How to maintain core values at Atea Logistics?

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Executive Summary

A company needs guidelines for the organization and its employees to act in the same direction. Core values constitute a fundamental part of a company but they have to be “lived” by the members of the organization in order to be valid. When a company undergoes many changes, there is a risk of losing the core values as focus is put on the survival of the company. Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to reach a solution for the maintenance of the core values at Atea Logistics, a company which has faced turbulent periods. However, in order to do so, a first requirement was to get in touch with Atea Logistics’ culture in order to later correctly apprehend the organization’s core values. Hence, this research was guided by the following research question:

“How to maintain core values at Atea Logistics?”

The conducted study consists of a case study made at Atea Logistics in Växjö, which is a part of the Atea Holding AB. The currently successful group, Atea, was created in 1985 under the name of Owell. Atea is a company which helps organizations and companies increase the benefits of Information Technologies (IT) by providing products and services that simplify the management, operation and development of IT infrastructure. As an IT product supplier, Atea covers the entire cycle from the supply of new IT products to the recycling of old ones.

Since we aimed at providing the company with a research that it could benefit from, this thesis has its base in discussions with managers of Atea Logistics. Empirical data were mostly gathered through interviews with several employees and finally interplay between empirical data and theoretical findings occurred.

The findings of this complex study comprise that core values have been neglected within the company for several years because of repetitive changes. However, employees have been aware of this situation but still have not focused on this aspect. Several core values have been discovered which have remained since the Owell-time: respect, participation, openness, trust, responsibility and family-friendly. In order for Atea Logistics to maintain these values, several aspects need to be developed such as their clear statement, their communication via different tools (i.e. printed documents, corporate events, an integration process for newcomers, etc.) as well as the alignment of employees with them.
Acknowledgments

Reaching the end of our research, we would like to thank all of those who made the investigating, the thinking and the writing processes possible.

First, we would like to show gratitude to all the interviewees who spent time answering our questions. Without their great cooperation, it would not have been possible to realize this study:

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Johan Glinghammar, Recycling Supervisor at Atea Logistics
Heléne Gröön, Human Resource Manager of Atea Logistics
Stefan Idstrand, Speaking Partner for Swedish customers of Atea Logistics
Marie Persson, Administrative clerk of Atea Logistics
Anders Ripström, Production and logistic manager of Atea Logistics
Andreas Sjöström, Business developer at Atea Logistics
Frank Svensson, Purchasing Manager at Atea Logistics

Second, we would like to thank the company, Atea Logistics for allowing us to conduct such a research and for supporting us throughout this research.

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Charles Enjalbert       Madelene Rundberg       Maja Stojanovic
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CHAPTER 1:  INTRODUCTION

This first part of our research aims at developing the reader’s interest by highlighting the relevance of the study. First, the background sets the scene of the research, introducing notions such as learning, culture and core values. In the problem discussion, the situation is narrowed down to the specific case of Atea Logistics and its difficulties regarding the maintenance of its core values due to many recent changes. This observation will lead to our research question. The main objectives and limitations shaping our study will finally be presented, as well as the theoretical and practical relevance.

1.1 Background

Today, there is a remarkable focus on achievement. Growth, profit and innovation are influenced by globalization, which forces organizations to compete both nationally as well as internationally. Hence, in order to stay competitive, organizations are constantly forced to improve their processes and create better results.

One of the new concepts of today’s organizations is called “learning”. The ability to learn faster than your competitors is becoming a crucial factor for success. Since learning is said to be the process of preparing for new situations so that future problems can be overcome, there is a lot to gain by implementing this way of thinking. According to Probst and Büchel, organizational learning is the process by which the organization’s knowledge and value base changes, leading to improved problem-solving ability and capacity for action. However, in order to learn efficiently, one must look underneath the system and create what is called a functioning organizational culture. The culture is to be seen as a cornerstone for the success of an organization.

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1 Senge, P., 1990, p. 4
2 Probst, G., Büchel, B., 1997, p. 4
3 Ibid., p. 15
4 Ibid., p. 16
According to Edgar Schein, culture is a pattern of shared basic assumptions where the complex group learning creates the culture. By creating a functioning culture where everybody is involved and participating, the organization is more likely to learn efficiently. Furthermore, Schein argues that culture is a “concept that points us to phenomena that are below surface, that are powerful in their impact but invisible and to a considerable degree unconscious”.

In addition, early researches have mainly focused on leadership-style, organizational structure, reward system and decision-making processes when looking upon organizational culture. There are many definitions of culture and one can say that it is “usually defined as social or normative glue that holds an organization together”. Culture also expresses the values, social ideals and beliefs that are shared among members within an organization. Patterns of beliefs or values are expressed through symbols such as legends, stories, myths and a special language formed within the organization. A key element in defining culture is to look at an organization’s value system.

Employees working for a company with a strong culture can at any time tell what the company believes in or stands for. Individual values guide a person’s intentions and actions and similarly, organizational goals, policies and strategies are set after guidelines from the organizational value system. Thereby, “the nature of the values is a crucial factor in the impact that culture will have on organizational effectiveness”. If goals and strategies are supported by current values, the culture will become an important asset. On the other hand, inadequate values can make the culture negative in forms of being a major strain instead of a source of success.

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5 Schein quoted in Shafritz, J., Ott, S., 2001, p. 370
6 Schein, E., 2004, p. 8
8 Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 536
9 Deal, T., Kennedy, A., 1982, p. 139
10 Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 536
11 Ibid., p. 536
1.2 Problem Discussion

Atea Logistics has undergone many changes throughout its history. Today successful, Atea Logistics started up in 1985 under the name of Owell. During this period of time, the company developed a strong culture of which some parts can be found today. However, the culture and core values changed during the time when WM-data acquired Owell. Even thought Atea Logistics has gone back to many of the values from the time of Owell, WM-data has marked the culture and values that could be found in Atea Logistics some years ago. During the ten year period of time when WM-data was the main actor in the company, Atea Logistics in Växjö tried to retain their old culture from the Owell-time. When Atea Logistics was created, as it is known today, there was no doubt that the employees would get back to the culture and core values from Owell. There are still many employees that have remained in Atea Logistics during the many changes and acquisitions and are thereby good carriers of the “old Atea Logistics culture”.

However, Atea Logistics has undergone many changes lately and for the last couple of years there has been many new employees entering the company, not only because of the closure of Atea Logistics in Denmark but also because of the acquisition of Martinsson. Trying to stick with an old culture and at the same time bringing in new people into the organization ultimately affects the culture and values that exist.

Due to all the changes Atea Logistics has gone through, it has been difficult for them to clearly state their present core values. After discussions with employees at Atea Logistics we have come up with the following research question:

How to maintain core values at Atea Logistics?

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 Main Objectives

The main objectives of our master thesis are to discover Atea Logistics’ core values and to provide the company with insights and suggestions in order to maintain them.
1.3.2 Theoretical Objectives

- Briefly present the concept of culture in order to introduce the notion of core values.
- Define core values and highlight their roles and types.
- Emphasize the importance of maintaining core values within an organization.
- Find methods to maintain core values within a company.

1.3.3 Empirical Objectives

- Get as wide access and panel of interviewees as possible within the company in order to assure the reliability of our research.
- Discover the current core values of Atea Logistics.
- Identify the malfunctions or lacks in the maintenance of Atea Logistics’ core values.

1.4 Limitations

- The first limitation of this paper is the short period of time allocated to it. Indeed, we are aware that studying such a complex notion as core values might require more time. Nevertheless, the full support of the company via its managing director, Pär Aspengren, and its human resources manager, Heléne Gröön, helped offset it.

- This research is built up as a case study of Atea Logistics. Therefore, as all our findings remain adapted to Atea Logistics, we cannot claim to have a high level of external validity or generalization.

- The purpose of this research is to discover Atea Logistics’ core values and provide the company with possible ways to maintain them. To do so, we had to briefly present and explain the organization’s corporate culture but, because of the short period of time allocated for this study, we will not explore in details the corporate culture of Atea Logistics and have no ambition in defining it.
• We conducted three interviews in Swedish and six in English with eight Swedish interviewees. Therefore, we are aware of the existing risks that our Swedish interviewees speaking in English might not have been able to be as accurate in English as in Swedish, and that our translations of the Swedish interviews in English might have been influenced by our understanding of the answers.

1.5 Theoretical and Practical Relevance

1.5.1 Theoretical Relevance

The two research areas of this study (discovering and maintaining of core values) have been inducted from empirical findings. Therefore, at first, these areas could not be justified theoretically. Nevertheless, as we were looking for theories dealing with the maintenance of core values, we realized that it is a subject with very few theories directly focusing on this topic. Hence, there might be a need for new theories explaining how to retain values as most theorists agree on the importance of maintaining them.

1.5.2 Practical Relevance

The practical relevance of our research lays in the obvious need of Atea Logistics for the definition of its core values and their maintenance. In that sense, this study aims at discovering the current company’s core values and at providing insights to serenely maintain them in the future. Therefore, we match the practical reality of Atea Logistics by attempting to help the organization cope with difficulties that it is facing.
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

The methodology chapter describes the way we conducted our research. Indeed, we will explain the different methodological choices and the methodology of our study. First, we will start this chapter with the notion of pre-understanding. Second, we will present our research journey which shows the development of our research question. Third, we will introduce our research approach which provided us with guidelines or a path for the writing of this thesis. Fourth, we will talk about data collection which decides the way we collect and analyze the data. Finally, we will ensure the value of our study in terms validity and reliability.

2.1 Pre-understanding

The concept of pre-understanding refers to people’s insights into a specific problem and social environment before they start in a research program or consulting assignment. A researcher can gain two different types of pre-understanding on a subject. Either, it can be gained through personal experiences or via the use of intermediaries. A certain level of pre-understanding can influence the researcher’s work either in a positive or negative way. For a researcher, it is important to have a certain degree of basic pre-understanding before starting a project; if not, the researcher might spend a lot of “considerable additional time on information gathering”. According to the categories of pre-understanding offered by Gummesson, we can order them into three levels: general knowledge, specific knowledge and personal attributes.

2.1.1 General Knowledge

According to Gummesson, the researcher gains general knowledge with help of theories, concepts, models, techniques, research methods and tools; this knowledge of theories can be

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12 Gummesson, E., 2000, p. 57
13 Ibid., p. 57
14 Ibid., p. 58
15 Ibid., p. 58
achieved via university education and/or scientific environment \textsuperscript{16}. Our group is made of a French student, Charles Enjalbert, and two Swedish students, Madelene Rundberg and Maja Stojanovic, therefore coming from different European educational perspectives. Our general knowledge has mainly been acquired via the education we have received in our respective home university (at Växjö University for Madelene and Maja and at EDC, a business school in Paris for Charles) as well as in other universities (in Santa Barbara, USA, for Madelene and at Växjö University for Charles). Furthermore, each of us has its own background. Two of us have followed courses dealing with business administration and economics, while the other one has attended courses about international management, logistic and marketing.

\textbf{2.1.2 Specific Knowledge}

The specific knowledge encompasses the knowledge of technical conditions, customary practice, key decision makers, and specific mechanisms and factors relating to a particular industry, market, sector, and so forth \textsuperscript{17}. Our specific knowledge has been enriched in the ‘strategic management in dynamic organizations’ master program we attended at Växjö University during this spring semester via courses and seminars which dealt with organizational learning, leadership and more generally management. Furthermore, thanks to a previous assignment, we have already been able to build up a particular relationship with Atea Logistics, the company we are studying in this thesis. Indeed, we have written, as a first part of this master program, a field work report focusing on the integration of newcomers at Atea Logistics. Clearly, this is an important pre-understanding which must be taken into consideration for our research.

\textbf{2.1.3 Personal Attributes}

According to Gummesson, personal attributes such as intuition, creativity, vitality, and human understanding are essential for the change agent \textsuperscript{18}. Indeed, he argues that the personality of the researchers may be of decisive importance to the outcome of the assignment. Since we are from Sweden and France, our different experiences and cultures will have great influence on our thesis in many aspects, and this kind of combination would be a very interesting experience.

\textsuperscript{16} Gummesson, E., 2000, p. 72
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 73
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 75
2.2 From Pre-understanding to Understanding

Having a good pre-understanding on the topic of our research, be it general knowledge, specific knowledge and personal attributes, will help us learn more about the theories, models and tools used in this thesis. Moreover, the relative diversity of our backgrounds will lead to a good coverage of the study, regarding the management of a company, the core values, the ways to maintain those values, etc. Finally, by adding as much empirical data as we can, we aim at having a wide understanding of the subject.

![Diagram showing the relationship between pre-understanding, experience of others, access via personal involvement, own methods of access to experience of others, and understanding.](image)

Source: Gummesson, E., 2000, p. 67

Figure 1: From pre-understanding to understanding

2.3 Research Journey

As introduced in the pre-understanding part, we already had the opportunity to study Atea Logistics before in a fieldwork report. The topic of this previous assignment was the integration of newcomers within Atea Logistics. Indeed, as the company is going through a lot of changes since a couple of years, the integration of its new employees has proved not to be as efficient as what it used to be in the past. So, in a first time, it was this notion of changes that caught our attention. Therefore, our first research question was the following one:

“How can a company overcome a long period of intense changes?”
As we were starting to look for theories and to wonder what could be the answer to this research question, we realized that part of it might come from Atea Logistics’s corporate culture. Indeed, our prior findings for the fieldwork report had shown that Atea Logistics’s culture was really important for the company. That is the reason why we came up with the following new research question which associates the notions of change and culture:

“How can a corporate culture remain the same in an intensively changing environment?”

Shortly after coming up with this research question, we set up our first interview with Heléne Gröön, human resource manager of Atea Logistics, in order to discuss it with the company and make sure that both parties could benefit from this work. Even though our first interviewee was interested in this possible subject, she introduced to us the notion of core values which is important within Atea Logistics. In fact, she pointed out the fact that employees are acting according to those beliefs. Therefore, this led us to the following research question:

“How can a company make its employees act according to its corporate values and beliefs?”

However, as we were brainstorming and digging up in the topic, we realized that Atea Logistics’ core values were not clearly defined. As a matter of fact, our next two interviews with Heléne Gröön and Pär Aspengren, managing director of Atea Logistics, confirmed our impressions and expressed a need for defining the company’s corporate values and for maintaining them. As a result, we came up with the following research question:

“How to maintain core values in a changing, growing, and successful company?”

As we were moving forward in the different steps of the writing of this thesis, we realized that the series of adjectives before the word company could lead to confusion. In order to add clarity and because our research is only focused on the particular case of Atea Logistics, we decided to delete the “changing, growing and successful” part from the main question and simply place “at Atea Logistics” instead. Hence, we came up with our final research question:

“How to maintain core values at Atea Logistics?”

Once we became sure about this research question, we presented it to Heléne Gröön and Pär Aspengren so that they could validate it. Indeed, it is important for us to make sure that this study really deals and provides suggestions to problems currently face by Atea Logistics.
Later, after the gathering of our empirical findings, we were able to discover and list the current core values of Atea Logistics. Nevertheless, in order to receive feedbacks about them, we briefly presented these values to Heléne Gröön who confirmed their accuracy as “she was able to see on paper what she lives at work everyday”. Indeed, she was quite impressed by our findings and even introduced the possibility of presenting our results to the board of directors.

Finally, in the conclusion of this report, we present the core values we discovered within Atea Logistics as well as our findings and suggestions regarding their maintenance. Furthermore, we do hope that this paper will help Atea Logistics which was so supportive of us throughout the writing of this thesis.

Following is the time-frame that we have followed to write this thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of time</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| March 1<sup>st</sup> – April 4<sup>th</sup> | - Brainstorming on possible subjects  
- Elaboration of the research question in accordance with the company’s needs (first interview) |
| April 5<sup>th</sup> – April 23<sup>rd</sup> | - Writing of the introduction chapter  
- Research of existing theories and writing of the theory chapter  
- Collection of empirical data (interviews) and writing of the interviews’ transcripts |
| April 24<sup>th</sup> – May 15<sup>th</sup> | - Last two interviews  
- Writing of the empirical part  
- Writing of the analysis |
| May 16<sup>th</sup> – May 24<sup>th</sup> | - Writing of the conclusions  
- Improvements and adjustments of each chapter |

Source: Own creation

Table 1: Schedule of the writing of the thesis

2.4 Research Approach

The research approach deals with the way a scientist confronts the empirical world. The research approach will help the reader understand the selected research methods and why we have chosen those ones for our research. In fact, before starting writing this thesis, we had to define and be aware of our research approach.
2.4.1 Positivistic vs. Hermeneutic Paradigm

A research is always guided by the way of looking at things. A paradigm represents people’s value, judgment, norms, standards, frames of reference, perspectives, ideologies, myth, theories, and approved procedures that govern their thinking and action\(^\text{19}\). There are two main scientific paradigms: *Positivistic* and *Hermeneutic*. Both approaches are opposed and define two different ways of looking upon a research methodology.

The *positivistic paradigm* refers to the school of thought that the only ‘true’ or valid form of knowledge is the one which is “scientific”, objective and tangible in nature\(^\text{20}\). The positivistic approach is theory-based and works on description and explanation. Theories give a strong framework based on discussions and deductions. The research is looking for a rational, reasonable and logical approach. It is used through a cause and effect relationship\(^\text{21}\). Concepts such as feelings, emotions, and beliefs are not accepted in research as they are not objective or tangible; they are not reliable and constant over time.

The *hermeneutic paradigm* is more based on a personal interpretative process to understand reality. Concepts such as feelings, emotions and so on are the basis of this paradigm. They are ‘measured’ using words, statement and other non-numerical measures, collecting data from the viewpoint of the participant. The data is then interpreted by the researcher, who attempts to uncover meanings, values, explanations, etc.\(^\text{22}\)

**Discussion regarding our choice:**

As we are reaching the end of the writing of this study, we realize that our choice of a paradigm is far more complicated than what we had expected when we started to write this report. Therefore, we have decided to discuss in more details in order to be as clear and accurate as possible.

The following table illustrates the main differences between the positivistic and the hermeneutic paradigms as well as our choices between them.

\[^{19}\text{Gummesson, E., 2000, p. 18}\]
\[^{20}\text{Gratton, C., Jones, L., 2004, p. 16}\]
\[^{21}\text{Gummesson, E., 2000, p. 173}\]
\[^{22}\text{Gratton, C., Jones, L., 2004, p. 19}\]
### Table 2: Positivistic vs. Hermeneutic Paradigms and Our Choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positivistic paradigm</th>
<th>Hermeneutic paradigm</th>
<th>Our Choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research concentrates on description and explanation</td>
<td>Research concentrates on understanding and interpretation</td>
<td>We focused on discovering the core values of Atea Logistics which implied description and understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The vantage point is primarily deductive; thought is governed by explicitly stated theories and hypotheses</td>
<td>The vantage point is primarily inductive; researchers’ attention is less focused and is allowed to ‘float’ more widely</td>
<td>We used an abductive method, which is a combination of the inductive and deductive approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research concentrates on generalization and abstraction</td>
<td>Research concentrates on the specific and concrete but also attempts generalization</td>
<td>We focused on the specific case of Atea Logistics but generalizations could perhaps come from our conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical and mathematical techniques for quantitative processing of data</td>
<td>Data are primarily non-quantitative</td>
<td>We used qualitative methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers are detached, they maintain a distance between themselves and the object of research, take on the role of external observer</td>
<td>Both distance and involvement, researchers are actors who also want to experience what they are studying from the inside</td>
<td>We tried to keep both distance and involvement but depending on the situation, we were either external or internal observers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinction between science and personal experience</td>
<td>Researchers accept influence from both science and personal experience; they use their personality as an instrument</td>
<td>We accepted influence from both science and personal experience (for instance our pre-understanding)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers try to be emotionally neutral and make clear distinction between reason and feeling</td>
<td>Researchers allow both feelings and reason to govern their action</td>
<td>Even though we tried to forbid feelings, we are aware that they still might have influenced our actions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Gummesson, E., 2000, p. 178

As one may realize after reading the above table 2, the choice of a paradigm that will guide (or has guided) our thinking and actions is not easy to make. Indeed, it appears that we are walking a fine line separating both paradigms.
As a matter of fact, when we first started to write this research, we decided or rather thought that we were using the hermeneutic paradigm. Indeed, at first we used a sort of exploratory approach in order to define an interesting topic; we used the background and knowledge about the company that we previously gained during our fieldwork report as well as conducted interviews within the organization.

Nevertheless, the further we got into the research, the closer we got from the positivistic paradigm. In fact, we started to develop our theoretical data while conducting interviews and we even completed it before finishing gathering all our empirical data. Therefore, it is likely that theories influenced some of our interviews. Moreover, as the theory part was already completed when built up the empirical one, we decided to organize the empirical part according to the theoretical one.

Finally, we may argue that we have rather used the hermeneutic paradigm during the very beginning of the writing of this research and that we slowly switched to the positivistic one later which eventually might dominate within this report. However, we definitely remained close to the fine line separating both approaches.

2.4.2 Deductive, Inductive, and Abductive Approaches

The researcher’s task is to relate the reality and the theoretic world to each other. To do so, there are three alternative research approaches: the deductive approach, the inductive approach and the abductive approach.

The deductive approach involves the development of an idea, or hypothesis, from an existing theory which can then be tested through the collection of data. A hypothesis is a statement of the relationship between two variables that can be tested empirically. In fact, Gummesson argues that deductive researches start with existing theories and formulates hypotheses that are subsequently tested.

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23 Gratton, C., Jones, I., 2004, p. 26
24 Gummesson, E., 2000, p. 63
The *inductive* approach starts with data collection, and analyses data to develop a theory, model or explanation. It is the process of moving from specific data to a general conclusion. According to Gummesson, an inductive research starts with real data from the world and categories, concepts, patterns and other models or theories emerge from this input\(^\text{25}\).

The *abductive* approach is understood as the middle-way between the inductive and the deductive ones. Indeed, Denzin argues that abduction in qualitative analysis is a combination of inductive and deductive thinking with logical underpinnings\(^\text{26}\). Gummesson argues that abductive means that sometimes a study can consist of the sequence of a deductive research and an inductive one; and even repeat itself\(^\text{27}\).

As far as this research is concerned, we have conducted it according to the following path: after the writing of our fieldwork report on Atea Logistics, which constitutes a good research background, we first gathered some new empirical findings in order to define the topic of this thesis and identify possible and relevant areas of theory. Second, we started to look for these relevant theories and to build up our theory part. Later, as we were still working on the theory part, we conducted at the same time interviews for the empirical part which enabled us to find new pertinent theories as our empirical findings were guiding us in new directions. So, we can see that this way of proceeding is thus in accordance with an abductive circle.

### 2.4.3 Qualitative vs. Quantitative Approach

In accordance with his/her research approach, a researcher can choose between the qualitative and the quantitative approach to conduct his/her study.

Qualitative methods aim at capturing qualities that are neither quantifiable nor reducible to numbers, such as feeling, thoughts, and experiences and so on. It means concepts associated with interpretive approaches to knowledge\(^\text{28}\). In other words, qualitative researches rely heavily on verbal data and subjective analysis and have little use of numbers and statistics.

\(^{25}\) Gummesson, E., 2000, p. 63  
\(^{26}\) Quoted in Patton, M., 2002  
\(^{27}\) Gummesson, E., 2000, p. 64  
\(^{28}\) Gratton, C., Jones, I., 2004, p. 22
Thus with the help of qualitative research, researcher may asking questions like ‘What’s your opinion?’ or ‘Why do you like this’ in order to identify some of the personal reasons.

On the other hand, the use of numerical measurements and analysis is referred to as a quantitative approach, which means research that involves measurable quantities\(^{29}\). For instance, a researcher may be interested in the relationship between a financial investment in a sport club and a subsequent success. Researcher can approach this by measuring how much money has been invested in the club, and measuring performance by medal count.

As far as our thesis is concerned, we used the qualitative approach because our aim is to investigate and define the core values of Atea Logistics and find ways for maintaining them. As a result, we needed understand how the company was working, according to which values, how was the atmosphere, how the employees are feeling. To do so, it is the qualitative approach which fits the best.

### 2.5 Data Collection

The quality and results of a thesis depends on the relevance of the information which constitutes it. Indeed, the data collection, be it theoretical or empirical, represents the foundation or basis of the whole study. Therefore, we have tried to collect our data as carefully as possible in order to meet our expectation of quality.

#### 2.5.1 Theoretical Data Collection

Regarding the theoretical part of this research, we gathered as much theory as we could, dealing with the fields of core values, culture and the maintenance of core values. Nevertheless, the finding of specific information regarding the maintenance of core values was not an easy task as there are few theories directly dealing with this topic. Therefore, we were forced to consider many different data sources. In order to find this relevant information, we mainly focused our research on books available at the library of Växjö University. To find these books, we used the data base system from the Website of Växjö University.

\(^{29}\) Gratton, C., Jones, L., 2004, p. 21
Moreover, we used articles that we have been able to find via the online database ELIN, available on the Website of Växjö University. Another source of theory was the internet where we found articles and publications using the search engine program Google.

### 2.5.2 Empirical Data Collection

Yin argues that there are six sources of evidence:

- Documentation
- Archival records
- Interviews
- Direct observation
- Participant observation
- Physical artifacts

For our research, we have used four of the above sources of evidence. The first sources we used and which represents the most of our empirical data are interviews. Indeed, we have conducted nine interviews with eight interviewees for this thesis (we also used few data from the six interviews that we had already collected for our fieldwork report). We have interviewed four main managers and four regular employees in order to gather different points of views. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and an hour, and three of these interviews were conducted in Swedish while the others were done in English. For each interview, a list of basic questions was prepared. However, we tried to have a real conversation with the interviewees and not just ask a succession of questions.

Second, we used documentation that we were able to access such as on Atea’s website. Third, we went through archival records that the company provided us with. For instance, we got access to all the annual reports of the company as well as to classified documents which were not to leave the company facilities (but we were allowed to write down notes from the contents of these documents). Finally, we used direct observation each time we had access to the company facilities. In fact, it was interesting to observe how employees were acting or behaving while doing their daily jobs as we could create links with some of our interviews’ data.

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30 We use Yin’s work because of the positivistic degree of our report but we are aware that his theories do not really suit strictly hermeneutic studies.
31 Yin, R., 2003
32 See appendix, p. 113
2.6 The Value of the Study

We have chosen to use Yin’s theories to ensure the value of our study because of the strong positivistic approach which finally governs our report and because our research is build up as a case study. Nevertheless, we are well aware that his theories mostly only fit positivistic researches. According to Yin, there are four tests to assess the validity of a research: construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. We will cover in this part three of them as the internal validity does not seem to be relevant to our study. Indeed; Yin argues that internal validity is a test for casual case studies which try to determine whether event X led to event Y and this is not the purpose of this research.

2.6.1 Construct Validity

Construct validity deals with “establishing correct operational measure for the concepts being studied”. We used several sources of evidence at different levels to make sure of the construct validity of our study. First, we conducted nine interviews, observed Atea Logistics’ employees during our visits on site, and used documentation and archival records to build up our empirical part. Then, confronting our findings with existing theories will allow us to point out possible problems and propose solutions in order to improve the situation. Furthermore, all the theories used and developed within our study are based on books and articles dealing with core values, culture and the maintenance of core values.

2.6.2 External Validity

External validity means “establishing the domain to which a study’s findings can be generalized”. The aim here is to know if the findings of this research can be generalized. Our research is specific to the case of Atea Logistics. However, in Sweden and more largely in Europe or in the world, other companies might be facing the same sort of difficulties and therefore might find some relevant ideas to help them improve their situations.

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33 Yin, R., 2003, p. 34
34 Ibid., p. 34
35 Ibid., p. 34
2.6.3 Reliability

Yin defines reliability as “demonstrating that the operations of a study – such as the data collection procedures – can be repeated, with the same results”\textsuperscript{36}. The purpose of the reliability is to know if by using the same case study, using the same procedures, another researcher would reach the same findings and conclusions. As far as our research is concerned, another researcher could find the same results but some differences might be expected as we have followed to some extent in the beginning of our study the hermeneutic paradigm which allows interpretation of the data. This difference could be enhanced by the use of a qualitative method which is also an interpretive approach.

\textsuperscript{36} Yin, R., 2003, p. 34
CHAPTER 3: THEORY

In this part, we will develop a theoretical framework which will allow us, by analyzing our empirical data in a proper way, to answer our research question. Indeed, we will present theories and models relevant to our topic, the definition and maintenance of core values in an organization. First, we will briefly present the concept of culture. Indeed, as values are a level of culture, it is important to have first a clear picture of what culture is. Second, we will define core values and present the different types of values that can be found within companies. Finally, we will emphasize the importance of maintaining core values for organizations and provide possible ways to do so.

3.1 Culture

3.1.1 What Is Culture?

There are many definitions of culture and one can say that it is “usually defined as social or normative glue that holds an organization together”37. As far as Schein is concerned, he argues that culture is a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problem of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems38.

Organizational culture could be seen as the personality of a company as culture deals with peoples’ thoughts, feelings and how they spend their time.39 Corporate culture helps an organization or company succeed in its environment.40 Culture can be compared to a system where the input is feedback from society, professions, competition, stories, etc. Members’ assumptions, values and norms are the process of the system, for example values on time,

38 Schein, E., 2004, p. 17
money and space. The outputs of the system are the effects of the culture such as image, organizational behavior, products, services etc.\textsuperscript{41} In order for the cultural concept to be effectively integrated into general organizational models, it must be recognized as a host, including many different factors affecting organizational life.\textsuperscript{42}

Culture also expresses the values, social ideals and beliefs that are shared among members within an organization. Patterns of beliefs or values are expressed through symbols such as legends, stories, myths and a special language formed within the organization.\textsuperscript{43} Employees working for a company with a strong culture can at any time tell what the company believes in or stands for.\textsuperscript{44} Besides, a culture should be clearly defined and expressed to new members so that they can act accordingly to the culture.\textsuperscript{45}

Deal & Kennedy’s research at “The Tandem Corporation” showed that even when an organization lacks formal organizational charts, has few formal rules and no name tags, the organization still works and people get their job done. Deal & Kennedy believe that it is the unwritten rules and shared understandings that keep the organization going. In their research, employees explained that the open-door policy within the company gave access to anyone in the organization no matter of hierarchical positions and gave a feeling that all employees were equal. In this way balance between autonomy and control can be held without relying too much on formal and centralized procedures.\textsuperscript{46}

### 3.1.2 The Use of Culture

There are various ways in which a culture can be used. Managers can for example use culture as a way to implement a business strategy but at the same time use it as a tool; how to interact with external constituencies, such as shareholders and customers. The internal relationship is also heavily related to culture as well as managerial styles and behavior. In terms of organizational effectiveness, the culture also plays a vital role. The strengths and consistency of a culture, as well as employee involvement in decision making, corporate adaptability to change and clear guidelines are directly linked to the culture.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{41} [http://www.managementhelp.org/org_thry/culture/culture.htm](http://www.managementhelp.org/org_thry/culture/culture.htm), March 28\textsuperscript{th} 2006
\textsuperscript{42} Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 536
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 536
\textsuperscript{44} Deal, T., Kennedy, A., 1982, p. 139
\textsuperscript{45} Gordon, J., 1993, p. 171
\textsuperscript{46} Deal, T., Kennedy, A., 1982, p. 10
\textsuperscript{47} Gordon, J., 1993, p. 171
3.1.3 The Positive Aspects of Culture

It is argued by Saffold that a strong, powerful culture is the key to improved performance and in most cases seen as the driving force behind a continued success. Organizations with strong cultures are said to generate an almost touchable social force field of energy that empowers the employees and drives the organization to superior performance. Connecting strong core values with commitment, self-confidence, ethical behavior, and reduced job stress, one will create an exceptionally favorable culture. In order to reach this state, one must possess and combine traits such as values, believes, symbols, rituals, norms, philosophies etc.

The meaning of strong culture is surprisingly difficult to fasten. One definition of a strong culture is the one argued by Saffold, saying that a strong culture is defined as homogenous, stable and more intense, thick and widely shared, cohesive and tight-knit, characterized by congruent rule based expectations, fully articulated and highly differentiated, and coherent.48

No matter if an organization possesses a strong or weak culture, there is a powerful influence of organizational behavior. The difference is that in strong cultures everybody knows and works for the goals within the organization. Thus, in a strong culture, the goals of the employees and the management are aligned, nevertheless, in weak cultures the goals are counter to each other. In some cases even different and spread.

3.2 Values: A Level of Culture

According to Schein, it is possible to analyze culture at several levels, with the term level meaning the degree to which the cultural phenomenon is visible to the observer. Mirvis and Marks, who share the same view as Schein, use the metaphor of an iceberg to illustrate the ideas of levels within culture. Indeed, some aspects of culture are obvious (figuratively above the surface) while others are deeper down and hidden from view49. These include norms, values and at the base, understandings about human nature and how the world works. In fact, these subsurface elements from the larger mass of the iceberg and have been shaped by a

48 Saffold G., 1988, p. 546-558
49 Quoted in Burke, R., Cooper, C., 2004, p. 286
firm’s founding and history as well as its national origins, the ethnic and demographic composition of its leaders and workforce, and industry characteristics. Passed on via socialization, they become taken-for-granted assumptions about how to do business.

According to Schein, there are three levels within culture: artifacts, espoused values, basic assumptions. These levels range from the very tangible obvious manifestations that one can see and feel (artifacts) to the deeply embedded, unconscious, basic assumptions that can be defined as the essence of culture. In between these layers are various espoused beliefs, values, norms, and rules of behavior that members of the culture use as a way of depicting to themselves and others. Following is a figure illustrating those three levels.

![Figure 2: Levels of culture](image)

Figure 2: Levels of culture

Before focusing on core values, which is the focal point of this research, a brief definition of the other two levels of culture, artifacts and basic assumptions, will be given. According to Schein, artifacts are at the surface of culture which includes all the phenomena that one sees, hears, and feels when one encounters a new group with an unfamiliar culture. In other words and as Nadler explains, artifacts are observable behavior and concrete evidence of a company’s underlying assumptions. However, it is important to underline that this level of culture is easy to observe but very difficult to decipher. Basic assumptions are taken for granted assumptions, which tend to be non-confrontable and non-debatable, and therefore

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50 Schein, E., 2004, p. 25
51 Ibid., p. 25
52 Nadler, D., 1998, p. 203
extremely difficult to change. According to Nadler, they can be regarded as unstated values and beliefs manifested in overt behavior or cultural artifacts\textsuperscript{53}.

### 3.3 Core Values

#### 3.3.1 Definition of Core Values

By definition, “values are beliefs about what is right and wrong and what is important in life.”\textsuperscript{54} Schein defines values as “basic assumptions because these tend to be taken for granted by group members and treated as non-negotiable. However, values can be open to discuss and people can agree to disagree upon them. Basic assumptions are so taken for granted that someone who does not hold them is viewed as a ‘foreigner’ or as ‘crazy’ and is automatically dismissed.”\textsuperscript{55}

According to French and Bell, a set of values, assumptions and beliefs constitutes an integral part of organization development, shaping the goals and methods of the field and distinguishing organization development for other improvement strategies\textsuperscript{56}. In fact, most of these beliefs and values should have been formulated early in the development of the field, and they continue to evolve as the field itself evolves. These values and assumptions can either be developed from research and theory by behavioral scientists or from the experiences and observations of practicing managers. French and Bell argue that values are beliefs and are defined as beliefs about what is desirable or good and what is undesirable or bad\textsuperscript{57}. As a matter of fact, values as well as beliefs and assumptions provide people with structure and stability as they attempt to understand the world around them.

Rokeach stated that “a value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence.”\textsuperscript{58} Deal & Kennedy argues that values establish standards of achievement in the organization and defines “success” for employees.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{53} Nadler, D., 1998, p. 203  
\textsuperscript{54} Oxford advanced learners dictionary, 2005, p. 1693  
\textsuperscript{55} Schein, E., 2004, p. 25  
\textsuperscript{56} French, W., Bell, C., 1999, p. 62  
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p. 62  
\textsuperscript{58} Rokeach quoted in Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 535  
\textsuperscript{59} Deal, T., Kennedy, A., 1982, p. 10
Schein argues that values undergo transformation, starting with being a perceived value and then it becomes a core value or belief and lastly it becomes a shared assumption. It is only when these beliefs and values continue to be successful in solving a group’s problem that they become shared assumptions. Employees who are aware of what their company stands for and of its standards are more likely to make decisions that uphold those standards. Furthermore, they are more likely to be motivated as they feel as being an important part of the company. Therefore, Deal & Kennedy argue that shaping and enhancing values can be the most important job for a manager. Deal & Kennedy found that values are an important aspect for successful companies and there are three characteristics of values that companies shared:

- **They stand for something** – it is clear and explicit of how to conduct the business.
- **Managements’ role** – much attention is put on shaping the values in order to make these consistent with the external environment and to communicate them within the organization.
- **The values are well known** – and are shared among all members of the organization.

Furthermore, Deal & Kennedy argue that core values define the fundamental character of an organization for those who hold them. The difference between a company’s slogan and its values is the fact that values capture something that the members of the organization deeply believe in. These core values of a company become the essence of the philosophy of the organization. The stated core values are just the visible part of a complex system containing a whole range of beliefs about the organization’s work. However, values must be lived by if they are to survive.

A central value system is said to exist when a number of key values, concerning behaviors in the organization, are shared by members of an organization. Key values that are broadly and intensely shared by members are considered to be “strong” values. A value system can also be seen as a code of practice or behaviors, just like the Ten Commandments are for Christians. Conflicts that are inborn in a multicultural situation can be reduced by a strong central value system since large, decentralized organizations may possess multiple value systems.

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60 Schein, E., 2004, p. 28-29  
61 Deal, T., Kennedy, A., 1982, p. 22  
62 Ibid., p. 24  
64 Collins, D., 1998, p. 111  
3.3.2 The Importance of Core Values

A key element in defining culture is to look at an organization’s value system. Values guide employees in their daily life and Deal & Kennedy argue that companies often succeed because their employees identify, adopt and act upon the organization’s values.\textsuperscript{66} Wiener argues that core values are a core element of organizational culture and constitute an organizational value system.\textsuperscript{67} Furthermore, the core values approach is independent of the cultural construct and is therefore useful as an explanatory system. The organizational value system should not only be seen as a way of identifying an organizational culture but can offer unique meaning and perspective to the understanding of organizational phenomena.\textsuperscript{68} According to Wiener, focusing on core values leads to two issues\textsuperscript{69}:

- The cultural concept’s integration with other aspects connected to the explanation of organizational phenomena
- Factors of cultural contribution relative to, for example, structure and technology (non-cultural variables) to various organizational outcomes

Early researches have mainly focused on leadership-style, organizational structure, reward system and decision-making processes when looking upon organizational culture. The importance of core values has more or less been neglected. Individual values guide a person’s intentions and actions and similarly, organizational goals, policies and strategies are set after guidelines from the organizational value system. Thereby, “the nature of the values is a crucial factor in the impact that culture will have on organizational effectiveness”.\textsuperscript{70} If goals and strategies are supported by current values, the culture will become an important asset. On the other hand, wrong values can make the culture negative in forms of being a major strain instead of a source of effectiveness.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{66} Deal, T., Kennedy, A., 1982, p. 21
\textsuperscript{67} Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 544
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., p 544
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., p 544
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., p. 536
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., p. 536
However, according to Cheney et al, one difficulty for companies is that it is often not easy to articulate basic values\textsuperscript{72}. In fact, there seems to be a lack of alternative visions and ways of conceptualizing problems because a “bottom-line” mentality is so prevalent and little time is spent on reflection. So Cheney et al argue that there is an important case where the things people do not say, or have difficulty expressing, may be just as important as what they do. It is what these authors call the lack of “the vision thing”\textsuperscript{73}.

### 3.3.3 Different Types of Values

#### 3.3.3.1 Humanistic, Optimistic and Democratic Values

According to Cheney et al, values are often indexed or referenced at a vague and emotionally rich level that cannot be achieved by more specific symbolic appeals\textsuperscript{74}. Values are emotionally charged. Indeed, many organizations elicit warm feelings in their audiences or stakeholders with references to such things as “family friendly”, “environmentally friendly”, or “child conscious”. Moreover, some value expressions operate as means of pacification and denial of problems (e.g. “we are all equal” as equality can be asserted to mask endemic or persistent differences).

Values tend to be humanistic, optimistic and democratic. *Humanistic values* state the importance of the individual: respect of the whole person, treat people with respect and dignity, assume that everyone has intrinsic worth, view all people as having the potential for growth and development. *Optimistic values* proclaim that people are basically good, that progress is possible and desirable in human affairs, and that rationality, reason and goodwill are the tools for making progress. *Democratic values* posit the sanctity of the individual, the right of people to be free from arbitrary misuse of power, the importance of fair and equitable treatment for all, and the need for justice through the rule of law and due process.

\textsuperscript{72} Cheney, G., et al, 2004, p. 414
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., p. 414
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., p. 429
3.3.3.2 Social Values

Nevertheless, values can be seen as underlying principles of morality. Although, morality is the personal judgment of what is right and wrong as well as what is important it differs from values since it is socially constructed and therefore socially judged. On the other hand, values are more personal and mark the character and behavior.\textsuperscript{75} Values answer the question of why people do what they do in the organization.\textsuperscript{76}

A major source of values within an organization may be social expectations, especially when they are shared. Therefore social values can be seen as normative beliefs which complement instrumental beliefs as forerunners of behavior. Values can also be seen as internalized normative beliefs, which create a sort of framework when they are established. They act as built-in normative guides to behavior, independently from the effect of rewards and punishments as consequences of actions. The core values become norms and guide the members of an organization toward uniformity in behavior.\textsuperscript{77}

Social values apply to values that deal more with ethics and aesthetics, which are non-testable. Group members learn that these values, for example, reduce uncertainty regarding the group’s functioning and as they continue to work they will be transformed into non-discussible assumptions. These can then be noticed as articulated sets of beliefs, norms and rules of behavior.\textsuperscript{78} Another definition is that values are broader than norms in the sense where norms are seen as more specific and explicit behavioral expectations.\textsuperscript{79}

3.3.3.3 Functional and Elitist Values

According to Wiener, values can be looked upon as functional or elitist\textsuperscript{80}.

\textsuperscript{75} Hjort, D., Steyaert, C., 2004, p. 131
\textsuperscript{76} Schein, E., 2004, p. 343
\textsuperscript{77} Rokeach in Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 535
\textsuperscript{78} Schein, E., 2004, p. 28-29
\textsuperscript{79} Kilman quoted in Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 535
\textsuperscript{80} Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 536-537
**Functional values**

Values that are functional focus particularly on goals, functions and style of actions, including factors such as product quality, innovation and customer service. An example could be that the “customer is always right”. Furthermore, functional values tend to be constructive as they constitute more explicit guides for members’ behavior. These values are also likely to cause rational behavior since achieving goals is strongly emphasized.

**Elitist values**

These are values concerning the importance of the organization itself, its members and products, status and superiority. These are especially directed towards the relation to other institutions and society at large. Since elitist values can be: “We are simply number one”, one can argue that this type of values are comparative in nature and reflects some kind of nationalism in the organization. One can argue that elitist values are more “soft” in the sense of focusing more on generating strong feelings, such as pride towards the organization.

If emphasis is on organizational primacy and superiority, this can lead to behaviors that may destroy organizational integrity in the long run. However, both functional and elitist values can be included in any organizational value system. Therefore, one has to decide whether the value system is primarily functional or elitist and this can be done by determining the strength of the elitist values relative to the functional ones. “A value system can be classified as primarily functional when elitist values show small relative strength. As the relative strength of these values increases, the orientation of the system becomes increasingly elitist.”\(^{81}\)

### 3.3.4 Formation, Evolution and Change of Values

Organizational value systems can change and evolve. Many culture developments are characterized by a charismatic value system, either elitist or functional. It is unusual that cultures emerge without the influence of charismatic leaders with whom members identify. A temporary and transitional situation is often represented by a charismatic value system. Cultural discontinuity is possible when the system depends on strong identification with a leader. “In the context of charismatic value systems, elitist values seem to be more changeable and replaceable than functional ones; they are less directly associated with a specific,

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\(^{81}\) Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 537
imbedded pattern of ongoing behaviors.” This in turn can lead to the fact that the future evolution of a functional-charismatic value system will be toward a focus on maintenance of functional culture. Early leaders of such organizations emphasize enduring functional values that guide members’ behavior and express organizational missions. Consequently, they equal themselves with the institution and despite their charisma, they tend to discourage hero worship and personality cults.

On the other hand, the evolution of charismatic-elitist value systems is not as predictable as the functional-charismatic. This is due to the fact that such a system does not have the vital elements for creating a stable cultural structure. The chance of an emergent functional-charismatic form of value system to develop to a functional-traditional one is high, but the functional-traditional value system should not be seen as an end state of culture. During organizational reconstruction and crisis situations, strongly established traditional culture can turn charismatic. Other factors which can help achieving cultural change are planned management interventions. The first attempt could be to change the value system itself, often towards the functional-traditional form. Secondly, not only the value system is to change but also specific values within the preferred value system. For example, a company with strong and mature functional-traditional value system can become more responsive and adaptive to their environment if they introduce functional values of innovation. This can also lead to more dynamics and flexibility dimensions of the organization.

However, introducing new values to an organization involves a complex learning process for members of the organization. It often requires a union of optimal individual, societal and organizational conditions and therefore value adoption cannot only be based on managements’ decisions and practices. The process is rather evolutionary and emergent.

3.3.5 The Source of Values

Values emerge from experience, by testing what works and what does not in the economic environment. Also members of an organization have much influence in shaping the standards

82 Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 540
83 Ibid., p. 538-539
84 Ibid., p. 538-539
85 Ibid., p. 540-541
86 Ibid., p. 537-538
and beliefs of the organization. They can also derive from charismatic leadership or organizational tradition. Values that are rooted in tradition are being passed on from one generation of organizational members to the next. An individual might have been the origin to these types of values, such as a founder, and since these values have survived throughout the years, they are considered traditional. These types of values are relatively independent of the potential influence of individuals and situations. According to Wiener, values that are rooted in tradition are more likely to be contributing with stability and predictability to the organization’s functioning.

A central value system facilitates leaders’ role in charting the direction of the organization and guiding the members to move in the same direction. According to Wiener, it is the leader’s responsibility to put weight on each core values and reflect its importance to organizational mission. When identifying the key values in an organization, one should look at the degree to which members agree with the value system as a whole and the number of members who share these values.

Values that derive from charismatic leaders are mainly based on members’ personal identification with that leader. Therefore, such values are less stable and permanent than traditional ones. These types of values may not survive when the leader leaves the organization but may also be valid only for a short while since much depends on the personal attractiveness of the leader. However, present charismatic leaders can reinforce traditional organizational values, but these should then be considered as traditional.

Organizational value systems can be divided into traditional or charismatic, depending on the strength of each core value to each source. Primarily, organizations that are new and emerging are often led by charismatic leaders and thereby hold a charismatic organizational value system.

### 3.3.6 Forms of Value Systems

From the facts given, a model can be drawn showing the four different types of values.

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87 Deal, T., Kennedy, A., 1982, p. 25
3.3.6.1 Functional – Traditional

This category of value systems that are both functional and traditional are most likely to contribute to organizational effectiveness through the development of proper values. According to Hayes there are two elements necessary for the setting of corporate goals, policies and strategies that this type of value systems encourages:\n
(a) An organizational structure that is flat where broad organizational participation is imbedded in daily business rather than a hierarchical structure with a top-down approach.

(b) A hard-to-copy, patient organization with step-to-step changes and improvements rather than trendy strategic and magnificent leaps.

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However, one should remember that functional-traditional value systems do not guarantee organizational effectiveness. In these kinds of systems, specific functional decision may be adopted, in these types of systems that are not consistent with success factors. The combination of these two dimensions can very easily lead to organizational dynamics that are highly mistrustful to groupthink, where stereotyping, illusion of invulnerability and self-righteousness is common. A well-known example of this is the Silicon Valley where sudden success fostered an elitist orientation which prevented the leaders from effectively responding to the changing external environment and led to many lay-offs and losses.

### 3.3.6.2 Functional – Charismatic

The functional and charismatic value system can lead to effective organizational outcomes. This value system exists in a more transitional phase which accordingly evolves towards a functional – traditional value system.

### 3.3.6.3 Elitist – Traditional

This is a stable, long-term, elitist dimension because organizations that have this elitist, club-like value system create specific organizational purposes such as satisfying their customers’ needs. Elitist – traditional value systems are often found in knowledge industries such as big law firms or management consulting agencies. The clientele seems to prefer a sense of exclusivity which is the main feature of elitist cultures.

One has to bear in mind that theoretical typologies are simplifications of complex realities and perfect classifications are often impossible. However, it is easier to fit in stronger and more distinct value systems into the typology.

### 3.3.6.4 Elitist – Charismatic

These value dimensions are the ones that are less likely to result in long-term organizational success.\(^{90}\)

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\(^{90}\) Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 539
3.4 The Maintenance of Core Values

3.4.1 The Importance to Maintain Values

Most companies are evolving in turbulent environments where changes often occur. According to speakers at a conference organized by the University of Pennsylvania in Mumbai (India), companies must focus on their core values, which are like beacons that can help them on course\(^91\). As a matter of fact, Harker argues that, at times such as these, when change seems unmanageable, organizations have to go back to the basics\(^92\). According to him they have to ask themselves why they exist.

In his article “Top companies put values in action”, Trigaux explains why it really does matter for companies to have and maintain corporate cultures\(^93\). Indeed, he gives the example of two companies, Anheuser-Bush and BB&T, which have encountered success by implementing such strategies. As a matter of fact, both companies take their core values very seriously. Once one has emphasized the importance for companies to maintain their core values, one might wonder how this is possible or what kind of strategies may help retaining them.

3.4.2 Maintenance of Organizational Value Systems\(^94\)

Outsiders coming into an organization inevitably raise discomfort and bring cultural assumptions into conflict with each other. However, Schein argues that it is not a guarantee that subcultures can change or reexamine the larger corporate culture, even though they are innovative. Subcultures help in disconfirming the core assumptions but if there is no sense of crisis or sufficient anxiety, the core culture will remain impervious to the innovations created.\(^95\) According to Wiener, there are three main functions within the process of maintaining a value system\(^96\):

\(^{91}\) Quoted in [http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/index.cfm?fa=viewfeature&id=487](http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/index.cfm?fa=viewfeature&id=487), April 24\(^{th}\) 2006

\(^{92}\) Quoted in [http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/index.cfm?fa=viewfeature&id=487](http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/index.cfm?fa=viewfeature&id=487), April 24\(^{th}\) 2006


\(^{94}\) Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 541-543

\(^{95}\) Schein, E., 2004, p. 309

\(^{96}\) Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 541
1. The identification of future new members who are inclined to adapt to the organization’s culture. The vital factors here are recruitment and selection.
2. The transmission of corporate core values to new members. An important aspect to think of here is the organizational socialization.
3. The support and renewal of the existing value system, managed by rites and rituals.

The source and the focus of the organization’s core values influence the form of the intervention factors recruitment and selection, organizational socialization and rites and rituals.

**Figure 4: A sequence of processes and events contributing to the transmission and maintenance of organizational value system**
3.4.2.1 Individual Adaptation to an Organizational Value System

Individuals have different ways of obtaining core values underlying a particular value system. Wiener has identified two factors which are crucial in the determination of individuals’ tendency to grasp the core values of an organization. First, one must believe that individuals have a moral obligation to engage in loyalty and duty in all social situations where they have significant personal involvement. These can be seen as generalized values of loyalty and duty and are determined mainly by socialization processes and are not affected by organizational influences. It is easier for individuals to adapt to an established culture if they are highly aware of these generalized values. Secondly, the degree of similarity between core values of each prospective member and the core organizational values. Individuals are more likely to adapt to the organizational value system when the degree of correspondence is high.

In combination, these two determinants can create a model of prospective organizational members when it comes to their ability to adapt to a given culture. Wiener has put these types into four classifications which are to be used when looking upon the three forms of interventions; recruitment and selection, organizational socialization and rites and rituals:

A) High loyalty – high congruency
B) Low loyalty – high congruency
C) High loyalty – low congruency
D) Low loyalty – low congruency

3.4.2.2 Recruitment and Selection

The objectives of recruitment and selection practices are a communicative appeal to values and beliefs of potential members and their judgment. These types of practices are designed to attract and select those persons that are most suited to given culture. When it comes to personal adaptability, type A and B individuals (described above) are preferable. Type C and especially type D are desirable if major socialization interventions are planned.

97 Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 541
The specific form of value system may also affect the recruitment and selection strategies. Cultures that heavily depend on members’ identification with leadership are strongly focused on the selection of people that are high on loyalty and duty. This fits into charismatic systems, especially charismatic-elitist ones. Since prospective individuals are already high on generalized loyalty, the identification process for them can be reduced or simplified.

### 3.4.2.3 Organizational Socialization

The values of members are brought into line with those of the organization in the process of organizational socialization. Wiener argues that formal and informal organizational socialization practices can be useful in acquiring and maintaining organizational value systems. Organizational socialization is more emphasized in the process of integrating new members as their needs for cultural adaptation are prominent. However, organizational socialization also helps in the renewal and support of an existing value system. The cultural adaptability typology indicates how much benefit each person from socialization as this cannot be equal but individual. However, Wiener has classified that Type A and B persons do not need an intensive organizational socialization. This is because their values already go well together with those of the organization. Furthermore, socialization is necessary for people belonging to Type C and D in order to simplify cultural adaptation.

The strength of socialization interventions depends on the value system. Elitist value systems include unique and specific core values and are less likely to be consistent with general societal values, comparing to the values of functional system which are better known and not as specific. Consequently, members may need more intense interventions in order to acquire such values. Indeed, in charismatic cultures more intense interventions are preferred due to the fact that such socialization will encourage identification with the leader. This socialization often involves the process of abolishment of old and incompatible values.

### 3.4.2.4 Rites and Rituals

Organizational socialization does not differ much from rites and rituals as they have similar functions. Both processes include the acquisition of core values by new members as well as the maintenance of existing value systems. However, the socialization process puts more focus on the acquisition of core values for new members, while rites and rituals emphasize the maintenance of the existing value system.
Knowing which type of rites that is most likely to emerge can be found the specific form of organizational value system.\textsuperscript{98} Trice and Beyer found that elitist value system mostly include rites of degradation and enhancement as such rites define the boundaries of the organization, its exclusivity as well as its superiority. Furthermore, rites related to hero worship and personality cults are main aspects in charismatic value systems. Also here, the identification with the leader is the main point as it is the mechanism of the acquisition of values and maintenance of it.\textsuperscript{99}

### 3.4.3 Managing by Values (MBV)

#### 3.4.3.1 What Is Managing by Values?

Nowadays, most companies have mission statements and values but the real question is: are they actually walking their talk? According to Blanchard and O’Connor, ‘managing by values’ is an accepted business practice for motivating customers to keep coming back, inspiring employees to be their best everyday, enabling owners to be both profitable and proud, and encouraging significant others to support their business commitments with you.\textsuperscript{100}

The basis of managing by values is having your priorities straight. In other words, the most important thing for a company is to know what is most important for it. The way to be of a MBV (managing by values) organization is to have a process for making sure that your organization’s values are sound and lasting.\textsuperscript{101} Companies do this by aligning both their strategic decisions and day-to-day actions with these guiding values.

According to Blanchard and O’Connor, the managing by values process consists in three phases which are the following ones:

- Phase 1: Clarifying your values
- Phase 2: Communicating your values
- Phase 3: Aligning your daily practices with your values\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{98} Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 543  
\textsuperscript{100} Blanchard, K., O’Connor, M., 1997, p. 25  
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p. 26-27  
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., p. 39
3.4.3.2 Clarifying Your Values

Blanchard and O’Connor explain that the process of clarifying values (phase 1) is made out of 7 steps:

1. Get owner’s approval of managing by values process
2. CEO provides own input about the values
3. Management team provides input without CEO
4. CEO and top management team share and compare
5. Employee focus groups provide input
6. Check with customers and significant others
7. Synthesize all inputs and present recommended values to board of directors for final approval

3.4.3.3 Communicating Your Values

The main idea of the second phase of the MBV process (communicating your values) is that genuine success does not come from proclaiming values but from consistently putting them into daily action. Indeed, when aligned around core values, ordinary people accomplish extraordinary results. Therefore, organizations have to realize the importance of communicating over and over again their values in order to make employees live accordingly to them.

There are several means that can be used to communicate corporate values. First, a company can arrange organization and unit events such as meetings, celebrations and so on. Second, an organization can communicate its values via several communications materials like posters, brochures action, cards, etc. Third, formal communications mechanisms can be used such as newsletters. Finally, companies can communicate via informal communications practices like memos, e-mail, intranet, etc.

103 Blanchard, K., O’Connor, M., 1997, p. 60
104 Ibid., p. 77
3.4.3.4 Aligning Your Daily Practices with Your Values

The last phase of the MBV process (aligning your daily practices with your values) is the result of the previous one. Indeed, a good communication of values should help employees put them in action. As a matter of fact, as Blanchard and O’Connor explain walking one’s talk is an ongoing journey. As a matter of fact, the company can organize individual (e.g. leadership practices), team (e.g. group dynamics & processes) and organizational (e.g. rewards & recognition practices) practices in order to improve the alignment within the organization.

3.4.4 Other Ways to Retain Values

3.4.4.1 Consistently Communicate the Core Values

According to Trigaux, the key element to maintain values is to communicate them all the time in any situation. For instance, he explains that BB&T’s values are published in a small booklet handed to every new employee in order to give the company a sense of purpose and a consistency of values. As a matter of fact, Allison, CEO of BB&T, said the cultural statements of some businesses are just “bromides and clichés” that sounds good but are disconnected from the company and its employees. At BB&T, on the other hand, core values are reinforced often and training is extensive. In addition, half of the performance appraisal of managers depends on whether they follow the company’s core values. Finally, Trigaux concludes that, first, companies should keep corporate values simple and communicate them consistently. Managers should be honest and show that honesty in their actions in order to gain the trust and commitment of employees. Second, there is a growing sense that investors, regulators and the media do not understand and may be actually subverting some of the positive corporate cultures. Therefore, organizations should be aware and careful with those negative influences.

105 Blanchard, K., O’Connor, M., 1997, p.102
3.4.4.2 Have Discipline and Involve All the Employees

According to Wenjen, maintaining values requires extraordinary discipline from companies, the discipline to stick to those values\(^{109}\). As a matter of fact, she gives the example of a situation in which she and other managers had to look for alternative solutions in a growth problem of her company in order not to go against the corporate core values. Furthermore, Wenjen argues that involving all employees in the company and in its values will help maintaining those values, especially when employees can see that the whole company follows and lives according to them.

Another way to maintain core values is to consider organizations as living organism, forever changing. According to Kamath, companies cannot be cast in stone but should be always be guided by their core values\(^{110}\). In fact, Banga argues that organizations need to be more sensitive in order to take changes in their stride\(^{111}\). They must be in close contact with stakeholders, invest in people, nurture a culture of empowerment and move from hierarchical to flat structures. Furthermore, Parekh adds that clarity of purpose is the most important\(^{112}\). That is the reason why organizations should have effective public policy to accept reality, harness knowledge and generate dialogue between all employees.


\(^{110}\) Quoted in [http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/index.cfm?fa=viewfeature&id=487](http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/index.cfm?fa=viewfeature&id=487), April 24\(^{th}\) 2006

\(^{111}\) Quoted in [http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/index.cfm?fa=viewfeature&id=487](http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/index.cfm?fa=viewfeature&id=487), April 24\(^{th}\) 2006

\(^{112}\) Quoted in [http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/index.cfm?fa=viewfeature&id=487](http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/index.cfm?fa=viewfeature&id=487), April 24\(^{th}\) 2006
CHAPTER 4: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

In this chapter, we will present our empirical data. First of all, we will introduce our interviewees in order to give an overview of their role and experience within the company. Second of all, we will present the organization, Atea Logistics. Finally, we will present our empirical findings that we have organized in three parts according to the structure of our theory chapter: culture, core values and the maintenance of core values.

4.1 Presentation of the Interviewees

Following is the list of our interviewees and a short presentation of each of them:

- **Pär Aspengren**, Managing Director of Atea Logistics, Växjö. He has been working for Atea Logistics since 1996. Before the creation of Atea Logistics, he was the managing director of Atea Sweden.
- **Johan Glinghammar**, Recycling Supervisor. He entered the company in 1996 and has occupied different functions since that time (i.e. truck driver, logistic handler and so on).
- **Heléne Gröön**, Human Resource Manager, Atea Logistics, Växjö. She has been working for Atea Logistics since 1985.
- **Stefan Idstrand**, Speaking Partner for Swedish customers (i.e. Atea Sweden). He has been working for Atea since 1985.
- **Marie Persson**, Employed by Manpower. She has been working in the administration department for Atea Logistics since December 2005.
- **Anders Ripström**, Production and logistic Manager. He entered the company in 1996.
- **Andreas Sjöström**, Business developer. He joined the company in 2003.
- **Frank Svensson**, Purchasing Manager. He has been working for Atea since 1987.

All the interviews were conducted at Atea Logistics in Växjö and an interview schedule can be found in the appendixes.
4.2 Presentation of Atea Logistics

4.2.1 A Leading IT Product Supplier

Atea is a company which helps organizations and companies increase the benefits of Information Technologies (IT) by providing products and services that simplify the management, operation and development of IT infrastructure. As an IT product supplier, Atea covers the entire cycle from the supply of new IT products to the recycling of old ones. One of Atea’s competitive advantages is its value chain. The life-cycle philosophy that it embodies improves their customers’ PC environment as well as the way they work. As a result, those clients have time and energy left over so that they can develop their own business.\(^{113}\)

Atea is also a successful company regarding the growth of its turnover. According to Pär Aspengren, Atea’s turnover represented 7.5 billion SEK in 2005. The company’s goal for 2006 is to reach a turnover of 8 to 9 billion SEK\(^ {114}\).

4.2.2 Changes Through the Time

Atea’s history comprises over 30 years of development in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. It is a continuous development which has taken place in the four Nordic countries and which in 2001 resulted in it being the Nordic countries leading company for the advice, sales, distribution and integration of IT-products and related services\(^ {115}\).

Atea has its roots in the PC-retailer Owell, which was founded in 1981 under the name of Owell Brevteknik. In 1989, Owell expanded its operations and in 1994 it became listed on the stock market. In 1995, Owell was acquired by WM-data and in 1999 the entire cooperation became part of the WM-data infrastructure. At the end of 2000, WM-data decided to focus on the business which now goes under the name of Atea under its own brand. In 2001 Atea started up in all the Nordic countries. Since October 2001, Atea is functioning as a separate


\(^{114}\) Interview with Pär Aspengren, February 13\(^{th}\) 2006

legal business in all four countries (Atea Sweden, Atea Denmark, Atea Finland, and Atea Norway) as well as jointly in Atea Holding AB.

![Organization chart of Atea Holding AB](image)

Source: Own creation

**Figure 5: Organization chart of Atea Holding AB**

In March 2005, Atea acquired the market-leading provider of IT-infrastructures, Martinsson, with over 600 employees and 19 offices, specialized in helping businesses and organizations to achieve their objectives with well-designed end-to-end solutions. With Martinsson’s expertise in consulting, the merger resulted in Atea becoming the leading distributor for IT-solutions in Sweden. Atea now employs about 1500 employees in the Nordic region and among those co-workers, 900 work in Sweden.\(^\text{116}\)

In such a growing and changing environment, Atea decided in 2004 to gather all its purchasing and logistic operations in Växjö in a structure called Atea Logistics, which now employs 200 people. As a matter of fact, Atea Logistics replaces the logistic offices that were previously located in each of the four Nordic countries. This new unit is therefore responsible for the supply of Atea products and services to the rest of the entire Atea group (Atea Sweden, Atea Denmark, Atea Finland, and Atea Norway). Atea Logistics handles everything from configuration and delivery of equipments to recycling of worn-out equipments.\(^\text{117}\)

\(^{116}\) Interview with Pär Aspengren, February 13\(^{th}\) 2006

4.3 Culture

4.3.1 Atea Logistics: a Comfortable Working-Place

There is a clear general belief among all our interviewees that Atea Logistics is a pleasant and solid company to work at. Marie Persson, who entered the organization last year, confirms the existence of this comfortable and enjoyable atmosphere as well as the “family-friendly” feeling throughout the organization. According to Stefan Idstrand, the unity among the employees is very high, which shortens the decision making process. In addition, he truly believes that this is a good company to work at.

Even though the culture is not one of the main corporate focuses at the moment, Heléne Gröön explains that it used to be different. However, she argues that the corporate culture is still reflected throughout the organization. She thinks that Atea Logistics is a solid organization to work at, with good working conditions. As far as Pär Aspengren is concerned, he confirms the good atmosphere within the company:

“We are very seldom arguing or yelling at each other. There is a good atmosphere but at the same time when we say “hey, it is serious now” then everyone is listening and focused. Since many of us have been here for such a long time, we have grown together as an entity”

Furthermore, Pär Aspengren believes that Atea Logistics is a good company to work at. As a matter of fact, he thinks that being part of the company for so long affects the business:

“I am a continuity-fundamentalist. I think it is much easier to work if you have some kind of continuity in the company. It can get really difficult for companies especially if they change their top management all the time. Each new manager wants to change something”.

4.3.2 A Changing Company

Heléne Gröön explains the changes that have been going on at Atea Logistics during the last few years. She argues that they have led to an increased pressure on the employees, mostly because people have been more focused on the changes rather than on the work itself. Atea
Logistics has grown from a small company, where everybody knew everybody, to a large organization which is dependent on a solid management and lots of engagement from all employees. Stefan Idstrand explains that people got used to the fact that the organization is constantly changing and thereby so has the culture. He points out that new people who enter the organization quickly adapt to whatever situation there is. The older employees also easily adapt to the newcomers. Heléne Gröön argues that even though the environment has changed, Atea Logistics has more or less kept on doing the same thing during the years, which is one of the reasons why Atea Logistics is able to preserve its culture in such a good way. Another factor that has helped maintain the culture is the fact that Atea Logistics has lived a preserved life in Växjö, since all functions are here, such as workforce, logistics, purchase, economy, etc.

Moreover, some employees consider change as something exciting. Indeed, Frank Svensson explains:

“I believe that we have come to the point where people are used to and expect Atea Logistics to constantly change. Change is probably one of the reasons for why people enjoy working at Atea Logistics and stay within the organization”.

However, Frank argues that today there is a general belief that people do not want to change. Of course, he admits that there are people within Atea Logistics who think that it is hard with all the changes, but he really thinks that Atea Logistics has gotten used to all the changes and nowadays benefits from them in many areas.

According to Stefan Idstrand, change is probably the reason why Atea Logistics has a lack in some important areas, such as values. Heléne Gröön also emphasizes this point and claims that there has not been enough time to deal with the aspects of values in the company. In fact, she explains that all employees only focused on performing their jobs. Nonetheless, this situation is starting to change as people realized this lack and are starting to work on it. Indeed, a new project called P-A-Q-S has started to be developed as explained by Anders Ripström and Andreas Sjöström. It deals with values for the organization but this project will be developed further in the empirical part.
Marie Persson argues about the lack of contacts with people from other departments. She explained that the situation has come to a point where employees from a department only meet with employees from other departments during the “every-three-month” meetings. According to her, this is not enough. As Atea Logistics is growing so much, the sense of a common-culture based on closeness is starting to fade away. In fact, Pär Aspengren explains that before he more or less knew all his employees but now it is impossible. It is a common belief that something should be done to gather or make the different departments work as a team, otherwise this current situation could lead to problematic consequences as explained by Andreas Sjöström:

“There could easily be walls created between people and departments if you do not work in the direction of preventing it”.

### 4.3.3 A Flat Organization

Most of the interviewees told us about the flat organization structure of Atea Logistics. Marie Persson, who arrived in the company six month ago, argues that this open atmosphere with a low power-distance is important for the entire culture since it makes it friendlier. In fact, she was surprised to notice that everyone is accessible in the company:

“Of course, I do not go to the highest manager whenever I have a problem because it is not much of his/her concern. But whenever there is a difficulty, I ask the ones responsible for it and I know that I will always get the help and feedback I am looking for”.

Heléne Gröön explains that this flat organization comes from the past and more exactly from the Owell period when the intense “family-friendly” atmosphere came up. As it was previously explained, the company was much smaller back then and everybody knew each other. People had no problem discussing things with one another. Today the situation has changed as Atea Logistics has grown into a large organization. However, Heléne Gröön still emphasizes that this spirit still remains; it is just harder to maintain it because of the company’s size.
Stefan Idstrand draws attention to the fact that Atea Logistics stands for friendship and unity, which leads to shorter distances in the hierarchy. According to Pär Aspengren, the flat structure of Atea Logistics is of tremendous importance for the company because it helps people understand that everyone is important and contributes to the company’s results. He explains that most employees stay for a long time within the company as compared to other countries where Atea Logistics operates. Hence, for him, the situation in Växjö is somehow unique.

4.3.4 The “Owell-Time”

According to most of our interviewees, the roots from Atea Logistics’ culture come from the “Owell-time”. As a matter of fact, the Owell culture seems to be the main influence of Atea Logistics’ current culture. Marie Persson explains that she is often told about the Owell culture and the spirit that took place during this period, although sometimes she has a hard time relating to it since she was not there at that time and has not received any specific information about it. Furthermore, Heléne Gröön explains that no matter what the company has gone through, for instance acquisitions and mergers, Atea Logistics has always been able to preserve its corporate culture from the “Owell-time”. She says:

“I would argue that the foundation of our culture goes back all the way to Owell. It was a long time but one can clearly see patterns that were created during this time.”

Heléne Gröön argues that the “family-friendly” atmosphere that was created during the Owell time is still obvious throughout the organization. Of course there have been many changes but for anyone who has worked in the company for many years, it is easy to relate to this time.

Frank Svensson agrees that the Owell-time still has a great impact on the current culture although he thinks that it has changed quite a lot after all, but in a positive way. As a matter of fact, he believes that people who have been working here for so long may not have reflected those changes and therefore in a way not have realized them. He thinks that it could easily happen. Indeed, he argues that the culture has changed accordingly to the environment.
4.4 Core Values

4.4.1 Difficulties to State the Core Values

There is some sort of confusion in the organization when it comes to stating the present core values of the company. Due to many recent changes, Atea Logistics has no clear values stated. Throughout the organization, employees are not sure anymore of what the core values are. Most interviewees encountered difficulties when attempting to define or list the current core values. Pär Aspengren explains:

“If you had come three or four years ago, I would have been sure of what our core values are. But right now, I think I have to be a little philosophical. I have to think while I am answering because I do not have clear picture of what they are.”

According to Anders Ripström, Atea Logistics is lacking core values at the moment because the whole organization has been on a journey, changing from a small to a huge company. Frank Svensson explained that this journey has had its effects on the organization’s core values because in one way or the other, the owners or the management always bring some changes to the core values. Furthermore, he adds:

“You have to realize that there have been so many changes the last two years, regarding what kind of company we are. So maybe our core values are “on hold”, because we really do not know where we are going due to all the influences from these changes.”

Employees that have been working in the company since the Owell-time, have somehow had the same core values which have been spread out, maintained, and communicated to newcomers throughout the organization. Heléne Gröön explains:

“We are standing on a platform and depending on what happens in the world, we are either on one side of it or on the other one, but our base remains the same.”
Growing from a company working on its own to becoming a part of a large Nordic group has been challenging for Atea Logistics. Influences from all directions need to be put in place and Frank Svensson explained that maybe one has to make a mix of all of them in order to succeed and satisfy all the interested parties. He argues that this is Atea Logistics’ greatest impact on the core values and that the problem lies in how to transfer this to the employees. The management team has not changed much during these changes and they act in the same way. However, something must have changed, and the core values have been mistreated in the sense of communicating them to new employees and making sure to keep them clear. There has been a lot of newcomers lately from employment agencies such as Manpower and MaxKompetens, and according to Frank Svensson, this is an indicator of Atea Logistics’ current situation where they do not know exactly where they are heading and for how long the situation will be as it is. Heléne Gröön explains:

“We have a lack with what regards our values. What are the core values of the company? What do we really want? How should we act, think and be? What is right or wrong, both internally and externally? It is a bit unclear and could be hard to do in a ‘square’ project because there are no clear guidelines.”

Before Atea’s creation, the management discussed missions and visions during strategic discussions and at that time it was stated how an Atea employee should feel and respond to these factors. Furthermore, we were told that the core values have not changed much since the Owell-time if one considers how employees are and act in their daily life. Frank Svensson argues that it has been the same values the whole time, but that the words to express them have changed. According to him, when Atea was formed, the words that were discussed were:

- Everyone can and is allowed to succeed
- Responsibility
- Openness
- Freedom of speech
- Low hierarchy (leaders that are close to employees)
- Support
Nevertheless, as most interviewees explained, these core values has been mistreated or ignored for a while and no one knows if they are still valid. Due to the changes, Atea Logistics does not know whether to keep on the same track or if they have to change according to the preferences set by the headquarters. Nowadays, there are even more interested parties that want to be a part of the discussions. The struggle lies within the management as they are more influenced of what is going on in the entire Atea group. Pär Aspengren adds that it is hard to state values because of this situation and every owner has its own interests. As mentioned earlier, Atea is today still owned by WM Data. They own 48.8% of the company but they are just a financial owner. The other owner is the company 3i (48.8%) and they consider themselves as the largest venture capital company in Europe. Pär Aspengren explains:

“The thing is that these investors are not at all interested in our customers or in what we are doing but only in capital efficiency and this kind of matters. These investors are constantly focused on our capital efficiency. Their focus is targeted only on financial aspects. I know it is like that and I know we will have new owners sooner or later but meanwhile you are in a strange situation having to deal with “owners’ strategies” instead of corporate strategies. By periods, you are more focused on customers, how you are working with people and sometimes you have other focuses. But now we have to care about what are our core values.”

Finally, another difficulty that most of our interviewees realized was that it is hard to talk about the company’s values as they are more something that they live with but do not really think of.

4.4.2 Definition of Atea Logistics’ Core Values

4.4.2.1 An Unclear Picture

As previously mentioned, none of the interviewees could clearly state the current values of Atea Logistics. Due to the changes, focus has been put on managing the day to day priorities and aspects such as values have been left aside.

“There have been too many changes which is why I cannot state the values today.”
Some interviewees also argued that there are no clearly stated values but that there are values that are taken for granted. Hélène Gröön explains that during the first five years of the Owell-time and until 1990, there were no stated core values. However, later, the existing and lived values had developed so much that it became easy to put them down on paper. This was also a time where a lot of new employees were hired and therefore there was a need to state the core values in order to communicate them to newcomers. In fact, many employees from that time are still working at Atea Logistics and that is one of the reasons why the old values still exist.

However, the recent merger with Martinsson has led to a clash between the values of Atea and the ones of Martinsson according to most of our interviewees. This, of course, is another factor which makes it harder for employees to state Atea Logistics’ core values. As a matter of fact, Atea Logistics does not know if it can operate on its own within this merger or if it is to be more controlled by the headquarters. Pär Aspengren explains:

“The thing with core values is that they are worth nothing if you do not stand up for them or live according to them. If you express core values but then act in another way then those values are really worth nothing.”

Furthermore, Frank Svensson adds that a company can increase employees’ salary and give them bonuses but if they do not feel comfortable within the organization, they will leave the company no matter what bonuses they get. Being aware of that is very important for Atea Logistics. According to Hélène Gröön, now that Atea Logistics has gone through so many changes, service and feelings become important. She explains:

“Certain points are extra important, such as service and feeling. The focus should not be on the hard values but on the soft ones. When we started Atea back in 2001, our goal was to become ‘the biggest small company’ and we still have this goal. The aim was to have a friendly environment where everyone can speak freely, say what they think, should help and respect each other like in a family. We are now still trying to keep this atmosphere and spirit by avoiding hierarchy and keeping a flat organization. It is a very open environment but there have been a lot of newcomers as you have seen but how should they get the feeling of the Atea Logistics spirit?”
4.4.2.2 The “Forgotten” Values

Even though only two of our interviewees mentioned them (Heléne Gröön and Frank Svensson), Atea had stated some core values during the first two years of its existence. In 2002, Atea declared that they have a positive outlook of people and that their work should be characterized by simplicity, humbleness and directed towards profitability. The output of the work should be beneficial for customers. Participation and commitment should contribute to a will of constantly changing. The core values that were stated at this time were as follow:\(^{118}\):

- **Responsibility**
  - Honesty
  - Respect
  - Confidence
  - Openness

- **Precision**
  - Quality
  - Secure delivery
  - Accessibility
  - Clearness

- **Development**
  - Customers
  - Partners
  - Co-workers
  - Activity

In 2003, the goal was still to characterize the daily work by participation and commitment as well as by a will to constantly change. So, the core values did not change much during this period of time. The stated values were the following ones:\(^{119}\):

- Positive/sympathetic outlook of people
- Simplicity
- Humbleness
- Direction towards profitability
- Customer benefits

\(^{118}\) Free translation from Atea confidential documents, 2002

\(^{119}\) Free translation from Atea confidential documents, 2003
These are the last documented statements of Atea’s core values. In 2003, a research was made by Alecta in order to see if Atea Logistics was to be given an award for Sweden’s best workplace of the year. Researchers were impressed by the entrepreneurial spirit that was found in the organization and highlighted the openness, the great extent of trust, freedom, and responsibility among employees. Furthermore, the will to constantly change, develop and evolve was emphasized.  

### 4.4.2.3 P-A-Q-S

Anders Ripström explained that he recently realized that Atea Logistics has gone through an intense journey. In fact, he thinks that because of all the recent changes the company has gotten a little bit out of track. Therefore, he asked one of his employees, Andreas Sjöström, to redefine or clarify the warehouse’s strategy and core values and possibly to the entire company. This project was an independent mission and Andreas Sjöström conducted it completely on his own. He did not receive any help from anyone and did not interview any employee.

P-A-Q-S stands for People, Achievement, Quality and Shop and is supposed to summarize Atea Logistics’ global strategy. In fact, Anders Ripström uses the metaphor of a football team to illustrate the P-A-Q-S strategy:

“We can say that the Atea Logistics team is playing P-A-Q-S like a 4-4-2 for a football team.”

Following is how each word is defined in the booklet where the P-A-Q-S project is described:

**People:** We want it to be fun working at Atea Logistics. There are high demands as far as flexibility and decision making are concerned. Our values and quality systems are guiding us into providing our customers with the best possible service”.

**Achievement:** Increase in productivity leads to better profit and development for the organization”.

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120 Report, Alecta award for Sweden’s best work place of the year 2003, p. 4
“**Quality:** Quality is a value for the customer and does not depend on documentation or systems. Quality is to be seen as the actions that are made in order to give our customers value”.

“**Shop:** Our department and units should be perceived as small, well taken care of shops. We are familiar with the customers and their needs. We are in control of the shelves and the warehouse. In smaller shops the comfort increases, which encourages engagement and better service”.

Then Anders Ripström explains that as a football coach might give personal orders to each player, Atea Logistics needs to guide its employees with core values:

“Each player receives personal orders from the coach which for the Atea Logistics players are: service-minded, responsibility and engagement. These are to be seen as Atea Logistics’ core values”.

These values are therefore connected to the word “people” in the P-A-Q-S plan. Besides, Andreas Sjöström who is the one who came up with the P-A-Q-S strategy plan and those core values explained, that he only used books and his former job-experience at Manpower to create this project. Indeed, when he was an employee of Manpower, he was working with the same values and thought that they were general values that could fit any company:

“I came up with these values alone. I am afraid to admit that these values do not come from the staff since I did not have time to interview other employees”

Moreover, both Anders Ripström and Andreas Sjöström argue that these three core values would be suitable for the whole company. However, none of them has yet received any feedback regarding the P-A-Q-S findings. Indeed, the results have been succinctly presented to the company for the moment but have not received any feedback yet.
4.4.2.4 The Discovered Values

Now that the company is starting to stabilize, the redefinition of the company’s core values is of tremendous importance, as all the managers we interviewed told us. As we were conducting our interviews, we have been able to identify several values that were expressed by all our interviewees. Following is a list of those values:

- Participation
- Low power-distance, or openness
- Trust
- Responsibility
- Family-friendly organization
- Respect

Heléne Gröön explained that some companies try to use more attractive words to state their values but she does not think it is a good solution for Atea Logistics. Indeed, as Pär Aspengren argued above, successful values are values that are lived by the employees. According to Heléne Gröön, it is more important for Atea Logistics to know that everyone is part of the same family rather than having flashy words on their website that no employee would understand.

“We always argue that we are a small boat which turns and steer easily.”

Participation:

An important value that we found in the company is participation. This concerns the fact that each employee should feel as a part of the company and know that he/she contributes to the success of the company. It is a value which has its origin from the creation of Owell and deals with the fact that each employee has to feel part of a team and that they can make changes in the company. Frank Svensson explains:

“If I know I am a part of the company and am aware of my role, the company should succeed and then I know I am a part of the success.”
This value is not only shared by employees who have been working since the Owell-time, but also by some newcomers. Stefan Idstrand explains that newcomers easily adapt to this value and quite quickly feel their contribution to the success of the company. Marie Persson explained that she knows what she is contributing to and realizes that if she does not do her job, someone else might not be able to do his/her job. To put it in a nutshell, Pär Aspengren says:

“Everyone in the management team bears in mind that all employees have the same value wherever and whatever they are doing for the company, be they managers or not. And I think that this is one core values for us. Everyone is contributing to the result of the company”.

Low power-distance or openness:
Openness can also be included as a value. A number of employees mentioned the freedom of saying what they want and asking questions, without having anyone putting them down and everyone in the company is accessible. For instance, Pär Aspengren admitted being asked questions while walking in the company and taking time to answer them. He explains:

“We are trying to avoid having a high hierarchy and tend to have a flat organization. That is another core value”.

In that sense, the informal meetings which take place in the corridors (in the administration building) are very important. However, Heléne Gröön sees a negative effect in this. Indeed, she is afraid that information might not reach everyone. Frank Svensson also adds that employees can say what they want, do what they want as long as they do not leave the frame that is set. It is also important to listen to what others have to say. He argues that it is less important to tell someone what to do than it is to listen to this person. For example, according to him, a good question which is not asked enough is: how the newcomers feel after working for the company for a month or so? Finally, he adds:

“Our leaders or managers are not seen as being on another level because there are close to their employees”.

Trust:
Trust is a crucial value at Atea Logistics. It is argued that everybody must trust each other in order to do a good job and that it will result in a feeling of responsibility (our next identified value). Even newcomers feel that everyone trusts each other and them as well. Stefan Idstrand says that since Owell was a small company, it was never a problem to trust each other. Frank Svensson also says that everyone knew what everyone else was doing. Furthermore, Stefan Idstrand explains:

“Most of the members of the organization feel that trust is very important. This is perhaps due to the fact that many employees grew up with the Owell/WM-data way of thinking. In a way, it is in our spine or in our genes.”

Besides, Pär Aspengren says that trust is a really important value at Atea Logistics that he is not ready to compromise about it. He illustrates this with his refusal of having cameras in the warehouse which would decrease the feeling of trust:

“So it is a sort of a unique warehouse in that respect and even the customers know that in Växjö we trust our employees. Therefore, this is important both for the company and the customers and I do hope we can keep it that way.”

Furthermore, Pär Aspengren argues that employees trust the management and especially him as a managing director. He explained that Atea in Denmark hired a managing director and fired him only seven months later and if it was a single case, it would be ok. But if the company starts to hire and fire very often, as they did in Denmark, then employees stop listening to the managing director as they do not think he or she will stay in the company for long. Therefore, a leader has a great impact in influencing the values. Besides, according to Pär Aspengren, employees need time to start trusting their manager.

Another factor that strengthens the value of trust is the fact that no big analysis is done when decisions are to be taken but rather the employees (or in this case, the management) are asked to trust their feelings and act when something feels good. However, Heléne Gröön says that this situation is changing and that the “entrepreneurial spirit” by itself is not enough nowadays because lots of money is at stake. Heléne Gröön explains that the more changes a company goes through the more control the managers need to have. Nonetheless, she does not think
people at Atea Logistics reflect much on changes since there has been so many lately that they have gotten used to it.

Andreas Sjöström is the only interviewee who does not agree with trust being an important or even a core value. He does not think it is a wrong value but he does not agree upon it.

**Responsibility:**

For Heléne Gröön, responsibility is the first idea that crosses her mind when she is asked about the company’s value. She continues:

“We do not want to tell someone what their area is because we want them to manage their area by themselves. Responsibility has always been important for us. If, for any reason, there is someone who does not want responsibility, there is a problem because we strongly believe in this”.

Anders Ripström and Pär Aspengren explained that responsibility is very important in the top management team, where they have a very high level of trust. Johan Glinghammar agrees upon this and thinks that trust is important in his department but also reflects the rest of the organization. Results are being checked but how employees actually work is not controlled; they are trusted and responsible for what they are doing. He also explains that he has noticed that people work better when they are trusted. He believes that effectiveness is connected to trust and responsibility.

**Family-friendly organization & Respect:**

Another value which is vivid and still maintained since the Owell-time is the familiar feeling that exists throughout the company. Owell started as a small, flexible company with an open and nice atmosphere where everyone treated each other with respect. Employees created close relationships towards each other and since there are many employees left from that time, they have tried to pass on this feeling and the value of being a family and respecting each other.

According to Stefan Idstrand, this friendship also creates a sense of unity among members as well as it shortens the way in the hierarchy. Employees also take responsibility for each other and if there are any problems, people are aware of them and there is always someone who can help solve them. Moreover, Pär Aspengren says:
“When people have been working together for so long, they know each other very well despite differences in their personalities. It seems to be easier to work that way as everyone knows what is in each others’ minds and they know what is in yours”.

Employees at Atea Logistics argue that they know how to work together. Being there for each other is very important even though it has been a bit hard to explain it with so many newcomers. Therefore, this family-friendly climate within the company really goes along with the previously identified value openness.

Employees have explained that having this family feeling has led to the fact that people really enjoy coming to work and spend eight hours there. In addition, Pär Aspengren argues that it has always been important for the company to “have happy employees”. Therefore, lots of employees feel that it is crucial to get back to these values again so that newcomers can be integrated better and feel more comfortable within Atea Logistics. Frank Svensson adds:

“It is one of our strong core values and we need to realize. If we do not treat employees well then we will not have this company.”

However, some newcomers argued that there could be a better unity among the different departments. Indeed, each department is well united within itself but there is no real overall company unity or family. Johan Glinghammar explains that the recent growth of Atea Logistics has led to this situation and therefore some efforts should be done to get back to the previous situation.

### 4.4.3 The Importance of Core Values

Going through many changes could either result in a company loosing its values or sticking to them. Back in the eighties, Owell started as a small, flexible company with an open and nice atmosphere where everyone treated each other with respect. Employees created close relationships towards each other and since many employees have remained since that time, they have tried to pass on this feeling and the value of being a family and respecting each other. Hence, one can understand that at the very first creation of the company, the core values were really important even though they were not yet stated on paper.
In 1990, when the board of Owell stated the organization’s values for the first time, the company had realized their importance especially as there was a need to communicate those values to the numerous newcomers entering the organization.

Our identified values (participation, openness, trust, responsibility, family-friendly, and respect) are the ones that most interviewees agreed upon and used to describe Atea Logistics.

Andreas Sjöström, who developed the P-A-Q-S project, explains that the company wants values that can be stuck inside every employee within a few years, and that is one of the objectives of the P-A-Q-S project. Frank Svensson thinks that if the small shops are being well taken care of then as a result the whole department will be working well too. However, he thinks that it is crucial that these “shops” are heading towards the same direction and he thinks that Pär Aspengren has a great role in this. Furthermore, he argues that it is important for the company to know its core values in order to work towards the same goal:

“If you do not have the same core values in the shops and you do not have a leader telling employees in which direction they should develop that shop, then you will probably have ten different companies within the company.”

Employees agree upon the fact that it is hard to work if no one knows the direction where they are heading. In other words, if the company is growing without any clear values, it will be hard to give a clear picture of Atea Logistics to its employees. Besides, Atea Logistics’ employees are aware of the importance of core values and of their transfer to newcomers. Those new employees will feel welcome and also that they are a part of the organization if the values are correctly passed on. Frank Svensson says:

“Something must have happened. In former days, we used to make sure that newcomers got the proper information on what we are doing, why are we doing it, who are our customers, etc. We have the same management team, but something must have happened because why are we doing things differently now? We now realize that we have mistreated our core values, because it is important that employees and newcomers know what our core values are.”
Having strong core values creates a feeling of unity within Atea Logistics. The familiar culture that they have built up with the notions of responsibility and trust, has led to a unity among employees, showing a spirit of “it is us against the world” as Pär Aspengren explained. Most employees recognize the importance of having stated core values, not only to simplify it for newcomers but also as clear guidance for all employees.

4.4.4 The Sources of Core Values

We have been able to identify several sources of values. As a matter of fact, people who are in anyway related to Atea Logistics are creating and/or influencing the company’s core values.

4.4.4.1 Traditions and “Old” Members

Atea Logistics’ core values have their roots in Owell’s core values. Owell is very often referred to which proves the tremendous influence it still has on Atea Logistics’ core values. Heléne Gröön explains:

“In the beginning, we did not have any values but they emerged and as the company developed these values became clearer and clearer. Eventually in 1990, we stated the values in a more structured way. (...) Today, I still feel those values present in Atea Logistics”

The culture that was formed during the Owell-time has to some extent survived all the changes that have occurred and is still vivid in the company today. The atmosphere is still very friendly and open, and one can still sense the small business spirit from the Owell-time until now, values have emerged after sensing what is functioning or not in the organization. Since there are a lot of employees left today that were present when these values were created, those values have been passed on.

When WM-data acquired Owell, they tried to assert their own culture and as a result the employees were a bit lost. However, Heléne Gröön says:
“But since the culture we had from Owell was so strong, we fairly quickly found our way back to it. And later, when Atea was founded in 2001, we said that we would retain what we had learned during the years. I also think that our strong culture is the reason for why we have managed all the changes that has been going on lately.”

Marie Persson states that there seems to be different values in the different departments. She argues that this is perhaps because there are more people from the Owell time in one department than in another.

### 4.4.4.2 The Owners

Each change of ownership resulted in more or less important changes for Atea’s core values. However, most of the time the company has been able to stay on the same tracks as their new owners let them “act in peace”. After the Owell-time, when the company was small and independent with its own culture and values, WM-data became an owner and there were some changes within the organization. For example, WM-Data was a much larger company than Owell and therefore Owell had to adjust to WM-data’s principles and values. Heléne Gröön explained that when Owell became WM-data they faced a completely different culture even though it was stated in the same way on paper. Indeed, the core values that were expressed were almost the same, with a big focus on employees, their comfort and the fact that the company wanted them to enjoy their work and thereby perform better. However, the way WM-data “lived” was different she says. Pär Aspengren explains:

“Sometimes, the owners, WM Data for instance, say that these are the core values in our group so you have to adapt to those. On the other hand, 3i, our other owner, has never talked about core values because they only have a short time interest in the company. They will never talk about this kind of matters. Therefore, it is up to the board and the management team to create the core values. In that sense, if you believe that core values are important then you do something about it. If you do not then, nothing will happen. But, I do not think that the board is really interested in values as well so eventually it is more up to the management team.”
Furthermore, Pär Aspengren regrets that the owners are mostly interested in the company’s capital efficiency and only consider the company as a short-term investment. Indeed, he explains that with the rumors of a repurchase of Atea tend to create a feeling of fear among employees who wonder how safe their positions are. As a matter of fact, Stefan Idstrand confirmed this feeling of threat and expressed the need for more security on this level. Nonetheless, Pär Aspengren considers Atea Logistics luckier than its counterpart Atea Sweden:

“In one respect, we are quite lucky and happy that we are not located in Stockholm where our owners are located. They are not so thrilled of flying to Växjö so they are not here that often, meaning that we can run Atea Logistics as we want to. We are in a way “hands-free”. For the managing director of Atea Sweden, it is another story as he is located next to our owners so his life is more complicated than mine. So, to certain extent, we can run our own business here the way we want to. And in that sense, we are trying to keep our core values from the Orwell-time”.

A year ago, the Atea Group acquired Martinsson and therefore welcomed hundreds of new employees. Nevertheless, it is still not decided whether Atea Logistics will continue to work on its own or if they will have to follow the guidelines valid for all resources within the Atea Group set by the owners and the new board of directors. Heléne Gröön argues:

“One must understand that we are not the only ones who are confused, the former Martinsson employees are also confused but I guess it works like this before everybody finds their roles.”

4.4.4.3 The Management Team and the Leaders

Even though Atea Logistics has a flat organization, there are lots of middle managers and they have the toughest jobs according to Heléne Gröön since they are influenced both from the top-managers and the workforce. However, managers are not seen as bosses but rather as leaders of a group within Atea Logistics. Newcomers state that managers are seen as role models and thereby as carriers of values. It is also argued throughout the organization that the more changes there are, the more employees tend to feel controlled. Heléne Gröön argues that
managers have to be as effective as possible but do not want to control the employees because this is not something that Atea Logistics wants to stand for. Anders Ripström explains:

“Pär is very transparent; he wants his employees to take their own decisions. I truly believe he has done a good job as far as creating a culture. He would be very hard to replace and it would take a long time”.

When Pär Aspengren entered the company ten years ago, he fitted well into the established culture and could enhance and live by the values that were previously created. Within the company, he is considered as a charismatic leader to whom employees can identify. Frank Svensson thinks that Pär Aspengren has had a great impact on creating the values of respect, of how to treat people and what kind of respect one should have towards employees. Heléne Gröön goes on:

“Pär Aspengren is a person who walks around and talks to everyone at the company. As a result, the employees regard him as one of them and not as their Managing Director.”

As a matter of fact, this was evident when we followed him for a company-tour. Indeed, he seemed to know all the employees and they appeared to be familiar with him. Pär Aspengren himself is aware of the fact that the way he behaves means a lot to others. He explains:

“The thing with core values is that they are worth nothing if you do not stand up for them or live according to them. If you express core values but then act in another way then those values are really worth nothing. (...) I am becoming more and more aware of how important my leadership is and how my management style affects the organization. For instance, the way I behave means so much for others. Everyone can see if you really mean or do what you say or if it is just words. It is really important. I am more and more wondering what will happen when I will leave the company. What will happen to those core values? Is it something that can stay which is built in the walls? Or is it related to some people? I have no answer to that. It is interesting and I think that the way you behave is so important because everyone can see exactly what you mean. You have to be aware of that”.

Moreover, Pär Aspengren points out another kind of influence for the values: the leaders. He argues that they can have either a good or a bad influence on the other employees:
“There are always some kinds of informal leaders in organizations with strong personalities. They do not need to be in the top management to have a strong influence. You have to be aware of them. And as a managing director, you have to realize that there can be negative informal leaders; Strong personalities that are influencing the organization in a negative way. In that case, you have to identify them and get rid of them because there are dangerous for others. On the other hand, you have positive leaders carrying traditions and positive values”.

Anders Ripström thinks that a new leader would of course put his/her mark on the organization but that it will be hard to change. A crucial aspect of becoming a new leader for a group is that one must agree upon the core values before accepting the offer to be a manager. Stefan Idstrand argues that Pär Aspengren has a great role in “living by the values” but so have the employees as everybody must do their best because the smallest link holds the chain together.

4.4.4.4 Newcomers

Heléne Gröön explains that the numerous changes that Atea Logistics has encountered have brought many new influences and inputs from many different directions. Therefore, the company has thought of how Atea Logistics should respond to all these. Atea Logistics has always been looking forward and is ready to meet challenges and changes but now it might be time get some feedbacks from unheard parties.

As a result, another source and influence of values could be the newcomers. Indeed, as they see the company from a different or fresh point of view, they are likely to come up with good suggestions. Frank Svensson thinks that newcomers should have more impact on what Atea Logistics is doing. In fact, he regrets that nowadays the whole company has been too busy to listen to them. In that sense, he argues that the company has “mistreated” them by not listening to what they had to say. Therefore, this could be something interesting to change in order to improve the values and the situation within Atea Logistics. Indeed, sometimes it is good to take a step back and listen. Frank Svensson explains that it is usually really positive and helpful to receive feedbacks.
4.5 The maintenance of Atea Logistics’ Core Values

4.5.1 The Importance of Maintaining Values

All our interviewees recognized the importance for Atea Logistics to maintain its core values. The main argument for that is that those successful values are responsible for the good atmosphere which is present throughout the whole organization. Pär Aspengren explains:

“One reason why our employees are staying so long within the company is, I assume, because they feel comfortable and happy to work here. So we need to keep on working that way with the same values in order not to change that”.

Furthermore, Stefan Idstrand argues that in turbulent times with many changes it is important to stick to your values. For Pär Aspengren, another factor that makes maintaining the values important is the feeling of fear or insecurity which comes from the Atea’s owners’ attitude. In fact, he explains that this feeling of threat tends to add unity among employees within the organization. Therefore, the employees stick even more together and to the corporate values. That’s why it is important to keep those values so that people can relate to them during hard times.

4.5.2 Maintaining Atea Logistics’ Values

4.5.2.1 Inherited Values

In spite of all the encountered changes in the past, Atea Logistics in Växjö has been able to maintain, to some extent, its core values inherited from its past and to limit the influence from the headquarters. Indeed, according to most of our interviewees, Atea Logistics is still governed by values which are close to the values from the Owell- and WM-data-time.

“So, to a certain extent, we can run our own business the way we want to. And in that sense, we are trying to keep our core values from the WM-data- and Owell-time.”
As a matter of fact, Frank Svensson explains that the current core values do not radically differ from the previous ones. He thinks that it is probably the words which have changed, not really the message. Heléne Gröön argues:

“The difference I see if I compare our past and present core values regards the way the express them, or maybe even not express them. But if I think of how we act or how want to do our daily work, I do not see any changes.”

Nevertheless, in such a global context, most managers wonder how long the company will manage to do it.

4.5.2.2 Clarifying and Stating the Values

During our investigations, we have discovered that Atea Logistics’ core values had been stated in the past but not recently. As a matter of fact, since the Owell-time, it appears that the company does not have the habit of documenting, writing or simply updating their core values. As we explained before, the interviewees justified this behavior by the close relationships between employees since the Owell-time. Being part of a small company where everyone knew each other made them feel confident that the values would live on without stating them.

However, now that the company has gone through so many changes there is a need for stating again Atea Logistics’ core values. Indeed, as previously quoted, Pär Aspengren cannot clearly define the current Atea Logistics’ core values whereas he could have done it few years ago. Heléne Gröön shares the same opinion and argues:

“We have a need for stating our core values”

Heléne Gröön explains that if the company was to decide upon and state its core values today, this process would probably start discussions between the members of the top management with at least one person responsible for each department. These people would then gather their department staff to present their findings. Then, every third month an information meeting would be held to discuss the progresses. Heléne Gröön adds that it is crucial to make sure that employees are properly informed so that information is spread out correctly.
4.5.2.3 Communication of Values

*General “non-communication”:*

A serious problem that the company seems to be realizing is that they do not communicate enough or at all their values. As a matter of fact, no events of any kinds are organized in order to promote them. Pär Aspengren says:

“We stated them a couple of years ago but we are not communicating them today unfortunately.”

Frank Svensson cannot agree more with his managing director when he says:

“We need to communicate more our values. We cannot put them aside for long periods of time like we are doing”

Furthermore, this lack of core values’ communication turns out to pose more problems with newcomers even though it remains a real issue for all employees. Indeed, newcomers do not have the experience from the Owell-time or from the WM-data period like the “older” employees. Therefore, their integration and adaptation within Atea Logistics can be slowed down and even compromised. Pär Aspengren explains:

“This absence of values’ communication is a problem when we hire new people when we do not communicate them those values. The older employees of course know them but not the new ones. That is a problem.”

Pär Aspengren’s opinion is completely shared by Heléne Gröön who regrets the absence of a good integration program for newcomers:

“When it comes to newcomers, we do not have a clear process to present our company. We rely on words of mouth, and mostly entrust the ´older’ employees to transmit and share the values with those newcomers. But we can get better with this by structuring a real integration program”.

Going further on the importance of communicating values to newcomers, Frank Svensson argues:

“In my opinion, we could maintain our values by accepting dialog and feedbacks from employees and especially from newcomers”.

This is an idea which is shared by Johan Glinghammar who works in the warehouse with a lot of newcomers. As a matter of fact, as Heléne Gröön explained, so far it is a one-direction process: the company influences the newcomers with its values but the newcomers do not get the chance to influence the company.

*Communication’s means and events:*

As explains above, Atea Logistics’ core values are currently not communicated. However, during our research, we were able to find old stated values available on old company’s booklet, on old annual reports and on the intranet of Atea Logistics.

Furthermore, some of our interviewees have been able to remember events that were organized in the past or give us suggestions of events which could help maintain Atea Logistics’ core values. Frank Svensson remembers that during the WM-data-time, a group of 100 employees was meeting twice a year and visited all parts of WM-data in order to discuss their impressions on each department. In addition, owners and parts of the management teams were presented. According to Frank Svensson, it was a good way to keep up with what was happening and would occur in the future as well as which values and what kind of image the company wanted to have.

Several interviewees stated that the meetings held quarterly could be a good way to transfer the company’s core values as different sorts of information about the company are given during these meetings. Nevertheless, there is a wish among newcomers to hold these meetings more often as they get really a chance to know the core values during those reunions. In addition, Marie Persson thinks that the company should organize activities with the whole organization present as it would be a fun way to communicate Atea Logistics’ core values.
4.5.2.4 Aligning With Values

A global concern:

According to both Pär Aspengren and Heléne Gröön, it is of tremendous importance that employees and especially managers align and act accordingly to the company’s core values. Indeed, Heléne Gröön agrees upon that when she says that values have to be felt within the company. As a matter of fact, Pär Aspengren goes further saying that values are worthless if employees do not act according to them:

“The thing with core values is that they are worth nothing if you do not stand up for them or live according to them. If you express core values but then act in another way then those values are really worth nothing.”

The role of the Pär Aspengren:

In addition, several interviews think that Pär Aspengren, the managing director of Atea Logistics, has a central role in maintaining the organization’s core values. Stefan Idstrand explains:

“I consider Pär as an important factor for maintaining our values”

In fact, Pär Aspengren himself realizes his role in maintaining the values. He understands that most employees look up for him and regards him as their role model. Therefore, he has the responsibility to set the example. He says:

“I am becoming more and more aware of how important my leadership is and how my management style affects the organization. For instance, the way I behave means so much for others. Everyone can see if you really mean or do what you say or if it is just words. It is really important.”

Through his actions, Pär Aspengren is indeed showing his employees that he is acting according to the company’s core values. For instance, when he gave us a tour around the company facilities, we saw him smiling, waving, or talking to all the employees. By seeing
him being so available, one can understand the low power-distance and the flat structure which exist within Atea Logistics. His refusal to place cameras in the warehouse proves his discipline and will to stick to the corporate values. Indeed, he is aware than setting cameras would compromise the trust within the organization and would go against one of their core values.

4.5.2.5 Other Ways for the Values’ Maintenance

Even though, Atea Logistics’ managing director, Pär Aspengren, admits that he is worried about what would happen to Atea Logistics’ core values when he will retire, he admits that he is not forming or has not planned to form one of his subordinates to take over after his departure. In fact, as far as he is concerned, picking and forming the future managers inside the company would not necessarily be the best solution. He explains:

“A major danger for the company is that we are really complementing each other with my management team. In that sense, promoting one of them could be difficult. When I will leave, I think it would be better to get someone from the outside. But I admit that it is a complex situation, but in the organization we have people really exploiting their skills.”

On the other hand, Pär Aspengren, argues the benefit of stability and continuity within Atea Logistics which would not be guaranteed with a completely new manager:

“I am a continuity-fundamentalist. I think it is much easier to work if you have some kind of continuity in the company. It can get really difficult for companies especially if they change their top management all the time. Each new manager wants to change something”. 
CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS

In this chapter, we are to analyze our empirical data according to the theories we found relevant to our topic. First, we will briefly analyze the culture of Atea Logistics. Second, we will study the core values present within the company. Finally, we will consider the maintenance of core values within the organization.

5.1 Culture

5.1.1 Atea Logistics’ Culture

5.1.1.1 Changes Influencing Atea Logistics’ Culture

One definition of culture by Siehl and Martin is that “culture is defined as social or normative glue that holds an organization together”\textsuperscript{121}. In the case of Atea Logistics, we argue that the glue has remained strong during many years. There is no doubt that employees within Atea Logistics enjoy working there and actually stays within the company for long periods of time. People who have been working in the organization for ten years are in some cases still seen as rookies. The cultural history of Atea Logistics comprises both success as well as setbacks. At this time, Atea Logistics faces a setback where focus needs to be pointed out more efficiently in the direction of culture.

The recent changes, Atea Logistics went through, have without any doubt had enormous impacts on the culture. Mergers tend to create new influences, which is why it is important to have a solid base from the very beginning. Atea Logistics has gotten used to all the mergers, even to the extent that change is now expected on a regular basis. Therefore, the culture is now exceptionally influenced by the fact that people constantly try to face difficulties that takes place during change such as mergers. As explained in the theory chapter, culture is a pattern of shared notions that is learned by a group as it solves its problem of external adaptation and internal integration. Considering this point of view, the changes have lead to a more shared focus, which in turn gathers the group and strengthens the culture.

\textsuperscript{121} Siehl & Martin quoted in Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 535
The fact that Atea Logistics is constantly growing and recently became one of the leading IT-supplier in the Nordic region, also influences the culture. Some people argue that Atea Logistics’ culture, which is based on closeness, is gradually starting to fade away. According to us, this should be seen as a natural process since the company is no longer a small-sized organization. Therefore, we argue that it is important to proceed with the cultural development accordingly to the development of the organization. Based on our findings, we believe that the culture within the departments of Atea Logistics is relatively strong. However, the problem is at this point mostly between the departments and the interrelation between them. We argue that there should be more emphasis spent on trying to improve this link, which in turn would result in better flows regarding decision-making, coordination, communication, etc.

5.1.1.2 The Influence of the Former “Owell-culture”

As explained above, Atea Logistics has become one of the leading organizations in IT-supplying in the Nordic region. Nonetheless, Atea Logistics used to be a small sized company where decisions were taken in agreement with the employees, as in a family. The family-friendly atmosphere was permeated within the entire organization and to a certain extent, it still is. Nowadays, old employees within Atea Logistics tend to rely on the former “Owell-culture”. This can be hard for new employees who just entered the organization as they constantly hear about this old culture but have never been taught anything about it. According to Wiener, patterns of beliefs or values are expressed through symbols such as legends, stories, myths and a special language formed within the organization. This is in clear relation with the “Owell-culture”, where features such as myths and stories still remain. No matter whom we interviewed, the former “Owell culture” was constantly mentioned and emphasized.

We argue that one of the reasons why Atea Logistics has been able to preserve its culture to such an extent lays in the unwritten rules and shared understandings. As said by Deal & Kennedy, the unwritten rules and shared understandings keep the organization going. Much of the behavior within Atea Logistics is shaped by the “Owell-culture”, where unwritten behaviors and rules are still present among older employees, which in turn influences the younger ones.

\(^{122}\) Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 536
\(^{123}\) Deal, T., Kennedy, A., 1982, p. 10
Since the values could not be clearly expressed by anyone in the organization and as the focus on culture is more or less completely left aside, one could argue about the possible uncertainty that could arise. Nonetheless, relying on the influence from the “Owell-culture”, Atea Logistics has been able to retain a functioning culture during all changes, and each time they have been able to find their way back to a culture that meet their requirements and history. There is no doubt about the major influence from the “Owell-culture”. However, we are not arguing that the current Atea Logistics’ culture is the same.

5.1.1.3 Time to Re-focus on Culture

Culture is said to express the values, social ideals and beliefs that are shared among members within an organization. Unfortunately, this is not the case within Atea Logistics today. As said before, change is one of the reasons why Atea Logistics has lost track of its focus and “soft areas” such as values, beliefs and ideals have been left aside. This argument is supported by both Pär Aspengren and Heléne Gröön, who argues that there has not been as much focus on values and culture as the company would have liked. They both admit the importance of finding their way back to what Atea Logistics once had, but of course with a modern touch to it. This lack of cultural emphasis is clearly shown in the way Atea Logistics deals with the integration of newcomers. According to Blanchard and O’Connor, a culture should be clearly defined and expressed to new members so that they can act accordingly. Unfortunately, we argue that this is not the case in Atea Logistics nowadays. Indeed, newcomers are not given proper introductions; hence, they carry themselves the whole responsibility to try to fit into the group.

According to Deal & Kennedy, an open-door policy within a company gives access to anyone in the organization, no matter of hierarchical positions, and gives a feeling of equality among the employees. The flat organizational structure has been one of the major concerns in the leadership of Pär Aspengren and as argued by many of the interviewees, Atea Logistics’ managing director acts as a role model for the entire organization. As the theory supports, by using this approach there is a balance between autonomy and control, which can be held

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124 Blanchard, K., O’Connor, M., 1997, p.102
125 Deal, T., Kennedy, A., 1982, p. 10
without relying too much on formal and centralized procedures. We argue that this approach of decision-making is one of the fundamental characteristics of Atea Logistics and should not under any circumstances be altered.

According to Deal and Kennedy, employees working for a company with a strong culture can at any time tell what the company believes in or stands for\textsuperscript{126}. In the case of Atea Logistics, we believe that this statement is both true and false. The employees we interviewed had no problem expressing their beliefs and thoughts about Atea Logistics, although the words they used were expressed and appreciated differently. It appears that people have basically the same perception of Atea Logistics, even though some words are more frequently argued than others. Based on this observation, we can clearly notice and argue about the current need of Atea Logistics for stating its core values and centralize the importance of its current culture.

5.1.2 The use of Culture

Pär Aspengren is perceived as a one of the most important role models within Atea Logistics. Not only do the employees see him as a role model, but he is fully aware that he carries this responsibility and must therefore constantly act accordingly to his given instructions and believes. According to Gordon, culture can be used as a tool to interact with constituencies both internally and externally\textsuperscript{127}. As the CEO of Atea Logistics, we believe that Pär Aspengren captures the benefits from culture by highlighting areas in which he knows the culture can create profit. As an example, the family friendly atmosphere previously mentioned is one of the cultural cornerstones within Atea Logistics. By using this as a tool, Pär Aspengren automatically divides the workload and indirectly orders people to cooperate. The fact that Pär Aspengren argues that Atea is “the biggest small company” is according to us a very successful approach. By emphasizing the cultural dimensions of a small business, such as family-friendly and trustworthy atmosphere, people will eventually behave accordingly to them. As a result, this will influence the customer into feeling that they are doing business with a small-sized organization and are therefore receiving a more individual service.

\textsuperscript{126} Deal, T., Kennedy, A., 1982, p. 10
\textsuperscript{127} Gordon, J., 1993, p. 171
5.1.3 The Positive Aspects of Culture

Saffold argues about the significance of culture, which leads to an almost touchable social force field of energy that empowers employees and drives the organization to superior performance\(^\text{128}\). The culture at Atea Logistics has gone back and forth from being really strong and coherent during the Owell time, to not being so strong. As soon as there is a merger, there is a drawback in the cultural dimension. Nonetheless, Atea Logistics always manages to stabilize it rather quick again. Besides, the company is now entering an era where years of mergers are starting to slow down. As a consequence, we think that it is more and more starting to realize the importance of getting its culture back on track again.

No matter whether there is a strong or weak culture, its influence on the organizational behavior remains powerful. What determines the strengths of a culture is the degree of alignment of its employees. Based on our theoretical findings, we argue that Atea Logistics possesses a relatively strong culture. It appears that employees of Atea Logistics strive towards the same goals, although as said before, they use different tools. In fact, by determining values, the sense of unity within the company will be improved and thereby increase the positive aspects of culture even more.

5.2 Core Values

5.2.1 Difficulties to State Values

Due to numerous recent changes, it has become hard for Atea Logistics to state their present core values. As explained before, aspects concerning values have been put on hold as other factors of the company’s survival have been more emphasized. Because of these external influences, Atea Logistics has in some way relied on their old values as the chance of clarifying or developing new ones has not appeared. Among people who have been employed for a long time, there has been no need for stating what the existing values but for newcomers these values have not been evident to understand. We think that this situation might create problems as it could result in employees being split up in groups in such a way that older employees would follow the guidelines they have had since the “old-times”, while newcomers

\(^{128}\) Saffold G., 1988, p. 546-558
would form new groups with their own guidelines. In addition, we observed that newcomers learn from older employees, but another difficulty is that these older employees might not always think of transferring the proper information to the new employees as they take it for granted. An example of this is that employees who have been working for Atea Logistics since the Owell-time are used to having close relationships with each other. However, it is easy to forget that these close relationships do not include newcomers. In fact, these relationships are taken for granted but can, as a matter of fact, work the other way around and put apart members, if emphasis is not put on welcoming and including them.

Another factor which has developed from all the changes is the fact that Atea Logistics does not know where it is heading. Should it follow guidelines from the headquarters, which now also includes Martinsson, or should it keep on “minding their own business”. However, the problem is not to make a combination of the two companies’ values but rather to know how to transfer the values to others, i.e. newcomers.

The difficulty of stating values is evident in the case of Atea Logistics. In fact, we argue that some values are taken for granted while others do not seem clear at all. The question is, if values are being taken for granted by the older employees, should they then be considered as strong values for the company even though they are not evident for newcomers? This issue states the fact that there is a need for action from Atea Logistics to coordinate and create some sort of guidelines for the organization. Indeed, we believe that there is a risk that employees will not feel that the company is taking them seriously as the focus has mainly been on the production figures lately. Deal & Kennedy argued that values have to be lived by in order to survive and this view is shared by Pär Aspengren who explained that values mean nothing if you do not stand up for them129. Perhaps that is why, contrary to three or four years ago, he cannot say what the core values of Atea Logistics are, because employees are not living them. In addition, stating values now that are almost the same as the previous ones can be hard since they perhaps will not be shared by the many newcomers that have entered the company lately. Consequently, it is hard to convey any values to other employees and especially to newcomers.

129 Deal, T., Kennedy, A., 1982, p. 22
5.2.2 Discovering of Atea Logistics’ Core Values

Looking at Atea Logistics’ history, the values discovered today do not differ much from the old ones. Atea Logistics stated their first values in 1990 due to the fact that they were hiring a lot of new people and felt a need to state the existing values. That is also the case today as they have brought in many new employees but are not sure of what values to convey. Beside the old values, Atea Logistics has gone from values mainly focusing on productivity and customers to “softer” values dealing with employees and the way people should behave and act in their working life.

Based on our empirical findings, we argue that the following values should be seen as the current core values of Atea Logistics:

- Responsibility
- Participation
- Low power distance, or openness
- Trust
- Family-friendly
- Respect

5.2.2.1 Responsibility

There is one value that seems to have remained ever since the Owell-time and it is responsibility. This should be considered as one of the strongest core values of the company as there has not been one interviewee who has not mentioned this aspect as a main factor of their work. However, even if responsibility is central for Atea Logistics and that employees should look for it, the company does not want to tell its employees for which area each employee should be responsible. Indeed, it is more up to the employee to define his/her degree of responsibility. There can be a problem if there are employees who are not used to the extent of responsibility that implies a job within Atea Logistics. Therefore, it is of importance that people are aware of the consequences that go together with a job with that high level of responsibility. It has also been made clear that people who are not comfortable with responsibilities do not fit into the organization. However, we would argue that this value
is so strong that employees who do not agree upon it eventually leave the company. The power of this value is further confirmed as it is stated within P-A-Q-S and presented as a core value among employees in the warehouse. Therefore, we believe that employees should be aware of this responsibility expectation when accepting a job at Atea Logistics. Hence, we argue that it is the duty of the company to communicate its values during a recruiting process.

**5.2.2.2 Participation**

Participation is one of the values that have remained strong since the WM-data period. We argue that employees feel that they are contributing to the success of the company and especially nowadays as there have been changes and discussions regarding Atea Logistics’ future. The notion of “engagement” was mentioned in P-A-Q-S and we may wonder if this does not belong to the value of participation. In our opinion, engagement deals with the degree of involvement of employees in their work and of contribution to the corporate results. Participation and engagement are especially enhanced in P-A-Q-S, where emphasis is put on the attempt to involve the employees and give feedback to whatever actions they do.

**5.2.2.3 Openness**

*Openness* or *low power-distance* can be seen as the main factor in the culture of Atea Logistics, as it functions as a base for the flat organizational structure. As Heléne Gröön mentioned, the informal meetings can be very efficient as it reaches the person concerned, but can also be negative in the sense that the information is not spread out throughout the whole company. For instance, employees who are not used to or do not have close relationships might easily be out of this information channel and feel excluded (i.e. newcomers). Therefore, we believe that the openness present large advantages but also risks which are to be considered. Moreover, one can wonder if Atea Logistics is really as open as it would like to be perceived. In fact, we argue that there is a lack of feedback exchanges within the organization, which automatically lowers the degree of openness.
5.2.2.4 Trust

We argue that another core value of Atea Logistics is trust. However, this value was not shared by all our interviewees as one of them did not agree upon it. Nonetheless, the validity of this value is not at stake as Schein explained that a value can still be considered as a strong value within the organization as long as it is shared by most members\textsuperscript{130}. Furthermore, we think that it is remarkable that a company with such high turnover of staff can trust their employees to the extent of, for example, not having surveillance cameras in the warehouse. Nevertheless, there is a risk that this value can be compromised to some extent in the future because of the expansion of the company. Finally, we argue that trust is a fundamental value within Atea Logistics and that the company should try to keep it intact as long as possible.

5.2.2.5 Family-friendly and Respect

It is evident that employees who have worked since the Owell-time have been good at maintaining the atmosphere of a familiar or friendly organization. However, while these “older” employees state that this familiar feeling creates a sense of unity among employees, newcomers seem to think the other way around. According to them, the unity and solidarity could be improved, especially between departments. In fact, we believe that there is a high unity within groups and departments but not in within the whole company. This situation could be the result of older employees knowing how to work together while newcomers are left aside.

5.2.3 P-A-Q-S

To our mind, it is good that Atea Logistics has realized the importance of stating its values but we think that the process of developing P-A-Q-S was not adapted or even correct. In other words, we believe that P-A-Q-S was a good initiative but used a wrong method. Indeed, we argue that the definition of a company’s core values should not be based on one person’s opinion as it was the case for P-A-Q-S, especially when this person only bases his arguments on previous experiences in another company and on books, but rather on interviews conducted within the organization to discover the real values lived the employees. In fact, it is amusing to note that Hélène Gröön explained that Atea Logistics does not want to put nice

\textsuperscript{130} Schein, E., 2004, p. 25
words without a real meaning for the company as core values but it is exactly what has been
done with P-A-Q-S which does not reflect the real Atea Logistics’ values. As we argued for
the uniqueness of each company, we will now explain why the value “service” expressed
within P-A-Q-S is not reflecting the ones lived within Atea Logistics.

First, we believe that the value service, stated in P-A-Q-S, should not be considered as a core
value of the company for the following reasons:

1. Service could be understood as too general or unclear which is why people cannot act
   and relate to it.
2. It does not give any clear guidelines on how to behave but rather on something that
   needs to be delivered to customers. Therefore, we think that service should lie under
   the value responsibility, since giving good service is part of taking responsibility for
   ones job.

If we consider French & Bell’s theories, we can see that service can not be looked upon as a
strong value as it does not state what is good or bad and neither does it seem to establish
standards of achievement as Deal & Kennedy suggest\textsuperscript{131}. In fact, employees tend to be more
motivated if they feel that they are a part of the company and this value does not highlight this
belief. Responsibility can be seen as one of the core values (as we have also discovered it) and
to some extent also engagement. However, the difference is that these values from P-A-Q-S
are intended to be used for production matters while our understanding and definition of
responsibility concerns directly the employee and therefore “soft” values.

Even though P-A-Q-S can be considered as a breakthrough in the effort of making sense in
the daily life of the production, we argue that the values can not be regarded as shared or
strong. This feeling is emphasized by the fact that P-A-Q-S has only recently been created and
has not yet received real feedbacks from the board. In fact, the real new question is whether
the old, existing values are strong enough to survive the large amount of newcomers in the
production and the implementation of P-A-Q-S. The old values are so strong that older
employees might not regard the values from P-A-Q-S as new and therefore they will not stick
to them. In any way, we argue that it can be devastating for the company to implement values
that are not thoroughly discussed among the employees. As mentioned earlier, values must be
lived by if they are to be successful.

\textsuperscript{131} French, W., Bell, C., 1999, p. 62 and Deal, T., Kennedy, A., 1982, p. 10
5.2.4 The Importance of Values

One possible factor for the success of Atea Logistics’ is that members have been given the opportunity to achieve personal goals within the company and also that the former employees from Owell have created values that they, themselves, have found suitable. Since these values have been more or less taken for granted and therefore also maintained, one can argue that Deal & Kennedy’s hypothesis of employee’s identification, adoption and action upon organizational values relation to a company’s success, has been validated\textsuperscript{132}. It has been mentioned several times that Atea Logistics’ is made of employees who are willing to change and see new possibilities with their work. By using values such as participation, family-friendly, respect and trust, we argue that employees feel secure in what they are doing and can thereby contribute to the success of the company.

Furthermore, it is important for Atea Logistics to have clear and stated values as these give directions and guidelines regarding how things are to be done within the organization. In order for the values stated in P-A-Q-S to be successful, they must be accepted and shared among the employees dealing with them. Not to forget that a company which states core values also clarifies its nature for external interested parties such as customers or investors. This is something Atea Logistics has to work with as it is not sure about them at the moment. In fact, we believe having clear core values, which fit the company and express the image that it wants to show, will also profit to Atea Logistics in other ways as it might make external parties view in a better and more positive way.

Besides, we believe that stating core values that are strong could also contribute to improve the sense of unity within the organization. As Pår Aspengren mentioned “it is us against the world”. If one considers the long-term perspective, this could contribute to increase in productivity. We argue that it would also integrate the newcomers, as they have expressed a lack of unity within the organization.

\textsuperscript{132} Deal, T., Kennedy, A., 1982, p. 21
5.2.5 Humanistic, Optimistic and Democratic Values

Cheney et al argued that values are emotionally charged and one aspect all interviewees emphasized was the family friendly atmosphere\textsuperscript{133}. The familiar atmosphere at Atea Logistics is clearly evident and has apparently stayed since the Owell-time and it could be regarded as the first factor that newcomers immediately sense.

As far as the value of respect is concerned, we argue that it belongs to the category of humanistic values as it deals with how people are being treated and the importance of the individual which is fairly obvious at Atea Logistics. People are seen as having potential for growth and development. In addition, we think that the value of trust could fit into this category.

To our mind, participation could be seen as an optimistic value since all employees at Atea Logistics are seen as a part of the organization, who contribute to the success of the company. As long as they want to, they can accomplish whatever goal they have set up within the company. Besides, the fact that Pär Aspengren walks around in the warehouse and talks to everyone lowers the level of hierarchy and contributes to the development of a more familiar atmosphere. Employees also stated that they can get help whenever needed and this creates a form of security that the employees can rely on. One unique aspect found at Atea Logistics is the fact that, even though it is now a big company, employees still make decisions based on their feelings and not only on analyses.

We consider trust and responsibility as democratic values as employees are responsible to get information that they need on their own. Employees are also trusted to perform their work properly and meet the goals that are set. However, they are not being controlled in the sense of how they do their work or how they reach their goal as long as they act within the frames that have been defined. In fact, we think that avoiding strict controls is important at Atea Logistics as this seems to create productivity and maintains the friendly and familiar feeling. However, we find it difficult to understand how Atea Logistics manages to not control their employees when there are so many changes. For example, the recent focus of investors has been focused on financial aspects and there have been discussions about closing Atea Logistics in Växjö. Therefore, the management at Atea Logistics in Växjö has made an effort in explaining the seriousness of the situation and the need for monitoring the efficiency of

\textsuperscript{133} Cheney, G., et al, 2004, p. 414
production. This has also led to more controls of employees’ work. Since one of the fundamental core values of Atea Logistics is responsibility, this new directives seriously contradict the spinal cord of Atea Logistics.

To conclude, we argue that the values we discovered at Atea Logistics are mainly focused on the individual. This also strengthens our argument that the values within P-A-Q-S are not set in coherence with the general beliefs of the company as they are rather oriented towards production.

5.2.6 Social Values

Treating employees with respect is so much taken for granted that it becomes in a way a characteristic of the normative Atea Logistics’ behavior. Nevertheless, this guidance is free from the effects of rewards and punishments. As Frank Svensson explained, giving employees a higher salary does not mean much if you do not listen to them, help them or respect them. Respect seems to form a unity among Atea Logistics as this is a general belief shared by most members.

However, social values should work as some sort of reducers of uncertainty among employees, but that is only the case to a certain extent. Employees who have been in the company for a long time think that they are doing good but new employees feel that they are not involved on the same level. As a matter of fact, we think that even though everyone is friendly within Atea Logistics, the feelings of newcomers are being neglected since no one really listens to them or ask for their feedback. Hence, if newcomers only get directions to follow but no feedback one can wonder how solid this value is and how important listening to others is in that sense. This also implies a lack of what Cheney et al describes as “the vision thing”\textsuperscript{134}. Based on this, we argue that there is too much emphasis on what people express and not so much on what they do not say. Not doing something could be just as important as doing something. Frank Svensson was the only one who argued that newcomers should be listened to in order for the organization to get some kind of approval of what it is doing is good. In addition, we argue that it could be a way to make newcomers more integrated as they would feel that they can say what they want. Consequently, this also leads to the fact that the value of family feeling and participation would be discerned and maintained.

\textsuperscript{134} Cheney, G., et al, 2004, p. 414
5.2.7 Functional and Elitist Values

The values expressed in P-A-Q-S can be considered as functional since they are meant for the production and dealt with the products and the way employees should become more efficient. The value *service* is the most suitable in this category as it is directed towards customers’ benefits. However, Wiener argued that functional values tend to construct explicit guidelines for employees’ behavior, but *service* is such a general word which can be interpreted in so many ways, that it can actually create more confusion than clarity.\(^{135}\)

However, we argue that Atea Logistics’ value system is more elitist as they concern the way people behave and act within the organization. For example, stating that Atea Logistics wants to be the “biggest small company” in Sweden indicates that the value is comparative and reflects some kind of unity and nationalism in the organization. Furthermore, elitist values also generate strong feelings and a sense of pride for the organization. Indeed, most of the employees interviewed were proud of being a part of the company and the familiar feeling was a point that all agreed upon.

5.2.8 Source of Values

5.2.8.1 Traditions

It is evident that the values which exist at Atea Logistics today are values which have their source in the Owell-time. Since Owell was founded, these values have, in one way or another, been tested and questioned several times and have proved to be the ultimate guidelines regarding how to proceed with the daily tasks within the company. For example, when Owell became WM-data, their values were being questioned and somewhat modified by the guidelines stated by WM-data. However, Atea Logistics managed to keep most of their core values and these values were seen as traditional ones when Atea Logistics was formed later on. As these values derive from tradition, we believe that this has created a sense of security as employees trust these values since they have been adapted to their jobs. Nonetheless, Atea Logistics has to consider now if these values are still valid as they might no longer be seen as a small-scale business. Therefore, the values that functioned in the old days might have to be modified or clarified in order to fit today’s business.

\(^{135}\) Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 537
5.2.8.2 Owners

Even though the values that were founded during the Owell-time have survived, they have been marked or slightly modified by each previous owner along the way. Indeed, each time a new owner took control of the company, it tried to somehow impose its core values. Nevertheless, we argue that these owners set values or guidelines for Atea, and by Atea we mean the entire Atea Group. But we think that these values are so much different from the ones that are lived within Atea Logistics that they do not really permeate the organization. To some extent, they remind us of the P-A-Q-S values which were decided unilaterally. Moreover, we believe that Atea Logistics would have a hard time if owners like 3i stated its core values as their focus is only on capital efficiency and does not consider the employees.

5.2.8.3 Leaders

Since Atea Logistics does not have any stated core values at the moment and Pär Aspengren is not sure of what they are, he will have a hard time guiding employees and giving them the direction of where Atea Logistics is heading. We argue that Pär Aspengren probably has a hard time since he is influenced by two sides. On the one hand, there is the board of directors who have ideas of how the whole Atea Group should develop and what the values of the group should be. On the other hand, Pär Aspengren has, so far, had the freedom to manage Atea Logistics on his own without clear guidelines from the headquarter and therefore employee’s thoughts and actions have been crucial for him. As a consequence, as Wiener stated, having the wrong core values could be devastating as they could become strains instead of sources of effectiveness\(^\text{136}\).

Furthermore, Pär Aspengren plays a major role as a role model at Atea Logistics and is appreciated by most employees, if not all. Employees at Atea Logistics identify themselves with Pär Aspengren and he can therefore be seen as a charismatic leader. Even though it is argued that values stated by charismatic leaders do not survive for a long time, we argue that the values stated under Pär Aspengren’s time as managing director can be seen as reinforcements of old traditional ones. Nevertheless, he also thinks that core values are an essential part of an organization and we agree that it is his responsibility to reflect each value’s importance for the organization.

\(^{136}\) Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 540
5.2.8.4 Newcomers

Values, as any other aspects of the organization, are always influenced by external factors and newcomers who contribute to the emergence of new values and modification of old ones. At Atea Logistics, we think that there are many newcomers who can contribute to the need for redefining or clarifying new values. As Frank Svensson explained, Atea Logistics is currently not considering or listening to newcomers’ ideas, suggestions or feelings regarding how things work within the organization. Hence, we think that the “old” value of respect is being mistreated. However, a new value can emerge from the newcomers if there would be someone who listens to them. According to our research, newcomers feel that unity and solidarity should be more emphasized within the company. This corresponds to the value of being a family but that seems to work only among employees who have been at Atea Logistics for a longer time. Therefore, unity is wanted by newcomers, probably to fill the gap between the two groups (newcomers and older employees). Hence, this could lead to a strengthening or modification of the existing values.

5.2.9 Forms of Value Systems

Atea Logistics’ organizational structure is flat and high hierarchical levels are avoided as participation from each employee is encouraged. The organization can also be seen as very unique as it is a big company which has a small-scale business spirit. As Atea Logistics is constantly changing and facing new challenges, the company is used to reorganize and seek new equilibriums. These facts fit into the functional-traditional value system explained by Wiener. However, in Atea Logistics’ case this combination does not contribute to organizational dynamics that is highly mistrustful to group-thinking and where invulnerability and self-righteousness is common. In fact, it is more directed towards challenges, innovation, new thinking, and unity in some aspects as well as towards the awareness of being vulnerable when for example owners change. Consequently, Atea Logistics’ values system is mainly functional-traditional but also elitist-traditional when it comes to other aspects such as customer service.

5.3 The Maintenance of Atea Logistics’ Core Values

5.3.1 The Importance of Maintaining Core Values

According to Harker, when companies are experiencing periods with lots of changes, it is important to go back to the basics, or in other words to their core values. As a matter of fact, this is an opinion which turns out to be shared within Atea Logistics. Indeed, several employees such as Pär Aspengren and Stefan Idstrand have emphasized the great importance of maintaining Atea Logistics’ core values, especially after all the changes the organization has gone through.

However, we think that it is important to note that this belief is fairly new within the company. In fact, it appears that managers and employees have only recently realized the importance of this maintenance as no plans or incentives have been started yet to facilitate this preservation of the company’s values. Therefore, we argue that it is crucial to make sure that this observation is not just a trend but that it will remain a constant focus in the future.

5.3.2 A First Observation

The first important observed fact is that throughout the years Atea Logistics has managed to maintain parts of its core values from the old times (the Owell and WM-date periods). As a matter of fact, it is undeniable that there is some sort of tradition to pass on the company’s core values within the organization. We believe that Atea Logistics’ employees show some developed skills in the sharing and retaining of values. Indeed, to some extent, the survival and flourishing of values such as trust or the family-friendly relations are proofs of this values’ transfer.

Nevertheless, it appears obvious that the challenge of maintaining these values is becoming more and more demanding and difficult. In fact, the growth of the company and the rise in the number of employees tend to go against some of the organization’s pillars such as the closeness between employees. Therefore, we argue that the maintenance of the values currently “lived” within Atea Logistics will require numerous efforts in the future.

138 Quoted in http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/index.cfm?fa=viewfeature&id=487, April 24th 2006
5.3.3 Clarifying and Stating the Values

According to Blanchard and O’Connor, the first step in managing by values is to clarify the company’s values\textsuperscript{139}. As far as the situation within Atea Logistics is concerned, we believe that the company might have to take a step even more backward. Indeed, Atea Logistics’ core values need to be defined or at least significantly updated and clarified from their past versions. As a matter of fact, some values were stated by the board of directors a few years ago but have not been used since then and tend to become, to some extent, forgotten. Besides, those values were expressed for the creation of Atea and the organization’s situation, size and environment has changed quite a lot since that time. Therefore, we argue that there is an urgent need for Atea Logistics to (re-)define or clarify and then state their core values. Nonetheless, a positive aspect in this worrying situation is that the company is aware of this requirement as the testimonies from Pär Aspengren and Heléne Gröön confirm.

As far as the methodology to state Atea Logistics’ values is concerned, Heléne Gröön explained that it would probably be a reflection involving the top management team. However, Blanchard and O’Connor argue that this phase should involve the whole company (owners, managers and the entire workforce) as they are all going to deal with these values in the future\textsuperscript{140}. Therefore, we truly think that it should be an open discussion between all the people involved in Atea Logistics.

Furthermore, we believe that the way the P-A-Q-S project has been conducted is wrong as it is in total disagreement with Blanchard and O’Connor’s theory\textsuperscript{141}. Indeed, Andreas Sjöström found the P-A-Q-S values on his own, without consulting anyone else in the company.

\textsuperscript{139} Blanchard, K., O’Connor, M., 1997, p. 39
\textsuperscript{140} Blanchard, K., O’Connor, M., 1997, p. 60
\textsuperscript{141} Blanchard, K., O’Connor, M., 1997, p. 60
5.3.4 Communicating Atea Logistics’ Values

5.3.4.1 A Need for More Communication

According to Blanchard and O’Connor, an organization needs to realize the importance of communicating their values over and over again\(^{142}\). In fact, this opinion is shared by Trigaux who argues that the key element to maintain values is to communicate them all the time in any situation\(^{143}\). However, Pär Aspengren and our other interviews had to admit that Atea Logistics is not communicating its values. Indeed, these values have been left aside with no one in charge of working with them. Hence, we think that it is easy to identify one of the main malfunctions in the value-maintenance process. As a result, in our opinion, the organization needs to start (again) communicating its values.

As a matter of fact, the first victims of this absence of communication turn out to be the newcomers according to Pär Aspengren and Heléne Gröön. Indeed, as they do not have any knowledge about the company when entering it, their adaptation to its values, culture and atmosphere is considerably slowed down and harder because of the non-communication of Atea Logistics’ values. That is the reason why Wiener argues that the transmission of core values to new members is essential\(^{144}\). In fact, he goes further explaining that formal and informal organizational socialization practices can be useful for newcomers in order to acquire and maintain organizational values system. Therefore, we argue that in addition to a good communication of Atea Logistics’ values to all its employees, the company should implement an integration program in order to facilitate the adaptation of newcomers within the organization (this was the purpose of our previous assignment\(^{145}\)).

5.3.4.2 Communication’s Means and Events

As our interviewees previously admitted, Atea Logistics is not currently communicating its values or at least does not put any special energy or effort in it. Therefore, it is not surprising to find out that the company is only using very few of the possible communication means listed by Blanchard and O’Connor\(^{146}\). As far as our findings are concerned, we have been able

\(^{142}\) Blanchard, K., O’Connor, M., 1997, p. 77
\(^{144}\) Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 541
\(^{145}\) See the results of our fieldwork report on how to improve the integration of newcomers
\(^{146}\) Blanchard, K., O’Connor, M., 1997, p. 77
to identify few supports used to communicate passively the values: old booklets, old annual reports and the intranet with old values. As a consequence, we believe that Atea Logistics really needs to start thinking about means to promote its core values and develop an efficient communication plan with both passive (leaflets, intranet and so on) and active (meetings, celebrations, etc.) means.

Moreover, we argue that the company should be open-minded in order to find dynamic ways to share their values with their employees, and also try to take advantage of what is at its disposal. For instance, the new intranet, that the company has installed, might offer new possibilities to communicate the company’s values in a better way online. Some employees have also indicated that different kinds of meetings could be used to communicate values and not only to discuss regular work issues. In that sense, they argued that those meetings could be organized more often. In fact, we think that the company has all the prerequisites to communicate efficiently its values (positive atmosphere, loyal employees, etc.); it is just up to it to start doing it by using all its available resources.

Furthermore, in our opinion, the company could find some inspiration from the past as the situation was different back then as several interviews told us. Indeed, more corporate activities were organized such as the one described by Frank Svensson to inform employees about the company’s values and strategy. As a matter of fact, some newcomers like Marie Persson are supporting the organization of these activities as they have heard that they were organized and efficient in the past.

As far as the absence of values’ communication is concerned and despite the fact that the company recognized not doing anything to communicate their values, a factor might partly explain this behavior. We think that the feeling of closeness between members resulting from the family-friendly environment may in a way hinder a full communication within the organization. Indeed, employees might get over-confident regarding their communication as they feel very close to each other. However, acting in that way might make them not realize the need to communicate certain things like values because they assume that the others know them as well as they are from the same family but, even within a close family, information does not necessarily reach everyone. Therefore, we argue that the company should not neglect any possible communication ways, and question itself in order to constantly improve.
Speaking about not neglecting any communication means, several interviewees argued that Atea Logistics could consider and listen to the newcomers’ feedbacks and not simply try to make them adapt the company’s values. Besides, Wenjen and Banga argue that an organization should involve all the employees in its values\textsuperscript{147}. In addition, Wiener explains that newcomers could help ensure the support and renewal of an existing value system\textsuperscript{148}. Hence, we believe that newcomers could bring a lot to the company’s values and possibly help find new ways for communicating them. As it is argued by the company, everyone is equal within Atea Logistics so why not listen to everyone.

Finally, following is our interpretation of the situation: the company does not communicate with its employees but its employees have ideas to communicate or propose to the company. Therefore, Atea Logistics should listen to its employees to understand how to talk (communicate) to them.

5.3.5 Aligning With Values

According to Blanchard and O’Connor, the last step of managing by values consists in aligning with the previously stated and communicated values\textsuperscript{149}. In other words, it means that employees should act accordingly to these values. As a matter of fact, it appears to be the step that Atea Logistics manages to do the best. Indeed, we think that the company has understood the importance of “living” the values as confirmed Pär Aspengren. Furthermore, even though it is hard to say if the whole company is aligned, it is clear that some values are lived within Atea Logistics otherwise we would probably not have been able to discover them throughout our interviews.

In fact, we think that this alignment to the core values of Atea Logistics is clearly facilitated by Pär Aspengren’s behavior. Indeed, as he realizes himself, when it comes to acting within the organization, he is the employees’ role model. In order to make them understand the importance of following these values, he has to show them that these values are guiding his daily behavior. By showing his employees his determination and discipline to stick to the corporate values (i.e. with the surveillance cameras), he shows the kind of positive attitude that Wenjen described or the-identification-with-the-leader process that Wiener developed.

\textsuperscript{147} \url{http://www.inc.com/articles/2001/06/22952.html}, April 25th 2006
\textsuperscript{148} Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 541
\textsuperscript{149} Blanchard, K., O’Connor, M., 1997, p.25
5.3.6 Other Ways to Maintain Values

Contrary to Pär Aspengren’s opinion, we believe that an internal formation of tomorrow’s Atea Logistics managers would help ensure the life of core values within the organization. Indeed, we think that it might be a risk to welcome a new managing director with no previous experience of Atea Logistics’ core values and culture. As a matter of fact, some people might not understand and accept the corporate way of doing things. In fact, this is a fear shared by Wiener who argued that companies have to identify potential new members who are inclined to adapt to the company’s core values in order to form them later\textsuperscript{150}.

\textsuperscript{150} Wiener, Y., 1998, p. 541
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

We will close this research with this conclusion part which will attempt to provide answers to our research question. We will first present our concluded findings as well as some suggestions in order to improve the situation in areas where the company is currently facing difficulties. Second, we will introduce possible critics and restrictions that could challenge our research. Finally, we will re-open our research toward further perspectives of investigation.

6.1 Our Conclusions and Suggestions to Maintain Atea Logistics’ Core Values

First, we will answer our research question: “How to maintain core values at Atea Logistics?” Therefore, we will present our conclusions and advice that might help Atea Logistics improve its current situation. However, it is important to note that we are not claiming that the company should implement our ideas without any objection. We are providing Atea Logistics with suggestions which could, perhaps, be the start of further reflections and discussions within the organization.

6.1.1 Atea Logistics’ Core Values

Even though the first objective of this study was to find ways to maintain core values within Atea Logistics, we realized that there was an important prerequisite to take care of beforehand. Indeed, we noticed that the company’s core values were not clearly stated and that employees encountered a lot of difficulties in articulating or explaining them because of all the recent changes that occurred within the organization. Therefore, our first task was to discover Atea Logistics’ core values in order to later figure out how to maintain them. Nevertheless, beforehand, we had to get in touch or familiar with Atea Logistics’ culture as values are a level of culture. Following are the values we were able to identify:
• **Respect and participation** - Everyone in the company contributes equally to the corporate results.

• **Low power-distance, or openness** - Atea Logistics rely on a flat organization structure and tries to avoid hierarchy.

• **Trust** - The company trusts its employees and they trust each other as well.

• **Responsibility** – Having responsibility should motivate the employees

• **Family-friendly** – Atea Logistics remains in its “soul” a small company within which a friendly or even familiar atmosphere is essential among employees.

These values were more or less expressed by all our employees even though they used different words to explain them. Furthermore, it is important to note that there is no real order in the list of values. In fact, we think that they rather all together form a package which represents Atea Logistics’ core values, and that they should not be dissociated. Indeed, we believe that it is their combination which creates or leads to the sense of unity observed within departments and to some extent within the whole company.

### 6.1.2 Determine a Values’ Maintenance Strategy

According to us, an essential factor for any company to successfully maintain its core values is to have a real will to do so. Luckily for Atea Logistics, it appears that the organization has recently realized the importance to maintain its values. However, no incentive has been developed to put this thought into action. Therefore, we argue that it is urgent for Atea Logistics to define and implement a clear plan and strategy for maintaining its values.

Moreover, we think that several points should be taken into consideration before starting up this plan. First of all, the maintenance of core values is not an easy process. Therefore, it will require a lot of time and energy from the company. In addition, it should rely on a long-term strategy as it will be an ongoing process necessitating everyday efforts. Second of all, the organization should not be looking for a magic solution but Atea Logistics should rather try to build up a comprehensive and detailed action-plan and strategy. Finally, as an IT supplier, Atea Logistics should know that technologies and certitudes are evolving constantly. Hence, the company should always be open-minded as changing-times, -employees and -technologies might bring new tools or ideas to maintain its values.
The following headings will develop possible means or tools that could be used to build up such a value-maintenance plan.

6.1.3 Clearly State Atea Logistics’ Core Values

As we already discussed above, we argue that the first step in the maintenance of Atea Logistics’ core values is for the company to clearly state these existing values. Indeed, the organization has to write them down in order to be able to start communicating them. Furthermore, in our opinion, Atea Logistics should make sure not to let the existing feeling of closeness that exists between employees hide the need for writing down its values.

6.1.4 Communication of Core Values

The communication of core values is an extremely important step in the process of maintaining them. However, this phase has been completely left aside by Atea Logistics and therefore the situation has to change dramatically. Indeed, in our opinion, the whole maintenance of the corporate values mostly depends on their communication once these values have been stated. Moreover, it will require even more effort from Atea Logistics as the company more or less has to start from scratch regarding this matter.

6.1.4.1 Communication Means

To communicate its values, Atea Logistics will have to use different kinds of tools and supports. Because of the current absence of communication of values, we believe that the company should not neglect any possible means and therefore be open to any ideas. Indeed, we may argue that Atea Logistics has neglected its values’ communication long enough to now limit its communication’s means.
Furthermore, we truly think that fun or laughing is an important vector when it comes to communication. In fact, in our opinion, it is easier to make people learn or realize something via the use of humor or of a funny atmosphere. Besides, reading or hearing the core values should not be something boring or experienced as a constraint by employees but rather as a reminder of their own nature. In that sense, Atea Logistics should not be afraid of being innovative or to go out of the box in order to meet its communication objectives.

**Printed materials:**
Even though they are not the most innovative supports to communicate values, printed documents turn out to be some sort of basis when it comes to communication. As a result, we think that they are not communication means to neglect. Those printed documents, which would have the Atea Logistics’ core values written on, could be company brochures, posters newsletters and so on. Furthermore, these documents could be distributed or put up in the company’s facilities or spread out during any kind of corporate events or company promotion.

**Internet and intranet:**
As far as we are concerned, we think that both internet and Atea Logistics’ intranet are communication means with a great potential. Indeed, the company recently installed a new intranet and the employees are often referring to it as it turns out to be an important tool for most of them in their daily tasks. Therefore, we argue that Atea Logistics’ core values should appear on the first page of the intranet. In that way, all employees would see them everyday. Moreover, we believe that the values should clearly appear on the company’s website. Indeed, it would be a good way to communicate them to employees, customers and other external actors or even to attract new potential employees.

**Regular meetings:**
In our opinion, gathering employees from different departments could be a good opportunity to communicate the corporate values. In fact, those meetings could be organized on a more regular basis; they would deal with both daily business matters and more general discussions with subjects such as values. Indeed, we think that values cannot be communicated enough and that those meetings could create interesting discussions about the values leading to possible clarifications and improvements.
Furthermore, we argue that Atea Logistics could use a contraction of the words constituting its values in order to communicate them in a shorter way. For instance, the contraction “RPL-RTF” could sometimes stand for Respect, Participation, and Low power-distance, Responsibility, Trust and Family-friendly. Moreover, this contraction could be used as a “team scream” to start or end a meeting as a sport team might do; people would gather and say the contraction all together. Even though one may argue that it is not a very academic procedure, it would surely improve the sense of unity (common in a family…) and add excitement to the group.

**Corporate events**

The company could also organize corporate events with the main goal of communicating its values to its employees. Indeed, it appears that most employees are enjoying these activities. To do so, Atea Logistics could look for inspiration in the activities from the Owell- or WM-data-time with the former facilities’ visit for 100 employees.

Nevertheless, we argue that parties, celebrations or sports activities gathering the whole organization could be the most successful events regarding the communication of the company’s core values. Indeed, during these parties, people meet to have fun and not to work. Therefore, there is a different atmosphere, probably more relaxed and oriented towards fun, where people might accept and realize the real nature of the corporate values more easily. For instance, the family–friendly feeling might become even more obvious.

**Integration process for newcomers**

The absence of values’ communication to older employees is a serious problem. Nonetheless, in our opinion, it is less worrying than the absence of values’ communication to newcomers. Indeed, the integration process of these new employees might be slowed down by this lack. Furthermore, these newcomers will in a few years become the carriers of Atea Logistics’ core values when the older employees will retire. What will happen to the corporate values if newcomers do not know what these values are? Will they realize their importance and their inherited aspect? As a consequence, we think that it is a necessity for the company to start integrating newcomers via a real integration plan. This integration procedure will facilitate the integration of newcomers, and ensure the communication of the corporate values and hopefully their passing on in the future.

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151 See the results of our fieldwork report on how to improve the integration of newcomers
Rely on its role models

As we realized from Pär Aspengren’s behavior, managers and leaders have a great role to play in the communication of core values. Indeed, they are role models that the other employees observe in order to understand what the correct attitude in the organization is. In other words, managers set the example and employees adapt to it; they are the living explanation of the core values. Therefore, their influence is tremendous within Atea Logistics. In our opinion, managers should be aware of this responsibility and make sure they are over possible critics and that core values are reflected in their behavior.

6.1.4.2 A Constant Concern

All the above communication means are of tremendous importance for Atea Logistics. Indeed, they are tools that will help communicate the company’s values. Nevertheless, another factor should go together with all these communication means: their constant use! In fact, we argue that the company has to communicate its values constantly. Of course, it is more crucial to communicate them during turbulent times but they remain very important during successful times as they might be the basis of this success. Therefore, Atea Logistics should communicate its values all the time with every possible mean available.

6.1.5 Aligning With Core Values

The result of the new communication of Atea Logistics’ core values should be that employees act accordingly to them. As far as the situation is concerned, employees try to act according to the values that they think are Atea Logistics’ core values. Once the present values will be clarified, they will surely align more easily with the corporate values. Nevertheless, we argue that it has to be a constant effort from the whole personnel to act accordingly to the company’s core values, to put them in practice so that the values really “live” within the company.

Moreover, it is amusing to realize that Atea Logistics is now in some sort of reversed process to maintain its values. Indeed, instead of first stating its values and then aligning with them, it appears that the company has aligned with values that are for now unstated, thus the current need for stating them.
6.1.6 Other Ways

As we previously developed, we think that the company should rely on its managers to communicate the company’s core values as they are role models for other employees. Nevertheless, we have noted that there is no strategy implemented to form tomorrow’s managers internally. In fact, the company would rather hire an external manager to replace a retiring one. But one may wonder what kind of role model this new manager will be if he/she has no clue or even no respect for the corporate values. Therefore, we think that it is too big of a risk especially when the company is willing to make so many efforts to communicate and retain its values internally. For this reason, we argue that Atea Logistics should prepare and form its new managers internally if it wants to keep on relying on them to communicate its core values. Indeed, those future managers would have had time to experience and align with the values before their promotion. In that way, the maintenance of core values would be ensured or at least facilitated.

6.2 Reflections and Critics

The process of conducting this kind of study requires a lot of time and energy from the authors. The more involved in the writing process one gets, the more difficult it is to remain critical and unbiased towards one’s own work. Therefore, we will now explain the possible reproaches that we could be directed towards our research.

First of all, having written a previous report on Atea Logistics creates a risk of interpreting our findings according to our previous understanding of the company, even though we tried to remain as distant and unbiased as possible. Second of all, the discovering of core values is a very complicated subject as it deals with the interviewees’ understanding and articulation of abstract information. Therefore, the risk of gathering inaccurate data is higher.

Furthermore, the research question was formed together with employees and resulted in making us loose quite a lot of time during the beginning of our study. Therefore, we lost some of our focus exploring possible areas to study that we finally did not use.
6.3 Suggestions for Further Research Areas

6.3.1 Assess Possible Generalizations of Our Findings

As previously mentioned in the limitations of our research, we have chosen to study the example of one company, Atea Logistics to answer our research question. Therefore it is hard to know if our findings and conclusions regarding possible ways to maintain core values could be generalized and applied to other companies. In that sense, it would be interesting to study other companies in order to see how they are dealing with the maintenance of their core values and if some of our findings could be generalized.

6.3.2 Training and Formation of Managers

As we previously explained, we believe in the internal formation of managers in order to ensure the continuity within the company. Therefore, as we suggested a training or formation procedure should be created in order to form internally the managers of tomorrow. Hence, it could be interesting to develop such a plan going from the detection of possible managers to their starting as managers with all the training process in between.

Moreover, in the case of companies which prefer to hire external managers, it might be interesting to study the influence of these new managers on the existing culture of values.
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APPENDIXES

Interviews’ schedule:

April 4\textsuperscript{th} 2006:  Heléne Gröön, Human Resource Manager
April 10\textsuperscript{th} 2006:  Heléne Gröön, Human Resource Manager
April 18\textsuperscript{th} 2006:  Pär Aspengren, Managing Director
April 25\textsuperscript{th} 2006:  Marie Persson, Purchasing Assistant
April 25\textsuperscript{th} 2006:  Stefan Idstrand, Speaking Partner for Swedish customers
April 25\textsuperscript{th} 2006:  Anders Ripström, Production Manager
April 26\textsuperscript{th} 2006:  Frank Svensson, Purchasing Manager
May 4\textsuperscript{th} 2006:  Johan Glinghammar, Recycling Supervisor
May 4\textsuperscript{th} 2006:  Andreas Sjöström, Business developer

Following is the interviews’ schedule of our fieldwork report as we are using some of the empirical data gathered for this previous research.

February 13\textsuperscript{th} 2006:  Pär Aspengren, Managing Director
February 28\textsuperscript{th} 2006:  Heléne Gröön, Human Resource Manager
March 8\textsuperscript{th} 2006:  Marie Persson, Newcomer
March 9\textsuperscript{th} 2006:  Stefan Idstrand, Older employee
March 9th 2006: Oskar Simonsson, Newcomer

March 9th 2006: Héléne Gröön, Human Resource Manager
Basic questions for each interview:

1. What are the core values of the company?
2. Who has set these values?
3. Would you say that these values are valuable at present?
4. Which factors would you argue have changed these values?
5. To what extent have the changes had impact lately on the existing values?
6. Have the values that were set a while ago, not been strong enough to survive the changes or are they strong enough to survive the ongoing changes?
7. How much have the core values changed through the years and changes (acquisitions, mergers, etc.)
8. Who states and forms these values?
9. How are they transferred throughout the organisation and to newcomers?
10. What would you consider to be the most crucial factor to create (strong) values? And to maintain them?
11. What kind of “image” (values) do you want to present to your subordinate or to the newcomers?
12. Are the values that exist more directed towards production, quality and goals or are they more “soft” in the sense of how workers are interacting with each other?
13. To what extend are you affected by your leader?
14. Who are the main carriers of culture and values?
15. What do you think Atea has to do in order to maintain existing or former values?
16. What values do you think would fit Atea at present?
17. Do you have the same procedures for each newcomer?