



**Linnæus University**

Sweden

Thesis 15 ECTS credits  
Media and Communication

# Internal Communication

*-The employee perspective*



*Author:* Emilia Bergquist

*Supervisor:* Mikael Rinaldo

*Examiner:* Name

*Date:* June 2014

*Subject:* Media and  
Communication

*Level:* Bachelor of Science

# Abstract

**Author:** Emilia Bergquist

**Title:** Internal Communication – The employee perspective

**Location:** Linnaeus University

**Language:** English

**Number of pages:** 57

Den omfattande globaliseringen som sker i världen har givit upphov till stora förändringar för världens organisationer. Den ständigt växande konkurrensen som kommer därav ökar kraven på en fungerande internkommunikation samt betydelsen av att de interna kommunikationskanalerna utnyttjas så effektivt som möjligt. Samtidigt krävs långtgående hänsynstaganden gällande alla organisationens medlemmar då utveckling av internkommunikationens struktur och strategi genomförs.

I detta examensarbete används teorierna "Uses and gratifications", "Dependency theory" och "Social information processing theory". Teorierna används med målsättning att beskriva de mest framträdande dragen i den interna kommunikationsutövningen i en organisation och vidare för att undersöka hur denna utövning överensstämmer med de förväntningar och användningsmönster som kan utrönas bland de anställda.

Med utgångspunkt i tidigare forskning inom ämnet framkommer vikten av att utföra studien från ett användarperspektiv i en organisation som bedriver industriell produktion såväl som kontorsarbete. Skillnader mellan dessa olika grupper i fråga om upplevelser och förväntningar inkluderades också i undersökningen.

Studien genomfördes på ett teknologiföretag i södra Sverige i ett skede där lansering av en ny intranät-portal väntade. Det empiriska materialet erhöles genom utförande av sju fokusgruppsintervjuer. Totalt deltog 28 personer i dessa fokusgrupper.

Resultatet visade på många tillgängliga interna kommunikationskanaler samtidigt som det synliggjorde en upplevd avsaknad av en tydlig strategi och en utsedd koordinator som ansvarar för den interna kommunikationen.

Från ett medarbetarperspektiv karaktäriseras den generella internkommunikationen av inkonsekvens, otillförlitlighet och godtycklighet. Olika typer av strategier för att tillfredsställa specifika behov kunde identifieras såväl som långtgående beroenden av vissa informationskanaler för att få information. Kollaborationsplattformar som en integrerad del av intranätet mötte motsägelsefulla åsikter och visar på att de anställda både önskar och fruktar det fria ordet i organisationskommunikativa sammanhang. De interna kommunikationskanalerna måste struktureras och samköras för att ge alla organisationsmedlemmar möjlighet att tillfredsställa sina informations- och kommunikationsbehov.

## Keywords

Internal communication, Organizational communication, Intranet, Uses and gratifications, Focus group interviews

# Content

<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Organizational communication	1
1.2 Internal communication	1
1.3 Intranet	2
<b>2 Previous research</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Internal communication	4
2.2 Intranet	4
2.3 Intranet from a users' perspective	7
2.4 Uses and gratifications	7
2.5 Summary of previous research	8
<b>3 Theoretical framework</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 Uses and gratifications theory	10
3.2 Dependency theory	12
3.3 Social information processing theory	13
3.4 Usage of theoretical framework	14
<b>4 Aim</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>5 Research questions</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>6 Method and material</b>	<b>17</b>
6.1 Focus groups	17
6.1.1 Selection of experimental subjects	17
6.1.2 Recruitment of experimental subjects	18
6.1.3 Total number of respondents	19
6.1.4 Anonymity	20
6.1.5 Reflexivity regarding the moderator	20
6.2 Interview guide	21
6.3 Focus group procedure	22
6.3.1 Difficulties and Limitations	22
6.3.2 Research ethics	23
6.4 Focus group material	24
<b>7 Result and Analysis</b>	<b>26</b>
7.1 Current internal communication system	26
7.1.1 Internal printed magazine	26
7.1.2 TV-monitors	26
7.1.3 Yammer (Collaborative platform)	27
7.1.4 Same Time/Lync (chat-program)	27
7.1.5 Further tools for internal communication:	27
7.2 Characteristics of internal communication	27
7.3 Uses and gratifications	28
7.3.1 The cognitive needs	28

7.3.2 <i>The affective needs</i>	32
7.3.3 <i>The personal integrative needs</i>	34
7.3.4 <i>The social integrative needs</i>	36
7.4 Dependency theory as an extension of uses and gratifications	39
7.5 Social information processing theory	41
7.5.1 <i>Overt statement from people in the surroundings</i>	42
7.5.2 <i>Individual interpretation of specific event</i>	43
7.5.3 <i>Rules regarding suitability</i>	46
<b>8 Summary of the results</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>9 Discussion</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>10 Conclusions</b>	<b>52</b>
10.1 Intranet/Channels	52
10.2 Interpretations within the organization	52
10.3 Content management/strategy	53
10.4 Lack of resources/accountability for internal communication	54
10.5 Collaborative platforms	54
10.6 Prior launch and during launch	55
10.7 Diversity	55
10.8 Future research	56
<b>References</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Appendix A- Interview manual, Focus groups</b>	<b>I</b>

# 1 Introduction

The following thesis will examine the internal communication patterns in organizations comprising a combination of office-work and industrial production. The research topic will be analyzed from an employee perspective including office-based personnel as well as production-based personnel. The main focus will be on the intranet but the study will incorporate other internal communication channels as well.

## 1.1 Organizational communication

The current experience for almost every organization existent today is an increasingly competitive market situation (Heide, 2002, p. 11). Many reasons can be identified as the source for this development, including the societal globalization which is radically changing the conditions for local organizations. These organizations now exist in a global environment where their competitive advantages must be utilized to their maximum in order to survive the increasing rivalry from numerous similar organizations. In turn the accumulating competitive situation forces organizations to develop in terms of productivity and efficiency. One condition in order to do so is to streamline the communication channels and primarily the digital channels within an organization (Bark et al, 2002, p. 44). In this way a more expedient work procedure is enabled.

## 1.2 Internal communication

*“If the employees are not aware of what the company stands for and where it is heading probably no one outside the company will understand either”*

- Eriksson (2008, p. 70)

The internal communication is a part of the expression organizational communication (Bark, 2002, p. 24). Communication taking place within an organization is integrated with the communication occurring externally. These communicative actions are affecting each other in both directions which highlight the importance of managing them with equal concern. If the internal communication is utilized it allows creation of unitary organizational goals and understanding of value of individual work performances. This will enhance development of a common strive in a favourable direction and in turn also improve the overall organizational effectiveness.

Further, the collaborative technologies are a prerequisite since knowledge has become one of the single most important competitive advantages to develop on a market where the competition is on a constant increase (Bark et al, 2002, p. 44). It is of great importance for every organization to enable the internal use of competence to be conducted as effectively as possible. If this succeeds it can constitute a facilitating factor in the organizational strive towards becoming the premier choice in the complex market situation of today (Eriksson, 2008).

### 1.3 Intranet

In 1994 the expression IntraNet emerged. It was a term initially used by Steven Telleen who recognized the potential in using the same technical solutions for internal communication as for external communication. His vision was to develop an “internal internet” (Bark et al. 2002, p. 11, 12). Nowadays the majority of organizations have a more or less functional intranet; the issue for many of these is how it is operated.

A large number of studies have been conducted in order to examine the concept of intranets. Despite this, the actual communicative aspects have not been a main interest for previous researchers, something that have led to numerous failures in using intranet capacity to its full potential (Bark et al, 2002, p. 8, 11). Even though the intranet is the main part of an internal communication system other channels have to be acknowledged as well. The use of communication channels within organizations should originate from the needs and conditions among the employees (Bark et al, 2002, p. 39).

The article *Evaluating the role and effectiveness of an intranet in facilitating knowledge management* written by Skok and Kalmanovitch (2004) displays a study of intranet effectiveness as a tool for utilization of knowledge. The conclusions show that company management often has an exaggerated belief when it comes to use of digital communication channels (Skok & Kalmanovitch, 2004, p. 732, 733). Intranets are often launched without an explicit strategy or distinct purpose which leads to that it seldom lives up to the expectations on management level. If the goal is to create a useful and streamlined intranet it has to be planned and monitored by people on a regular basis (Bark et al, 2002, p. 54). Not even a greatly structured intranet will work expedient left to its own device.

Management often fail to see the potential of the intranet as part of the organizational communication system (Bark et al, 2002, p. 37). It has a tendency to become a one way

communication channel where information is published in uncontrolled amounts (Skok & Kalmanovitch, 2004, p. 733). The needs and desires of the employees are rarely considered despite that this should constitute the base of every intranet development (Bark et al, 2002, p. 24, 39, 45).

*“An intranet is not the solution to every need”.*

- Eriksson (2008, p. 78)

An intranet is not automatically making people abandon old structures and ways of communicating and therefore management cannot do that either. The newer interactive communication platforms will not be used in the same way or to the same extent by every organizational member (Eriksson, 2008, p. 78). It is required to find a balance between channels and realising what their most effective way of usage is. If parts of the workforce do not have constant access to computers it has to be considered how information will be distributed equally throughout the organization (Eriksson, 2008, p. 79). Consideration and awareness of specific organizational conditions will display suitability of usage of different channels. A sensible combination is often the most favourable.

Channels are only effective if they are used with a conscious intention to fulfil a specific need (Bark et al, 2002, p. 14). Digital communication channels such as intranets offers excellent opportunities for organizations to adopt elaborate technical solutions to solve different problems. However, it is not the channel itself that will solve the issue; the solution is dependent on how the company makes use of the channel in order to do so. Information on the intranet is often published by a few key people who are not entirely aware of what kind of information people want to find or how the information could be to any help for employees. This can cause an unfavourable information overload which is of no use to anyone (Bark et al, 2002, p. 24).

## 2 Previous research

The following section will demonstrate previous research achievements on the chosen research topic.

### 2.1 Internal communication

A study regarding the increasing importance of internal communication was performed by Mishra, Boynton & Mishra (2014). They used explorative interviews with PR and internal communication managers in striving for clarity of how these managers viewed the significance of internal communication. The result shows that using all the available communication channels to provide the employees with the desired information is likely to increase the engagement and satisfaction at the work place. It could help creating a transparent culture where everyone involved understands the organization and its values (Mishra, Boynton & Mishra, 2014). If the managers succeed with the challenge of conveying information to the employees using the particular channel the receiver prefers, it is more liable that the message is assimilated and grants the desired effects for the organization as well as for the employees.

### 2.2 Intranet

In the article by Skok and Kalmanovitch (2004) a drawn conclusion is that a strategically operated intranet can enhance the productivity of a specific organization. At the same time an inadequate use of the intranet can be directly harmful to the corporate effectiveness. The authors also point to the extremely high expectations that are often held by the organizational management regarding intranets and their effects on productivity. These expectations are often originating from the large expenses that an intranet investment comprise but what actually determines the intranet functionality is how the users perceive it in ratio to the primary launch. The employee reaction determines how the usage of the intranet will develop and what role it will be given among the other organizational communication channels (Skok & Kalmanovitch, 2004). The main finding in Skok and Kalmanovitch's (2004) study is that the intranet is more frequently used as an information channel than a knowledge tool. The last option is something that would be preferable both for management and users.

The research article *"Intranet editors as corporate gatekeepers and agenda setters"* written by Lehmuskallio (2006) aims to shed a light on processes of decision-making

regarding information published on an organizational intranet. The study examines how organizations conduct the gathering, selection and distribution of information and what effect these processes have on the outcome. Semi-structured interviews with intranet editors are supporting the conclusions made in the article. The result of these has been analyzed mainly through the mass media theory agenda setting and led to the finding of a correlation between the skills of the individual intranet editor and the perceived importance of a published item (Lehmuskallio, 2006). Of the organizations that were subjects for this study, less than half had an appointed team responsible for the publishing and maintenance of the intranet portal. This is a result reasonably leading to the conclusion that the gatekeeper function very often lies upon one single person. This, in turn, frequently results in spontaneously published items basically as a product of individual decision-making without an explicit strategy. The receivers of the information were seldom examined to evaluate what needs and desires flourished among them. Lehmuskallio (2006) also found a widespread belief among corporate-level intranet editors that employees on “lower levels” did not hold an interest regarding an intranet. Therefore they were not notified of the information published there. This led to them being excluded from participating in the organizational development processes. The practical solution described in the article is to increase the individual skills of the intranet editors and achieve higher quality on the published items. Lehmuskallio (2006) also suggests the employee perspective as a topic for further research.

Niell and Richards (2011) write in their article about the increasing pressure on corporations to adopt and effectively use new digital technology to enhance the competitiveness in relation to other organizations active on the market. A cross-sectional field study with an online questionnaire formed the base of their study with the overall purpose to shed a light on problems and acceptance of intranet portals. The reason is that these are becoming a competitive advantage with increasing importance for all kinds of organizations. Management investments in collaborative technology has to be immediately accepted by employees and used to its full potential in order to reach the desirable advantages expected from the venture. The demands on enough employee engagement to start using the new technology in a fast manner can be problematic depending on different conditions. For instance Niell and Richards (2011) point out the possible emergence of a digital divide within organizations. This would put the employees' knowledge, confidence and competence regarding technology to the test.

Based on the findings in the study, Niell and Richards (2011) concluded that the need of prior portal education and consultation for employees is of great importance to overcome possible issues connected to the intranet launch. It would help providing experience and knowledge that in turn would reduce the effects of possible digital divides existent among the organizational members. The perceived usefulness is largely determined by the initial experience of the intranet portal. This finding states that providing of prior portal consultation even higher. If the initial experience is positive, this is likely to increase the use, consistency and efficiency of the intranet portal on a long term basis. If an organization fails to provide employees with a positive attitude towards the intranet portal there is a crucial risk that the intranet initiation will generate destructive actions. This in turn could lead to dissimulation of misinformation throughout the organization instead of enhancing effectiveness (Neill & Richards, 2011).

Meroño-Cerdan, Soto-Acosta and López-Nicolás (2008) produced the article “*Analyzing collaborative technologies*” with the aim to gain knowledge about the collaborative technologies and their effect on organizational performance (Meroño-Cerdan, Soto-Acosta & López-Nicolás, 2008). The study is based on a questionnaire and face-to-face surveys conducted on 310 Spanish organizations. Applying the website orientations e-information, e-communication and e-transaction on a study of intranet portals the underlying idea of a specific intranet could be revealed. An intranet with focus on e-information is used as a channel to provide information internally in the organization. It enables access to chosen material across organizational departments. E-communication is an orientation with a more distinct focus on interaction and relationships than the previous. The technology comprised within an intranet with this orientation is meant to facilitate exchange of information and opinions and focuses on collaboration in different respects (Meroño-Cerdan, Soto-Acosta & López-Nicolás, 2008). The research paper concludes the positive influence that an e-information approach has on organizational performance. It shows the positive effects coming out of using collaborative technologies as an internal tool. According to the findings in this study a combination between the approaches e-information and e-communication is the most effective way to enhance further efficiency regarding organizational performance. Finally it is concluded that collaboration and information sharing is a requirement

within organizations. Although the real effect that an intranet portal providing these functions will have is based on the employees' way of using it.

### 2.3 Intranet from a users' perspective

*Intranet use: A study of five Swedish organizations* is an article written by Banck and Amcoff Nyström (2002) regarding a study of what is influencing the understanding of intranets as well as their usability. The examination was conducted through an explorative method where interviews were held with both users and managers in order to cover both perspectives. Determined from the result of the study is that intranets are mainly used as a platform for publishing material and for self-information rather than sharing or keeping others informed. Further, Banck and Amcoff Nyström (2002) found that there is a general requirement among the employees to be able to make use of an intranet in their daily work which actually means tools developed for interactivity. In addition to these findings it was discovered that elaborate strategies regarding the corporate intranet are often constructed. Although, these strategies seldom work as the actual governing principles when the intranet is implemented practically (Banck & Amcoff Nyström, 2002). Studies clearly suggest that strategies and requirements should be the main aspects taken into account while governing intranets. Despite this, the majority of the organizations examined did not use their intranet as presented in their strategy and vision. The result distinctively shows that further research regarding the intranet use is required. Banck and Amcoff Nyström (2002) themselves points out the urgent need to examine possible divides within organizations. In their study, people from the production departments were excluded from being interviewed which obviously constitutes a lack of information regarding their thoughts on the matter.

### 2.4 Uses and gratifications

Ann Lind (2009) performed a study concerning solution sharing networks. In this study she used the "uses and gratifications theory" applied to communication occurring within a corporate network instead of on mass media usage. Lind (2009) examined what the reasons for participating in and committing to such a network was and came to the conclusion that it does fulfil certain needs. Of the needs categories presented in the uses and gratifications model it was cognitive needs, affective needs and social integrating needs that were the ones people were most likely to fulfil through network participation. Lind (2009) also found that the way in which people committed to the network differed.

Factors like economy, demands and feelings influenced the individual reasons for participating.

## 2.5 Summary of previous research

Based on finding and conclusions from the research presented above, one can come to terms with that internal communication overall plays a significant role in organizational performance. Comprised in internal communication intranets are subjects of interest and their importance is on a constant increase. If an organization is enabled to use their internal communication channels in a purposive manner (Mishra, Boynton & Mishra, 2014) and utilize their intranet to its full potential it will most likely be a key factor in striving towards greater effectiveness (Skok & Kalmanovitch, 2004). On the other hand, an intranet that is left to its own device and not utilized could possibly cause damages to the business productivity. Niell and Richards (2011) points out the possible emerging of a digital divide within an organization, something that could be rebuked by educating personnel before launching a new intranet. Anne Lind (2009) also raises the question of participation motives in networks and in her study she point out reasons to why these differ. The result shows other entities contributing to internal divides.

In a number of studies the user perspective in ratio to intranet efficiency and use is pointed out as something in need of more attention from researchers. The role the intranet is given in an organizational communication structure is basically determined by the users (Skok & Kalmanovitch, 2004). Positive or negative attitudes towards a new intranet emerge very early in the implementation process (Neill & Richards, 2011). It is up to the organizational management to decide in what way they want to operate the channel. Although the actual link to organizational performance is based on how the employees are enabled to use it (Meroño-Cerdan, Soto-Acosta & López-Nicolás, 2008). Lehmuskallio's (2006) results show the indication that the general attitude amongst people at management level is that there is no proper interest regarding the intranet on "lower levels" in the organization. He also suggests an employee focus for future researchers. Banck and Amcoff Nyström's (2002) study is combining management perspective and user perspective finding that the governing on management level is seldom performed in accordance to needs of the users. Not either in accordance to established strategies. Although Banck and Amcoff Nyström (2002) was considering users in their study they left out the people working in the production of the organizations, something they also point out as a lack and a subject to be examined in future research projects.



### 3 Theoretical framework

Although many of the previously performed studies take on a management perspective, they have shown that usage of the intranet is one of the parameters that determine if the result of the intranet investment is successful or not. In order to come to terms with how the patterns of usage are uttered in accordance to requirements and desires among the users I will use the theoretical concepts presented below. The theoretical framework will consist of three parts which are The “Uses and Gratifications theory”, the “Dependency theory” as an extension of “Uses and gratifications” and finally the theory about “Social information processing” in organizational media usage.

#### 3.1 Uses and gratifications theory

Uses and gratifications theory has mainly been used to examine what people do with mass media. In this study the internal media system in an organization will be regarded as a choice of media with a similar suggested outcome or dependency as the mass media distribution of media channels provides.

The theory of “Uses and gratifications”, originally developed by Katz (1959) is a theory regarding motives for usage of different media. Examination of the reason to why people use a specific media will chart patterns of usage and which individual needs that are being fulfilled through that media usage (Pearce, 2009). The theory is based on the question “*What do people do with the media?*” (Severin and Tankard, 2010, p. 293) and the assumption of an active audience both in terms of reason and ability of choosing media and in terms of attentive consumption of it. “Uses and gratifications” can be studied on macro- and micro-level (Pearce, 2009). The two approaches centres different focus and put the theory in relation to diverse societal processes. Micro level uses and gratifications focus on what role media has in the life of an individual and a person’s deliberate choice and use of that media to meet certain needs and desires. It also covers the development of an individual dependency towards a specific media. The macro level approach uses the theory to explain the relationship between individuals, mass media system and social system (Pearce, 2009).

Severin and Tankard (2009, p. 295) referrers to McQuail, Blumler and Brown (1972) as being the first ones to categorize users’ needs and in that way enable determination of reasons behind media use. This version of the model includes apparent suppositions of

the active audience who chooses specific media for a defined reason and to satisfy obvious needs (Severin & Tankard, 2009, p. 295). The choice is made in an environment where media is one of several options to choose from in order to fulfil the same need.

The categories used in the model are:

1. “*Diversion* – escape from routine and problems; emotional release”.
2. “*Personal relationships* – social utility of information in conversations; substitute of the media for companionship”.
3. “*Personal identity or individual psychology* – value reinforcement or reassurance; self-understanding; reality exploration, and so on”.
4. “*Surveillance* – information about things that might affect one or will help one do or accomplish something”.

- McQuail, Blumler and Brown (1972)  
quoted in Severin and Tankard (2009, s.  
295)

An even more developed model of the “Uses and gratifications theory” was initiated by Katz, Gurevitch and Haas (1973, p. 166-167) and was destined to visualize the connectedness or disconnectedness people chose to create or maintain through mass media consumption. Their model does as well suggest a categorization of needs, although slightly modified.

1. “*Cognitive needs*: acquiring information, knowledge, and understanding”.
2. “*Affective needs* – emotional, pleasurable, or aesthetic experience”.
3. “*Personal integrative needs* – strengthening credibility, confidence, stability, and status”.
4. “*Social integrative needs* – strengthening contacts with family, friends, and so on”.
5. “*Tension release needs* – escape and diversion”.

- Katz, Gurevitch and Haas (1973, p. 166-  
167)

In this particular study the theory presented above will be used in a rather untraditional way. It will primarily be in order to examine needs and use of internal communication channels among employees rather than mass media usage as the traditional approach

suggests. The way that the theory is utilized in this context is by using the same theoretical concepts as in Katz, Gurevitch and Haas (1973, p. 166-167) categories but instead of regarding media use and gratification it will connect to the internal communication channels. The matter that is addressed is the possible ways of satisfying the different needs categorized through usage of the internal communications channels available within an organization. This will help develop an understanding of which communicative processes that works to a satisfactory extent and which does not provide sufficient gratifications of the needs in need of being fulfilled. Usage of these theoretical concepts will also enable examination of employees' motives in order to find specific content within the organizational communication system. With the base in the previous research presented earlier this theoretical concept is suitable to describe and explain the problem discovered.

### 3.2 Dependency theory

The "Dependency theory" is sometimes regarded as a theory to extend or combine with the "Uses and gratifications model". The reason for this theory is to respond to criticism pointing towards that the "Uses and gratifications theory" alone takes a too individualistic point of view which results in ignorance concerning the social system in which the individuals examined reside (Severin & Tankard, 2009, p. 297).

The dependency model indicates that individuals are not totally in control while choosing what media to consume (Pearce, 2009). Instead the choices are influenced by factors in our social environment and the demands it puts. Further influential factors are circumstances and personality. The "Dependency theory" also suggests that people with more media options providing the same kind of satisfaction will decrease dependency to a specific channel. A limited amount of options will, on the contrary, increase a person's dependency since the needs will remain unsatisfied without that particular channel (Pearce, 2009). It is a theory that proposes a collaborative view on social system, audience and media. Consumption is based on expectations of what gratifications a person can be given by media but not solely based on needs but also other variables (Palmgreen, 1984). The uses and "Dependency model" (Rubin & Windahl, 1986) was therefore developed basically using both theories combined.

The “Dependency theory” is used as an extension of “Uses and gratifications theory.” It is included in this study in order to examine gain further knowledge regarding the possible divides between different groups of employees.

### 3.3 Social information processing theory

The third and final part of the theoretical framework is the theory of “Social Information Processing”. In this theory the focus is on connecting the adoption of organizational media technology with the social environment where the employees reside and the implementation of the technology takes place (Miller, 2009, p. 244). The “Social information processing theory” is basically an addition based on the theory of media richness since it is taking into account the variables of communication requirement in ratio to the ambiguity of the communication task (Miller, 2009, p. 244). The addition is that this theory also processes the effects that the social environment has on an individual choice of media usage. Behavioural and cognitive patterns do not emerge only as a result of what is required to succeed with the communicative task. It is also an effect of social and symbolic processes (Fulk, 1993, p. 924). By acquiring knowledge about the social environment and its processes it is prompted that cognition and behaviour can be predicted. This accumulation makes the theoretical model more elaborate than the previous and in turn more reliable. What the theorists promoting this theory means is that the communication between people within an organization influences the way employees use different kinds of media. Contrarily to the media richness theory that point towards the automatic choice of the most suitable channel through which to convey a specific message (Miller, 2009, p. 244).

The actions affecting the media choice of employees can be transmitted and assimilated in four different ways (Fulk, 1993, p. 924). Overt statements from co-workers or other people with whom employees engage in interaction are one possible influential factor. Employees own interpretations of specific events are another. Thirdly, some events might receive explicit attention and therefore be the origin of further change of media usage patterns. The fourth influential factor is any regulations regarding suitability for corporate communication behaviour and also stipulations constructed in order to streamline work-related communication (Fulk, 1993, p. 924). The social information conveyed in the situations mentioned above is effecting the individual perception of specific characteristics associated with a particular media. This becomes the source

from which attitudes, perceived requirements and actual media use is originating (Fulk, Steinfield, Schmitz & Power, 1987).

### 3.4 Usage of theoretical framework

The theoretical framework presented above will be used as complementary tools in order to explain different aspects of the research problem. The “Uses and gratifications theory” will help describing the processes leading to specific usage patterns and choices of communication channels within the organization. In this research the aspect of content conveyed in a particular channel is also essential to examine. It is also likely that the need for specific content will determine how the organizational communication channels are utilized by the employees.

The “Dependency theory” is the extension of the “Uses and gratifications theory” and will be used to further examine the differences in usage of the organizational communication channels. Since this theory enables the distinguishing of reliance it can provide possible explanations to differences in needs and demands regarding different communication channels used in the organization.

The “Social information processing theory” is included in this research in order to contribute with knowledge regarding the interaction and structural processes within the organization and how this affects the usage of communication channels. Together these theories form a comprehensive theoretical framework in ratio to the problem presented in “Previous research” (chapter 2) as well as the research questions (chapter 5).

## 4 Aim

As mentioned; most studies previously performed on the topic intranet use in internal communication takes on a management perspective which makes this user-orientated study relatively rare. The study will be executed to regard internal communication patterns before the launch of a new organizational intranet using the theoretical framework outlined above. An important target to address in this study is the possible differences in perception between production-based and office-based personnel. The reason for this focus is based on previous research and the lack of examinations including the employees from the production departments of organizations in combination with internal communication and intranet research (Banck and Amcoff Nyström, 2002). This division of employees is the case of many industrial organizations and therefore a factor possibly mitigating efficiency.

Another aspect of internal communication and the distribution of information to take into account is that of when parts of the workforce do not have constant access to computers (Eriksson, 2008, p. 79). Those groups are likely to develop other communicative patterns and information retrieval methods than people who have consistent access to the computer-mediated communication channels. Both these groups' needs have to be considered and satisfied to succeed with the goals of internal communication. The specifically formulated aim of this study is to examine employee experience, expectations and requirements regarding internal communication channels. The main focus will be put on the intranet but in order to reach conclusions about that, the other internal communication channels must be taken into consideration and be examined as well.

## 5 Research questions

The following core research question is addressed from an employee's point of view:

What characterizes the internal communication performance in organizations with an industrial production and how does this correspond with the employees' expectations and needs?

Further, the following sub-question is formulated:

- Are there any differences between the experience and expectations of employees who are office-based and production-based?

## 6 Method and material

In the following section the method used in this study will be described and evaluated. The portrayal of the used method will follow the demand for replication to enable other researches to conduct the exact same study (Backman, 2008, p. 41). The method generating this particular material is focus group interviews. The study was conducted during a time-period of eight weeks, between the dates 2014-03-31 and 2014-05-09.

### 6.1 Focus groups

The focus group technique is a qualitative method with the aim of collecting data based on group interaction (Ekström & Larsson, 2010, p. 80). Focus groups are defined as group interviews and are a research method structured around a theme about which the participants engage in a discussion. The material collected from focus group discussions is frequently used as a source of information regarding attitudes and thoughts, in market research concerning a specific product or in cases where it is a major interest to find out feelings and thought of employees and users (Krueger & Casey, 2001, p. 4). The groups are preferably set up as homogeneously as possible to favour a fruitful discussion climate and bring out aspects that do not come forward in ordinary interviews (Ekström & Larsson, 2010, p. 80). Krueger and Casey (2001, p. 5) describes the characteristics of a well structured and well conducted focus group as including carefully selected participants, implementation in a secure and neutral environment and led by a competent moderator. They also formulate demands on a very carefully performed handling and analysis of the material collected during the occasions. In this study the suitability of focus groups in order to establish understanding of peoples' feelings and thought regarding a specific issue is determining the suitability of the method.

Krueger and Casey (2009) identify three phases of importance using focus groups as a research method. These are "Planning, Recruitment and Procedure", which will all be included in the following description of the study.

#### 6.1.1 Selection of experimental subjects

This study was performed in organization comprising both departments performing industrial production and departments undertaking various kinds of office work. The reason for this was the problematic aspects previously described (see chapter 4). The study was performed within a large technology organization. The size and complexity

of the organization required a limitation of the research and will specifically focus on the factory situated in south of Sweden. The specific factory chosen for the research is representative for the industrial organization earlier described (see chapter 4).

The technology company employs approximately 750 people and operates on a global market. In the thesis it will be referred to as “The Technology Company” and points to the chosen factory.

The Technology Company is currently in a phase where the launch of a newly designed intranet is imminent. The reason for this launch is to make it more visually attractive as well as increase flexibility and modernity. Another aspect of the updating of the system is the addition of collaboration tools which are expected to provide new opportunities for communicative actions. Based on findings in previous research (see chapter 2) this phase includes many opportunities to induce positive effects of the intranet in a long term perspective (Niell and Richards, 2011). Further research topics are the examination of the employee perspective regarding internal communication as well as possible inconveniences between production-based and office-based personnel.

### **6.1.2 Recruitment of experimental subjects**

The aim was to set-up focus groups from a variety of departments of the organization. It was an important factor to include production-based participants as well as office-based participants. The choice to examine both categories is supported by the fact that there are differences in receiving internal communication, most obviously to the intranet due to the limited access to computers. The division between office-based and production-based employees is a quite general separation but still the most relevant to address the issue regarding any differences in experience and expectations between these particular groups.

One of the research questions (see chapter 5) is if a divergence in perception of the internal communication between personnel in different departments of an organization can be distinguished. This makes the striving for diversity self-explanatory. In order to reach the desired diversity and enable the finding of an answer to that particular question, it was important to conduct at least three focus groups with each of the groupings (Krueger and Casey, 2001, p. 4). Therefore, members of each grouping with those characteristics important for the aim of the study were gathered, in this case affinity to the office section or the production section.

In order to reach suitable participants corresponding with the diversity goal the department managers were contacted and asked to appoint as many candidates from their department as needed. The people appointed were contacted by me via e-mail where subject, purpose, interview structure, duration time and expectations were described. At this point their interest to take part was established. In the cases where the appointed candidates were not reachable via email they were asked directly by their manager. They were able to decline the participation and this implicates that all participants contributed voluntarily in favour of research topic.

If the potential participants agreed to contribute, they received a second e-mail where further details of the study's nature were provided. It was established if the interview would be recorded, to what degree anonymity and confidentiality could be promised. Time, place and other practical information were also provided. The above described process has followed the recommendations of Ekengren & Hinnfors (2012, p. 112).

### **6.1.3 Total number of respondents**

I chose to schedule between four and six people for each focus group occasion. This number is based on the recommendation of Wibeck (2010) referred to in Ekström and Larsson (2010, p. 81) who suggests a minimum of four participants and a maximum of six. The reason for this choice was both a matter of engaging people in the discussions and preventing formation of subgroups.

The final total number of participants was 28 people and these individuals were divided into seven groups. The first group of four people was performed as a test group in order to assess the interview guide. Subsequently three groups of office-based personnel and three groups of production-based personnel were conducted. Four of these groups contained four people; one group consisted of five people and one group of three people. According to Wibeck (2010) a group of three people is a low number of participant but at the time there was no possibility to recruit a fourth interviewee. The time for each focus group was scheduled for 60 minutes and the actual duration varied between the groups. The shortest focus group lasted for 29 minutes due to slight nervousness among the participants to engage in a discussion. The duration of the remaining groups was between 45 and 59 minutes. The reason for the shorter duration of one of the conducted focus groups could possibly derive from the phenomenon addressed by Krueger and Casey (2001) as the fact that some focus groups never reach the desired state of engaging in a discussion rather independent in ratio to the

moderator. The desired state of a focus group is when the discussion is mainly revolving around the participant and their contribution to each other's interjections. If this does not occur the interaction and answers to question becomes mainly directed towards the moderator instead of the others in the group.

#### **6.1.4 Anonymity**

Before the focus group took place each participant received an email containing information about purpose, anonymity, confidentiality and ethics. They were all asked to contact me, if they did not want the discussion to be recorded and if they had other questions. In the beginning of each focus group this information was brought up again to make sure that they were all aware of what they were promised and the purpose of their contribution to the study. The participants were also guaranteed anonymity in the final rapport and the recordings are not being shared. The names of the people in the focus groups will not be published in the transcription of the discussion which will make it impossible for people to derive statements and citations to a specific participant.

#### **6.1.5 Reflexivity regarding the moderator**

A researcher is naturally and unquestionable a part of the world where the research is conducted (Alvesson, 2011, p. 120). This fact has to be considered and taken into account while performing this kind of interactive study. As a moderator the goal is to not play a dominating role in the interaction occurring during the focus groups, especially not in the early phase of the discussions (Krueger & Casey, 2001). Despite this the presence of a person will contribute and affect the environment of the discussion and is something that must be taken into account while analysing and interpreting the result. Further, it is not only in the interactive situation that I will influence the result. The fact that the interpretations are made by me as well could also affect the outcome. It is of high importance to critically consider my ability to maintain an objective point of view regarding the result as well as creating an awareness of however this is possible. A study is always partly subjective since the researcher holds certain prepositions. To prevent the subjectivity to dominate this study I performed the analysis using carefully transcribed interview material rather than relying on a selective memory or notes that is more sensitive to influences. In the presentation of the material quotes are used in order to enable readers to gain an understanding of made interpretations. Practical attempts of consideration of the objectivity aspect will be deliberated in the "Focus group material" (see chapter 6.4).

## 6. 2 Interview guide

In the conduction of the focus groups an interview manual (Appendix A) with a structured interview design was used. The questions were formed according to Krueger and Casey's (2001, p. 9) recommended structure:

- Opening question
- Introductory question
- Transition question
- Key questions
- Ending question

- Krueger and Casey's (2001, p. 9)

To enable replication, the interview guide used is found in Appendix A (Backman, 2011, p. 42).

The questions presented in the interview guide are designed to provide information directly connected to the research questions constituting the topic of the report (Krueger and Casey, 2001, p. 7). Since the study aims to examine employees' experience and opinions regarding the internal communication a general question was asked as an opening to encourage people to start talking and exchanging views on this topic. Secondly the question following was intended to move the discussion closer towards the key questions and doing so by narrowing down the scope of the dialogue to more specific areas of concern. The third question initiated sharing of personal experience regarding the topic and were the transition finally reaching the more specific and investigative key questions. In the interview manual the posed questions are presented with a number of directory questions beneath to make sure that all the aspects required had been discussed. In some groups the discussion flowed very well around the head questions with few interventions from my part and still all the established themes were considered. Other groups needed more directions and encouragement in order to make the discussion progress. The final question summed up the main topics of the discussions and dealt with possible additions from the participants. The diversity of internal communication channels were all handled in the question structure as well as expectations and needs. The differences between sections in the organizations were brought up explicitly in most of the groups even though such questions were not overtly posed.

### 6.3 Focus group procedure

Following procedure is described in accordance to Backman's (2011, p. 42) outlined requirements regarding the methodical description. The focus group description will include all information of importance for possible replication attempts.

The participants arrived to the conference room at a time decided in advance.

When they arrived they were greeted by me and asked to take a seat around the table where I had arranged the chairs as favourable as possible given the circumstances. It is important that the participants can see each other in order to include everyone in the discussion (Krueger & Casey, 2001, p. 4). The participants were welcomed to the meeting and an introduced of the work; research topic and the nature of the study were provided. A brief clarification regarding the role of the moderator was also given as well as an explanation of the expectations of their contribution.

The session consisted of the asking of the questions according to the outlined structure in order to grant an as favourable discussion atmosphere as possible. To the possible extent the questions were posed in the order visible in the interview guide. Spontaneous questions as follow up to aspects and topics that were relevant to explore further were posed as well. Other questions that arose as the interview went along were discussed in the end according to Krueger and Casey's (2001, p. 9) proposed procedure.

When the theme had been discussed to the extent that the questions in the interview guide had all been addressed and discussed I rounded up the discussion by posing the ending question regarding potential additions from the participant (Krueger, 2002, p. 7). Additional points of discussion were dealt with as a short summary. The participants were thanked for their contribution and the session was completed. All focus groups were held on the participant native language Swedish. Quotes and statements used in the presentation of the result have been translated into English.

#### 6.3.1 Difficulties and Limitations

Focus groups as a research method are often more effectively executed if there is more than one person participating in the outlining and conduction of them (Krueger & Casey, 2001, p. 7). This study was entirely designed by me, as well as the questions in the final interview guide. The actual procedure was also performed by me alone. It is possible that other aspects, for instance regarding the interview manual would have made it different and contributed to other interesting discussions and aspects.

A traditional focus group should be consisting of a minimum of four people and last for approximately 90 minutes (Wibeck, 2010 referred in Ekström & Larsson, 2010, p. 81). My focus groups were only scheduled for 60 minutes since that was the maximum amount of time that the participants were able to set aside for the particular purpose. The preferred shape of the table is round since that enables people to see all the other participants clearly (Krueger & Casey, 2001, p. 4). Unfortunately round tables were not available at the site but I arranged the chairs as favourable as possible given the circumstances.

Using focus groups as a research method does not provide any statistically adequate numbers since the people participating are a small part of the entire population (Krueger and Casey, 2001, p. 6). Although it is suggested that generalizations can still be made based on qualitative data but it holds the characteristics of analytical generalizations (Yin, 2009, p. 43) instead of statistic generalizations. This is also true regarding the fact that the study is conducted on one specific organization comprising its own characteristics.

### **6.3.2 Research ethics**

The choice of giving such a far-reaching assurance regarding anonymity to the participants was basically a way to create a secure and relaxant environment in which to share experiences and thoughts. Prior to the examination started, I received much scepticism regarding anonymity and confidentiality since the employees at The Technology Company have all signed a confidentiality agreement. This agreement would be violated if they shared sensitive information without an assurance that the material would be confidential and kept within the organization.

During my study at The Technology Company, I have conducted seven focus groups with several employees in order to find out attitudes, thought and feelings regarding the internal communication. It is always with a certain amount of risk that people agree to participate in an examination where personal opinions are uttered which makes it a central interest to protect the identities of the participant as far as possible. This is justified through the demand on protection of individuals (Gustafsson et al, 2011, p. 18). Another aspect justifying the withholding of the identities of the people who took part is that there is no relevance in publishing names or personal information in order to strengthen the results. The study aims to provide new knowledge about general attitudes

from a users' perspective to enable changes towards a more favourable communication climate. In the striving towards high quality research results, ethical aspects have to be carefully considered in order to assure that the achievements are valid (Gustafsson et al, 2011, p. 17). As a researcher I also have to put great effort into minimizing any risks that may occur to the research subjects do to participation in this investigative work. I agreed to a contract where I pledged confidentiality regarding information of classified nature. Even though this prevents me from sharing some material containing this type of information, it does not impair the results or material concerning the assigned the research topic.

#### 6.4 Focus group material

The material collected during the focus groups was analysed according to Krueger and Casey's (2001) method description. Transcriptions were manually made within a short time of the focus group performance. The audio recordings were listened to repeatedly throughout the transcription process and every single word was typed on the document. Pauses and sounds were indicated as well as complementary notes in some cases. When the study aims to distinguish patterns of thought and feelings Krueger and Casey (2001) recommended working with carefully made transcriptions to enable a just as careful analysis and a maintained an open way of interpreting the result.

Working with the analysis I started by identifying themes that were mentioned by several participants. Prior I worked through it again to regard further interesting things on the topic even if it was only mentioned by one or a few participants. This process was repeated a several steps. First I worked through each transcription directly after it was conducted. This was in order to enable as little memory losses as possible. The next step was a working session comprising reading of all transcriptions. Each transcription was worked through several times in order to find as much relevant material as possible. This process was conducted with the aim of testing the theoretical framework and to discover if it could be used in a favourable way. In order to do so the base for the thematic structure was the theories from this framework. To prevent important details from being ignored an additional category was actualized. In that category the material that could not be fitted within the other categories were placed, which eventually resulted in some of the matters discussed in the "Discussion"(see chapter 9), the "Conclusions"(see chapter 10) and the "Future research"(see chapter 10.8).



## 7 Result and Analysis

The following result analysis will be presented in line with the theoretical framework outlined in the second chapter. The chapter will start with a description of the current situation availability of internal communication channels. It will be presented what the intended usages of the different channels are as well. The second part illustrates the general characteristics of the internal communication at The Technology Company. The third part will display the result using the “uses and gratification theory” and finally the “social information processing theory” will be applied. Each part will start with a resume of the result from the focus groups with the office-based employees followed by a description of the result from the focus groups with production-based personnel. Every segment will end with an analysis using the theoretical framework.

### 7.1 Current internal communication system

The following chapter presents the organizations’ intended usage of different internal communication channels available. This is interesting in order to understand the result from the focus groups.

#### 7.1.1 Internal printed magazine

Target group: Employees, especially for production personnel

The internal printed magazine should inform employees from The Technology Company about the most important ongoing activities within the organization. The printed paper is distributed within all departments, so that even employees without a computer should be able to read it.

#### 7.1.2 TV-monitors

Target group: Employees from The Technology Company and guests

The TV monitors are placed within the whole organization and the information that is seen there is usually uploaded from the assistant of the department. It is a platform to inform the employees about ongoing activities, some department-related information, some information for guest (e.g. to welcome them) etc.

### **7.1.3 Yammer (Collaborative platform)**

Target group: Employees worldwide

Yammer is an enterprise social network platform and in simple words it is ABBs Facebook. Employees can share their current activities, create working/interest groups etc.

### **7.1.4 Same Time/Lync (chat-program)**

Target group: Employees worldwide

This is a chat-program that makes it easier to communicate and work in a quick way with employees worldwide. It is a tool for collaborative work.

### **7.1.5 Further tools for internal communication:**

- Internal events/meetings.
- Country specific employee magazine – online or printed versions exist.
- SharePoint, is a collaboration tool for a specified group of participants.

## **7.2 Characteristics of internal communication**

*“Clear messages, what is the strategy, what is important and that it is pushed out in the entire organization. Right now, I think it is very indefinite and every department has its own view of what is important”.*

- *Anonymous office-based employee about the general view of internal communication*

*“Searching for information, yes that is easy for us sitting in front of a computer all the time, but for the guys and girls in the production department it is not quite as easy”.*

- *Anonymous office-based employee*

Most participants in the focus groups agree on that there is no overall, generally known and accepted strategy for the internal communication at The Technology Company. The communicative actions are discontinuous and therefore unreliable. From the employees' perspective even the most basic information such as order status, names of project managers and organizational changes is withheld and that people in general have difficulties making decisions. The latter is mainly experienced as an effect of uncertainty regarding mandates for decision-making.

*“We lack the basic platforms on which to communicate goals, vision”*

- *Anonymous office-based employee*

*“I would want to know more about what is happening”*

- *Anonymous office-based employee*

Within specific departments the communication works well but the interaction between departments is sensed as very limited and unresponsive. Regarding the providing of information the participants also point towards unevenness in receiving information. The unevenness depends on where in the organization a person works, in terms of geographical location, organizational hierarchy, informal network and consistency in computer access.

*“The communication works best out here on the floor, here we get a dialogue”*

- *Anonymous production-based employee*

*“Within each department the communication works great but as soon as it is about communication across department boundaries or upwards in the organization it becomes much harder”.*

- *Anonymous office-based employee*

### 7.3 Uses and gratifications

The internal communication is evidently an important area with much potential of further development. Based on the employees' statements revealed in the focus groups a number of explicit needs and requirements can be discovered and related to specific communication channels in line with the “Uses and gratifications theory” (see chapter 3). The motives and fulfilment of employees' needs as well as their patterns of usage are examined as follows.

#### 7.3.1 The cognitive needs

The cognitive needs regard knowledge, understanding and information about matters (Katz, Gurevitch & Haas, 1973:166-167), which becomes very relevant examining basic needs and desires in a workplace.

*“I think management has their lists and arbitrarily communicate what is happening and what is planned. And sometimes it is done two weeks before vacation”.*

- *Anonymous office-based employee*

It became evident during the focus groups with the office-based personnel that cognitive needs, which regard searching for understanding, knowledge and information, were the dominating ones they search to fulfil using organizational media channels.

Simultaneously, this is the category of needs that arouse most immediate frustration if gratification is not experienced, for instance if information directly related to specific work duties is not provided.

*“I miss the everyday-information”*

- *Anonymous office-based employee*

*“People who knows why they are doing things tend to do a better job”.*

- *Anonymous production-based employee*

Needs with a connection to the cognitive category are fulfilled through attainment of knowledge about for instance what is happening in the organization and what takes place in other departments. Being provided with information individually relevant, such as defined work assignments, is also a desire belonging to the cognitive category. The result of the focus groups point toward individual shaping of strategies among employees in order to achieve required satisfaction of the need of information. It is a far-reaching experience that the official channels in the internal communication system do not provide the opportunity to find this satisfaction in an obvious way.

*“From a subjective point of view the fastest way is to call someone”*

- *Anonymous office-based employee*

*“...also where the communication between people is working very well it cannot be effective since you are constantly interrupting each other during something that might have worked better conducted in a flow”.*

- *Anonymous office-based employee*

When people do not know where in the official system to search for information about a specific subject, they rely on interpersonal contact, often telephone calls, to other

employees who are expected to conciliate the requirements. This is regarded as an inefficient and problematic behaviour, but at the same time it is said to be the undoubtedly quickest way to find what is searched for. However, for the person being continuously interrupted in order to give information about matters that could have been provided by the official systems it is not a beneficial. This method of assembling information is regarded to decrease both speed and quality of the work performance. Cognitive needs do concern searching for understanding which can explain the expressed overall need for an explicit strategy for different communicative platforms and internal communication as a discipline within the company. At the moment people lack the feeling of a common goal and an established communication strategy for the internal communication as well as an overview of what channels are available and the purpose of each one of them.

*“I think the production personnel would appreciate it”*

- *Anonymous office-based employee about TV-monitors in the production area*

The TV-monitors are intended to provide employees with information of ongoing activities within the organization. Based on the discussions this is not the case since the employees participating does not regard the TV-monitors as a provider of any information except for the lunch menu. The office based interviewees discussed further usage of this channel in order to satisfy an informational need. The outcome of the discussion was that production personnel would probably appreciate having TV-monitors with updated information in the production areas.

*“What is expected to come in and if we have reached success in any of our projects, but it is very little of that [...]*

- *Anonymous production-based employee about what kind of information is desired*

*“I want to know what is going on”.*

- *Anonymous production-based employee about what kind of information is desired*

The production-based employees participating share the view of lacking satisfactory communication channels for fulfilling the needs in the cognitive needs category. The feeling of not being able to acquire information about the company's position in the market and generally what is happening within the organization seems to be widespread based on the discussions in the focus groups. For this group of employees meetings are expressed as the main source of information and consequently a source of high importance. Frustration occurs when these meetings are not supplying adequate information since there are few other channels experienced as suitable for people working in the production to attain the desired information. The intranet is further used as an information provider but since their work duties are on the production lines their access to computer-mediated communication is limited.

*"In that case they have to be placed out here otherwise we cannot see them"*

- *Anonymous production-based employee about TV-monitors as a channel for information*

*"Hmm, I don't know actually, someone has to really update it in that case otherwise it would be annoying"*

- *Anonymous production-based employee about TV-monitors in the coffee-room would be a good idea*

For the production-based personnel the TV monitors were not considered a channel to count on while wanting to satisfy any informational need. The channel itself was not regarded negatively but the stale information and the location of the monitors were pointed out as the problem.

*"Decisions are scary, it has consequences"*

- *Anonymous office-based employee – expressed with a sarcastic tone to describe why people tend to avoid making decisions.*

Another opinion uttered during these focus groups is the slow process of decision-making which is related to the size of the company as well as the perceived unregulated meeting structure. This is a view shared by both groups.

Instead of knowing what specific communication channel to use in order to realize the sought-after gratification, employees search through a number of different, more or less effective and time consuming, channels. Sometimes the information required remains unattained and the need ungratified which is an undesirable consequence. In this case the effect of unfulfilled needs is that individuals are forced to become dependent on other individuals and their willingness to share the required information. This, in turn, creates a need of an elaborate informal network in order to acquire information or directions to sources of information. Immediately a problematic aspect arises and it is the deficit of information experienced by those who lack this kind of network. The same aspect generates difficulties when this becomes a necessity in order to perform work on an everyday basis. This is an example of the possibly harmful effect that an intranet not strategically operated can cause (Skok & Kalmanovitch, 2004). The above explained chain of actions compelled by the difficulty to navigate within the internal communication system is definitely not as effective as it could be. An enhancement of efficiency could be generated if the information was accessible through the specific channel that different groups of employees favour (Mishra, Boynton & Mishra, 2014). While striving towards fulfilling the cognitive needs the intranet is the channel most frequently used, based on the interviews with office-based personnel. This is mainly the channel used with the expectation of gratifying the cognitive needs. Suggested by the result displayed above is that it often fails to do so due to stale and sporadically published information. There is a general feeling that the flow of information on the intranet needs to be monitored and managed by a specific person or team in order to assure that the system provides the information expected from it. The entity determining the differences between the office-based and production-based employees' habit of searching for gratification of the cognitive needs is time. The limited time that the production-based employees have at their disposal changes their preferred channel for receiving information. For them meetings constitute the ideal channel and their level of contentedness can be assumed to increase if well-structured information of their interest could be conveyed in this way (Mishra, Boynton & Mishra, 2014).

### **7.3.2 The affective needs**

This category of needs comprise for instance emotional satisfaction as a gratification of media usage (Katz, Gurevitch & Haas, 1973:166-167) but in this case usage of

communicative channels will be regarded. The affective needs identified during the focus groups are somewhat connected to the cognitive needs but on a more emotional level.

*“When we are in situations, where urgency is growing and maybe in other situations too, you, as an employee, feel good about knowing there is a structure and a firm management and that we are working together and that we have information about what is happening”*

- *Anonymous office-based employee about a specific situation in which internal communication is especially important*

In this case the emotional satisfaction can be regarded in terms of need of appreciation and the emotional security of knowing how the organization is handling difficult situations and that there is a reliable process for it. Since very little information is provided regarding market situation, order statuses and similar matters people expressed a slight insecurity concerning the prosperity of the organization.

*“It feels like they don’t think we’ve got anything to do with it”*

- *Anonymous production-based employee about what they thought about information concerning what happens in the organization.*

Both categories of employees examined experience a far-reaching deficit of information about what is generally happening in the organization but it is perceived by many that the information exist, but is, intentionally or unintentionally, withheld by people higher in the organizational hierarchy.

*“They want to protect their own skin because there are so many of them now”*

- *Anonymous production-based employee about what X thought about the office-based personnel*

*“You are referring to anxiety inhibiting Friday-afternoon-mails”.*

- *Anonymous office-based employee about a phenomenon occurring due to a save-your-own-skin mentality.*

In the focus groups people from both categories express the feeling of a “save you own skin mentality”. From the office-workers they mainly refer to e-mails sent as an insurance of who provides a specific statement or piece of information to, in case of being questioned, be able to protect oneself. In one of the focus groups from the production they state the experience that the expansion of the company has led to such an increase of officials that people “in there” (in the office building) are beginning to worry about their jobs since they do not know what to do anymore.

Apart from some examples just mentioned, the office-based and production-based employees’ experiences show extensive resemblance regarding the affective needs, showing a proclaimed discontentedness. The feeling that information is deliberately detained was indicated slightly stronger in the production departments, which could be linked to the partially limited access to some communication channels as well as geographical location further from top management. This brings forth the importance of conveying information through individually suitable channels in order to engage and involve employees in the organizational culture and accordingly also increase the possibility of gaining the desired effect of the message (Mishra, Boynton & Mishra, 2014). It also shows indications of a digital divide in terms of access to computer-mediated channels as discussed by Niell and Richards (2011). However, the digital divide identified in this empirical material does not base on exactly the same reasons as Niell and Richard (2011) suggest.

The explained “save your own skin mentality” can possibly have its base in the lack of emotional gratifications people experience. It can be linked to confusion emerging due to the lack of an explicit strategy for internal communication as well as a common mindset for where the organization is heading and what is important. This statement can be seen as an indication of insufficient contact and communication between office-based and production-based personnel since some seem to lack understanding or knowledge about other employees’ occupations.

### **7.3.3 The personal integrative needs**

These are needs of stability of the existence and needs connected to strengthening of confidence, credibility or status (Katz, Gurevitch & Haas, 1973:166-167).

*“I would like to know ahead, what is happening”*

- *Anonymous office-based employee about desires and needs of internal communication*

Knowing what happens in the organization and how the future is forecasted is typically a need connected to the category of personal integrative needs since this type of information can give confidence and stability on an individual level. This need is, as mentioned, overtly stated to be ungratified and causes infuriation among participants. They express a specific requirement for general information published on a regular basis functioning as an update about the entire organization and not just the specific department each individual belongs to.

*“Yes in smaller groups it might work if you have a view of the participants and are able to check what information that is released and if it is accurate. But it has to be limited for groups, maybe not more than 10 people”.*

- *Anonymous office-based employee*

Another theme identified connecting to the personal integrative needs category is the collaborative platforms that were brought up as a topic during the focus groups. These are generally met by uncertainty and disbelief. The participants uttered extensive anxiety about the result of a platform enabling people to, without restraint, publish various items and comment on matters. Despite this comprehensive scepticism there were also positive comments among the interviewees. The collaborative tools are expected to provide individuals with the feeling of being informed as well as the ability to contribute with opinions and information. For this to be realized both participant categories clarify a need for these platforms to be monitored by a knowledgeable moderator. This view is shared by both office-personnel and production-personnel.

*“It would actually give you pride of what you are manufacturing”*

- *Anonymous production-based employee about wanting to receive information about the product manufactured*

Further, the production-based personnel express a desire to be informed of the future of the organization and state that it would make their work more pleasant, if they knew more about the specific product they manufacture. They discuss that some information is classified and for that reason cannot be provided, but more information would be much appreciated.

*“We send it out on the intranet and then we never hear about it again”*

- *Anonymous production-based employee about reported items in need of being corrected/considered*

Another aspect of personal integrative needs is the dissatisfaction experienced by production-based employees concerning feedback. If they send a request for a measure or a decision, for instance regarding a deviation, they seldom receive response of how that deviation is being handled. The absence of a direct response makes them doubt whether their execution of a specific matter was good or bad. Communication of information regarding order status, ongoing negotiations, the organizational strategy and goals are examples of what people aspire to receive in order to fulfil needs of personal integrative character. Fulfilment is expressed to provide a stronger sense of security and belief in the organization as a place to work in.

Being included in communicative actions providing stabilizing information for instance regarding the forecasts will make people feel more secure and valued (Mishra, Boyton & Mishra, 2014). The establishment of a dialogue of some kind can give people throughout the organization better confidence to contribute and be part of the development process. This inclusion is an advantageous state for an organization to attain and it has to embrace organizational members on every level and in every department (Lehmuskallio, 2006).

In this category of needs the more collaborative communication platforms can help with the gratifications. Although there is a comprehensive scepticism expressed among the interviewees regarding collaborative platforms with free contribution these are thought to have the positive effects if being monitored by a knowledgeable moderator. A statement strengthened by Lehmuskallio (2006) who claimed that skills of the individual intranet editor play an important part in the quality of the intranet function.

#### **7.3.4 The social integrative needs**

The social integrative needs are concerning the matter of relationships between people (Katz, Gurevitch & Haas, 1973:166-167). In order to satisfy these requirements the

organization needs to provide platforms appropriate for this kind of contact and relationship building.

*“It is “we and them”. It is not unitary”*

- *Anonymous office-based employee about the relationship and communication between office-based and production-based employees*

During the focus groups people express a general belief that relationships across the department boundaries are in need of strengthening. The communication within each department is viewed as well functioning but about the interaction between the departments the opinion is different. This is concerning every department but most explicit is the insufficiency regarding communication and contact between the people working in the offices and the people working in the production. At the site in the production area and the buildings of the local headquarter where most of the offices are located are divided by road. This separation is experienced as a symbolic separation hampering the communication between the two parts of the organization used in this report. The participants from the office departments discuss it and point towards the difficulties in establishing contact with the production workers in a natural way.

*It is absolutely blurry. We don't know who we are. We don't see each other”.*

- *Anonymous office-based employee*

There is a wide-spread opinion that a suitable platform is needed to satisfy this need but it does not exist today. Channels thought to gratify this are meetings and interpersonal communication but it is not regarded as a suitable dominating channel of information. The utilization of these channels depends on what function each individual has in the organizational structure and with whom each individual establish contact. People desire channels and platforms where the collaboration across department boundaries becomes a natural element in the organizational communication.

*“It strengthens the team-feeling”*

- *Anonymous office-based employee about the internal printed magazine*

*“Yes when I stand at the coffee machine. It is probably more to quell curiosity and not an actual need”.*

- *Anonymous office-based employee about the internal printed magazine*

For office-based employees the internal printed magazine is a channel that does gratify the need of belonging and knowing the organization, although this channel is not regarded as needed in unmitigated work related matters. The main quality associated with this magazine is that it provides a team-feeling since it concerns local information about the organization The Technology Company.

*“The managers are extremely anonymous; they should be out here with the troops. That would be much appreciated”*

- *Anonymous production-based employee*

*“We don't know who they are”*

- *Anonymous production-based employee about the office-based employees*

Production-based employees in the focus groups experience a lack of communicative actions from management level down in the organization. This regards all types of communication, interpersonal as well as computer-mediated. A need identified is the physical involvement from management in the production environment and the interpersonal contact between personnel with different functions within the organization.

The internal printed magazine does not have the same expressed impact on the production-based employees. They do browse through it but the experience is that it most frequently lacks information of interest for people on the production lines. They stated that they had not seen it in a long a time but simultaneously expressed an unconcerned attitude regarding it.

The social integrative needs relate to strengthening of relationships of different kinds, something that the focus group participants regarded as a matter with much potential of improvement. In this category emphasis were upon natural acquaintances across department boundaries and mainly between offices and production.

Collaborative platforms become a necessity as well as a danger. The free word can be used purposefully in order to actually inform or communicate but it can be misused. That might happen if people in general are unsatisfied with the organizational communication performance. The participants express somewhat contradictory opinions about these platforms.

Both examined categories of personnel expressed unsatisfying contact between office and production although uttered in different ways. In the focus groups with the employees from the production a few participants express frustration regarding office personnel. This might be the result of this insufficient contact between the categories of employees and consequently a lack of understanding regarding different peoples' work tasks. It can also be connected to Mishra, Boynton and Mishra's (2014) postulation of the need of a transparent culture with the goal to create inclusion and engagement in the organization. Other aspects of organizational culture can also be recognized.

Regarding the internal magazine it is the only channel expressed to a greater extent satisfy the need of social integration but based on the results of the focus groups this satisfaction is not equal throughout the organization. As presented in the beginning of this section (see chapter 7.1.1) the internal printed magazine was specifically designed to target the production personnel which is not the case in reality, according to the focus group discussions.

#### 7.4 Dependency theory as an extension of uses and gratifications

The dependency theory is sometimes regarded as an extension of, or possible to combine with the "Uses and gratifications theory". In this theory influences from the social environment, individual demands, circumstances and personality are of high importance (Pearce, 2009).

*"If you are curious about the projects you ask someone from that project or the project manager and if it is internal you talk to you closest manager"*

- *Anonymous office-based employee*

*"If you do not find information in the systems you have to go back to the heart, the source of information"*

- *Anonymous office-based employee*

What becomes evident during the focus groups is that the information communicated is very unevenly distributed in the organization which generates a negative attitude among many employees. The communicative actions are also reliant on individuals own effort as well as co-workers effort to find and distribute information. People rely on informal, interpersonal communication in order to fulfil needs that they fail to fulfil using the official organizational communication channels. This increases the ascendancy of those individuals with a strong informal network and decreases the ability to keep informed for those who do not, for instance recently employed people.

Another kind of dependency evidently developed among the employees is the dependency on management. Many people rely on their closest manager to update them on organizational matters. If this particular manager, for some reason, is unable to satisfy the need of information, an information gap occurs. As long as managers succeed to act as information-providers this is expressed to be an appreciated channel but if not, it becomes the origin of extensive speculations and rumours instead. Since many people experience a lack of effective information and communication channels it is a far-reaching phenomenon that people develop a dependency on one specific channel. If that channel fails to provide the gratification expected from it, it causes confusion and uncertainty of where to find the information instead.

*“Go upwards, I can go to my manager and to his manager but I cannot go higher [...]”.*

- *Anonymous production-based employee about where to turn if information is needed*

*“We would not really have time to use tools like that, we are basically always out at the production lines”*

- *Anonymous production-based employee about collaborative tools as communication channels*

Since time in front of the computer is very limited for production-based personnel their credence must be placed upon either easy accessed information in computer-mediated communication channels or sufficiency regarding information mediated through interpersonal communication, most frequently from their closest manager. They express a continuous feeling of not being informed to an adequate extent and therefore develop dependency on unreliable channels of information such as interpersonal contemplation

of rumours and arbitrarily communicated information with an unknown source. Since no official denial of these rumours is being provided an uncertainty of what to believe arises. Many contradictory speculations are circling within the group and generate a negative atmosphere.

Phone calls as well as interpersonal communication can and should be regarded as part of the internal media system comprising channels to choose from in order to gratify specific needs. Although these are unstable sources that results in an ineffective information seeking method and causes much frustration among employees both as information seekers and information providers. For people working on the production lines a greater reliance upon interpersonal communication with managers can be identified. The production personnel are for that reason unable to find information if their manager cannot provide what they need or desire. This does occur regardless of which department people belong to although stronger indications were perceived from the production-based employees. Again the need for diverse and conscious distribution of information in channels suitable for everyone within the organization becomes clear (Mishra, Boynton & Mishra, 2014).

Although dependency is never a desirable thing the knowledge of which dependency tendencies exist in the organization can enable providing of sufficient information in the channels people in different categories actually use. Based on the finding in the focus groups the office-based personnel at The Technology Company has a desire to use the intranet as an information-provider in terms of cognitive needs. However, the discontinuance, the uncertainty of what information that can be found there as well as how to acquire the needed information makes people turn elsewhere for gratifications.

## 7.5 Social information processing theory

“The social information processing theory” suggests a variety of reasons for individual choices of media channel in order to conduct a specific task (Fulk, 1993: 924). The choice is related to the characteristics of a particular media as well as influences from the social surroundings. This theory is used in order to distinguish and explain communication patterns in an organization.

The general internal communication performance in the organization is perceived by the employees as not as thought-out and well-functioning as they require it to be in order to work effectively. It is indicated that people view the system as lacking in the providing of opportunities generating sufficient solutions to everyday communication. The reason for choosing a particular channel is as the theory of social information processing suggests based on influences from the individuals' surroundings. That aspect of the theory asserts itself while examining statements from the focus groups indicating different determiners for available media choices.

There is no explicit and accepted communicative strategy for the internal communication at The Technology Company which results in an unregulated use of available communication channels. Because of the lack of policy regarding usage of different channels the decision is made on an individual level in accordance to individual attitudes, opinions, tasks and goals.

### **7.5.1 Overt statement from people in the surroundings**

*“We must have a structure, what is it that we should communicate. What is important? We are almost in need of someone taking command and telling us that this is what we should focus on right now”.*

- *Anonymous office-based employee*

People in the organization are very open with their view of the internal communication and the regarded flaws. This attitude is, as it seems, developed by the notion that there is no internal communication giving any more information than can be provided “by the coffee machine”. The concept of the coffee machine refers to highly informal contact between employees for instance occurring during breaks. To actually regard this concept as a primary source of information can be damaging to the organization depending on what kind of information is shared in that situation. The flourishing of rumours and speculations are making many people request a firmer structure regarding the internal communication.

*“And then we have the rumour mill prevailing in here too, it is absolutely wonderful... It has become like a tradition in here [...]*

- *Anonymous production-based employee about the rumour mill*

As mentioned before, the spreading of rumours is occurs in the production departments as well. Some interviewees express these rumours to be a laughing-stock within the organization and consequently a quite harmless matter. However, the source of the rumours as well as the accuracy regarding what is said awakens a curiosity. Depending on what the rumour revolves around it causes anxiety and a strained atmosphere comprising endless speculations.

The general disbelief regarding the information-providing will most likely affect the choices people make of what communication channel to use. If the task is to acquire information about a specific subject the way that matter is talked about will determine an individual's perception of characteristics of a media channel. If the characteristics are displayed as unfavourable for, in this case, acquiring information it is probable that the choice instead would be to turn to the "coffee machine" to succeed with that task.

Rumours flourishing within the organization can seem undisruptive. Although, they do create a certain attitude towards the specific matter they concern as well as towards the communication culture within the organization. It is most likely that it is not a very positive attitude and an organization containing extensive suspicion is likely to perform labour in less effective manner.

### **7.5.2 Individual interpretation of specific event**

Individual interpretations of specific events are another aspect influencing the choices of how to accomplish tasks requiring aid from media channels.

*"New platforms are created but then you forget that maybe it is in need of a few people to administrate it and... then it collapses and there is just an empty platform that causes annoyance instead".*

- *Anonymous office-based employee about the emergence and need of new platforms*

During the focus groups with office-based personnel the view that it is subjectively time-saving to ask or call someone directly instead of searching for information in the official systems was brought up. This is an interpretation that employees conduct and that very overtly becomes the foundation of media channel choice. The interviewed employees experience a discrepancy between the purpose of available channels and the actual use of them. The fact that channels are used in a discontinuous manner and does

not provide the functions that is desired of them turns them into more a source of aggravation than an actual communication tool. This regards the intranet-related channels in particular but apprehension was also directed towards other communication channels.

*“You become shaped; I mean I do not spread information about what I am up to. And neither does any of you, or that is if we run into each other and talk a bit, so I know broadly who is doing what”.*

- *Anonymous office-based employee*

Some respondents mean that the customs concerning distribution of information in the organization today has made employees develop the same attitude regarding their personal information sharing. People adopt the pattern and retain information instead of spreading it. Some interviewees experience that people in the organization for that reason are withholding information either by choice or by indifference.

During the focus groups the collaborative platforms discussed met much scepticism in many aspects. Some respondent expressed apprehension regarding an entirely free platform. The anxiety is directed both towards what people might publish there and the amount of information for each employee to monitor in case there is something they need or are expected to know about. The ability to maintain a high measure of quality assurance of the information published is also sincerely questioned. Doubts about the suitability of such platforms as tools for work-related communication seem to be far-reaching in the focus groups.

*“Better communication would make the cooperation much easier”*

- *Anonymous production-based employee*

In the production departments the attitude that office-based employees are extremely hard to reach has spread and in turn seems to generate an explicit avoidance of establishing contact with them. Many of the production-based participants express contempt regarding the divided organization. Another attitude recognized during these groups was the scornfulness expressed while discussing collaborative platforms and forums. It was obvious that an immediate disbelief arose and the question of who would take responsibility for what is published was expressed. They also discussed who would take on the assignment to answer questions posed. Some of the participant though that

such a platform would bring positive opportunities but their usage would depend on how it was handled and if a serious conversation could be maintained. Many connections were made to personal experiences with collaborative platforms outside work and a general cynicism were displayed regarding the usage of such a platform as an organizational tool for communication.

Based on the discussions in the focus groups the choice of communication channel is often determined by inability of other available channels. The organization has a wide range of channels available but these do not fulfil these purposes as of today. Attitudes are emerging from frustration instead of a diversity of alternatives that the media system could constitute. Even when functions are available to use, a general mindset formed towards that specific function will determine if it is utilized or disregarded.

Contempt and disbelief are obviously not desirable emotions and it can definitely be harmful for the organizational atmosphere. It is crucial for the launch and maintenance of a new intranet as well as for other communication channels that these emotional states and expressed requirement are taken into account (Banck & Amcoff Nyström, 2012). If the intranet containing functions of the character that causes these negative emotions is launched it is probable that it will be perceived with the same negative attitude and therefore not generate the effect desired by the management launching it (Niell & Richards, 2011).

The two categories share the view of collaborative platforms as a danger to the organization's seriousness if used as a free communication platform throughout the entire organization. It becomes evident that people shape their opinion regarding the collaborative platforms based on individual experience possibly from outside work. The private experiences of these platforms are interpreted as negative or unsuitable which determines the characteristics of them as inappropriate in an organizational context. It is possible to connect this to the need of an initially positive impression of new platforms. There is a certain risk that a launch of a platform that provokes these feelings will be received with persistent scepticism and consequently determine the role of the platform in the internal communication system in an undesirable manner (Skok & Kalmanovitch, 2004).

### **7.5.3 Rules regarding suitability**

*“For some reason, consciously, unconsciously, by mistake or ignorance someone can publish information that is nonsense. Thus, it cannot be stopped at all”.*

- *Anonymous office-based employee about collaborative platforms*

Collaborative tools are not considered suitable for most of the communicative activities performed within the organization. They are also regarded as time-consuming with a very vague purpose in order to work resolutely in an organizational environment.

At the moment the communication is regarded as arbitrary and without an outlined structure. Consequently there have been occasions when information has been published externally or throughout the organization before the people directly concerned were informed. This causes disappointment and frustration and peoples' trust to the communication system decrease as a consequence. An example from the production-based employees is that they could read about major news concerning the organization in the external papers before they were provided with the information within the organization.

*“Within a large company like this it would probably be a pastime and mischief and fun stuff and jokes”*

- *Anonymous production-based employee about collaborative platforms*

The same view of the collaborative platforms as inappropriate for organizational communication could be sensed during the focus groups with the production employees. Some of them claim that serious organizations do not use that kind of platforms.

People make judgments of specific channels in accordance to many sources of information and in this case it becomes evident that the disbelief arises from earlier experiences of collaborative platforms.

Nothing is discussed about explicit organizational rules about platforms but based on the result outlined above these are individual perceptions of what can contribute to the streamlined communication process in order to conduct a task as effectively as possible. The attitude towards the platform as a time-consuming channel combined with the willingness to efficiently perform a task does not correspond.

## 8 Summary of the results

The research at The Technology Company shows that the internal communication lacks a generally accepted strategy for the internal communication and the channels comprised within the system. The focus group participants presented unitary opinions regarding the difficulties of decision-making as well as insufficient communication between departments and in particular between the office-based and production-based employees. Based on the attitudes expressed during the discussions there are few people who are satisfied with the information-providing within the organization. The discontent specifically regards matters such as order statuses, success or failure of the overall organization and for specific projects. These are matters that employees request to be informed about. The ability to acquire information does seem to vary depending on where in the organization a person works. Office-based people express greater opportunity to search for the information they require. They have constant access to computers and experience that information often do exist even if it to be found deep down in the intranet structure.

On the contrary the production-based interviewees find it difficult to search for information since they cannot spend much time in front of the computer during their working hours. They regard the intranet more as a one-way communication tool where information is sporadically published and dialogue is not favoured. The information-acquiring of both categories of employees is partly determined by who their manager is, who they establish informal contact with and where in the organizational hierarchy they work.

Another main subject of discontent among the production-based employees are the repeated experience of reading about major news regarding the organization in the external papers before they were internally informed which provoked feelings of exclusion. Similar events had also been experienced by some of the office-based employees and the appropriateness of the order that information is distributed in is questioned. Collaborative platforms discussed were met both by scepticism and positive emotions. The free word is somewhat dreaded but still desired by most organizational members.

## 9 Discussion

Using focus groups as a research method does not provide any statistically adequate numbers since the people participating are a small part of the entire population (Krueger and Casey, 2001, s. 6). Although it is suggested that generalizations can still be conducted based on qualitative data but it holds the characteristics of analytical generalizations instead of statistic generalizations (Yin, 2009 s. 43). This is also true regarding the fact that the study is conducted on one specific organization comprising its own characteristics. However, there is a certain degree of transmissibility since the organizational characteristics described in previously (see chapter 4) are significant for many organizations other than The Technology Company.

Further the focus groups interviews as a method in this research contributed with nuances that could not have been reached in any other way. The groups were conducted in a homogenous structure but the discussion climate varied between them. In the groups that was most harmonising tended to express themselves in a more negative manner than the ones who disagreed. Further, peoples' different personalities also contributes to the outcome of the discussion. In one group one participant had a very dominant way of speaking. The effect this has on the fellow participants is hard to determine since a dominant speaker might cause silence or frustration and in turn utterances that would not have been contributed during other circumstances.

Some speakers show signs of thinking that their way of viewing the organization and communication is the only accurate way. In order to provide all individuals with an equal and common goals and views the importance of an explicit and strong organizational culture that everyone feels a part of. This interactive finding also indicates that dominant individuals are allowed to take large space and utter their opinions. The aspect of gaining and considering the opinions of more reticent individuals is something that has to be taken into consideration if, for instance, further research on the communicative aspects would be initiated.

The core research question was to identify what characterizes the internal communication performance in an organization with an industrial production comprises. The aim was to examine the correspondence between these characteristics and the employees' expectations of the internal communication. Based on the focus group

interviews the characteristics of the internal communication is sporadic information-providing as well as inadequate communication between departments. Judging by the discussions, the internal communication system in the organization does not supply the employees with the amount of information desired. Many people even uttered a deficit of basic information provoking disappointment when found out. It is obvious that the expectations of the internal communication are not met even though there are a large amount of communication channels accessible.

In short, the participants expect to be provided is accurate information about relevant matters that concerns them. General and continuous information regarding various aspects of the organizational performance would also be appreciated. Participants express the desire of someone coordinating the internal information to assure that the same core-information goes out to all organizational members. Connected to this a general strategy for internal communication is requested. Further expectations are the physical and personal involvement of top managers in the production area. In order to enable establishment of interpersonal contact with them it is considered as essential to feel appreciation for work-related accomplishments.

A sub-research question was also formulated in addition to the core research-question. This was the analysis if any differences between experience and expectations of employees who are office-based and production-based could be distinguished. The result of the study presents further differences of experiences between the two categories examined. Office-based personnel are more reliant upon interpersonal contact comprised in informal networks in order to acquire information. The method was not considered as effective, although it was in many cases the most effective alternative compared to engaging in a search on the intranet for instance.

For the production-based employees the greatest dependency is on their closest manager as information-provider. The discussion outcome suggests that this reliance is due to the limited time access to computers. The employees do not express discontent with the actual dependency on the managers, but because of their experience that information is withheld higher in the hierarchy, they are of the opinion that even their closest managers are not always enabled to provide the required information. Since this is the experience of some employees the information flow from top management should be reviewed in

order to improve it. The aspect of what kind of information the employees actually require has to be taken into consideration as well. It might regard information of classified nature that cannot be communicated or shared. Further the expectations on the internal communication channels share a deep resemblance between office-based and production-based personnel.

The previous research and theoretical framework used does describe and confirm most of the findings as displayed in the “Result and analysis”. However, the empirical result in this study does suggest that there are other influential categories besides those displayed in the “Social information processing theory”. The result suggests a category more distinctively comprising the organizational culture and management attitude as influential factors determining the media choice and usage patterns. It is implied that it is not only explicit rules that has an effect on media choice but also the absence of these explicit regulations. “The Social information processing theory” emphasises the social actions that will contribute to choice of media channel. Based on the result of this research the absence of these certain social influences do contribute just as much to the prevailing choice of organizational media. The category of “the Social information processing theory” “Explicit attention directed towards a specific event” is in need of being complemented based on following analysis. There are many platforms and communication channels available at The Technology Company and they constitute a quite elaborate system of organizational technology. Although this is the case, a general attitude among the employees is that there is no internal communication. Although no information of the character fitting in to this category was uttered a need for it was expressed, especially among the production-based employees. Some of them requested specific education for different functions particularly regarding computer-mediated communication channels. Further, there were a few channels that were completely unheard of by some employees who indicate the need for education or introduction demonstrated above even more. In order for people to use available channels it is an obvious necessity to provide information about their existence and purpose.

Neill and Richards (2011) mention in their article the effects of a digital divide emerging due to differences regarding knowledge, confidence and competence required to utilize certain media. Lind (2009) does also talk about a digital divide but in terms of economy, feelings and demands. However, the digital divide in an organization

resembling the target organization outlined in the introduction of this study is probably more in terms of unlimited or restricted access to a specific media. This existence of kind of divide has become evident during this specific research and therefore differentiates from the divide Lind (2009) and Neill and Richards (2011) refers to.

The category of “Tension release needs” (see chapter 3.1) was excluded from the “Result and analysis” (see chapter 7). The reason for this was that no expectations or experiences brought up during the focus groups connected to this category. It was not either something people expressed discontent regarding. Most likely is that it is a need people do not expect to fulfil in a workplace.

## 10 Conclusions

In this chapter conclusions from the study will be presented. Suggestions for measures will be considered as well as suggestions for subjects in need of further research.

### 10.1 Intranet/Channels

The result of this study shows that the intranet is not the right channel to distribute information, if the requirement is to reach everyone in the organization. From the employee perspective the intranet is not reliable in order to attain information to keep updated on organizational news. This is due to sporadically published items and the absence of a moderator who coordinates the internal communication channels. The demand on each individual to be an active information seeker even regarding basic information is not viable, since half of the workforce has a limited amount of time for this activity.

Often a specific need of content can be clearly defined but there is no certainty of what channel in the internal media system that can meet the defined need or if that information can be found. The wish and expectancy upon different channels are not always met which changes the media usage pattern towards a system mostly based on individual efforts and possibilities. This is not effective either in aspects of time or finance.

The focus group interviews do suggest that the intranet is a channel that many employees want to use to attain information which should make it a central interest to keep it updated. To come to terms with the predicaments regarding the internal communication measures must be taken. The managing of the intranet must be aligned with management of other internal communication channels in order to reach and satisfy every organizational member. The use of the intranet varies between the categories examined as well as within the groupings. To assure that information is assimilated in the organizational sections as desired, it has to be conveyed in more than one channel.

### 10.2 Interpretations within the organization

The lack of information in certain areas is something experienced as an intentional strategy of withholding of information from management level. In reality this might concern classifications or just non existing information even on this level. In this case it

is of high importance for the organization to communicate with the employees even if there is nothing specific to communicate. This enables prevention of rumours and misinformation. To always deliver an official version of different matters will calm the organization and enables creation of trust between different levels in the organization. It is important to regard the fact that many organizational members regard the lack of communication as a deliberate choice from management level to exclude them from important processes within the organization.

The presuppositions about the lacking of information and the extensive rumour mill existent among the employees reinforces the interpretations people make regarding communicative content and ways of communicating. People who does not expect to be informed might react unexpectedly when they actually are informed. This goes for all kinds of presuppositions and therefore the communication effect must always be estimated with based on the workforce and the organizational culture. The contribution of this study is a discovery or a confirmation that people require a structure regarding internal communication or otherwise they feel mistreated and unvalued. The requirements are just as high among the production personnel as among the office-based personnel which outlines a need for a more deliberate strategy to reach different target groups and include all organizational members in communicative activities.

The need of communication is equal and everyone has to be reached on equal terms. A persons' work duties cannot be what determines the right to be informed about basic matters and be included and valued as an organizational member. A more explicit and careful handling of the internal communication would most likely start the process to unite all employees. It is possible that knowledge about organizational status and goal would lessen the cultural aspect of "we and them" which is current at the present.

### 10.3 Content management/strategy

The information most crucial to communicate is the information needed to perform work duties on a daily basis. However, in order to motivate employees to genuinely engage in the organization, information about overall organizational matters should be provided as well. The latter is something that the organization would benefit from on other levels as well. This is because it is beneficial with motivated personnel but furthermore since the internal communication always becomes external. That people

acquire information from rumours that provokes insecurity within the organization will soon spread externally as well, something that is very unfavourable for the organizational reputation.

#### **10.4 Lack of resources/accountability for internal communication**

In many cases it is not the specific choice of platform used to communicate a particular message that generates most opinions. The employees are often satisfied as long as they are provided with information in any form and the desired gratification is reached.

There are many internal communication channels available in the organization. What seems to be absent is one person or a team responsible for managing these channels in a favourable way. The irregularity of items published in different channels creates confusion among the employees searching for information. The resources in terms of communication channels already exist. What is needed is an explicit strategy for how to use these different channels in combination with someone who manages the internal communication in line with this strategy.

The organization would benefit from explicitly taking the employees' requirements into account while outlining the internal communication strategy. This particular action could represent an attempt to include and consider the workforce, something that would definitely be appreciated. An idea would be to have a dialogue with employees from each department to come to terms with what information they need and what can actually be provided. In some cases it might be information that is kept unpublished for a reason. In other cases it might be the information flow that is in need of being improved.

#### **10.5 Collaborative platforms**

Since the organizational members are often part of different projects it might be a good idea to mainly use collaborative platforms for defined project groups rather than for the whole organization. Since the scepticism towards such platforms was far-reaching it is of high importance to bring attention to the positive aspects of these platforms during the initial phase. Extended possibility to engage in dialogues and receive feedback is something most organizational members demand. This could be enabled with collaborative platforms and probably something to focus on in order to found a positive attitude among employees.

The collaborative platforms will be an integrated part of the intranet in this case so the same requirement of a moderator is stated for these applications. An open platform has to be firmly overviewed in order to make sure that violations against policies do not occur. The communication on these platforms can be of more informal character but still it must follow regulations and be in line with the communication strategies. The result suggests that these type of platforms will not be regarded trustworthy among the employees if not moderated and controlled to a great extent. This aspect must be decisively dealt with before the usage get extensive.

### 10.6 Prior launch and during launch

There is an imminent launch of a new intranet within The Technology Company. This intranet portal comprises many new functions and applications for internal communication. The success of this intranet is dependent on how the applications within will be used. Evident from this study is that the internal communication is not satisfactory for all employees which could cause problems in connection to the launch of a new communication tool. Something that could prevent this is to follow an internally public strategy for usage as described in section 10.3 In addition to this an idea is to include some form of consultation for the personnel as is suggested in previous studies as well. Not only would this generate actual personal knowledge that would streamline the internal communication flow but opportunities for consultation could also enhance the informal communication between people. If everyone is included within a consultation program the new intranet could become an internal “talk about” instead of an aggravating addition to internal communication channels.

### 10.7 Diversity

The internal communication systems must be developed to include and suit all organizational members in order to create a more constructive attitude among the employees. This would also prevent further indentation of the already existing gap between the organizational sections – the office-based and production-based personnel. Clearly there is a deep divide between the organizational members in the production and the offices. It seems to be originating from the diverse locations as well as the lacking interaction between the two groups. If activities or platforms for this kind of interaction could be integrated in the work procedures this would most likely strengthen the relationship. Another aspect is to find platforms where integrative informal communication could take place. This would enable professional networks as well as

informal networks to be established across department boundaries. The groups express their desire to interact with each other in different ways but most participants are positive to enhance the interpersonal communication. This would enable people to understand each other and spare much unjustified frustration. Many aspects of organizational culture could be identified in the results of this study but further examination of these are outside the framework of this particular study and will therefore be considered in the following section.

As it is now some people tend to express themselves in a negative manner regarding people from another place in the organizational hierarchy. This is something that strengthens the divide between groups of employees and must be counteracted and internal communication is a key factor in that process. Further, the negative atmosphere is reinforced due to interpretation of specific events and matters for instance the way people are provided with information. Many of the participants among the production personnel interpreted the situation as if they are the only ones suffering from lack of information providing.

## 10.8 Future research

Based on the result from this study a quite divided organization could be detected. Much frustration and aggravation was expressed especially from the production-based employees towards the office-based employees. The internal communicative aspects were discussed but this matter does most likely have origins deeper in the organizational culture. A possible way for future researchers to address those issues is to perform a study in terms of the concept of intercultural communication and cultural intelligence. Organizational culture is a factor of high importance in internal communication since it characterizes the entire organization and how the structure is constructed (Eriksson, 2008, p. 238). The scope of the communicative activities is broadly determined by the organizational culture and it is therefore significant to be aware of its composition. The culture dominating an organization decides hierarchical structures as well as communicative structure (Eriksson, 2008, p. 238).

Intercultural communication is a concept comprised in the slightly wider concept of Cultural intelligence, CI (Plum, 2008, s. 30). Most organizations have a general organizational culture, but often comprise other cultural groupings as well. The

variations in values, opinions and attitudes can be substantial which constantly actualizes the practice of intercultural communication (Plum, 2008, s. 144). Since these groups are such a significant element of the organizational structure it becomes essential for the entire workforce to be enabled to recognize and control their own cultural behaviour to, in turn, use their ability to handle cultural differences in a suitable manner. If this can be accomplished it will help enhancing the effectiveness of cross-cultural communicative actions within the organization and create deeper understanding between different groupings (Plum, 2008, s. 30).

Another subject in need of further research could be identified. The employees' experience of the internal communication channels differ. For instance the printed magazine is met by different emotions. This magazine is primarily a channel intended to satisfy informational need of the production personnel. According to the result it does not accomplish that. This aspect suggests consideration regarding which communication and information channels are really required. This study gave an overview of opinions regarding the internal communication and the intranet using a qualitative method. In order to determine whether specific channels are necessary or not it could be suitable to conduct a quantitative study where more organizational members were taken into account. This could provide information about other more suitable ways to target different groups within the organization.

## References

- Alvesson, M. (2011). *Intervjuer – genomförande, tolkning och reflexivitet*. Malmö: Liber AB
- Backman, J. (2011). *Rapporter och uppsatser*. Lund: Studentlitteratur
- Banck, B. & Amcoff Nyström, C. (2002). *Intranet use: A study of five Swedish organizations*. /Electronic version/ *Journal of Organisational Transformation & Social Change*, 2 (2), 153-180. DOI: 10.1386/jots.2.2.153/1
- Bark, M. Heide, M. Landgen, M. & Nygren, E. (2002). *Intranätboken – Från elektronisk anslagstavla till dagligt arbetsverktyg*. Malmö: Liber
- Ekengren, A-M. & Hinnfors, J. (2012). *Uppsatshandboken – Hur du lyckas med din uppsats*. Lund: Studentlitteratur
- Ekström, M. & Larsson, L. (2010). *Metoder i kommunikationsvetenskap*. Lund: Studentlitteratur
- Eriksson, P. (2008). *Planerad kommunikation – Strategiskt ledningsstöd i företag och organisation*. Malmö: Liber
- Fulk, J. (1993). Social Construction of Communication Technology. *Academy of Management Journal*, 36, 921-950. doi: 10.2307/256641
- Fulk, Steinfield, Schmitz & Power, (1987). Emerging Theories of Communication in Organizations. *Journal of Management*, June 17, 407-446, doi: 10.1177/014920639101700207
- Gustafsson, B. Hermerén, G. & Petterson, B (2011). *God forskningssed*. Bromma: CM-Gruppen AB
- Heide, M. (2002). *Intranät – en ny arena för kommunikation och lärande*. (Doctoral dissertation, Lund University, 2002).
- Heide, M. Johansson, C & Simonsson, C. (2012). *Kommunikation i organisationer*. Malmö: Liber
- Krueger R. A. (2002). *Designing and Conducting Focus Group Interviews*. Retrieved May, 2014 from <http://www.eiu.edu/~iheec/Krueger-FocusGroupInterviews.pdf>
- Krueger, R. A. & Casey, M. A. (2001, June) Designing and Conducting Focus Group Interviews. *Social Development Papers: Social Analysis Selected Tools and Techniques* 36. Retrieved May 3, 2014 from [http://web.worldbank.org/archive/website01028/WEB/IMAGES/SDP\\_36.PDF#page=10](http://web.worldbank.org/archive/website01028/WEB/IMAGES/SDP_36.PDF#page=10)

Katz, E. Blumler, J.G. & Gurevitch, M. Uses and gratification research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37. Retrieved April 5, 2014 from <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.lnu.se/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=b61d24f6-507c-4407-b3a5-cc9c0564c6f0%40sessionmgr4003&vid=19&hid=4210>

Katz, E. Gurevitch, M. & Haas, H. (1973) On the Use of the Mass Media for Important Things. /Electronic version/. *American Sociological review*, 38(2), 164-181  
<http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.lnu.se/eds/detail?vid=14&sid=b61d24f6-507c-4407-b3a5-cc9c0564c6f0%40sessionmgr4003&hid=4210&bdata=Jmxhbmc9c3Ymc2l0ZT1lZHMt bGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#db=buh&AN=14741190>

Lehmuskallio, S. (2006) Intranet editors as corporate gatekeepers and agenda setters. /Electronic version/. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 13(1). 95-111 doi:10.1108/13563280810848229

Lind, A. (2009). *Uses and gratification theory in virtual network analysis*. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/2320/5868>

Lundgren, L. (2006). *Makten över intranätet – en kartläggning av forskningen kring intranät ur ett kommunikationsperspektiv*. Retrieved from <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:miun:diva-10073>

Meroño-Cerdan, A.L. Soto-Acosta, P. and López-Nicolás, C. (2008). Analyzing collaborative technologies effect on performance through intranet use orientations” *Journal of Enterprise Information Management*, 21(1), 39-51.  
doi:10.1108/17410390810842246

Miller, K. (2009). *Organizational Communication – Approaches and processes (5<sup>th</sup> edition)*. Texas: Wadsworth Cengage Learning

Mishra, K. Boynton, L. & Mishra, A. (2014). Driving Employee Engagement: The Expanded Role of Internal Communications. /Electronic version/. *International Journal of Business Communication*, 51(2), 183-202. doi:10.1177/232948841452539

Neill, W. D. & Richard, J. E. (2011, May) Intranet portals: Marketing and managing individuals’ acceptance and use. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ)* Retrieved April 2, 2014 from <http://dx.doi.org.proxy.lnu.se/10.1016/j.ausmj.2011.10.003>

Palmgreen, P. (1984). *Comparison of Gratification Models of Media Satisfaction*. Retrieved April 5, 2014 from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED247575>

Plum, E. (2008). *Cultural Intelligence – the art of leading cultural complexity*. London: Middlesex University Press

Severin, W. J & Tankard W. J. (2010). *Communication Theories – origins, methods and uses in the mass media (5<sup>th</sup> edition)*. United states: Pearson

Skok, W. & Kalmanovitch, C. (2014). Evaluating the role and effectiveness of an intranet in facilitating knowledge management: a case study at Surrey County Council. *Information & Management*, 42. Retrieved April 2, 2014 from <http://dx.doi.org.proxy.lnu.se/10.1016/j.im.2004.04.008>

Uses and gratifications. I Encyclopedia of Communication Theory. Retrieved from <http://knowledge.sagepub.com.proxy.lnu.se/view/communicationtheory/n388.xml?rskey=3d7Y4l&row=10>

Yin, Robert K. (2009) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications

# Appendix A- Interview manual, Focus groups

## Grundläggande regler och information om fokusgruppen

- Intervjun kommer att spelas in
- Materialet kommer att vara konfidentiellt och era namn kommer inte att publiceras i den slutgiltiga uppsatsen och kommer inte heller kunna härledas till vilka uttalanden ni har gjort.
- Relevanta delar av intervjudiskussionen kommer att transkriberas och redovisas (dock anonymt)
- Om det är frågor eller annat som är oklart formulerade från min sida be mig gärna förklara dem
- Övriga synpunkter på upplägget tar jag gärna emot efter intervjun
- Anteckningar kan komma att föras under intervjun, detta är i så fall för att
- Fokus kommer att ligga på er diskussion och era åsikter osv. så allt ni kommer att tänka på (relaterat till ämnet internkommunikation) är det fritt fram att prata om

### Öppningsfråga

Hur upplever ni den interna kommunikationen här på företaget över lag? (max 10min)

### Introduktionsfråga

I vilka sammanhang upplever ni att ni har behov av väl fungerande interna kommunikationskanaler? (5min)

### Övergångsfråga

Är det viktigt för personligen att internkommunikationen fungerar? (5min)

### Nyckelfrågor/Huvudfrågor

Interna kommunikationskanaler (10min)

Det finns ju ett antal olika interna kommunikationskanaler som utnyttjas för att nå ut till medarbetarna här på THE TECHNOLOGY COMPANY idag,

Hur får ni reda på vad som händer i organisationen?

- Nytt?
- Samtal med arbetskamrater
- Intern-tv
- Intranät
- Annat

Får du veta vad som händer?

- Om inte, varför?
- Är den aktuella kanalen den kanal du vill använda för att få informationen?
- Om inte, hur skulle du vilja få den?
- Är information lättillgänglig enligt er?
- Får ni alltid den information ni behöver för att känna er uppdaterade? (är det viktigt för er i ert dagliga arbete?)

I vilket syfte använder ni de olika interna kommunikationskanalerna? Varför ser det ut just så?

- När använder ni intranätet?
- Varför ser användningen av intranätet ut just så?

Tillgänglighet (10min)

- Hur tycker ni att kommunikationsflödet fungerar idag?
- Vet ni var ni vänder er för att ta reda på saker angående företaget?
- Finns det något ni tydligt ser skulle förbättra eller underlätta i ert dagliga arbete när det kommer till informations och kommunikationsmöjligheter?
- Skulle ni vilja ha mer information?
- Är det lätt att nå personer snthe technology companyt exempelvis om man har frågor? Vilken kanal föredrar ni för detta ändamål? Varför?
- Finns det några andra kanaler som ni tycker skulle vara smidigare/snthe technology companyare, just för den typen av kommunikation?

Innehåll (10min)

- Hittar du den informationen du behöver i ditt dagliga arbete? Om inte, varför?
- Vilken information är viktig för dig att få tag på fort?

Kollaboration/samverkan (10min)

Använder ni Facebook idag? Vet ni hur det fungerar ungefär?

- Andra nätforum eller sociala medier?
- Är denna typ av funktioner eller forum något som skulle kunna hjälpa er i ert dagliga arbete (ex. med tanke på frågor osv.)
- Om inte, varför/Om ja hur?
- Om det fanns sådana funktioner, tror ni att ni skulle använda dem?
- Till vad skulle ni använda dem?
- Tycker ni att det skulle vara bra med ett mer kollaborativt intranät? Varför/varför inte?

**Slutfråga**

Är det någonting som har med internkommunikation att göra som inte har tagits upp som ni vill tillägga?