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The Strategic Value of Efficient and Effective Communication in the Order-Fulfilment Process

Tehokkaan ja vaikuttavan viestinnän strateginen arvo tilauksen toteuttamisprosessissa

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ABSTRACT

With an increasing amount of competition, it is even more challenging for companies to differentiate from others and gain competitive advantage. Communication is commonly an ignored and forgotten asset, but in fact it is a critical enabler for success that can better a company's productivity, customer satisfaction and the actualization of its strategy.

This thesis aims to study, what strategic value effective and efficient communication has. The study is based on a case study for a manufacturing company. The purpose of the study is to analyze the current challenges and qualities of the company's internal communication and assess, whether it currently adds any strategic value or competitive advantage to its activity.

The results confirm the importance of effective and efficient communication for companies. The results show how problems in unintended exclusion of relevant recipients in the information flow hinders internal communication from functioning effectively and efficiently. Additionally, a greater understanding of how one's own work affects others and the areas of responsibility in communicating are needed. The results also showed that communication problems and misunderstandings seemed to appear in the beginning of the information flow but were noticed later in the production stage of the order. Based on the analysis, good qualities were the use of applicable communication tools, active interaction within each department and communication qualities such as clarity, completeness, correctness and efficiency.

TIIVISTELMÄ

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Lisääntyvän kilpailun myötä yritysten on yhä haastavampaa erottua joukosta ja saavuttaa kilpailuetua. Viestintä on useasti sivuutettu ja unohdettu voimavara, joka on kuitenkin kriittinen menestyksen mahdollistaja, joka voi parantaa yrityksen tuottavuutta, asiakastyytyväisyyttä ja strategian toteutumista.

Tämän kandidaatintutkielman tavoite on tutkia tehokkaan ja vaikuttavan sisäisen viestinnän strategista merkitystä yrityksille. Tutkielma perustuu case-tutkielmaan, jossa tarkastellaan teollisuusyrityksen sisäistä viestintää. Tutkielman tarkoitus on tutkia yrityksen sisäisen viestinnän haasteita ja piirteitä, sekä arvioida tuottaako sen sisäinen viestintä nykyisellä tasollaan yritykselle strategista arvoa tai kilpailuetua.

Tutkimuksen tulokset vahvistavat tehokkaan ja vaikuttavan viestinnän tärkeyden yrityksille. Tulokset osoittavat, että jos kaikkia oleellisia osapuolia ei sisällytetä viestiketjuihin, niin tästä aiheutuvat ongelmat haittaavat sisäisen viestinnän toimimista tehokkaalla ja vaikuttavalla tasolla. Lisäksi parempi ymmärrys oman työskentelyn vaikutuksista toisiin sekä viestimisen vastuualueista ovat tärkeitä. Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittivat myös, että väärinymmärrykset ja ongelmat viestinnässä ilmenivät viestiketjun alussa, mutta huomattiin vasta myöhemmin tilauksen ollessa tuotantovaiheessa. Analyysin perusteella viestimisen hyviä piirteitä ovat hyvin soveltuvien kommunikointivälineiden käyttö, eri osastojen aktiivinen sisäinen viestintä ja tietyt viestimisen piirteet, kuten selkeys, valmius, oikeellisuus ja tehokkuus.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This bachelor's thesis discusses the strategic value of effective and efficient internal communications in a company, specifically in its order-fulfilment process. This topic is explored in the empirical portion of this thesis by studying the case company's internal communications and its possible problems.

The importance of business communications has risen immensely as remote teams are becoming more popular and business structures are modernizing. (Martic, 2020) Various company reports and surveys prove the importance of business communications' role in the business' activity further by presenting that 60% of employees struggle at least once a month with matters caused by communication issues (Boudinet, 2020) and 29% believe poor communication to be the cause of failed projects (Cohen, 2019).

For confidentiality reasons the case company of this case study is called "Company A." While working at Company A as a Logistics Coordinator Summer Trainee, I noted the importance of well-functioning internal communications, which was highlighted through my own experiences and motivated me to study the issues and challenges related to it. What I gathered from other employees' experiences was that a notable number of cases, in which an order was delayed, incorrect or faced other complications, was due to a lack of efficient and effective communication. It made me question, how the company's activity might benefit from, for example, an internal communications policy adapted for its different products and order-fulfilment types or from the use of different communication tools suited for its business.

Company A is one of the leading companies in manufacturing and selling uninterruptible power supply devices. The aim of this thesis is to determine, what strategic value effective and efficient internal communications provide in the order-fulfilment process. Additionally, it studies the positive impacts effective and efficient internal communications could have on the order-fulfilment process of Company A and if it could increase the company's customer satisfaction and thus also its competitive advantage.

1.1 Goals of the Research and the Research Problems

The goal of this research is to gain a better understanding of the strategic value effective and efficient internal communication has. Additionally, it will discuss what negative effects poor communication has on a company. The case part of this research strives to determine, what the internal communication problems at Company A are. Furthermore, one goal is to gain insight on why these communication problems exist and where they are located in the information flow. These in turn will help to understand the current state of the company's internal communication and if it provides competitive advantage.

The main question of the research is,

What strategic value does effective and efficient internal communication provide in the order-fulfilment process?

and the two sub-questions are,

What are the qualities of effective and efficient communication?

How can effective and efficient communication be implemented to reduce communication problems?

Answers to these questions will provide the case company with essential information regarding the current state of their internal communications, provide information on why effective and efficient internal communication is valuable and how they can possibly implement some of its qualities into their business activity to reduce current communication problems.

1.2 Research Method and Data

The research is conducted by means of qualitative research methods. Qualitative research methods as a concept are quite elusive, as its definitions differ and there are various possibilities of execution. (Metsämuuronen, 2008)

Qualitative research methods help us to understand why humans behave and think the way they do regarding a specific topic, which is also why the research data is mostly based on the insights of people. The common ways for collecting this information are through questionnaires, interviews and by making observations on the matter. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018)

The data used in this research has been collected by a semi-structured theme interview. The interviewees consisted of employees from different departments in the Finnish sales office of Company A. The interviewees also differed in age and by the length of employment at Company A.

I worked at the Finnish subsidiary of Company A during the period of 18.05.2020-14.08.2020 as a Logistics Coordinator Trainee. Therefore, I used myself as a reference, for example, when explaining the order-fulfilment processes and information flow of Company A. Additionally, I used my own observations when analyzing the results of the interview.

1.3 Literature Review

Theories, such as Cutlip and Center's 7Cs of communication, which was initially presented in 1952, have evolved and expanded into more modern theories. Today, the topic of effective and efficient communication has become a more widespread concept to study. Technological advancements have provided a broad selection of communication tools that change the way of communicating at a rapid speed, as does the growing competition, which forces companies to seek competitive advantage in all aspects of its business activity.

O'Dell (2020) presents that effective and efficient communication improves response times to business problems and helps employees to work towards common goals of the company. Kekäläinen (2016) shares similar views to efficient and effective communication being a unifying force amongst employees. Kekäläinen, Quirke (2008) and Ritchie (2015) also conclude how the positive impact of successful internal communications betters the quality of customer service. Furthermore, Quirke explains how businesses may now expect and

rely more on successful internal business communications and how it is an important driving force in turning strategy into action.

1.4 Main Concepts

This part introduces the main concepts of the research, which are more extensively explained in the theoretical framework part of this thesis. The main concepts are significantly present in the research and comprehending them is vital to understanding the research wholly.

Internal Business communications

"The way organizations and employees share information and communicate with each other." (Open Social 2020) Business communications can occur in person or remotely with the help of different communicational tools. (Masjedi, 2019) Internal communications is about interacting with one another and creating communality. (Kekäläinen, 2016)

Effective communication

Effective communication strives to communicate a matter and its main points as extensively and understandably as possible to the recipient. (Wroblewski, 2020) Effective communication is complete, concrete, courteous, correct, clear, considerate, concise, creative and credible. (Romih, 2016)

Efficient communication

Efficient communication aims to reduce the time it takes to communicate the information to its recipients and strives to communicate it as clearly as possible. (Wroblewski, 2020)

1.5 Structure of the Research

The research consists of five separate parts. The first part introduces the topic of the research, its goals, limitations, main concepts and research method. The second part consists of the theoretical framework, which presents the scientific articles and literature that the research is based on. The theoretical framework was divided into four different parts, which are internal business communication, strategic potential in successful internal communication, poor internal business communication, the qualities of efficient and effective communication and the value of efficient and effective communication. The third part in the research is the research and data collection section, which discusses the research method and data collection choices, introduces Company A and its order-fulfilment processes, information flow and order-fulfilment strategies and the demographics of the interviewees. The fourth part is the empirical part, where the value of effective and efficient communication and its current presence in Company A's internal communication is studied, and also the results of the interviews are presented. Based on the results of the interview, general improvement ideas for the company's internal communication and suggestions for solving the supplemental case problems presented by Company A are discussed. Lastly, the conclusions present answers to the research problems and opportunities for future research.

1.6 Limitations of the Research

Even though Company A is a multinational limited liability company, this research is limited solely to its Finnish sales office and its operations. The case company in this thesis wanted to remain anonymous, so it is referred to as "Company A".

Internal communication refers to the communication and information flow within an organization. This research however focuses specifically on the internal communication related to the case company's order-fulfilment process. The order types discussed in this research are narrowed down to the case company's flow and project orders that are defined later in part 3.2.1.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework part introduces the theories present in this research topic. The theories are internal business communications and its benefits when practiced in an efficient and effective manner and the qualities of efficient and effective communication. Furthermore, this part discusses the strategic significance of internal communication, the outcomes of poor internal communication and what possible positive outcomes efficient and effective communication can provide for a company. Thus, these themes will provide better knowledge of the value and qualities of efficient and effective communication in the business activity of a company.

Therefore, the theoretical framework consists of and seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of internal business communications and its strategic value to a business, harmful outcomes of poor internal communications and furthermore to provide a definition and understanding of what effective and efficient communication is. The text is based on literature and articles related to internal business communications and efficient and effective communication. The scientific research and theories in this part are presented in a manner that support the empirical portion of this study.

2.1 Internal Business Communications

Internal business communications can be simply defined as "the way organizations and employees share information and communicate with each other." (Open Social, 2020) Business communications can occur verbally or written, which means it happens in person or remotely and within or between departments. Communication tools that make remote working possible are, for example, e-mails, phone calls or video calls, chats and other software (Masjedi, 2019), for example Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software.

Before, the goal in internal communications was simply to share information between the employer and employees. (Haynes, 1922, 81) However, internal business communications are not simply about sharing information, but rather interacting with one another and creating

communality and team spirit amongst the employees. Internal communications support a company's growth and solidifies its conceptions. (Kekäläinen, 2016) When internal business communication is seen merely as informing but not communicating, it does not communicate the matter well and understandably to the recipient. This leaves space for assumptions to be made, which weakens the quality of communication and leads to misunderstandings. (Gerberry, 2017)

Internal business communication, when done correctly, can have a major impact in the success of a company and provide strategic advantage. What is expected of internal business communications has changed immensely from its simplistic former ways, which is why companies may now expect internal business communications to aid in the battling of business challenges, such as differentiation, reducing costs and innovation. (Quirke, 2008, 4)

2.1.1 Strategic Potential in Successful Internal Communications

Internal communication has a major role in implementing business strategies (Figure 1). It allows employees to truly understand the goals of the company's strategy, their role in it and what actions are needed from them. "Communication is vital to creating value" and critical to the success of a business. (Quirke, 2008, 10)

Figure 1: The Strategic Value of Internal Communication. (Quirke, 2008)

Successful internal communication affects the employee attitudes positively, by building unity and pride, which in turn is more likely to generate quality customer service to customers. This will lead to greater customer satisfaction (Figure 1), as indifference towards customers diminishes the possibilities of a company to differentiate. (Quirke, 2008, 7)

Internal business communication can provide a company with competitive advantage, specifically, competitive differentiation (Figure 1). This is due to internal communication creating a greater understanding amongst employees of the brand promises, which can then be generated into action. This in turn creates greater perceived customer value, since now the company has a way of differentiating from its competitors. Higher customer loyalty will lead to higher profitability (Figure 1). Therefore, when the internal business communication of a company is not well-functioning, it can have a substantial impact on the profitability of a business. (Quirke, 2008, 5)

2.1.2 Poor Internal Business Communications

Poor internal communications appear as high levels of stress in the workplace, arguments and emotional breakdowns. It brings tension amongst employees, contaminates the working environment with a negative atmosphere, hinders teamwork and creates challenges in

meeting expectations and the goals of the company. These negative emotions also lower the working morale and motivation, which in turn lower the level of productivity. By having low morale, indifference and missing passion for one's work, customer relationships suffer as deadlines are more often not being met. (Kinsey, 2019)

Poor internal communications cause more mistakes to be made in the workplace, due to a lack of understanding what the other person is trying to communicate. It increases inefficient working by making employees work harder while getting less actual work done, which causes excess costs for the company. (Krause, 2019) With poor internal communications companies can in worst cases not reach their full level of productivity, lose sales, fail projects, have a great amount of employee turnover, have bad customer relations and ultimately be unprofitable businesses. (Kinsey, 2019; Krause, 2019)

2.2 Qualities of Efficient and Effective Communication

Efficient and effective internal business communications are commonly used as synonyms to describe positive communicational activity. However, they differ in the sense that efficient communication aims to reduce the time it takes to communicate the information amongst employees, while effective communication strives to communicate the matter as clearly and understandably as possible to the recipient. The reason why both efficiency and effectivity are necessary in well operating business communications, is because they both strive to better the factors present in communicating, thus enabling the company to perform successfully and stating its importance. (Wroblewski, 2020)

Effective communication has a checklist of 7 Cs, which helps to ensure the quality of communication. The 7 Cs of effective communication were first introduced by Scott M. Cutlip and Allen H. Center in 1952 in their book, "*Effective Public Relations*" (Einstein, 2014). These 7 Cs consist of completeness, concreteness, courtesy, correctness, clarity, consideration and conciseness. Creativity and credibility are also unofficial 7Cs factors, which should preferably be also present in communication. Effective communication consists of a polite tone with accurate, clear and correct information. (Romih, 2016)

2.3 The Value of Efficient and Effective Communication

Efficient and effective internal business communications help the company's employees and members to work towards common goals (O'Dell, 2020) and provides a better understanding for the employees as to what actions will lead to meeting the company's goals. Effective communication leads to many positive outcomes, such as greater quality in products and services, high efficiency and productivity. (Kekäläinen, 2016; Quirke, 2008; Ritchie, 2015) In fact, effective communication can lead to an increase in productivity by 25%. (Masjedi, 2019) These positive outcomes in turn lead to greater improvements in the company's customer service. (Kekäläinen, 2016; Quirke, 2008; Ritchie, 2015) Furthermore, this substantiates an interconnection between a company's quality in customer service and the level of effectivity and efficiency present in its internal business communications.

Effective internal communication can also better the response time to problems and emergencies faced at work. It has a positive impact in an individual's and team's capabilities at solving problematic matters, due to a clear understanding of the communicational process needed to get everyone acquainted with the issue at hand. Effective and efficient communication can aid in an issue not escalating into something even more troublesome. (O'Dell, 2020)

With the help of effective and efficient internal communication, a company can avoid information silos. Information silos form when communication does not flow freely between the members of an organization and its various departments, or there is too much nonimportant content, which is why relevant information gets lost. This creates a communicational bubble, in which the information is trapped and does not reach other personnel in the company. This in turn may lead to the company not meeting its deadlines or unattaining its goals. (Chen, 2020) With effectively structured internal communication and proper communicational tools these issues can be minimized or even dismissed altogether.

Effective and efficient internal communication can aid a company by gaining more competitive advantage. Competitive advantage refers to the factors, which allow a company to produce goods or services more efficiently and effectively than its competitors, which can be, for example, price, location or quality. One of the factors found by Raman, Wittmann and Rauseo (2006) is customer relationship management. Customer relationship management

produces an increase in sales effectiveness, which in turn generates competitive advantage for the company. The aim of customer relationship management is to attract and keep customers satisfied, which relies heavily on the communication between the parties. (Wood, 2009) Effective and efficient communication increases the quality of the conversation by improving the customer service of the company, thus maintaining content customers and potentially attracting more. (Kekäläinen, 2016; Quirke, 2008; Ritchie, 2015)

3. RESEARCH METHOD AND DATA COLLECTION

This part addresses the reasons for choosing a qualitative research method and Company A as the case company. It also provides general information about Company A, its line of business, order-fulfilment processes, information flow and order-fulfilment strategies. Additionally, two supplemental case problems provided by Company A are addressed and suggestions for solving them are presented later in parts 4.10.1 and 4.10.2. Lastly, the details on how the data of this study was collected and the demographics of the interviewees are discussed.

3.1 Reasoning for Choosing Qualitative Research Method and Company A

Qualitative research methods help us to understand, why humans behave and think the way they do regarding a specific topic and information. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018) For this reason, qualitative research methods were a natural choice for this study as communication is an interpersonal interaction. Interviewing Company A's employees appeared to be the best approach to collecting research data as the interviewees knew that I am also familiar with the company processes and would therefore most likely provide more elaborate answers.

Company A is suitable for this study as it represents a global company with sales offices across the world. Such global companies are quite common for companies nowadays and therefore the findings are probably applicable to other similar companies. Additionally, while working at Company A I noted that their internal communication could be improved to provide real strategic value. This observation led me to believe that Company A would benefit from the results of this research.

3.2 Company A

The Company A has now functioned for over a hundred years during which it has become an international cooperation with activity in over 175 countries, approximately 97 000

employees and a revenue of 21,4 billion dollars during the year 2019. (Company A web page)

The vision of Company A is to ensure a better quality of life and to better the environment with the help of more sufficient energy efficiency. The company perceives their impact on the environment to be ever growing, which is why they focus in helping their employees to improve themselves, providing quality customer service, listening to their stakeholders while still acting ethically right and by supporting the communities fully in order to meet their social and financial needs. (Company A web page)

Company is a global power management company. It produces various different products, spare parts and accessories. (Company A web page) Company A's Finnish office's customer orders mainly consists of intercompany orders, which means that their orders come from Company A's other sales offices.

3.2.1 The Order-Fulfilment Process and Information Flow of Company A

The case Company A has a variety of products and product types, but this research focuses solely on its flow and project orders. A flow order refers to an order consisting of a product that has its individual standardized design and manufacturing process. A project order in turn refers to an order type in which the requests of the customer affect the actual manufacturing of the product and is a customer specific product. In other words, it needs customization and its design and manufacturing process are not entirely standardized. Additionally, the quantity of ordered products can be very high. Only in this order type, the Applied Engineers and the Critical Power Solutions-Team (CPS-Team) of Company A are present, as the team's main function is to aid in the order-fulfilment process and activities concerning a project order.

Below are two simplified figures to represent the order-fulfilment processes of flow orders and project orders and the information flow present in both. Figure 2 portrays the case company's order fulfilment process and Figure 3 represents the information flow present during the order-fulfilment processes. It is however important to note that in order to simplify the figures, they do not include some essential steps or departments.
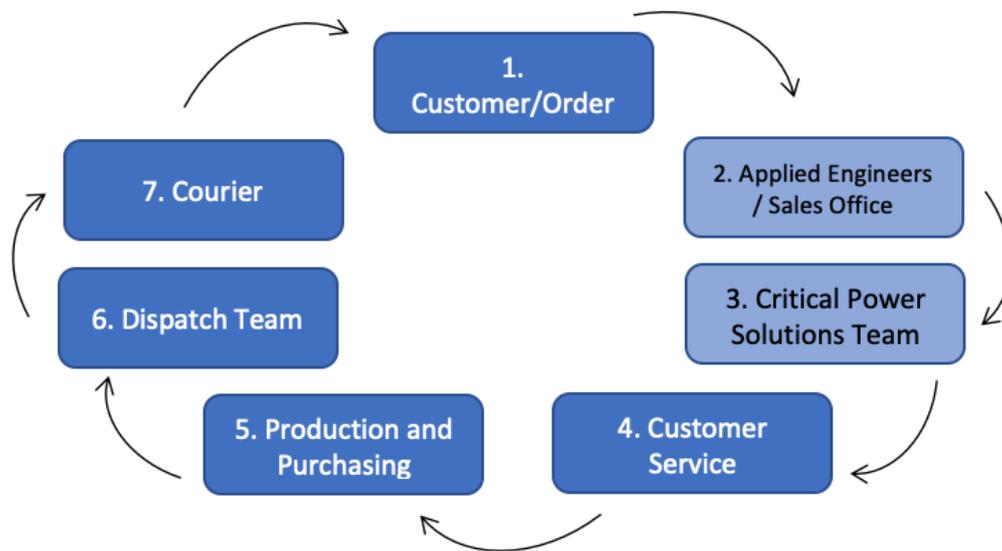
Figure 2: The order-fulfilment process of project orders (includes also the light blue stages) and flow orders (only the dark blue stages).

Figure 2 shows how the order initially comes from the customer and makes its way through the different stages and departments of the order-fulfilment process of Company A.
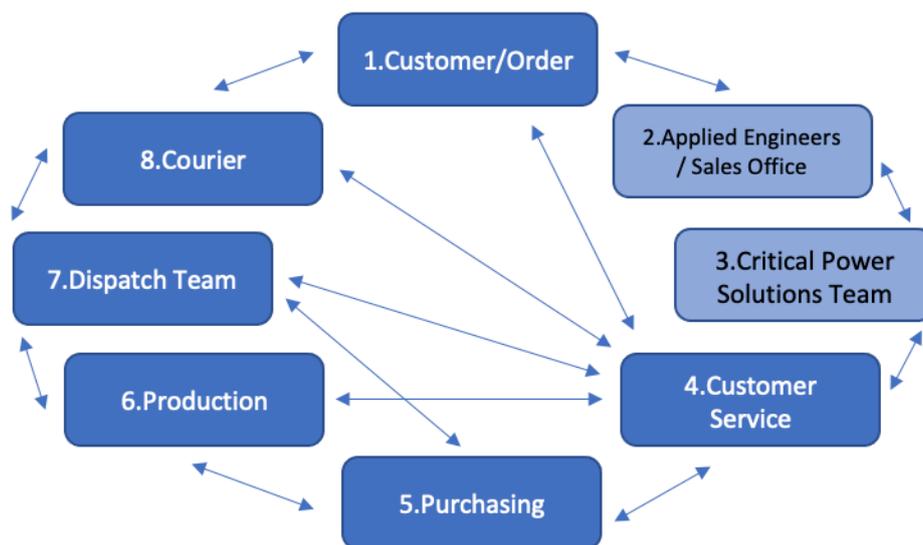

Figure 3: The information flow of a project order (includes arrows to light blue stages) and flow order (only the arrows to dark blue stages).

In Figure 3 the arrows represent the information flow occurring during the order-fulfilment processes of project and flow orders. Figure 3 has multiple arrows leading to and from

different teams and stages. This visualizes quite accurately the amount of communication occurring during the order-fulfilment process, for example, due to changes, updates and inquiries. By looking at Figure 3, one may notice that many of the arrows lead to and from the Customer Service Team. This means that the Customer Service Team has the most active role in communicating.

3.2.2 The Order-Fulfilment Strategies of Company A

The two order-fulfilment strategies of Company A are engineer to order (ETO), which is used for project orders and make to order (MTO), which is used for flow orders. Both order-fulfilment strategies are depicted in Figure 4.

In the engineer to order production style the product is manufactured according to the customer's wishes. The lead times in this order-fulfilment strategy depend on the estimates provided by the Production department (Olhager, 2003). Final products are not stored for long and storages consist rather of the raw materials and components, which the products are ultimately manufactured with. With this strategy companies can have a minimal amount, of materials stored or even none at all, which means that materials are ordered according to customer orders. This production procedure is recommendable and commonly used, when products are often tailored specifically to meet the customers' needs. These types of orders require moderate to extensive modification and designing on the production's behalf. (Logistiikan maailma a, 2020) It is important to note, that costs and lead times may increase in engineer to order manufacturing, when the customer's order needs to be significantly customized or if it requires complex engineering. (Cannas et al., 2020) All in all, this order-fulfilment style has a major role in participating in the lead time, price, flexibility and the quality of the product. (Olhager, 2003)

The make to order is also an order-fulfilment strategy, where orders are nearly manufactured from scratch, more typically from already existing components. As in the engineer to order strategy, lead times may fluctuate for a specific product due to high or low demand. The risks are low in this strategy, since all the work in progress is meant for a specific order and little capital is tied to the storage, due to the lack of an end product storage. (Logistiikan

maailma b, 2020). The make to order strategy is also less wasteful, since inventory is not stored in storages with the threat of products becoming outdated. (Hayes, 2020)
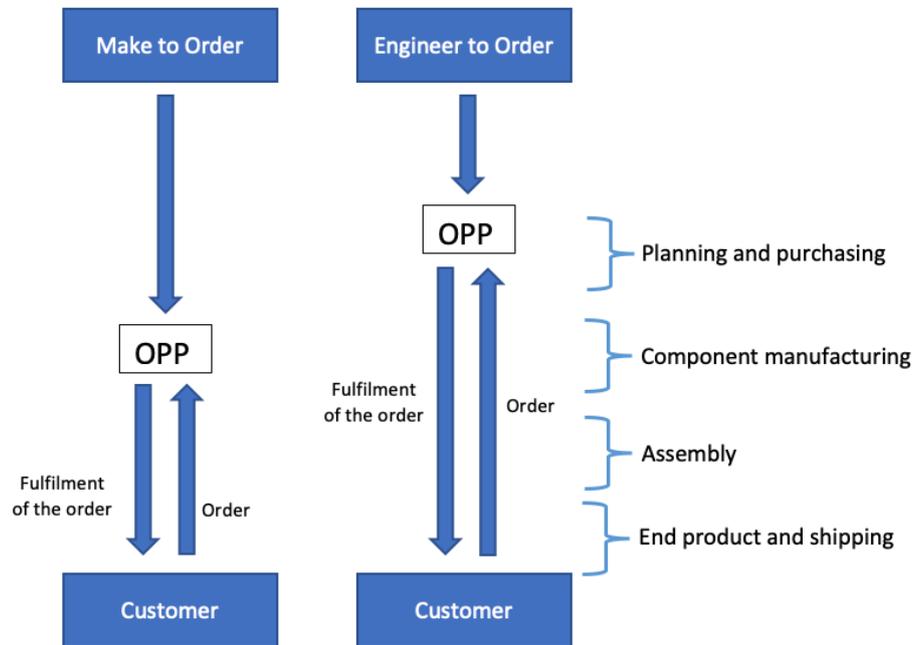
Figure 4: Make to Order and Engineer to Order. (Logistiikan maailma a & b, 2020)

In an engineer to order production, the order penetration point (OPP), ergo the point in the material flow when the product is linked to a customer order, is located the furthest from the customer when compared to other manufacturing processes (Logistiikan maailma a, 2020), as can be seen in Figure 4. This means that the customer is involved in the order-fulfilment process from almost the moment manufacturing starts. This is typically the strategy that Company A uses in producing its project orders, in which multiple deviations from initial orders may occur per customer's request, such as order quantities or desired shipment dates, which in my experience meant that different departments in the company needed to be even more in tune and aware of occurring changes. The make to order-fulfilment strategy's OPP is not located as far from the customer, which means that the customer is not involved in the order-fulfilment process as early on.

3.3 Case problems from Company A

In addition to assessing the current state of its internal communication, Company A presented two case problems. Both problems are linked to its internal communication and order-fulfilment process, since the company's Enterprise Resource Planning is at 3.3.1 problem's core and problem 3.3.2 has much to do with the efficiency and effectivity of sharing order related information amongst different departments.

3.3.1 Intercompany Invoicing

Formerly, when the shipping process of an order has been initiated in the Oracle Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)* system, an intercompany customer invoice has been sent out to the customer automatically. However, these invoices have been sent without the shipment having yet left the premises of Company A. Now this system needs to be changed so that the Oracle ERP system will send out the invoice after the shipment has been picked up by the courier and left from Company A. How to change the invoicing policy?

ERP stands for "Enterprise Resource Planning". The ERP software allows companies to improve the use of their business resources and helps manage business operations amongst its departments with better business processes. It can automate certain tasks specific to the business' activity, for example, production and accounting.

3.3.2 Commencement of Project order manufacturing

Project orders have a certain price limit to them, which is why Company A needs an assurance from the customer that Production can start working on the order. This is due to the high price and large quantity that these orders typically possess and the risk that they might take up limited warehouse or production space if the customer is suddenly unable to receive them, for example, due to project delays and also lacking the capacity to store them. This can cause inventory value issues for Company A. If the shipment cannot be shipped and thus neither invoiced, then the value is tied to Company A's storage facility. How to modify the process to flow more smoothly?

3.4 Data collection

The data used in this research had been collected by a semi-structured theme interview. The advantages of a semi-structured interview are its suitability to explore even complex and sensitive topics and the interviewer being able to adjust the flow of the conversation and questions. The interviewer can thus create a sense of ease in the interviewee and with that, evoke honesty, which in turn provides more accurate information on the matter being studied. (Bariball & While, 1994, 330). In this research the interviewees consisted of employees from different departments in the Finnish sales office of Company A. The interviews were held remotely via Microsoft Teams, due to Covid-19 safety regulations. They were recorded and transcribed afterwards, which aided significantly in the analyzation of the results. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018).

The interview consisted of nineteen questions, of which three were demographic related. The remaining questions were chosen in order to 1) gain a better understanding of the communication skills in the chosen departments 2) understand what issues are faced during the order-fulfilment process and which of them are due to communication problems 3) find out what the communication problems are in general 4) understand how employees believe internal communications could be improved 5) find out how different order-fulfilment processes differ in the quality of their information flow and 6) learn what Company A is currently doing to improve their internal communications.

The questions of the interview were formed in a way that would firstly provide sufficient and valid data, and secondly could provide answers to the main problem and sub-questions of this research. This study also strives to solve and provide solutions to the supplemental case problems provided by the company. The case problems were presented in parts 3.3.1 and 3.3.2. Additionally, all of the interview questions can be found in the attachments of this thesis.

Furthermore, the literature presented in the theoretical framework part was used to analyze the results of the empirical part since there are few similar studies to compare the results to.

My own experiences and observations were used in this study to create Figures depicting the order-fulfilment processes and information flow of Company A. Additionally, I used my experiences in forming the conclusions and improvement suggestions.

3.5 The Interviewees

The interviewees all work for Company A, but in different departments: Dispatch Team, Flow order Production, Project order Production, Customer Service Team and the Critical Power Solutions Team. These interviewees were chosen to ensure a diverse sampling for the study by interviewing employees from different departments. All of the interviews were held via Microsoft Teams, due to Covid-19 restrictions.

	Age	Department	Time of employment
Interviewee 1	26	CPS-Team	2,5 years
Interviewee 2	38	Dispatch Team	13 years
Interviewee 3	40	Production (Project)	14 years
Interviewee 4	60	Customer Service	20 years
Interviewee 5	35	Production (Flow)	15 years

Figure 5: The demographic factors of the interviewee.

Above are the demographic factors of the interviewees (Figure 5), which are age, the department they work in and how long they have worked for Company A. All of the interviewees differ in all three categories, which was the wanted outcome in order to gain as unbiased results as possible.

4. RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEW

This part will present the results of the interviews, which are divided into different themes. The first one provides an assessment of the communication tools used at Company A. It discusses which communication tools are primarily used by the interviewees and which is the most effective communication tool in their experience. Afterwards, the interviewees will evaluate their own communication skills, their department's and the company's in general. This information provides a basis for at what level the internal communication is currently happening and how successful it is.

Next the interviewees' experiences with challenges in the order-fulfilment process will be discussed. The common challenges will be compared to challenges caused specifically by communication problems. The communication problems will be studied further by learning how often, why they exist and what part of the information flow they occur. The differences and challenges between flow and project order communication will also be evaluated.

Lastly, the interviewees will discuss ways for improving the internal communication of Company A. They will also provide insight to how Company A is currently taking into consideration the strategic value of internal communications, if it has an internal communications policy or what actions have been taken to improve the internal communication.

4.1 Communications Tool Experiences

The interviewees said that the communication tools they use at work include email, Microsoft Teams, mobile phone, Oracle ERP and Kanban project tool. Face to face communication is also present in Interviewees 2, 3 and 4's daily work. Interviewee 1 primarily uses her email or the group email of her department (as does Interviewees 2 and 4) and finds it to be the most effective communication tool, specifically when sharing information with many. All interviewees conclude that urgent matters are easier to be dealt with by quickly phone calling or sending a message on Teams. Interviewee 2 prefers Teams a little bit more as his primary communication tool and finds it to be the most effective.

Interviewee 4: "I prefer email since this job requires, as you know, the ability to seek information and what has been agreed upon with customers from old messages, so it is the most easiest and quickest way to do this via email."

Interviewees 1, 2 and 4 conclude, that email is great, due to the conversation history being stored longer than with Teams. However, Interviewee 2 explains that email is more formal, and he prefers Teams due to its many different qualities, such as the chat or video call option. Both Interviewees 3 and 5 perceive face to face communication to be the most effective form of communicating and prefer it primarily.

4.2 Assessment of the Current Internal Communication Level

Interviewee 1 evaluates her skills as a communicator as pretty good but says that she could improve in being a more efficient communicator, as she tends to share nonvital information or information other than the "main point". Interviewee 2 assesses his skills to be above average. Interviewees 3, 4 and 5 assess their skills as average or quite good but note that there is also room for improvement.

Interviewee 5: "Nowadays I have noticed a shift in the way I communicate. There are so many emails that I just try to answer as fast and shortly as I possibly can. I don't know if this is an improvement or not, since it can also be good not to write too much or ramble on."

As for Interviewee 1's department's communication skills, she says it is difficult to comment on, since all of the members tend to oversee their own projects and are mainly focused on matters concerning them. In a way the communication of the department can be inefficient and ineffective, when faced with information or questions regarding an order, which no one seems to know who is responsible for in the CPS-team. Employees tend to not engage in communication in which they are not sure to whom the information or question is addressed.

Interviewee 2: "If the message (sent to the department's group e-mail) is not clearly related to someone's project or addressed to them, it is difficult to comment on it."

According to Interviewee 2, there is room for much improvement amongst his department. Many in the Dispatch Team have a poor rate of answering emails or confirming and providing updates and information regarding orders even if directly asked to do so. Interviewee 2 concludes that it has much to do with the nature of the day-to-day communication. A majority of the Dispatch Department's communication is between the Production Department or Couriers, which happens face to face and not by using communication tools.

Interviewees 3 and 5 believe the communication to be quite good amongst their department and well-functioning. Interviewee 4 believes her department to keep each other actively up to date on ongoing matters and that they have great knowledge in how to use different communication tools.

Interviewees 1, 2 and 5 conclude that in general the company has a good amount of communication tools available and Interviewees 1, 2 and 3 conclude that the use of Teams has upgraded the level of its internal communications. Interviewee 4 sees value in using the Kanban project tool and also potential in implementing it into the Production Department's use.

Interviewee 4: "Always and always it has been noted - or rather there has always been complaints about the internal communication not working properly and how not enough information is being shared. But in my experience, it has been a significant upgrade that we have started to use the Kanban project tool for project orders… I also have noted that the Kanban tool could benefit the production department also. There are still many manual ways of communicating present there, such as flap boards, post-its, so it would be much better if everything would be on screen and digital, so that information and updates could be much more easily sent to others."

Interviewee 1 adds that people tend to reply and react to problems quickly, which Interviewee 2 disagrees with, as he believes the react time and communication to problems or delays is oftentimes too slow, as does Interviewee 4.

4.3 Challenges in the Order-Fulfilment Process

Interviewee 1 says the typical difficulties faced during the project order-fulfilment process include long lead times or delays in materials and components. Additionally, the design of a product might still be ongoing or there is a tight schedule request from the customer. The customers can also at times change their mind a lot concerning the order.

All Interviewees agree that missing materials are commonly a reason, when there are challenges in the order-fulfilment process. Interviewee 4 clarifies that usually the Purchasing Department does not notify themself of there being delays or missing materials. Typically, they are asked about these matters by others. This however should not be the case as they should initiate the conversation.

Interviewee 2 defines a typical challenge to be the information silo, where information does not flow from the Production or the Purchasing Department to the Dispatch Team. According to Interviewee 2, Production does not often inform of delayed shipments nor does Purchasing inform that some parts are late. These issues have been tried to be resolved by Line Managers being responsible of informing by a specific time, which products will be late. However, often the people from the Dispatch Team have to go ask the Production themselves about certain shipments and their updates.

Interviewee 2: *"I do not understand why this is hard to fulfil…The communication should be better. If something is late, it should be communicated right away."*

Interviewee 2 believes information regarding delays should be sent to a larger group email and on time. At the moment the information is late and many employees in need of the information are left in the dark. Interviewee 2 believes that many of these issues have to do with the Line Managers being extremely busy with multiple orders to oversee. This leaves them with not enough time to communicate as effectively and efficiently as other departments might wish.

Interviewee 5 says that from a customer's perspective the common issue is the long time they have to wait to receive information or answers regarding their orders. Interviewee 3 says that the Bidman tool (a tool used for creating all the product codes) is more challenging

than it seems and tends to cause issues. It causes challenges in communicating essential and correct information to the Customer Service Team.

Interviewee 4 says that common problems are that order confirmations are sent too slowly, product codes are not created as fast as they should or there is information missing on the order. This leads to Production being unable to start manufacturing orders on time. Additionally, materials might be missing and surprising absences or supplier delays can occur.

4.4 Challenges in the Order-Fulfilment Process Caused by Communication Problems

According to Interviewee 1, a communication problem that is common in the order-fulfilment process of project orders is the incorrect use of the Kanban project tool by Line Managers. The Line Managers oversee that the production of different order types flows smoothly and inform about any updates regarding them. The reason why this is a problem is because sometimes those messages and the shared information does not reach the people it should due to the qualities of the Kanban tool. This means that vital information regarding the orders is not always successfully shared, as the recipients have had to have engaged in the Kanban tool's project card priorly in order to receive notifications on any updates.

Interviewee 1: "(Kanban) has these qualities in which if I have not yet written anything on the project card, I will not receive any messages concerning it. This is a known issue and yet it still recurs as Line Managers still use this method."

Interviewee 4 sees the main communication problems as sincere mistakes. She also believes that there is too little monitoring of ongoing matters. For example, Purchasing seems to not monitor the orders and shipments as actively as they should, as they rather notice the problems when it is already too late to fix them.

Both Interviewees 3 and 5 find that often Production does not receive correct information in the beginning of the order-fulfilment process or when the customer makes changes during the order-fulfillment process. Interviewee 5 believes the worst situations are those in which the product codes are found to be incorrect and have to be changed into correct ones while

the order-fulfillment process has already begun, as this causes confusion and many adjustments.

Interviewee 1 believes that communication issues are quite seldomly the root cause for difficulties and mistakes in the project order-fulfilment process. Interviewee 5 believes communication issues to be the cause now and then, as the basic information cannot be shared sometimes. It may also be inaccurate, which causes mistakes in, for example, quantities when fulfilling the order. Interviewee 4 estimates that 70% of the issues faced in the order-fulfilment process are due to communication problems. Interviewee 2 believes communication problems to be almost always the reason for delays and problems. Additionally, when delays or problems occur, the react time to inform others of them is too slow, as "there is not much effort put into communication."

Interviewee 1 believes that communication problems exist due to misunderstandings, by assuming things or by forgetting to include all the people concerned by the shared information in the loop. Interviewee 2 agrees that communication problems are often due to cryptic and unclear messages. Interviewee 2 believes that the information does not flow properly from department to department. There seems to be indifference towards communicating delays or other problems and misunderstanding of who's responsibility it is to communicate certain things, which Interviewee 4 agrees with. Interviewee 5 says that different ways of handling matters are the reason why communication problems exist.

Additionally, Oracle ERP, which the company uses, is not up to date according to Interviewee 2, "many of the issues are rooted from Oracle ERP". It does not support or have qualities, which would allow employees to interfere to problematic situations more efficiently and effectively.

According to Interviewee 1 the communication problems usually appear in the beginning when Company A gets notified of a new order. The communication regarding a new project order by the Sales Office or Application Engineers Team, who are usually the first to know of an upcoming order, is often rather unclear. Interviewees 3, 4 and 5 conclude that these issues tend to lie at the start of the information flow. Interviewee 4 clarifies that usually these

problems are noticed much later on in the order-fulfilment process, which is why it may appear to the customer that mistakes are made later in the process.

Interviewee 2 believes that the way Company A sells its products to its other foreign sales offices, which sell the products to end customers (who might even sell them on to another customer) does not make the job of communicating efficiently and effectively very easy.

According to all Interviewees communication problems may cause stops or delays in production, manufacturing errors, excess work to solve mistakes, delays in orders and the inventory value being incorrect. Interviewees 2, 4 and 5 add that the reputation of Company A and its customer relationships suffer from poor internal communications due to the inability to react to delays or problems and inform customers of them in good time. Interviewee 2 adds that it also causes friction amongst employees and generic dissatisfaction.

4.5 Communication Differences Between Project and Flow Orders

Interviewee 1 believes that the communication deviates according to the order type. It is difficult for Interviewee 1 to evaluate if communicational issues are more common in flow or project orders, since the interviewee works only with project orders. Interviewees 1, 3 and 5 note that project orders could possibly have more communication problems as their order-fulfilment processes are more challenging and are not as standardized as flow orders.

Interviewee 4: "Flow orders have more commonly communication issues. People are different, so that needs to be taken into consideration, we react and follow matters differently. Also, project orders have more incentive to be on time and have no mistakes as the penalties are far greater for them."

Interviewees 2 and 4 agree that project orders are the more difficult order type, but the communication is of better quality with them. Project order matters are usually communicated by the CPS-team and flow orders by the Production.

4.6 Ways to Improve the Internal Communication

Interviewee 1 suggests that communication problems could be fixed by making sure the shared information is correct and clear. Additionally, there are at times too many "middlemen" (e.g. ''broken telephone'' children's game) in the information flow, meaning that people should more often go straight to the source of the information when having questions or misunderstandings. As an example, Interviewee 1 says that the communication problems would improve by the Line Managers being in direct contact with the Application Engineers regarding their concerns and questions. Interviewee 2 agrees with there being too many middlemen in the information flow, and not enough communicating with the direct source of information. This allows information to get twisted and wrong. Interviewee 2 believes greater motivation and an understanding of how valuable and important internal communication is would increase employees' willingness to improve in how they communicate. Thus, employees would actually strive to realize the plans and goals, which have been aligned together. This would improve the internal communication and business activity of Company A. Interviewee 4 believes that by understanding other departments and what they do, it can unify all the employees and improve the communication and understanding of the areas of responsibility. This also helps to understand the strategy of the company and what is expected of its departments.

Interviewee 4: "The way one's actions affect others. And there are some big project orders for big customers with huge amounts of specific information that is needed to be shared. I was put in the unfortunate situation, where I received the information too late, which caused a huge amount of excess work. I tried to contact the departments and people at fault and express why this information is crucial for the Logistics (Customer Service) Team to have before the order is at its end of the order-fulfillment process, so when it is nearly shipped."

Interviewee 3 finds that the communication needs to be improved in the beginning when receiving the order. Small meetings could be held for project orders, as it could provide a better understanding of the order and what is needed of everyone.

Interviewee 4: "And in general to provide a better understanding of what the bigger picture is. For example, understanding what the Financing Department has to do with matters concerning an order and what the Dispatch Team does, so that everyone would understand what these different departments actually do and how they affect the order and others' work… So just a general understanding of, how your own actions affect others and how the actions of other people and departments affect the order and your work."

Interviewee 5 believes the Customer Service Team needs to provide all crucial information to Production, or possibly make clear to the customer that providing accurate and comprehensive information regarding the order helps to prevent mistakes or delays. He also notes that Production should promptly provide accurate lead-time for the Customer Service Team and Line managers should communicate updates as fast as possible.

4.7 The Current Use of Strategic Potential in Effective and Efficient Communication of Company A in its Internal Communication

All Interviewees conclude that there is little talk of improving the internal communication of Company A, an internal communications policy or about communication in general. Interviewees 2, 4 and 5 say there have been employee surveys regarding communication between departments, but no actions were taken afterwards to improve the quality of it. Additionally, Interviewee 1 clarifies, that there are some instructions for, how certain messages should be formatted, but agrees with Interviewee 2 in that employees do not know who should communicate certain matters or what is exactly expected of them as communicators. The areas of responsibility in communicating during the order-fulfilment process are unclear to employees.

4.8 Summary of the Results

Interviewees 1, 2 and 4 preferred email and Teams and also found them to be the most effective communication tools, while Interviewees 3 and 5 preferred face to face

communication and found it to be the most effective. The common conclusion was that there is a good amount of communication tools available to employees at Company A, but departments have quite much to improve in the quality of the communication.

Many of the common challenges stated in the order-fulfilment process seem to be a result of communication problems and it looks like there is a strong correlation between common challenges and communication problems. The following were the communication problems: too many middlemen, neglect, poor use of communication tools, lack of follow-up, general misunderstandings, incorrect product codes and unclear messages.

Most of the interviewees seemed to agree that the main communication problems are conceived early on in the order-fulfilment process, but they can appear as if they have been made later since they are not noticed earlier. This means that the problems are often located in the beginning of the information flow. These communication problems are, for example, the creation of incorrect product codes or having received incorrect or insufficient information regarding the order, which is then noticed in production (Figure 6).
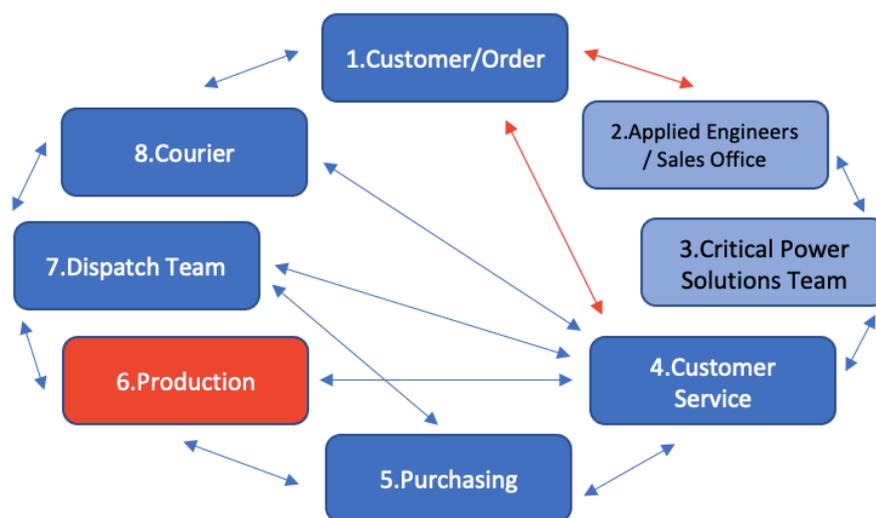
Figure 6: Where communication problems are commonly located in the information flow.

All Interviewees agreed that project orders have a more challenging order-fulfilment process than flow orders, but Interviewees 2 and 4 still believe that the communication regarding project orders is more efficient and effective. According to the interviewees, ways that Company A could improve its internal communication would be by getting rid of excess

middlemen in the information flow, employees communicating more clearly and correctly, gaining a greater understanding of the roles different departments have in the order-fulfilment process and employees gaining more motivation and desire to perform outstandingly at their jobs.

Company A does not have an internal communications policy. Additionally, there is little talk of improving communication and the areas of responsibility in communicating during the order-fulfilment process are unclear to employees.

4.9 Internal Communications Improvement Ideas for Company A

A practical improvement idea and tool for the company would be a RACI matrix of the areas of responsibility in the information flow. Its name "RACI" comes from the words responsible, accountable, consulted and informed. As can be seen below in Figure 7, the matrix is divided into different roles and tasks and given a letter according to what should be done, who does it and in what time. (Montgomery & Kumar, 2020) The roles could be for example the different departments of Company A and the tasks could be the common steps in the information flow of the order-fulfilment process.

	ROLE 1	ROLE 2	ROLE 3
TASK 1	R	A	A
TASK 2	I	A	R
TASK 3	I	R	C

Figure 7: Example of RACI matrix.

This could be easily adjusted to visualize and make the roles of responsibility in the information flow more commonly known and clear to employees.

Company A could also consider establishing a Cross Functional Team to be responsible for the order-fulfilment process. The Team would consist of members of different departments whose sole purpose is to own and improve the order-fulfilment process. For example, they could be in charge of implementing qualities of effective and efficient communication into the order-fulfilment process of Company A.

Interviewee 2 also suggested that after each day a group email to all of the departments of Company A would be sent, which would inform what orders were not shipped that day and why. This could also be made more efficient by automating this process somehow or by having an application or software that would support such activity. For instance, orders could have bar code documents attached to them during the order-fulfilment process, which could then be scanned to a database and their progress could be updated this way easily or automatically sent to all crucial departments. A selection of different status updates, such as "material missing", "labels attached", "delayed", could be options from which the communicator can choose from or write a new one themself. It would most likely be useful for Company A if such a feature would be possible in the new SAP ERP system.

Efficient and effective communication is enabled by creating an internal communications policy, actively participating in improving the internal communication, increasing employee motivation and having managers lead by example. I believe Company A would gain much by implementing efficient and effective communication qualities in its internal communication as it creates competitive advantage for the company. It would make its order-fulfilment process more fluent, productivity better, customer satisfaction greater and profitability higher.

4.10 Case Problem Solutions

In this part I will present the possible solutions to the supplemental case problems presented by the case company. Firstly, I will discuss the improvement ideas for the Oracle ERP

intercompany invoicing problem and afterwards discuss the problem of needed assurance for commencing the manufacturing of expensive project orders.

4.10.1 Intercompany Invoicing

Currently the solution for this matter is to place an invoice hold on the order via Oracle ERP. However, if the customer also uses the Oracle ERP system, even with an invoice hold the intercompany invoice is created but it will not be sent to the customer. Additionally, for customers that do not use the Oracle ERP system, the invoice hold will prevent the intercompany invoicing from being created altogether. This has caused some challenges in resolving the matter.

The ERP software is usually easily customized to meet the needs of the company and has many useful tools designed to better business performance. However, for a company the most important task is to find an ERP software, that is best suited for their specific needs, as an ERP with unnecessary features may in fact hinder the business' activity. (Wood, 2020) As stated in the case study portion, "many of the issues are rooted from Oracle ERP", which implies that the Oracle ERP system is not serving the companies needs well. Luckily, Company A is in the process of changing from the Oracle ERP system to the SAP ERP system, which will have different features and options. Hopefully these features will be better suited for the needs of Company A and capable of resolving this matter. It is important for companies to note that the correct communication tools and their qualities are what make the existence of efficient and effective communication even possible.

4.10.2 Commencement of Project order manufacturing

Currently the solution for this problem has been the CPS-Team or the Customer Service Team checking with the customer, if the production of their order can be started. It has worked quite fine, but it would make the communication even more effective and efficient to know whose area of responsibility it is to communicate such matters to the customer (e.g. RACI matrix). This solution would reduce confusion or possible excess middlemen, as it

minimizes mistakes or misunderstandings. The excess number of middlemen in the information flow was pointed out by multiple interviewees as a communication problem. This problem should be avoided as it can cause mistakes or delays. Additionally, it can cause excess work for employees or dissatisfied customers.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this research was to study the strategic value of effective and internal communication in the order-fulfilment process. This part presents the answers to the research questions, evaluates the reliability of this study and the ideas for future research.

5.1 Conclusions of the Research

What are the qualities of effective and efficient communication? As presented in the theoretical framework, effective communication consists of completeness, concreteness, courtesy, correctness, clarity, consideration, conciseness, creativity and credibility. (Romih, 2016) Efficient communication ties into effective communication and strives to communicate information as fast and clearly to its recipients as possible. (Wroblewski, 2020)

For Company A, the need for qualities of clarity, completeness, correctness and efficiency in its internal communications were highlighted. I find this to be accurate according to my observations. This however concludes that the internal communication of Company A is not functioning entirely at an effective and efficient level. It was also clear from the answers that the pace of communicating needs to be faster during the order-fulfilment process. Meaning, it lacks efficiency. A faster pace would also improve correctness as in order for employees to communicate correct information, they also need to be up to date with, what is going on in the order-fulfilment process. Situations can change rapidly, so information can expire quite easily, if not distributed efficiently. From my experience the internal communication at Company A is courteous, concise, credible and quite creative with multiple communication tools, as also stated in the results of the interview.

How can effective and efficient communication be implemented to reduce communication problems? According to the case study, many interviewees agree that the action and motivation for change needs to come from employees themselves. However, many of the employees seem to be lost as to, what is actually required of them as communicators. Additionally, employees do not entirely know of the harmful outcomes of poor

communicating and what the areas of responsibility in communication during the order-fulfilment process are.

Lack of motivation, understanding of the organization and the needs of others have to do with the style of management. Management behavior and leadership styles are one of the factors that affect the existence of effective and efficient communication. (L. Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002; Withworth, 2011) There are many different leadership styles, for example, transformational leadership, which is seen as a great enabler for interactive and empowering communication (Hackman & Johnson, 2004). According to Bass and Avolio (1997) one trait in transformational leadership, is to motivate employees to consider the organization's needs foremost. A shift in leadership style could thus aid in motivating employees, as they would understand the impact of their work on a larger scale and be more mindful of the needs of others.

Additionally, a transformational leader shares responsibility and authority with employees willingly. Sharing responsibility is also one of the most significant factors in planning successful internal communications. Therefore, management could, for example, appoint personnel to oversee certain matters, which in this case would be the order-fulfilment process and its information flow. (Juholin, 1999, 122) This could be done by establishing a Cross Functional Team, as priorly suggested in part 4.9.

Furthermore, there are many ways to improve internal communications. For example, by creating an internal communications policy, sending employee surveys or by discussing and emphasizing the value of effective and efficient internal communication. Although, many employees may see investing in communicating effectively and efficiently as more of an additional task, it is not. Poor communication in fact creates more excess work for employees as some interviewees pointed out. These preconceptions of effective and efficient communicating being laborious should be diminished. The company should actively strive to make communicating effectively and efficiently as effortless as possible.

What strategic value does effective and efficient internal communication provide in the order-fulfilment process? Effective and efficient internal communication differentiates the company from its competitors by enabling it to perform better in its customer service. This gives the company a competitive advantage and also increases its customer satisfaction. Customer

satisfaction in turn increases the profitability of the company, due to an increase in customer loyalty. Effective and efficient internal communication also help the company to reach its business goals and to align its strategic targets. (Kekäläinen, 2016; Quirke, 2008; Ritchie, 2015)

When looking at the case study results, it is clear that some of the interviewees understand the strategic value of effective and efficient communication. The link between effective and efficient communication and the reputation of the company, employee relations and customer satisfaction were competently made.

Currently, the internal communications are not entirely effective and efficient at Company A. Ineffective and insufficient communication leads to misunderstandings, mistakes and possible delays, which will tarnish the reputation of the company and may cause financial loss. Additionally, it creates frustration amongst employees and can possibly result in customers being dissatisfied or even questioning their loyalty to the company.

As stated by Kekäläinen, Quirke and Ritchie, effective and efficient communication holds strategic value by improving the customer service quality of a company and by providing other significant advantages. One of Company A's focal points was quality customer service, (Company A's webpage), which leads to believe that efficient and effective internal communications would indeed provide strategic value for Company A. Additionally, Company A would be able to evade the current harmful results of its communication problems.

Furthermore, a couple of the interviewees understood, how motivation and understanding one's role in the organization have much to do with successful internal communications, "communicating clear goals and then reporting on progress at regular intervals is motivating for teams… Being able to see exactly, how an individual contributes to the bigger picture is the key not just for management but also for motivating the individual concerned." (Smith & Mounter, 2008, 4) Thus, there are clearly competent ideas and thoughts on the matter, which is why I believe that meetings amongst the company's employees and management could lead to successful and worthy conversations and improvement actions.

The results of this research can be useful to Company A as they provide a better understanding of Company A's internal communications and communication problems during the order-fulfilment process. Additionally, the results and conclusions highlight the strategic value of effective and efficient communication. However, it is important to note that the sample size of the interview is quite small and does not represent the views of all of the team members of each interviewee.

5.2 Ideas for Future Research

One idea for future research is to increase the sample size of the interview, for example, by interviewing the Purchasing Department and other departments involved in the order-fulfilment process. This way they could also express their views on the current state of the internal communications at Company A.

The interview could also be edited into an employee survey and sent to all of the employees to gain the most comprehensive conclusions on the matter. Employee satisfaction surveys to the whole company could include questions related to internal communications and the answers could be studied.

Additionally, interviewing the customers of Company A would give a better understanding as to what their views are on the way Company A communicates to them. This way they could comment on the accuracy of the points made by the interviewees, for example, regarding delay notices being very late. It would also provide valid information on how internal communication problems truly affect the reputation of Company A. By gaining the customers' answers and feedback, Company A could better evaluate if steps to improve its communication are to be taken seriously.

Lastly, it would be interesting to conduct a comparative study between companies with similar order-fulfilment processes or ones that are in the same line of business have similar issues.

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ATTACHMENTS
The questions of the interview

Age?

What job position do you have at Company A?

How long have you worked at Company A?

What communication tool do you use the most at work?

Which communications tool is the most effective in your experience?

What do you prefer as your primary communications tool?

How would you assess your own communication skills?

How would you assess the communication skills of your department?

What challenges do you typically face in the order-fulfilment process?

What are some communication problems that you typically may have?

How often would you evaluate communication problems to be the root cause for difficulty or even mistakes when fulfilling an order?

Why do these issues exist?

Where do the communication problems usually lie in the information flow?

What do these communication problems usually cause for the company, how are they harmful?

What can be done to fix these issues? What would you strive to improve?

What is good and well-functioning in the current internal communication?

Are the internal communications consistent, or do they deviate and adjust to the specific order or customer country?

Are communication problems more common with project or flow orders?

Does Company A have an internal communications policy for the order-fulfillment process and are the areas of responsibility in the information flow common knowledge?