizational development theory. Lewin (1949) was among first researchers to study organizational change theories. After him there has been a lot of research on the subject. This study will concentrate one particularly: Kotter's (1996) eight step model for successful change. It is one of the most used organizational change models to this day (Palmer, Dunford and Akin 2006).

Even though there has been a lot of research on organization change theory and the methods to manage the change process, the success rate of organizational change is still less than 30 percent (Al-Haddad & Kotnour 2015, 235). Aiken and Keller (2009) presented the same results and point out that the vast research field has not

improved the success of organizational changes. The researchers stress the importance of organizations to understand the critical factors of change which leads to successful outcome. There has been a growing interest on employees' engagement being a critical factor in organizational changes. Aon Hewitt (2013; 2016), Ndaba and Anthony (2015) and Towers Watson (2015) studied how employee engagement affects to the success of implementing change process. Other studies present also a correlation between employee engagement and success on organizational change (Ndaba & Anthony 2015; Guy, Beaman & Weinstein 2005; Kotter 1996). Ndaba and Anthony (2015) suggest that employee engagement can be seen as tool which could be used during organizational change.

1.2 Research gaps and objectives

The research's goal is to broaden the view of how organizational change management initiatives affect employees' engagement level. The engagement of employees to the change is seen to be one of the drivers on succeeding better in organizational changes (Towers Watson 2015; Aon Hewitt 2013). The case company has used Kotter's (1996) model to implement the organizational change. These steps can be seen affecting to the employees' engagement level because Kotter expressed that change can be only implemented through the hearts of employees; Kotter has employees' engagement in the object of the change model. In this research the initiatives are studied from employees' point of view and evaluated how initiatives have affected on their engagement level.

The research question has been compressed as:

“How the change management initiatives of Kotter’s eight step model for successful organizational change affect the engagement level of employees?”

The sub- research questions have been created to support the prime research question by explaining the phenomenon better:

1. How has the engagement level of employees changed during the first steps of the organizational change?
2. How can the case company succeed better in engaging employees to the organizational change in future organizational changes?

The research increases the knowledge of strategic management and organizational change management field. As the research is a case study, it narrows down the generalization possibilities of the research. The research is done to a company in whose interest the research is done. The research’s main goal is to create understanding how to succeed in the organizational change better when the case company will implement the same change to the subsidiaries

1.3 Research method, data and delimitations

The research is a case study of a case company. Case study is a presentation of one or more of cases of phenomenon compared to a theory or theories. In this research the case company is a Finnish construction company. The case study is an organizational change which was implemented in Finland in the beginning of 2016. The organizational change is going to be implemented in other countries of the company in the following years. The operative model of the case company was

changed from regional based organization model to function based organization model. The case company was divided into four functions.

The research is a qualitative research which prime research data collection is half-structured interviews. All together twelve employees were interviewed for the research whose work the change initially affected. The interviews were half-structured to ensure to get answers for the research questions. The interviews are recorded and transcribed for analyzing process. The interviewees were named for the research from different functions of the case company. The analysis is made by content analysis where the data is analyzed by the theories presented in the research.

The change in employees' engagement level is evaluated mainly by the interviews. The interviewees were asked how they have experienced their engagement to the organizational change and how it has changed during the implementation process. In the research additional data is used to evaluate the engagement level change. The case company had collected a survey about the organizational change in the spring of 2016. The goal of the survey was to increase knowledge about how the employees feel about the change. The result of the survey has been used in the research to evaluate the engagement level of the employees in the beginning. The case company also collected data from the general engagement level of the employees to the case company in 2015.

The data collected from the interviews and from the surveys are analyzed to improve the change process initiatives in the upcoming organizational changes from the employees' engagement level point of view. The data collected from the interviews increases knowledge of which initiatives has effected positively on employees and which could be improved so the organizational change process would be implemented better in the future changes.

Researcher has been working in the parent company during the research. In summers of 2012 and 2013 researcher was working in the case company. Researcher has made some observations during the work experience which may have affected the research result.

1.4 Theoretical framework

Theoretical foundation of this research relies on strategic change management, organizational change management and employee engagement theories. The implemented organizational change is strategic for the case company to achieve their vision of the future. The research focuses on the strategy's implementation process: organizational change. Strategic organizational change includes factors of change management, organizational culture, change resistance and organizational change as a process. The change process is the main object of the research. The research presents Lewin's (1994) change model which has been a back ground for other models such as Kotter's eight step model (1996). The model is based on steps which should be followed to achieve successful organizational change.

Consultant firms, Towers Watson (2015) and Aon Hewitt (2013; 2016) have conducted surveys around the world from various industries of employees' engagement. These studies present that the key driver for successful organizational change is to engage employees to the change. Even Kotter's (1996) change strategy relies in changing employees' hearts. The Kotter's model's perspective is on employees' point of view to accept and understand the change needs, which increases the engagement of the employees to the change.

The theoretical framework is therefore constructed from these two theories to increase understanding of organizational change management (figure 1). The Figure presents the change process and what factors influences increasingly to employees' engagement level.

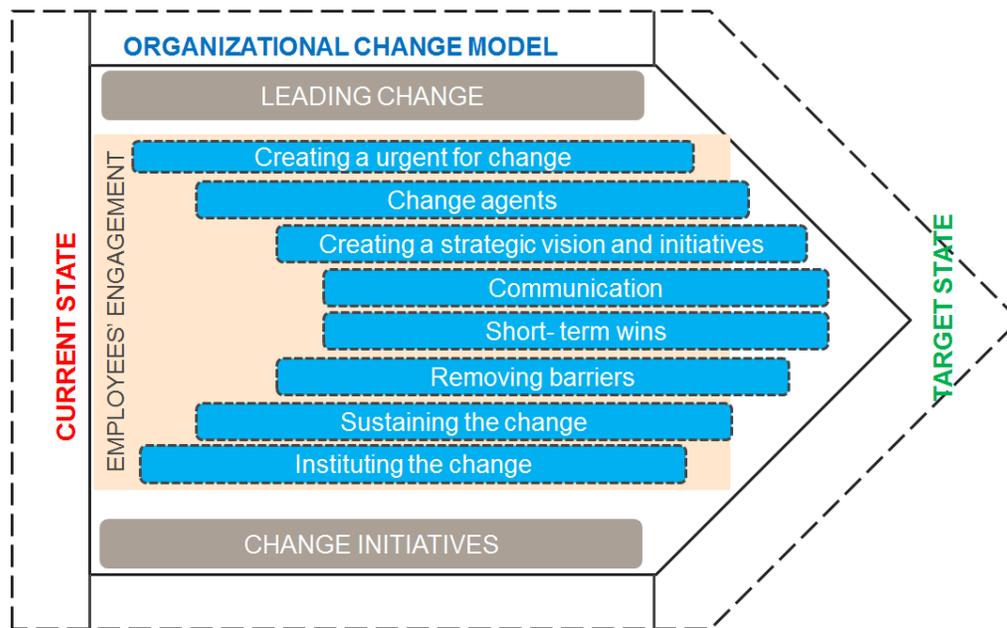


Figure 1. Research framework (Kotter 1996)

In Figure 1 change process is shown. Change starts from initial state when the change need is acknowledged and the process is planned. Then the process reaches the action part where the change initiatives are implemented. In figure 1 Kotter's models steps are presented. The model expects to be implemented from the top to down to reach wanted state. All of these steps should increase employees' engagement to the change. (Kotter 1996)

1.5 Structure of the thesis

Next the research's framework is presented in following sections. First the concept of organizational change is presented. Then the theories of employees' engagement and the effect of it on organizational changes are presented. The third section concerns organizational change process of implementing the change by Kotter's change model. The initiatives of Kotter's change model are presented and analyzed by other theories in the third section.

The fourth section presents the research methodology and data collection. It also concludes the empirical research data. First the paragraph describes what qualitative research is and the main goals for the methodology. Then the data collection of half-structured interview and additional data are explained and presented. The reliability of the research is also evaluated in more detail in the end of the fourth section. In the empirical research, "The case: employees' engagement in organizational change", the interviews are evaluated by the Kotter's initiatives. The engagement and organizational change resistance is evaluated in own paragraphs. In the end of the section the results of the research are presented. Research presents suggestions to improve the implementation of organizational change in the future organizational changes. The results and theories are concluded in the last section, conclusions.

2 STRATEGIC ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Every organizational change should be aligned to the organizations' vision and mission which make every organizational change always strategic. In truth, organizations face constantly changes which affect the organizations in different ways. Burnes (2004a) states that change can be seen in many forms and it is hard to define. The change can be small and hardly even noticeable, and sometimes it can be big and dramatic for the organization. Tichy (1983) separates the smaller changes into changes that sustain and support ongoing processes of the organization. Strategic organizational changes are defined as changes which aim to affect the processes of the organization. The change can be seen as strategic when the decision making of implementation process is strategic; it has irreversible and dramatic effect to the organization.

Usually strategic organizational change is proactive. When the need comes from the organizations' internal needs, it is defined as proactive organizational change. Haveri and Majonen (2000, 24-26) defines proactive change as an organizations act for their need to develop their processes. Then the strategic organizational change is an organizational change which is based on strategic decision making of where the organization wants to be in the future. The strategic organizational change process is carefully planned and controlled. Usually it is an innovative change to make processes more efficient or better structured. It is derived from organizations' efficiency analysis or it is a result of conducted new information. Proactive change gets usually positive reaction in organization. When the change initiative comes from the organizations' need it is usually seen as possibility, not as a solution for a problem. (Paton & McCalman 2008, 10) On the other hand Williams (2007, 36) sees that when the change is proactive, the change resistance can be worse than if the initiative comes externally as reactive organizational change. Reactive change

process means that the change process starts because the environment, external sources, demands it (Haveri & Majoinen 2000, 24-26).

Strategic organizational change management has been under research for many decades. Even so, the success rate of organizational change has remained at 30 percent from the end of 1990's when Kotter pointed it out (Aiken & Keller 2009, 101). Next the study will present characters of organizational change before it concentrated on strategic organizational change process. The research presents a driver to succeed better in organizational change: employees' engagement.

2.1 Change management

Management theory is broadly studied from 1800's to this day. Scientific management theory was created at 1800's when management wanted to develop processes to be more efficient and productive. This was the first theory which created the hierarchies of management. As aside of the theory, another management theory was created: human relations theory. The scientific management theory was all about making business' more profitable by developing processes, but the human relations theory emphasized relations of employees between management and also with the organization. (Takala 1999, 41-42)

Nowadays management has been studied in many perspectives but still the two management theories' roots are in the modern theories; management has been separated as people management, leadership, and to managing things, management. For example Kotter (1996) separates management as managing people and as managing things. Managing people can be seen constructed form three characters: showing direction, coordinating people and motivating them. Showing directions can

be seen as setting long distant goals, visions and planning strategies how to achieve them. Employees need to be coordinated to attain the wanted state. It is important to communicate the vision and strategy to the employees who are a part of it. By motivating the employees they will accept the vision and strategy easier and faster. (Kotter 1996, 22-23)

Kotter (1996, 22-23) also separates managing things in three categories: planning and budgeting, organizing and controlling. By planning and budgeting he means specific plans of how to achieve goals and what resources are needed. Organizing means that management need to structure the change process advance to monitor the implementation of the change. They also need to acknowledge how to divide resources, define how practice works and develop monitors to follow the change and to guide it on the right direction. These monitors help on controlling the whole change process.

When managing organizational change, Kotter stresses that to succeed in it; it demands 70-90 percentages of managing people and 10-30 percentages of managing things. He says that managing things increases predictability and controllability of the change. It also helps achieving short term wins. By managing people organizations can achieve bigger changes which increase organizations competitiveness. Strategic organizational changes are extensive projects where managements' skills are in a real test. (Kotter 1996, 22, 30-31)

Change management insists strong leadership and competences in different fields from the manager. Manager needs to be patient and she needs to be able to motivate and engage employees to the change. In the research engaging is defined as processes to include employees to the change, expressing interest for the change

and communicate the change vision for the employees. Engaging can also be seen as continuous learning and development process. (Tuominen 1999, 273 -275)

2.2 Organizational culture of change

Organizations are open systems. They are in a constant interaction with environment, outside and inside, which consists of different subgroups, operative groups, multiple levels of hierarchies and geographically distributed segments. The culture is generated through the impacts of these countless factors. (Schein, 1987)

Organizational culture is strongly related to change management. To achieve change demands it changes in employee's attitudes, in the organizational culture and in the structures of the organization. (Schein 1987, 19-20) Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) presents that the organizational culture is not significant by itself but how management uses it is relevant. Hofstede (1993) sees that management should use the cultural aspects when planning strategies. The strengths and weaknesses should be evaluated and acknowledge. In the change the strengths should be used and weaknesses minimized or even tried to get rid of.

In structural changes employees themselves adjusts in the new environment better than group of employees. Groups try to hold on of the old culture and resists of new processes and habits. In the change, management should effectively try to get rid of old, unwanted cultures. Also process changes and personnel changes has effect on organizational culture. (Hofstede 1993)

To make organizations agile for changes the culture need to be accepting for changes. The organizations can be developed to be agile and accepting. Hofstede (1993) presents that in many cases training has been seen as a tool to make organizational cultures more accepting toward organizational changes. But it is noted that training is an effective tool only if the organizational culture is capable of learning.

Organizational culture seems to have a great impact to organizational change. Rashid, Sambasivan and Rahman (2004) imply that organizational culture is one of the most common barriers for organizational changes. Organizational culture presents organizations operative functionality. The values, believes and assumptions of organization guides and modifies employees attitude toward organizational change. In an organizational change, management need to clarify what is organizational culture in the organization and specify the elements of it which supports the organizational change. Culture cannot be change by force. By showing benefits of the change, managers can make employees believe in it (Kotter 1996).

2.3 Resistance of change

Organizational change usually involves loss of status, certainty, control and familiarity which can evolve as resistance of employees. As it is hard for individuals to change their habits, organizations are reluctant to change their routines. Simply put people are afraid of new and unknown. They like to hold on present as it is. If processes are deeply integrated in organizations it is difficult to see the need for changing routines (Garvin & Roberto 2005, 106). Resistance of organizational change is seen in individual and organizational behavior. Force of the resistance can variate from mild to really strong.

There can be several reasons for resistance. Klärner and Diefenbach (2011) have researched employees' individual resistance of organizational change. The researchers consider resistance of organizational change through emotions. They presents that employees' behavior throughout the change is completely correlated to their emotions. For example negative feelings, which creates resistance, are risen because of believe that the change is unnecessary. Employees' trust and believe in the management is also relevant in organizational change. Garvin and Roberto (2005, 106) states that the change resistant is stronger when management has changed a lot. The resistance is built on the assumption that the new manager is going to fail also. Haveri and Majoinen (2000, 72-86) presents that the change resistance can be decreased by open discussion between management and the employees, giving enough time for the change and communicating a lot of the change. A key driver for reducing change resistance is good management.

Managing the change resistance can be separated into different levels by the target groups. First the key persons for the change need to accept and get positive relation to the organizational change. It is essential to get key persons, whose work the change mostly affects, acceptance for the change. As it is soon presented the engagement of these persons to the change is important. Secondly all other employees are in the focus to accept the reasons for the change and last the organization's other shareholders should be in focus. These different groups demand different kind of approach on managing the change because their needs are different. (Haveri & Majoinen 2000, 74 - 86)

Generally resistance of organizational change is seen as negative outcome. This depends from the point of view it is evaluated. Stenvall and Virtanen (2007) bring up a view that resistance of organizational change can develop the organization in some situations. Valpola et al. (2010) state that it should be even concerning if resistance of

organizational change does not occur at all. This would inform management of negligence of employees toward their own job and the organization. Engaged employee demands usually explanations for the change. By confronting the reasons for the change it usually brings up the unseen problems which otherwise would have been overlooked. (Valpola et al. 2010, 116-117)

Most important thing is that the resistance is acknowledged in the organization and handled in a right ways. By acknowledging the uncertainty and fears of employees' management can decrease the effect of resistance. (Valpola et al. 2010, 117; Gotsill & Natchez 2007, 25–26). Mattila (2011) illustrates the structure of resistance of organizational change as an iceberg. The tip of the top is only shown but under the water stays the unknown. This unknown should be managed as properly as it can be, because it can be the reason for not succeeding in the organizational change. Participating and engaging employees to the organizational change affects essentially to preventing resistance of the change. Gotsill and Natches (2007) states that employees need to be integrated to the change process and their ideas need to be heard. Information about the reasons, target and process should flow in every level of the organization before, during and after.

2.4 Employee engagement in organizational change

In the last decade the management theory of employee engagement has gained increasing recognition. Before this, in the research field of organizational behavior, the concentration was on employee satisfaction (from the 1970s), employee commitment (from the 1980s) and employee empowerment (from the 1990s) which can be seen as elements of employee engagement theory. The theory tries to discover solutions for companies to achieve its strategic goals by enabling their employees to give their best effort in the best interest of the business. The essence of

the theory is that employees not only give their best effort by working efficiently but they give it their heart and soul; employees are truly committed to their work and to the company. (Hellevig 2012, 24-26) Aon Hewitt (2013; 2016) defines employee engagement in three words; say, stay and strive. When employees are engaged they talk in positive way of the company where they work to co-workers, friends and other people in their life. They also want to work in the company and are not constantly looking for openings in other companies. They feel they are part of the company and are proud to work there. Employees are also striven in their work. They give their best effort to succeed in their work and also help others to succeed in their work. This can be derived into organizational change processes to succeed in the change better. Ndaba and Anthony (2015) stress that without this kind of engagement to the organizational change management will face huge problems during the implementation process.

Organizational changes affects employees' attitudes toward the organization and the work experience and can cause resistance as it is stated above. Ngyuen and Kleiner (2003) presents that organizations should study employees attitude, how they think, feel and behave during organizational changes, to attain useful information from organizations to succeed in the organizational change process. This information can be used to engage employees to the organizational change. Ndaba and Anthony (2015) present that the biggest challenges are the attitudes and behavior of employees during times of change. By identifying the nature of change and evaluating how it will effect on employees is good strategic change management. As then the change management can use the information as tool to engage employees to the change. Aon Hewitt (2013, 2) states that employee engagement is a key element in the organizational change initiative. Engagement of employee varies in different stages of change process. The engagement usually drops from the initial state during the first year. This is what change management should focus; engagement of employees would not drop too much, less is better, and that the initial state is reached as soon as possible.

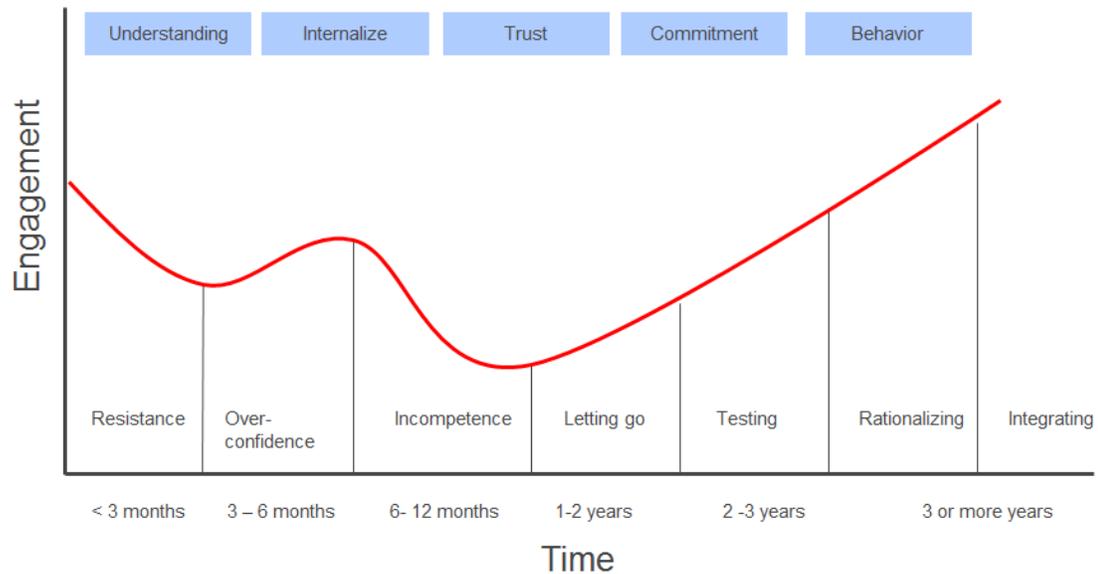


Figure 2. Classic change curve (Aon Hewitt 2013, 5; Towers Watson 2015)

Classic change curve (figure 2) presents how change affects employees after the organizational change initiative has been informed. As it is shown, first the engagement level decreases, then lifts a bit but then regress even lower. After this the trust levels rises and employees starts to behave as the change requires starting to feel more confidence which increases the engagement levels back to normal or even higher if the change initiative shows to be successful. The change curve presents the employee's emotional development during the change process. By affecting on these emotions the resistance can be minimized more efficiently (Towers Watson 2015) Aon Hewitt (2013, 5) presents in its study that the time period for change curve in acquiring organization is three or more years to recover the engagement back to normal.

Ndaba and Anthony (2015) present that to engage employees, organizations should give active support and efficient business processes that employees can perform their jobs efficiently during times of change. They stress the importance of creating environment of enablement for employees. Towers Watson (2015) has identified drivers how to engaged employees in the times of organizational change. Towers Watson present that leadership is the key driver. They separate it to four categories; informing, engaging, enabling and building trust and influencing others. Informing is defined as communicating the change vision in highly engaging way. When the change initiative is explained clearly employees can understand the need for the change and trust that it is the right thing for the organization. Research stresses that communication from leaders needs to be specific and transparent of the things that are not yet known. Leaders actions to engage employees means involving employees to the change, open and encouraging dialect during the change, responding proactively to the employees feedback and being visible and accessible during the change for the employees. By enabling engagement leaders need to remove barriers to change by providing good work environment. Also by providing opportunities to learn new skills that are needed in the future enables engagement to happen. Learning starts form the organizational culture which was stated before so the leaders first need to acknowledge this and understand the state of the organization. Leaders can also increase engagement of employees by behaving as an example for the employees. Authentic leaders that are engaged to the change themselves increases confidence and respect of employees. (Towers Watson 2015)

Aon Hewitt (2013, 6-7) brings up four categories which can be seen also as leaders tools to create engagement; control, career, capability and connection. The research defines control as involving and empowering employees to the change. Employees are more engaged to the change when they feel they have been heard in the decision making and that they can have an effect on it. Career is understood as employees' knowledge of their career path during the change and in the future. Capability means

enabling employees learning and development for the needs of the change. Last one, connection, is the most significant for employees to engage to the change. It means the same as Towers Watson's research communication. Leaders need to provide open dialect between employees and them to engage employees. This involves to every other aspect; control, career and capability. By open dialect employees feels they have been heard in in the change process, they know clearly why the change is happened and what is expected from them. By connection Aon Hewitt additionally means employees connection with colleagues too. Engagement increases when employees sees that the whole organization is pulling to the same direction, colleagues supports each other and everyone is able to make sacrifices during the organizational change process.

2.5 Organizational change as process

Change process is a time period from the moment that organization realizes the need for change and plans it, implements the change actions and integrates its processes to fit to the new practices. Bullock and Batten (1958, 400) clarifies what process includes different phases: sensing and searching needs for change includes acknowledging the need, implementing actions to change and integrating the change. Planning of change phase consists of diagnosis, design and decision parts of the change process. Implementation and evaluation are the process components of the change action phase. Finally, integrating the change phase contains stabilization, diffusion and renewal parts of the process.

Literature presents many models how to manage change process. The models represents the change process's phases but are usually presented from the process point of view. In these models the common factor is that the process is divided into steps. The process should follow these steps to succeed in the change. The most

famous change process model is Kurt Lewin's (1994) three step phase model. The model consists three phases as follows:

1. Unfreeze
2. Change
3. Refreeze

At the first state, unfreezing, the organization needs to get ready and prepare for the change. This is where management needs to understand and acknowledge the reasons for the change, plan the actions carefully and create tools to control the change process. The implementation state, changing processes and culture, is the action state of the organizational change process. The planned actions are implemented to achieve expected results. Refreezing is the last state of the organizational change where the changes will be stabilized to ensure that the changes will remain. (Burnes 2004b, 313) Even though the model is vastly criticized of simplifying complex and multi-dimensional process, it can be stated as change management theory's reference model. Most of the change models are based on Lewin's model.

As example Pettigrew (1985), Strömmer (1999) and Kotter (1996) have all created change models which has different amount of steps to succeed in the change process. Pettigrew present four step model, Stömmer five step model and Kotter eight step model. All of the models have strict guides to follow the steps and all of them are similar to the Lewin's model with more specified approaches.

Next the research will focus on Kotter's eight step model which was the case company's chosen model for the organizational change. Kotter stresses the

importance of management and leading people during the change. Kotter points out that the key element of the change is the employees and how to make them believe and trust the change initiative.

3 KOTTER'S ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE PROCESS

Kotter (1996) has created very practical instructions, a model, for successful organizational change. It is one of the most used organizational change process model still at this time. Kotter's model is not based on theoretical research, but mostly on empirical studies of how companies have failed in organizational changes. The model points out the biggest failures of change processes and gives solutions how to overcome these obstacles. (Palmer, Dunford and Akin 2006)

Kotter stresses that the first step for organizational change process is accepting the change and the need for change. To succeed in it, the necessity and urgency of the change is important to emphasize. Committing a team for the change, who represents as example and first movers, helps implementing the change. In the implementation process, open communication of the goals why the change is happening and how it will affect the business, is essential for the success of the change. In the great importance are employees. Everything that influence everyday job needs to be thought carefully. Barriers of working by the new model need to be eliminated so that employees can do their job well. Motivation of employees to the change by rewarding success improves the integration of the new practices and model. In the end the change needs to be consolidated to the organization and last integrated into the organization so it would stay. (Kotter 1996)

Kotter (1996) presents the change process as eight step model:

1. Create a urgency
2. Team
3. Vision and strategy

4. Communication
5. Barriers
6. Short-term wins
7. Build on the change
8. Anchoring the changes

In the next chapter the research will present more specifically the steps of the Kotter's model. Later in empirical part of the research the model is evaluated by the case study.

3.1 Create urgency of the change

In the first step Kotter presents that it is important to create an atmosphere that the change is a must and need to be done as soon as possible; creating feeling of necessity and urgency. The change needs to be felt as inevitable for the business to survive in the competition so that employees want to work and make sacrifices to succeed in the change. It is hard to change practices that have been done for many years. Even though the new model could be better for the company, the change is always felt as uncertain and uncontrolled process. Usually these feelings evoke change resistance in some level. This can be seen as good thing, because it would be concerning if there would not be any change resistance (Valpola et al. 2010). When the necessity is well communicated employees can feel more motivated for the change. They need to understand why the change is going to happen, how it helps the company and their work and what the benefits are. (Kotter 1996, 44)

Koppel (2007) stresses the importance of feeling urgency in the organizational change. The feeling will enable initiative work atmosphere and creativeness in the organization. This will help employees to adapt more easily for the change. Open

communication and training opportunities maintain initiative work atmosphere and creativeness of the employees. The communication of the company needs to emphasize the urgency by naming the essential aspects of the change. Facts, which employees can relate to, will engage employees to the change more strongly. (Kotter 1996, 44)

At the beginning organizations should recognize the factors why the change is done and go through its processes where changes would influence. Kosonen et al. (2002, 11, 23-24) have created a current state analysis for organizations to recognize a need for change. The purpose of the analysis is to get reliable and specific information of organization's present mode. The tools for the analysis are basic key performance indicators. As a side, for the analysis, organization can use interviews or surveys to recognize a need for change. When the critical factors have been found, Kotter (1996, 35) stresses that they should be carefully analyzed compared to the processes. He also presents that this is the moment when the possibilities and benefits of changing the processes need to be evaluated and acknowledged so management can communicate of the change properly.

Trust is one of the most important factors in organizational change. Employees need to trust the management's view of the change need and the vision they have for the organization. Reina & Reina (2004) presents that trust can be evaluated by interviewing employees, measuring it by tools or by encouraging employees to express their opinion. Organizations can build trust by being more transparent with the expectations of the change, how it will influence employees and to the business. Employees feel also safer when the reasons for the change are clear and understandable. When employee sees the change as necessity, the change really starts.

Managements' job is to help employees to understand and accept the reasons for the change. Haapalainen (2005, 24) states that employees might feel the change as a threat when their work processes, role, or work environment is changed. This usually evokes change resistance. This is why it is important to discuss openly and truthfully about the change.

It is really hard to change employees' accustomed ways. That is why the first step is critical for the change to succeed. Change won't happen without understanding of the necessity and urgency of the change.

3.2 Change agents

Kotter's next step, as a key to succeed, he proposes organizations to collect a team which will be working as change agents for the organizational change. In many cases the change is managed by one person. This might be dangerous because rarely one person alone can create a vision, declare barriers of the change, manage several change projects at the same time and instill new practices to the organization. In an organizational change there should always be a strong guidance team; change agents. (Kotter 1996, 45-46)

When choosing the change agents, Kotter stresses the importance of trust. Trust is important between the team members as well as it is between the team members and within rest of the organization. (Kotter 1996, 65) When the team trusts each other it is shown to create more positive attitudes, better performance and cooperation. Employees' trust on change agents also improves employees trust toward the change. Trust will help to implement the change initiatives, because when employees are engaged they are more motivated to work.

Dervitsiotis (2006) brings up the importance of engagement as a point of view of succeeding in the change. He proposes that by building trust and improving the quality of the relationships between employees and also with employee and organization the success rate gets better. Schockley-Zalabak (2000, 42) states that organizations which has high trust rate are more agile and innovative than organizations where trust rate is lower.

When choosing the candidates, it is important to select persons who have good reputation in the organization as managers and as experts of their field. To succeed in change, it demands good change management which encourages employees to work toward common goal. (Kotter 1996, 57) Strömmer (1999, 95) thinks that the management is a vital element for the change to success when employees need to change the old way of working. The management also needs to be able to see if the planned implementation process is not working and change the approach if necessary. Tyler (2003, 567) points out that employees do not know what the future holds for them. The only thing they can do is to trust to the management that they have thought of the change in the point of view of employees as well as the organizations.

The change agents need to promote, support, lead and develop the organizational change process. It is really important to find right persons for the job so that employees can start to trust the change. Trust builds engagement which motivates employees to give 110 percent for the change to succeed.

3.3 The change vision and strategy

Third step is to create vision why the change is done and what the organization wants to reach with the change. Vision has three goals according to Kotter. First it defines the direction for the change. Second, it motivates employees to succeed in the change. Thirdly it helps to coordinate the processes in the organization to be heading to the same direction. (Kotter 1996, 68-69) This is why vision needs to be planned carefully. It should be viewed in several points of views to find the best for everyone to assimilate.

The vision needs to be reachable and something that the organization itself truly believes in. It also needs to be desirable and clear. When the vision is not understandable, it does not motivate employees to work for it. The vision should also be easily communicated so the whole organization can identify with it. Kotter defines successful visions as ambitious. (Kotter 1996, 72, 79)

The vision should be built on the organizations processes and ongoing business. It should be carefully thought how it will be implemented and where it finally leads to. Recourses should be thought through because it is one of the most common problems of the organizational changes; costs are too big to implement the change initiative. When taken into process, the expected resource needs might overwhelm. (Pfeffer & Sutton 2006)

3.4 Communication of the organizational change

One of the most difficult aspects of the organizational change for employees is the uncertainty of the change. Berger (1987) presents two fundamental needs of

employees in change process; predictive needs and explanatory needs. Employees want to know how the change will effect on their personal work and to understand why things are happening and changing. By communicating the uncertainty could be minimized.

Kotter raises communication as one of the critical steps of organizational change process to succeed. The change vision needs to be communicated efficiently throughout the whole company. Vision is most well understood when employees can see the vision from their own point of view. (Lanning et al. 1999, 19, 94)

Ikävalko (1994, 47) has summarized the main objectives of communication as follows:

- The personnel understands the goals where the organization wants to be
- Personnel knows the means, how to reach the goal
- Personnel knows the organization and their own part in the organization
- Personnel gets feedback of their own and the organizations work and results

The biggest advantage of vision is achieved when organization is able to communicate the vision to the whole organization. Kotter thinks that it is important to motivate the whole organization by the vision (Kotter 1996, 85). This set criterions for communication. The presentation of the change vision has to be simple and understandable. When the message is clear there won't be any misunderstanding or uncertainty of what the organizations wants from the change. Communication at the right time and right kind of information is vital for the change. One important thing is to communicate to all who it concerns at the same time. This is one thing how organization can avoid rumors and uncertainty. (Russel – Jones 2000, 97-99)

Kotter stresses the importance of communication in different concepts over and over again. The information inflow will help employees to adjust to the change and help others to adjust as well. Open and rich communication decreases uncertainty within the organization. (Kotter 1996, 90) Uncertainty increases stress levels of employees which prevents the change initiative to succeed. Employees feel lack of control. By improving communication quality organization can improve prospects of succeeding in the organizational change. (Bordia, Hunt, Paulsen, Torish & DiFonzo 2004, 14-15)

To succeed in the communication the tools and channels should be evaluated. Internal communication channels should be evaluated from two perspectives. First view could be from management perspective to evaluate how managers have used different channels to communicate. Second view should be on employees' perspective on how they have used different channels to provide information. (Åberg 1997, 105)

To summarize, when it is necessary to ensure that the information is fully acknowledged the message should be as simple and clear as possible. Usage of different kinds of presentation models eases understanding and increases reliability. The same impact can be achieved by using right communication channels. By enabling instant feedback for the change, it will increase trust and reliability of employees. The key purpose of the change communication is to help employees to understand the reasons of the change.

3.5 Removing barriers of the change

Fifth step is to remove all possible barriers for the change. Kotter names most significant barriers of organizational change are internal structures, incomplete information and skills at organization and employee level, wrong or incomplete communication channels and managements lack of interest for the change. (Kotter 1996, 102) This is why it is important to study organization's structures and evaluate them if there is need to change the structures to achieve the change vision. DiFonzo and Bordia (1998, 295, 301-302) presents that the organization should build an open and common planning process for the organizational change. Through this the values, protocols and reasons behind decision making could be communicated and feedback could be given.

Organizations should enable trainings to ensure that employees have the competence and information what they need. Training will engage employees for the change and to the organization. This helps also managers to gain interest toward the change. By investing on trainings and communication employees could understand the rooted practices that need to be change to achieve the goals. (Kotter 1996, 115)

Kotter and Cohen (2002, 5) presents that employees will be motivated and more engaged to the change, when the barriers have been removed. The employees are courage to trust themselves by giving the opportunity to succeed in the change.

3.6 Generating short-term wins during the change

Sixth step is about showing the benefits of the change to the employees as soon as possible. Even though big changes need time it is important to be able to actual benefits of the organizational change. To keep the vision clear and to show where the organization wants to be in the future, should organizations show some gains and benefits of the change to motivate and help employees to understand why the change is done. If employees cannot see the benefits of the change in a long time the change process can start to slow down and in the worst case die in the end because of the lack of motivation. (Kotter 1996, 117-119)

Good short term win is built from three aspects. First the benefit should be visible, understandable and clear. Employees should see that the benefits are real. Secondly the benefits should be unambiguous, so that employees cannot deny them. Thirdly benefits should be related to the whole change vision and pursued strategy. (Kotter 1997, 104-105) Short term wins shows to the employees that the sacrifices they have done has been worth it. They also show gratitude for the key members of the change. Short term wins can be seen also as control tools to ensure that the change pursues toward the planned vision and strategy. When short term wins show that the organization is heading toward right direction managers are more easily engaged for the change. (Kotter 1996, 122-123)

As the short term wins shows that the change is heading to the right direction and helps employees feel that they have not done changes for nothing, it removes also change resistance. When the benefits are clear, they have a way of building momentum that engages neutral employees to the change and change resistant employees as active members of the change.

Set short term wins might add pressure for employees. Even though short term wins would be good tool for managers to keep the necessity of the change in mind of employees, it might increase stress levels and eventually lead to burnouts. In successful organizational changes' managers has succeeded to communicate the vision and strategy without stressing employees and burnouts. (Kotter 1996, 110)

3.7 Build on top of the change

The seventh step is to consolidate the changed practices and ensure that the new processes are used. There can be situations where consolidating one practice demands others to change their practices also. In these kinds of situations it is important to acknowledge the relations of the practices. They could be remains of old structures which should be removed. This will help of consolidating the new practices. It is also important to remember enable changes in the future as well. Nothing is more certain than change. (Kotter 1996, 131-132,142) Chance requests ability to learn new skills at employee and in organizational level and take advantage of it to achieve organizational goals. (Senge 1994, 139)

Senge (1994) defines learning organizations characters as follows:

- Personal competences
- Learning as a team
- Shared vision
- Internal operational guidance
- System thinking

In learning organizations employees are capable of learning. This is why investments on enabling personal learning are important for organizations to be learning

organizations. Motivation and attitudes are important in learning. In system thinking the key approach to learning is to perceive larger perspectives and understanding. In it personal capability is not built only on learning capabilities but also in development of their personalities. (Senge 1994, 139-140)

Managers and management has an important role in this step of change process. Managers can affect positively on consolidation of new practices by her example. Management should support learning organization by visibly enabling it and acknowledging it.

This is important step in organizational change process. If the changes have not been consolidated the change initiatives might be forgotten and all the work might be lost.

3.8 Anchoring the change

The last step of Kotter's change model is to anchor the changes into the organizational culture and practices. Kotter gives critique for model which first step is to change organizational culture and values to accept the change and develop. Kotter thinks it is more important to understand the organizational culture than try to change it at the beginning of the process. (Kotter 1996, 155-157)

Culture can be seen as the behavior and norms of the organization, which guides the processes. It can be built on official and unofficial rules which increases acknowledge what is acceptable behavior and what is not in the organization. Organizational culture is affected by the history, environment, business, people and management of the organization. (Russel – Jones 2000, 47-49)

Schein (2001) sees culture as constant phenomenon of which members of the organization wants to hold on to. Culture creates a safe environment and makes life more predictable. Organizational change is seen to affect the organizational culture which usually creates conflicts in the organization. Because of this it is important to engage employees to the change.

To anchor the new practices of the organizational change there might have to have changes at organizational culture and among employees. It is shown to be really hard and time consuming process. This is why it is the most difficult step of Kotter's change model.

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND EVALUATION OF THE CASE

This research is done by qualitative research principles. The empirical material is collected from half-structured personal theme interviews. In the next section the chosen research method is presented and the reasons for it. Conduction of the material used in the research is presented and the reliability of the material is evaluated.

In the following section the change management initiatives are evaluated by the half-structured interview data. Interviewees' point of view is presented and afterwards analyzed in the results of the research. Chapter 4.5 also includes analysis of employees' engagement level and their change resistance.

4.1 Presentation of the research method and data collection

The purpose of qualitative research is to reveal real life situations and events. Hirsijärvi, Remes and Sajavaara (2007) state that qualitative research method includes many different characters. The collection of research material is comprehensive data from real- life. The data collection is favored to be done by human because the situations demands adaption which most of the technical instruments of data collectors cannot perform. In qualitative research the goal is to find unpredictable facts of the research subject. The material is analyzed by using inductive analyze approach from many point of views. In the collection of the data it is preferred to use methods where the research subject can get their voice heard. Best practices are theme interviews, participating observation and group interviews. The target group of collection of research material should be thought carefully. The target

group should be chosen to support the research's goals. The research plan changes by the research process depending on the conditions of the research subject. The specialty of qualitative research is in its uniqueness.

This research is a case study. The research's goal is to present and describe specific phenomenon of the case company. It is presented by typical means of case study. The research data concludes theme interviews of person familiar of the phenomenon which is the research subject. The goal is to present interviewees thought of the facts of the research subject, increase the knowledge of the research subject and take into consideration the phenomenon's and back ground appending to the research subject. (Saaranen- Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006; Yin 2013)

Qualitative research pursues to offer a new point of view for the chosen research subject. This not only demands clearness from the research subject but also depth from it. The character of the qualitative research defines the amount of data needed to explain the chosen phenomenon. In this research the material is collected from site managers who were pointed to the researcher by change managers. Site managers were addressed from different functions to get unbiased data for the research. In qualitative research the sample of data is usually discretionary and affected by criterions set for the research. The quality of the sample can be evaluated by the limitations for the research, amount of the data and representativeness of the data collected. (Koskinen et al. 2005; Saaranen-Kauppinen et al., 2006)

The interviews are recorded. The research data is conducted by the research criterions and the research delimitations. The data is conducted from 12 interviewed persons who were pointed for the research. The collected material is transcript for the analyze process. The analysis is made by using content analysis process (Hannabuss 1996; Saaranen-Kauppinen et al., 2006).

4.1.1 Data collection – half- structured interview and surveys

The research material is collected by half-structured interviews. The most important part of half-structured interview is the open questions of the interview that builds the structure of it. The structure guides the conversation of the interview and ensures that the most important questions will be answered concerning research subject and phenomenon. The written questions are the same for every interviewee. Interviewees answer the question by their own words. The half structured interview can be unformal where the interviewees can speak openly. The material is then seen as the voice of the interviewees and their opinions of the phenomenon. (Eskola & Suoranta 1999; Koskinen et al. 2005) The questions should be formed without leading interviewees on their answers for the questions (Alasuutari 2011).

Koskinen et al. (2005) have presented a model for the half-structured interview structure. The structure is built on three dimensions: warm-up questions, core questions and two ending questions. The first phase concentrates on the interviewee. These questions are conducted to lead the interviewee for the subject. The core questions focuses on the research subject. Usually there are around ten questions. The half-structured interview most often ends with two closing questions. In these questions the second last usually concerns about the future and the last question concerns the interview if something was left unanswered. It is important for the interview to centralize wide answers in the middle of the interview and most sensitive questions in the end of the interview. (Koskinen et al. 2005)

Half-structured interview is most suited for this research. The research questions are constructed to answer organizational change and employee engagement issues. The interview was constructed as Koskinen et al. (2005) have presented. In this research the answers present the thought of the interviewee which supports the research agenda. The questions are presented in the appendix 1. Interviews were held in Finnish (appendix 2). The questions are constructed by the theory of presented

organizational change theory. Mostly to support Kotter's eight step model for successful organizational change.

All together fifteen employee were addressed for the research. Two of the interviews were unable to realize and one employee declined to participate on the research. Twelve employees were interviewed for the research. Nine of the interviewees are site managers whose work the change affected mostly. Three interviewees are office secretaries who work closely by the process managers and have seen the effects of the organizational change up close. The change also affected their work. In the table (1) of distribution of interviewees is presented the separation of interviewees. The interviewees are categorized by the functions because the deviation by interviewee would reveal the identity of the interviewee. In the research the interviewee are coded by the function and a number (Process manager 1, Process manager 2, Production manager 1, etc.).

Table 1. Distribution of interviewees

Function:	Sales and offer calculating managers	Process managers	Production managers	Special works managers	Office secretaries
Number of interviewees from the function	2	2	2	3	3
Average work experience in the company (years)	9,5	16,5	33,5	31	15
Average of experienced organizational changes	2	2	3	3	2

The careers of the interviewed interviewees are quite long in the case company. One of the interviewee has worked for the company for four years, others has worked there eight or more years. Four of the interviewees have worked in the company over thirty years. The deviation of the work experience has been presented in the

distribution of interviewees (Table 1.). The interviewees were pointed for the interviewer from different functions of the case company. Selection of the interviewees from different functions adds variations for the interview data. The interviewees were confirmed to be suitable for the research subject.

In the research, data is used from surveys made by the case company. Surveys are mostly used to study past time (Koskinen et al. 2005). Usually surveys are connected to quantitative research but the data can be used also in qualitative research. By surveys it is possible to collect wide range of data. It enables a large target group and the content can be diverse. Surveys are seen as efficient way to collect data. (Hirsijärvi et al., 2007)

The case company has produced a survey, Pulse survey (The case company 2016), to get information about employees' feelings toward the organizational change. The survey was done in spring 2016. The survey was done by survey program Webropool. The survey was sent to the whole organization. 105 employees answered the survey. The answer rate was 44,5 percentage. The data from survey is used to analyze engagement level of employees in the beginning of the organizational change.

The case company also collected another survey, Personnel survey (The case company 2015), which was addressed for whole company. The survey was done in autumn 2015. 1 798 employees answered the survey from 3 390 employees. The answer rate was 69 percentages. The survey conducted information about employees' engagement, renewal capability, customer experience, leadership and sustainability. In this research the results of employees engagement is used to get a better picture of how engaged employees were before the organizational change.

4.1.2 Analysis of the research data

The research data was analyzed by content analysis. The analysis was guided by the goal of the research and presented research questions. The interviews were recorded and transcript afterwards which enabled to divide the answers by themes. Themes are usually created by the most important subjects to describe the research. The deviation can be made by the characters of the theme or theory based deviation where the theory's frame of references defines the theme (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2013).

The analysis method is theory based process, deductive content analysis, where data and theory walks hand by hand. In theory based analysis the analysis factors are selected from the theory but the data determines the analysis process (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2013). In this research the analysis is guided by the theory although the analysis process progress by conditions of the data.

Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2013) has presented analyzing process model for quantitative research analyze which was used in this research:

1. Decide what is interesting in the data
2. A) The interesting subjects are marked and separated during the data analyze
B) Everything else is left outside the research material
C) The marked data is collected and separated from the other data
3. The data is classified and themed
4. Verify the conclusions

The first phase is defined by the research subject and the research questions. When the data was transcript the most interesting subjects were highlighted and coded by

the theme. Later the analysis data was assembled by the help of Microsoft Office tools. The data was easily classified and separate into themes. The themes are presented in more detail in 4.2. paragraph.

4.1.3 The reliability of the research

The fundamental of scientific research is to produce reliable research and minimize the possibility of errors. In qualitative research there is not one simple process for the evaluation and inspection of reliability. The reliability of qualitative research is most often considered as whole when the coherence of the research is pointed out. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2013)

To ensure the possibility to evaluate the reliability of the research, the researcher needs to present the research process as accurately and sufficiently as possible in all phases. According to the established practice, in qualitative research the observations and develop of observation to interpretations are clearly described. The reader of the research can evaluate the reliability of the research based on this information. (Koskinen et al. 2005; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2013)

In this research the research process is tried to be presented accurately to ensure the evaluation of reliability of the research. The research methods, the reasons and goals have been presented in the presentation of the research method- paragraph. In data collection paragraph the interview method and process is presented in detail for the reader. The interviewees were pointed for the researcher and they were selected to ensure validation of the data. Never the less, interviews are always social interactions where the situation can affect the interview. When analyzing the data, researcher needs to remember that the data is bound by the context and to the situation. In

qualitative research the results are not to be generalized even if they could be generalized by the subject or context of the research. (Hirsijärvi et al. 1997; Alasuutari 2011)

In qualitative research the researcher's impartiality needs to be evaluated to ensure the reliability of the research. Because the researcher is the collector and analyzer of the data, it is reasonable to question researcher's objectivity toward the research subject and the data collection. The background and qualification of the researcher can affect what is analyzed and studied in the research. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2013) In this research the researcher is working in the case company's parent company. The researcher has worked in the case company for two summers and knows all the interviewees as colleagues. The relationship between researcher and interviewees can be considered as neutral. The aspect of interviewee being acquaintance increased the trust of the interviewees. The researcher's familiarity toward the case company and its parent company needs to be considered to affect the research in some level.

4.2 The case: organizational change initiatives effect on employees engagement

This chapter will analyze the collected data to answer the research questions using the theory presented in this research. First the case company is introduced in order to become familiar of the history and the culture of the organization. Next it will present the actual research topic; the change initiatives are evaluated from the half-structured interview data. Following chapter presents how employees' engagement level has been affected and in the end the change resistance of the employees is evaluated. Finally the results of empirical research are analyzed by the theories and researcher's own opinion is presented.

4.2.1 Introducing the company

The company is an infrastructure construction company. It is one of the biggest infrastructure constructors in the Nordic countries. The company is known for expertise in the field. The company has been in the industry over a century. The years have taught good practices, which has raised the company to be one of the top companies in the industry. Now the company wants to improve these practices to be the best in the industry.

The organizational change is supposed to make processes more efficient and to enable sharing of best practices throughout the whole company. The old organization structure was based on regional organization model. The company has been doing business by this model for the past 100 years. The new organization structure is built on functions. There are four main operative functions: selling and offer calculation, production, processes and special works. In the new organization model the processes in different functions are being centralized. It enables controlling and planning of the business processes more cost efficient way. The company has subsidiaries in Nordic countries where the new organization model is supposed to be implemented in following years.

The change affects mostly on management and executive level of the company. The site managers interviewed in this research are working on these levels. Their roles and responsibilities have changed by the new organizational model.

As stated earlier the company is over 100 years old and the organizational culture is strong in the company. The organizational culture of the company has been built on long lasting careers. Employees have been in the company for decades and passed

their careers for next generations. This has been a very strong link between employees and the company. But in the last decade the competitive environment has been rough and it has taken its toll also in the spirit of employees. The economic situation has been challenging and companies in different industries have had to make strategic changes to survive in the competition. That has happened also for the company of this study.

4.2.2 Change process initiatives and engagement of employees

The company has chosen to use Kotter's eight step model to implement the change process. The change was announced in the autumn of 2015 and it was taken into practice in the spring of 2016. The research focuses only on the first six step of Kotter's model because it is too early to evaluate the last two steps of Kotter's model.

Next the research will present the organizational change initiatives of the company. The initiatives are evaluated by the interviews. Employees' engagement is also presented on the following paragraphs. In the end the research presents how organizational culture and employees' resistance has changed during the implementation process.

Creating sense of urgency

In November of 2015 the change management sent an information package to site managers about the upcoming organizational change. Information meetings were held within regions, where the agenda of the information package was presented and discussed with site managers' supervisors. In December 2015 change managers

arranged a strategy meeting where all site managers were invited and the strategy of the company and the new operating model was announced and discussed in person by them. One of the change managers, company's director, made a speech of the necessity and importance of the change. Also Finland's director spoke in the meeting about the practical changes. New roles and responsibilities of the employees were announced during this meeting.

In April the company had the opening meeting of the season. This meeting was for the whole organization. In the meeting change management presented the necessity of the change for the company to hold on to its market leadership status and being innovative, first mover, in its industry. The purpose for the meeting was to open the season with good spirit and motivate the employees to it. Now the priority was to motivate the employees to operate by the new operating model.

The change management has communicated the organizational change in the company's monthly newsletter. Communication of the urgency and necessity of the change has been top priority during 2016 in company's newsletters which are sent every month for the whole organization. Employees receive the newsletter by e-mail.

In general interviewees knew what the need for the change is. The reasons were listed by the interviewees. Few of the interviewees pointed out the saving aspect, euros, to be the only reason for the change. Even though other interviewees felt that the saving aspect was the most important reason for the change, some thought that it is vital for organizations to constantly innovate and improve its processes and practice. Some added that they felt the new management needed to show for the shareholders that they are capable of implementing change and gaining profit from it. The change managers were referred as "change leaders".

“The company wants to increase efficiency of the processes and use resources better throughout the whole company by being more united company”, Special works manager 3.

“The company is an old construction company and something new needs to be implemented”, Process manager 1.

“Company needs to change to succeed in the competition”, Office secretary 3.

Although the reasons for the change were mostly acknowledged and understood the feeling of urgency and necessity did not come across from the interviews. Interviewees thought mostly that the change was given and that is how they will work in the future. The necessity was not clear for interviewees because most of them felt that the change was not that drastic. The change communication was felt as unpersonal and the benefits were not clear. When asked to describe the organizational change by three words four of the interviewees stated the change as “too big change”. Eight interviewees described the change as too big during the interview.

“To make employees understand the urgency of the change, it would require more personal communication of the change. It is really hard to acknowledge the need for change when you have not experienced the problems in your own work”, Special works manager 3.

“Every change needs to be promoted properly for the employees. It can be sold by two aspects; the change would ease the workload of the employees or

by clearly showing the financial benefits of the change. At least one of these aspects needs to be fulfilled but in the best scenario both would happen”, Sales and offer calculation manager 1.

“By smaller changes we could have achieved the same results”, Special works manager 2.

This has affected the engagement level of employees in the beginning of the change. Only three of the interviewees said that the change is the right way for the company. Eight out of twelve resisted the change or were not that optimistic nor pessimistic about the change. All of the interviewees felt that there is some room to improve the organizational model and the practices. Interviewees understood that this was the first year of the new operating model. Mostly interviewees were open-minded about the change. The change communication was felt

Change agents

The change management chose “change agents” for the change process in October of 2015. These persons have strong knowledge from the industry and they have strong influence on the employees of the company. These persons were seen as representatives of each function and the operative work by the change management. Later these persons were named to organization’s executive team.

Interviewees did not know about “change agents”. Almost everyone was surprised about the question of who were the change agents. Only one interviewee had an idea

of the persons. The interviewees thought that change agents would be a good idea in the implementation process.

“This is the first time I hear about this. I cannot name anyone. But change agents would be extremely good thing to have”, Sales and offer calculation manager 2.

“Top management is responsible of this change and the representatives of the change are persons below them”, Production manager 1.

Mostly interviewees had discussed the change with their own superiors. Interviewees felt that they were the right ambassadors for them to transfer the challenges to the change management. When asked about interviewees' and their superiors' engagement towards the change the interviewees were little unsure.

“We are engaged to ensure that the company would perform as good as possible. To that we are engaged: me and my superior. But I am not sure are we engaged to the change”, Sales and offer calculation manager 2.

Interviewees felt that the change management, is too far away from the practice and that they could not understand the difficulties that the employees come across because of the change. Change agents could be persons who would be more involved in the operative practice during the change.

“I do not know who have been planning the change but I feel there have not been site managers involved, who could have thought the processes from the operative practices”, Special works manager 2.

Change vision and strategy

The change strategy was developed during 2015. It was first announced in December of 2015 in the strategy meeting where the change management presented the new strategy. Later it was presented in the monthly newsletters. Before the season started there was a season opening-meeting where the change management presented the vision and strategy again.

When asked what the vision of the company is, all of the interviewees answered the question without hesitation: the company wants to be the market leader. Although some interviewees' said that at least it is what the e-mails and the change management were saying.

“The vision is to be the biggest in the industry. I cannot remember what they have marketed from above. I know what we want, but I do not think of it in the practice, I concentrate on the processes”, Process manager 1.

Customers' point of view was pointed out in the discussion by being able to produce goods and services more cost and time efficiently. The customer would benefit from the change in the end. Sustainability was also seen as the company's vision from the point of view of business, but as well from environmental aspects.

“To become a market leader the company needs to be agile in the competitive environment, more efficient and transparent throughout the whole organizations”, Process manager 2.

But the change was not seen as a solution to achieve the vision. Eight out of twelve saw that the change did not specially improve the company’s market position. They thought that by much smaller change efforts the same results could have been reached. The company has had and will have a strong market position in Finland.

Production manager 2 and office secretary 2 questioned change managements’ view of improving company’s profitability in Finland by this change, when the company had always made at least reasonable profit. The company’s directors view of improving the business by the new operating model was felt as offensive for the 100 year old business model. The interviewees felt that there should have been more explaining and facts of how the new operating model will change the business to be more profitable.

Change communication

In addition to the change management’s communication of the change in the meetings in December and April, there has been general information by e-mails and in monthly newsletters. More detailed information had been given from superiors in monthly meetings and in personal discussions. The company produced a survey of the organizational change to get information about employees’ feelings of the change. The survey also gave opportunity to give open feedback of the change to the change management. Besides the survey other smaller questioners about the challenges and

possibilities has been gathered by the company. Among personnel there have been unofficial discussions.

When asked about the strategy meetings the answer was that the change information drowned under information flow. Sales and offer calculation manager 2 and Special works manager 2 described that they felt the communication was dictated without fully explaining the reasons and benefits from it. Also other interviewee questioned the benefits and stated that they were not presented well enough. Otherwise the meetings were not specially mentioned.

The general information flow about the change by emails, monthly newsletters and intranet, were perceived to be enough. The information flow of the change has been steady and heavy. Interviewees did not want any more information by emails, but they did not feel it was overwhelming. Some admitted that they did not read the emails, but they felt that maybe for someone else the information is important and necessary. The biggest problem in the email communication was that interviewees felt that information was too positive compared to the atmosphere of the employees. Interviewees would have hoped more realistic and open information, where the progress of the change would have been presented. Sales and offer calculation manager 1 stated that too honest communication does not work either when implementing a new change.

*“The communication by email is really difficult. I would have hoped more personal communication with my superior and with the change management”,
Special works manager 2.*

“Sometimes too positive information is shown in the releases. If the releases do not correlate with the atmosphere of the employees the message might be questioned”, Sales and offer calculation manager 1.

The best communication initiative was seen by interviewees to be discussions with their superiors and weekly- and monthly meetings with their colleagues. In the meetings interviewees felt that their voice was heard most effectively because their superior truly understands their point of views. They also got straight feedback in the meetings. Interviewees saw that these discussions and meeting were the channel how they could affect the change.

“The best way to communicate about the change is through my superior. Then I can truly trust that he understands what I am talking about and what are the needs to improve the processes” states Process manager 1.

All of the interviewees had answered the survey (The case company 2016) made by the company about the change. Interviewees were disappointed in the way the survey's results were displayed. The company sent the results by email with a summary cover letter. The results did not present open feedback of the survey, which was felt as manipulation of the results. Open feedback were not answered or dealt in any way during the change implementation. All together the interviewees felt that the survey results were too positive and questioned how the results were collected. The survey sampling was thought to be too broad including blue collar employees whose work the change did not specially affect.

“At least the result should have been dealt in more detailed level. It would have generated a feeling of open communication in both ways”, Sales and offer calculation manager 1.

Interviewees felt they had given feedback every time they had an opportunity to it. Some had given straight feedback to the change management and others whenever it was asked. Interviewees felt that the biggest problems were not fully answered and later on these questions were realized to be the biggest challenges during the implementation of the organizational change.

From the beginning of the organizational change announcement unofficial discussions started in the coffee tables. Production manager 1 stated that the separation of who supports the change and who is against it has been ongoing during the whole implementation process. Process manager 2 presented that the management should have had actively tried to remove the negative discussions so that the resistance of the change would have been under better control. Now the resistance grew because the negative unofficial discussions in the organization. Also the implementation process was not felt to be that effective.

Removing barriers of change

The change management and change agents have meetings every month about the change process. In these meetings the challenges and problems of the change are evaluated.

In the new operating model, business orientation changed mostly for site managers. The business orientation changed from profit responsibility to cost responsibility. Only sales and offer calculation function stayed as profit responsible. This change was felt as biggest change especially in special works. The new requirements to work efficiently were not thought through during the planning of the organizational change. The systems did not fully support this kind of monitoring and the organization was not given comprehensive instructions how to record the costs. The cost center oriented model also created double amount of internal invoices between the functions. The double invoicing was seen as barrier for the normal job. The interviewees thought that change management failed on these practical points. The cost responsibility was also a new approach of doing business. It was seen as frustrating way of monitoring performance. Special works manager 1 pointed out that there should be more accurate performance indicators for cost monitoring which would make working a lot easier.

“I would have hoped for more information about cost responsibility. The process was not informed well enough in the beginning of the change.” Special works manager 1.

The roles and responsibilities of employees were presented in the information package and in strategy meetings. Every employee discussed their own responsibilities and role with their own superior. Still some of the interviewees felt that they were not informed well enough. The change also affected especially on sales and offer calculation managers' responsibilities. Before the organizational change sales and offer calculation managers were in charge of the whole process chain and they were supervisors for process managers. After the change, sales and offer managers' responsibilities were expected to focus only on customer and selling work. At the same time process managers were separated into their own function and they got new supervisors. This meant that sales and offer managers lost responsibilities

whereas process managers gained more responsibilities. The biggest problems were seen to be that the sales and offer calculation managers hold on to their previous work as they felt that it helped the process managers. Production manager 2 felt that sales and offer calculation managers has continued to some extent working as before but also they have focused on sales and offering processes. Process manager 2 stated that it would have been important that the roles and responsibilities should have been more clearly implemented and controlled. The interviewee said that this was the problem in the change process; too many persons did not change their roles as the change would have needed which made the implementation much harder.

“The communication of roles and responsibilities could have been more straight forward and clearer. In the beginning it was not clear what our responsibilities were”, Process manager 1 said.

“The change needs to be taken into practice step by step. We have helped each other every time we can”, Sales and offer calculation manager 1.

The company arranged trainings in the end of 2015 and beginning of 2016 which were seen as great opportunity. Interviewees saw that there should be more training. But at the same time interviewees felt that it is difficult to arrange because of the season based business; production starts on average in April and lasts until the end of November. The summers are too busy to arrange anything and in the winter time employees spend their vacations. Developing the business processes is difficult in this industry because of the seasonal business.

“During the implementation process the company should provide trainings and guidance for people who would need it”, Special works manager 2.

In the end of the season the company gathered a new team of employees, site managers mostly, to develop the new organizational model. This team is supposed to improve the operative work and find solutions for the problems that have come up during the season. Interviewees were positively surprised that this kind of team was gathered by the change management's initiative. Few of the interviewees were also selected to this team. They spoke in positive way of the possibilities that the new development team could do for the new operative model. Other interviewees had heard of the development team and thought it was a right direction for the change.

Generating short-term wins in the change

The change has been followed and the benefits of the change process have been presented in the newsletters in where top management has written about it. Actually the season was a really good season profit wise for the company. This was pointed out and employees were remembered by coffee and cake. Most of the interviewees did not see the connection with great performance and the new operating model. Interviewees said that this and following years will be profitable years because of the government's politics. They thought that this was good time for the change to be implemented but the benefits of the change were hard to see.

Every year employees have development discussions where personal and functional, this year, short-term goals, goals for the season, are adjusted. Interviewees' goals for the season were generally about understanding their new role, implementing the new operating model into their own organization and sharing best practices. Every employee has also performance goals which are presented in employee based scorecards. The goals were felt as non-effective. The most motivating aspect for the

interviewees was how much profit they are able to generate in the end of the season. This is why the cost responsibility was felt as non-motivating and alien concept.

The company has defined key performance indicators to control the performance of the business. These indicators were designed to support the company's goal of encouraging employees to entrepreneurial attitude and more customer-oriented attitude. Interviewees felt that the indicators were not on their reach and they could not effect on the result. They hoped more practical indicators at least on cost center monitoring. Interviewees who are in the new cost centers thought that it is really hard to be motivated by minimizing costs. The thought of profit responsibility is seen to be more motivating and easier to manage than costs.

“The results are reported monthly, but the costs are difficult to control. The goal is really difficult to internalize because it is not as motivating to set a limit for costs as reaching best profit as you can”, Special works manager 1.

Interviewees appreciate the freedom and trust on their operative work from the management. This has been the most effective initiative from the change management. Although, interviewees expressed that getting more feedback would always be better: The interviewees felt that they got feedback from their own superiors but the change management was felt distant. Sales and offer calculation manager 1 said that it is known that the change management is following the change by reports in their offices, but they should more often present their view of how business is doing. It was felt that it is not enough that few times a year the change management commented the business performance. Interviewees missed more constructive feedback from the management.

“We have had freedom of doing our operative work. The management has shown that they trust us and they do not need to control our work all the time. It has been very motivating”, Sales and offer calculation manager 1.

“Constructive and positive feedback always motivates to work”, Production manager 1.

4.2.3 Employee engagement during the change

Engagement level of the employees in the company is high; the engagement score is 3,87 from 5 points (The case company 2015). Most of the interviewees say that their heart presents the color of the company and they see themselves working in the company at least for the next five years. The engagement level has been built on long lasting careers and the long history of the company.

The difficult times in business has taken its toll on interviewees' engagement. Especially interviewees felt that the previous organizational changes have affected their engagement level. After the previous organizational changes some of the old employees left to another company or got fired during co-determination negotiations. Special works manager 2 expressed that you never know any more if you will get fired even though you have been in the company for decades. The value of work experience and career history is felt under appreciated.

When asked how engaged employees were to the change in the beginning of spring 2016, most of them described their attitudes as open but reserved. Previous organizational changes have affected the attitudes towards the new change. The last

ten years have included few organizational changes which were not felt as successful. The previous organizational changes have had a negative effect on employees' engagement level too.

"In the operative level we are little reserved to this change. Everyone is more or less unsure if the change is really going to be implemented and if the new operating model would be operated in the future. In the beginning of the summer there were uncertainty but now the trust has increased that this is how the operations will be done", Process manager 1.

"First expression was that is the processes really going to be changed again", Office secretary 2.

During these years the management of the company has also changed. Interviewees pointed out the new management- aspect. Special works manager 2 would have hoped for more understandable reasons for the need of the change so the change would not be seen as new management's need to show they are capable of change. The uncertainty towards management and the organizational change increases change resistance.

"Along with new management comes new operating models", Process manager 1.

"I would have hoped more understandable reasons for the change and how it will affect the profitability of the company. This would prevent the feeling of

*because of the new management the operations needs to be changed”,
Special works manager 2.*

Only few interviewees admitted that they were resistant already in the beginning of the change. Few said, on the contrary, that they were strongly engaged to the change from the beginning. Rest of the interviewees did not have strong feelings about the change in the beginning. The resistance had increased during the season but in the end it lowered down. The roles and responsibilities were better implemented in the end and the new development team was seen in really positive way.

Except the engaged interviewees, everyone felt that their engagement had dropped in the beginning of the season but now the engagement had been improved in the end of the season. Office secretary 3 pointed out that in the beginning of the change she felt it was difficult to be motivated of the change, but now the change has been accepted and she needs to be engaged to the new operational model to make it work. Interviewees have now got used to the new operative model and accepted the new operative processes.

*“In the beginning the engagement of my superior and close management was questionable, which decreased my own motivation in the beginning of the change. If they would have been more engaged to the new operating model, it would have had an effect on my motivation of the change in the beginning”,
Office secretary 3.*

The new development team increased trust toward the change because everyone felt that the new model needs to be developed to make it work. No one expects that the company would return to the old model. The interviewees believe that the new

operating model could work when it is modified to support the operative work better. Also other interviewees state that the change needs time to be fully implemented and gained the best practices out of it.

“There is no point of thinking that we would return to old practices. There are a lot of good things in the new operating model. No one cannot judge the change based on first year. The change needs time”, Production manager 2.

When asked about change management’s engagement level toward the change interviewees mainly saw that the management is engaged as it is their initiative. When asked specifying questions of their involvement, interviewees basically only remembered the management being present in the first two meetings and that they have wrote to the newsletters about the change. Interviewees would have hoped more personal communication and discussions with the change management.

When looking for the next five years eleven out of twelve interviewees said that they would see themselves working in the company if they are not fired in the cooperation procedures which were seen as the biggest threat. One interviewee who does not see himself working in the company will be retiring soon. From this point of view interviewees are highly engaged to the company.

4.2.4 Change resistance

The company has tried to minimize the change resistance by open communication, surveys and open question and answer site in its intranet. The change has been

broadly communicated in the emails and newsletters. Change management has given speeches of the change and followed the change process by the executive team.

Organizational change process always faces change resistance. As stated before two of the interviewees admit that they were resistant from the beginning. Most of the interviewees did not say they were change resistant in the beginning but questioned the change and hoped answers for the unsure parts of the change. Interviewees did not get answers before the season and as one interviewee stated the worst fears came true which made the change resistance worse. Two interviewees out of twelve were engaged to the change. They thought that the change implementation process had some flaws and the questions should have been answered faster. At the end of the season questions were answered and the change started to work.

Process manager 2 pointed out that the change resistance should have been more effectively managed by the change management. The changes were not implemented to the operative work as they were planned and no one reacted on this. The change management should actively minimize the resistance. Process manager 2 implies that these persons who knowingly resisted the change implementation poisoned the change initiative from the beginning and got other persons onboard with them. Production manager 1 stated also that in the operative work employees has been divided into two groups; against the change and supporters of the change. The separation is made at the coffee table discussions by rumors and speculation.

The change resistance should not always be seen as negative reaction. Resistance means that the employees care about the company and are worried for the outcome of the change. Most of the interviewees have given feedback for the change management how to improve the change. These are the positive aspects of change resistance; to develop the change together. The change management has now

affected on the change resistance by creating the development team. This was seen as very positive initiative.

“If the voices of employees are not heard in the planning process, why the feedback is considered as resistance straight away”, Special works manager 2.

“During the change we have recognized evident difficulties on the new operating model. Now the change management has created a development team to improve the new operating model. They showed that they do not want to implement the change by force”, Special works manager 1.

4.3 Results of the research and suggestions for upcoming organizational changes

In next chapters the research data collected, presented above, is analyzed by content analysis. The data is evaluated by the theories presented previously in the research. Researcher presents also suggestions how to improve upcoming organizational changes. The new operational model is going to be implement to case company's other countries in the following years.

4.3.1 The first steps of the implementation process

The organizational change was change managements change request. Haveri and Majonen (2000, 24-26) define it as a proactive change. The change is based on strategic vision of how the company will make processes more efficient and in the end generate stronger market position and profit in the future. Paton and McCalman

(2008, 10) stated that usually proactive change is more easily accepted in the organization. In this case the previous organizational changes have influenced the attitudes of interviewees. The change need was seen as change managements need to show their capability on managing the company. The change resistance was felt stronger as in the previous organizational changes as Williams (2007, 36) stated that it could be the case.

Organizational culture of the company has been built on long careers and as the interviewees stated most of them have hearts as the color of the company. This indicated a strong relation to the company on organizational culture level. During past years the link between interviewees and the company have decreased, but still the engagement to the company is strong. Interviewees stated that the culture has changed and the feeling of community in the organization has change for the worse than it has been before. The organizational culture of change is built from the culture it already has. This has been seen as most common barrier for organizational change initiatives (Rashid et al. 2004). The management is in big importance of affecting the organizational culture of change (Schein 1987, 19-20). By improving the company's organizational culture the company could improve the organizational culture of change. After the organizational culture of the organization is improved the company should focus on making the organization more agile and accepting by increasing training opportunities, including employees to development projects and in general increase open communication inside the company (Hofstede 1993).

The company has communicated well their vision of the change. Kotter (1996, 68-69) says that this is one of the most important steps of the change process; employees understand why the change is done. Nevertheless, even though the vision is acknowledged the strategy to get there was questioned. Interviewees did not see how the change would affect positively to the business. Kotter stresses that the benefits should be presented clearly and understandable way so the employees will engage to

the change. Now the vision was acknowledged, but employees were not engaged to the change. Change management should have had thought how to present actual benefits of the change during the season. Now after the first round the company should find the parts of the change which has improved the work processes or profit of the year. As one interviewee stated, these are the only things that matters for the employees.

Ikävalko (1994) summarized the main objects of communication. Only the goals were acknowledged by employees. Other parts were not accomplished; personnel should know the means how to reach the goals, the roles and responsibilities should be more clearly stated and there should be more feedback between employees and change management. In the following organizational changes change management should also focus on these aspects to improve the change communication.

4.3.2 Engaging employees by change agents

Change agent increases the trust of employees toward the change. Change agents should be ones who have authority, are professionals and they are trusted among the employees. (Kotter 1996, 65) The change agents should be acknowledged by the employees so that they can turn to them when they face some problems. In this change the change agents were unknown and at the same time change management was seen as distant for employees. Interviewees stressed that they felt they were not listened and that the change was just pushed through. Few expressed that they think that in the planning of the change there were no one representing them who would understand the practical work and its challenges. By announcing the change agents more clearly the employees would trust more of their decisions. Tyler (2003, 567) stated that change management and change agents are the only thing that employees can trust in the change which makes their actions even more important to

engage employees. Leadership is the most effective driver on engaging employees to the change (Towers Watson 2015; Aon Hewitt 2013). The company is a big organization where change management cannot be present in the implementation process. That is why the change agent-team is especially important for the company; persons who actively will manage change.

In the future changes the communication should be more open in both ways. Employees need to feel that they can influence, develop and be part of the change process (Towers Watson 2015). Interviewees who presented criticism felt that their voice was suppressed under super positive image in newsletters and emails. Interviewees stated that the atmosphere did not correlate with the company's presented results of the change process which made them question the information given to them of the change. Change information has to focus on positive aspects, but on real things. If employees feel they are misled they lose their trust which increases change resistance and decreases the possibility of succeeding in the change (Schockley-Zalabak et al. 2000). Interviewees felt that the biggest pitfall was that no one heard their worries before the season and that the problems were realized in the beginning of the season.

The interviewees felt that there was enough communication of the change but not right kind. Kotter (1996, 90) stated that there should be a lot of communications but in this case it did not improve the engagement of the interviewees to the change. Bordia et al. (2004, 14) presents that the quality has a vital role in the change communication. Quantity does not replace quality. By presenting the concrete benefits and improvements of the processes and business the employees would be motivated better.

4.3.3 Barriers for the change and change resistance

The biggest barriers of change were seen to be the lack of planning how the practical work would be done in the new operating model. The engagement to the change is damaged if the employees feel their work is harder to do because of the change. These parts should be carefully planned to minimize the challenges for employees to do their actual work. When employees are engaged to the change they are willing to do sacrifices in the name of good outcome, but if they cannot even see the benefits they are reluctant to change their old habits. (Aon Hewitt 2013) Other big barrier, which one of the interviewees stated, was the implementation process's ineffectiveness. Change management need to address that the change is going to happen. That the change is a necessity for the company and urgent to implement. To minimize the change resistance the rumors and uncertainty should be minimized. (Gotsill & Natchez 2007) Few interviewees admitted that they did not change the practical work and they will not change it before it is proven to be good. The biggest reason was that the resources were seen to be too low. Interviewees hoped more realistic division of labor so that employees could perform well in their job. Engagement increases when the employee feels she can do her job well but it is challenging at the same time. (Towers Watson 2015)

To engage employees to the change, the importance of understanding how the change will improve the practical work and the business, cannot be stressed enough. Ndaba and Anthony (2015) state that organizations should identify the nature of the change to understand how engage employees to it. Then engagement could be used as a tool to succeed in the organizational change better. Understanding of how change effect on employees' attitudes and behavior is essential to minimize challenges of the change. Short-term wins should be carefully planned before the change implementation. There should be clear vision how the change effects on processes and how the company can communicate these improvements. (Kotter

1996) The interviewees said that they did not see direct effect of the change to the company's operations. They stated that the processes were already going toward the same directions as the change vision. And as the market situation was favorable for the profitable business even without the organizational change.

When asked about the short-term wins the interviewees said that trust of the management and their superiors was the most important motivator they have in their work. They still missed more personal feedback from the management for the work follow-up. In the change the change agents should be the ones who are truly interested how the change implementation has been done and how the employees feel about it. (Kotter 1996) They should communicate with employees and give constructive feedback on a regular basis. Open and constructive communication with management is one of the key drivers of employee engagement (Towers Watson 2015).

The key performance indicators which were designed to support the new operating model were not seen as supportive. Interviewees felt that the indicators were not on their reach to influence to the result so these did not motivate them to perform better. Kotter (1996) stresses the importance of producing short term wins which employees could reach in the beginning of the change. These should be planned carefully in advance to ensure they will be realized. This is how employees can actually see the benefits of the change and engage to it. Even though the company did have an extremely profitable season the interviewees did not see that the organizational change had any influence to it.

In the company's organizational change the classic change curve (Figure 2.) could be seen. The employees' engagement level has changed during the implementation process. After the organizational change was announced the interviewees expressed

that they felt the change was given but not thought through. The change created uncertainty and questioning. Few of the interviewees were resistant in the beginning of the change. Before the season started the atmosphere was hopeful but reserved. During the season the challenges came true and implementation of the change did not happen as it was planned which increased the change resistance. Now the first season is over and the worst disadvantages are acknowledged. The change management established a change development team which was seen in positive light among the interviewees.

All of the interviewees thought that the new operating model could work if it is modified to adjust the company's operations. Interviewees pointed out the positive outcomes of the change and hoped the change management would concentrate on these in the future. The most common word when describing the change was challenging. Most of the interviewees described the change in positive light as futuristic, efficient and going in the right direction.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Organizations are in a constant pressure to change. This research wanted to present how the change management initiatives of Kotter's model affect the employees' engagement to the change. The research focused on the first six steps of the change model. The change has not reached its last steps yet and that is why the last steps of the model cannot be studied. The same change is going to be done soon in the company's other segments. The success of engaging employees to the change was evaluated by interviews of site managers whose work the change mostly affected.

This research supports the results from other researches by emphasizing the importance of leadership in organizational changes. Leadership is an extensive concept which affects the implementation of organizational change in its every step. Next the main research results are presented, research proposals are given to management and finally the research is evaluated and suggested implications are given for future research.

5.1 The main results and conclusions

The research question was approached by two sub- research questions. First one is "How has the engagement level of employees changed during the first steps of the organizational change?". The engagement of employees to the change followed classic change curve (Aon Hewitt 2013; Towers Watson 2015) where at the beginning the engagement decreases a little, then employees usually turns optimistic by the selling talks and then the engagement drops to the bottom as the change is implemented. After that the engagement starts to improve. The research presented that the attitudes toward the change were reserved at first. In the beginning the

change managements' communication of the change was felt distant and dominative. Interviewees were not convinced of the urgency or necessity of the change. Few of the interviewees thought in the beginning that the change was good initiative from the change management but most of the interviewees wanted to take a step back and analyze the change first. When the change was implemented the change communication in general was felt that the change management did not react nor respond on their feedback of the change. In the beginning the roles and responsibilities were not clearly implemented on the operative work. This increased frustration and decreased the trust in the change. In the end of the season the change management organized development team to resolve the difficulties of the change. This affected the engagement level in a positive way. Employees' engagement increased also in the end because the new processes of the new operative model and the roles and responsibilities were clearer for them than in the beginning.

Second sub- research question is "How can the company succeed better in engaging the employees to the organizational change?". Aon Hewitt (2013) and Towers Watson (2015) presented that the key driver of engaging employees to the change is good management which consist of multiple dimensions. The whole change process is in the hands of change management and in the end it is their responsibility to succeed in it. Kotter (1996) states that no one should implement change alone. Change agents support the change management in the organizational change process by implementing and controlling the change, communicating with employees about the change and promoting it for the employees. In the case company change agents were not used this way. The change agents supported the change management but they were not acknowledged by the employees of the company. In the next changes the change agent should be presented more clearly for employees that they know who to approach when they have questions or worries. This would increase the engagement level of the employees.

To engage employees to the change change management should try to minimize the change resistance. Gotsill and Natchenz (2007) and Valpola et al. (2010) present that resistance of organizational change can be decreased by acknowledging the problems and facing them by open communication. By improving the change communication, the case company will succeed better in the following organizational changes by decreasing the change resistance and increasing engagement level of employees. Also the change should be implemented in full force. In this change employees did not adopt the new roles and responsibilities in the beginning. Kotter (1996) presents that the change has to be felt as must to succeed in it. By hesitation the implementation process becomes more difficult to execute.

The sub- research questions, presented above, answers to the actual research question “How the change management initiatives of Kotter’s eight step model for successful organizational change affected the engagement level of employees towards the organizational change?”.

Kotter (1996) stresses the importance of changing employees’ hearts at first. Change is not integrated, until employees trust and believe in the change. The company did not sell the change well enough for the interviewees. The urgency and necessity were not communicated as strongly as this type, strategic organizational change, requires. The initiatives that would have supported the change implementation, change agents, communication, disabling barriers and realizing short-term wins, were suppressed under the disbelief of the change need to achieve change vision and strategy by the new operating model. Even though the vision of the change was understood and known by interviewees, they were sceptic of the change. Interviewees questioned if the new operating model is the right way to get there.

The organizational change in the company is at its beginning. Interviewees saw that the new roles and responsibilities make the processes more transparent and efficient which was the goal of the change. The barriers of change are now acknowledged and change management has shown that they want to improve the process by creating a new development team for the change. This has had a big influence in interviewees trust and hope for the organizational change. Interviewees stressed also that this has been the first year of the change which makes it understandable that it is a work in progress and that in the future it will be better.

5.2 The research proposals

Kotter's change model is comprehensive change process model. It takes into account important aspects of employees needs during organizational change. The model is built from the employees' perspective by offering initiatives how the employee can engage to the change better. The change process model suites well to the company's organizational change for the upcoming changes too. The company and change management should focus more in change communications and change agents in the future changes.

The research results and the theory behind the research suggest that the most important driver of engaging employees to the change is leadership. Towers Watson (2015) has summarized "leadership!" to contain factors of informing, engaging, enabling and communicating with employees. Organizational changes demands 70-90 percentage of managing people, leadership, and the rest is managing things (Kotter 1996, 30-31). This proves that in organizational changes the focus should be on managing employees and their emotions toward the change.

Kotter (1996) presents an initiative to focus on this; change agents. Change agents should be the ones who actively communicates on behalf of the change, sells the

change for the resistant employees, listen the criticism of employees and provides answers for the concerning subjects. Change agents should be the ones that employees can trust to understand their needs as well as the company's needs. Change agents ensure that the change is actually implemented in the organization and makes sure that the information flow in the organization is sufficient and reaches everyone. In the upcoming organizational change the company should focus more on the change agents. Even though the company had nominated the change agents, interviewees did not know who the change agents were. Now the new development team seems to be the new "change agents", who the other employees can trust and give feedback more openly. The change management should put together this kind of team for the future changes. The change agents should have more time to focus on both the ongoing change and the concerns of employees, to minimize the resistance for the change.

The main reference of the research is that in the organizational change the organization truly gives time to assemble a guiding coalition; the change agents. After organization have people who the management and employees can trust, who are also engaged to the change and wants to manage it and who knows how to communicate with employees, employees will engage better to the change and the success rate improves. Change agents full time job should be implementing the change at least in the beginning so the change is truly taken into practice.

5.3 Limitations of the study and potential avenues for future research

The research was a case study of which the results are not able to be generalized. The data collection was relatively comprehensive, 12 interviews, but still the results are from one organization concerning one organizational change. When the case company will implement the other organizational changes the research could be

duplicated to increase the reliability of the research of how the change initiatives affects to the employees engagement level.

For the future research I would recommend focusing on change agent- concept in more detail. Organizations are in a constant turmoil of change and still the organizational change initiatives mostly fail. The change management could use change agents as a tool to implement change initiatives. This means that they would be the ones who actually focuses on the change implementation and gives it their heart and soul. The change agents could be seen as organizational change's chief executive officers. The future research could focus on what kind of persons should the change agents are to ensure that employees would engage to the change.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview structure

Warm-up questions

Basic questions

1. How long have you been working at the company?
2. How many organizational changes have you experienced at the company?
3. How many organizational changes during your whole career?

Core questions

Engagement level

4. How engaged were you in the spring of the 2016 before season started?
5. How engaged are you now?
6. What have been the factors affecting to the level of your engagement?
7. How could have the company affect it to better?
8. In the spring of 2016 did you believe that the new operating model would improve the business of the company?
9. Is the new operating model good solution for the company?

Change management initiatives

The urgency

10. List the key reasons why the new operating model was implemented.
11. What are the benefits of the new operating model and what is expected from it?
12. Were the company have failed and were succeeded?
13. How has the new operative model affected to the market situation of the company?

Vision and strategy

14. What is the vision of the company?

Change agents

15. Name the change agent of the organizational change?
16. Who are the persons who wanted the change?
17. How has the change management supported and managed the implementation process of organizational change?
18. How could have the change management support the implementation process better?

Communication

19. Where and how have you got information of the organizational change?
20. Has there been enough communication of the organizational change?
21. How the change communication could have being improved?

- 22. How have you affected to the change?
- 23. Have you got to tell your opinion and development suggestions?
- 24. Has your opinion and suggestions been noticed?

Customers

- 25. How has the change affected your customer-orientation?
- 26. How has the customers reacted to the change?

Removing barriers

- 27. How has the company supported you to implement the new operating model into your work?
- 28. Has the company arranged any trainings for the new operating model, any new systems to support the new operating model or anything else?
- 29. Can you work without any problems as the new operative model expects?
- 30. What problems or barriers you have noticed in this new operative model?
- 31. Has the systems supported the new operative model?

Short-term wins

- 32. What kinds of expectations were announced for the season?
- 33. Did the announced expectations motivate on the operative work?
- 34. Did you succeed?
- 35. Did you express any feelings of success during the season?
- 36. Did the management notice success during the season? By whom?

The ending questions

37. How do you talk about the company to your family, friend and colleagues?

38. Can you see yourself working in the company after five years?

39. Do you see that the organizational model is the same after five years?

40. Describe the organizational change in three words.

Appendix 2: Haastattelurunko

Aloituskysymykset

Perustiedot

1. Kauan olet työskennellyt yhtiössä?
2. Monta organisaatiomuutosta olet kokenut työurasi aikana tässä yrityksessä?
3. Entä koko työurasi aikana?

Haastattelun pääkysymykset

Sitoutumisasteen muutos

4. Kuinka sitoutunut olit muutokseen keväällä ennen kauden alkua?
5. Kuinka sitoutunut olet muutokseen nyt?
6. Mitkä tekijät ovat vaikuttaneet tähän?
7. Millä toimenpiteillä olisi voitu vahvistaa sitoutuneisuuttasi muutokseen?
8. Uskoitko keväällä uuden toimintamallin kehittävän päällistyksen toimintaa?
9. Mitä mieltä olet uuden toimintamallin toimivuudesta päällistyksen tulevaisuuden kannalta?

Muutosjohtamisen toimet

Muutostarve

10. Kerro keskeisimmät syyt miksi toimintamallimuutos toteutettiin?
11. Mitä hyötyjä uudella toimintamallilla on saavutettu ja halutaan saavuttaa tulevaisuudessa?
12. Millä alueilla on mielestäsi onnistuttu ja missä epäonnistuttu?

13. Minkälainen oli päällystyksen markkinatilanne keväällä ennen kautta?

Visio ja strategia

14. Mikä on yrityksen visio tulevaisuudelle?

Muutosagentit

15. Nimeä muutosagentit?

16. Ketkä ovat muutoksen takana?

17. Kuinka johto on tukenut ja ohjannut muutoksen implementointia?

18. Miten johto olisi voinut tukea muutoksen implementointia paremmin?

Viestintä

19. Mistä ja miten olet saanut tietoa muutoksesta?

20. Onko muutoksesta viestitty tarpeeksi?

21. Kuinka muutosviestintää voitaisiin parantaa?

22. Kuinka olet saanut vaikuttaa muutokseen?

23. Oletko saanut kertoa mielipiteesi/ kehitysehdotuksia muutoksesta?

24. Onko mielipiteesi huomioitu?

Asiakkaat

25. Kuinka toimintamallin muutos on vaikuttanut asiakastyöskentelyysi?

26. Miten asiakkaat ovat suhtautuneet päällystyksen uuteen toimintamalliin?

Esteiden vähentäminen

27. Kuinka sinua on tuettu uuden toimintamalliin siirtymisessä?

28. Onko järjestetty koulutuksia, otettu käyttöön uusia järjestelmiä tukemaan toimintoja tai muuta sellaista?

29. Pystytkö työskentelemään vaivattomasti uuden toimintamallin mukaisesti?
30. Mitä ongelmia/esteitä työn teolle olet huomannut uudessa toimintamallissa?
31. Ovatko järjestelmät tukeneet uuden toimintamallin tarpeita?

Lyhyen aikavälin tavoitteet

32. Minkälaisia tavoitteita kaudelle asetettiin?
33. Motivoivatko asetetut tavoitteet sinua työnteossa?
34. Onnistuitteko tavoitteissa?
35. Koitko onnistumisen tunteita kauden aikana?
36. Huomioitiinko onnistumisia kauden aikana? Kenen toimesta?

Lopetuskysymykset

37. Miten puhut yrityksestä perheenjäsenillesi, ystävillese tai kollegoillesi?
38. Näetkö itsesi työskentelevän vielä viiden vuoden päästä yrityksessä?
39. Näetkö toimintamallin olevan käytössä vielä viiden vuoden päästä?
40. Kuvaile organisaatiomuutosta kolmella sanalla?
41. Kuvaile organisaatiomuutosta kolmella sanalla?