



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW

How to know where to go, without knowing where you are heading: How is a Company Agile?

Alexander Ödman and Simon Molneryd

Graduate School

Master of Science in Management
Master Degree Project No. 2011:126
Supervisor: Andreas Diedrich

CONTENT

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Disposition of the article.....	2
2	Theoretical framework.....	3
2.1	Introduction.....	3
2.2	Historical development of Organizational Improvisation	3
2.3	Improvisation as convergence in time	5
2.4	Bricolage	5
2.5	Timing and intuition.....	5
2.6	Minimal structures.....	6
2.7	Degrees of improvisation	7
2.8	Reasons for improvisation.....	7
3	Methodology	8
3.1	Practical procedure of data collection.....	8
3.2	Data analysis.....	9
3.3	Limitations	10
4	The Setting.....	11
4.1	The company	11
4.2	The corporate culture	13
5	Analysis and empirical material.....	17
5.1	Strategic improvisation.....	17
5.2	The choice of not having a vision, strategy or plans	18
5.2.1	Empirical Material	18
5.2.2	Analysis.....	22
5.3	Resources.....	23
5.3.1	Empirical Material	23
5.3.2	Analysis.....	26
5.4	Ideas.....	28
5.4.1	Empirical material	28
5.4.2	Analysis	30
5.5	Timing.....	30
5.5.1	Empirical Material	30

5.5.2	Analysis.....	32
5.6	Individual improvisation.....	34
5.6.1	Empirical material.....	34
5.6.1.1	One example of individual improvisation.....	35
5.6.2	Analysis.....	36
5.7	Overall analysis.....	38
5.7.1	How can an organization be managed without explicit vision, strategy or plan?.....	38
5.7.2	How is a company agile?.....	39
6	Implications for further research.....	41
7	Conclusion.....	42
8	References.....	43
8.1	Books.....	43
8.2	Articles.....	43

ABSTRACT

**How to know where to go, without knowing where you are heading:
How is a company agile?**

Alexander Ödman and Simon Molneryd

A vision, strategies and goals are common tools to determine endeavours and paths for the future of an organization. However within the field of organizational improvisation there is a lack of literature investigating how companies continuously improvise on an overarching and strategic level. Two common themes in the literature are the notions that; first, organizational improvisation is a deviation from a predetermined plan or script; second, improvisation is a necessity to be used in shortage of time to plan or design. This article is based on an ethnographical case study conducted at a mid-sized company that do not use a vision, strategy nor plan, hence there is no plan to deviate from, however it is suggested that the company continuously improvise to develop intentionally. Further, it is argued that organizational improvisation is to be found on two levels in the company; strategic and individual level. The organizational improvisation on individual level enables the strategic improvisation and the interaction between the levels is essential. The authors conclude that the company is guided by intuition and that this form of organizational improvisation enables flexibility and agility.

Supervisor: Andreas Diedrich

1 INTRODUCTION

The title of this article starts with “how to know where to go, without knowing where you are heading”, and that is what puzzled the authors to write this article. If an organization doesn’t know where they want to be in the future, how is it then possible to know which path to follow, which decisions to take, what to do or what not to do?

In business life, as well as other arenas, it is usual for organizations to have ideas about what the organization is wanted to be in a couple of years. This is usually expressed in a vision of what that future is and looks like. The path to the vision is broken down into a more or less developed strategy and plans. The vision, strategy and plans provide organizations with guidelines for which decisions will take the organization closer to that vision or that prospective future. The organization gets a sort of reference to evaluate and judge potential actions upon and to decide if they will take the organization in the right direction. A vision of a pictured future can as well act as a reference itself; if the current organization is compared to the future organization, it becomes clear what actions and measures that has to be made in order for the organization to develop towards that future.

Critics argue that analytical strategies and preparation work can delude managers into believing that resource mobilization, plans, structures and networks are the only existing way to develop their organization (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2007). And what if an organization does not have a vision or even an idea of the future? Consequently strategy and plans serve little use, according to the reasoning above, as a strategy would aim to get the organization to a state that is not sought-after. If an organization does not have a vision, strategy or plan, what then serves as guidance for the management of that organization?

With this reasoning as a starting point the author’s intention of this article is to increase the understanding of how an organization can be managed without an explicit vision, strategy or a plan. Therefore the first research question is:

“How can an organization be managed without an explicit vision, strategy or plan?”

After some time into the present work, the authors realized that what they were about to find also addressed another question, that concerned the often present issue that company tries to be agile or flexible to both external and internal pressures. The recipes, in lack of a better word, to be agile are usually presented in terms of certain techniques or principles, as for example in the agile manifesto¹. But the authors are questioning the notion that there can be a list of characteristics, and if a company fulfil those, it is an agile company, thus every organization is different from other organizations. This lead the authors to try to describe what make the studied company agile, or rather, *how* the

¹ www.agilemanifesto.org (Available 2011-05-12)

company is agile. The authors does not intend to draw any further generalizations from the answer, thus the way the studied company is agile, may not be applicable to other companies. Further, the authors think that the answer to the first research question also is more or less the answer to the second research question, which is:

“How is a company agile?”

1.1 DISPOSITION OF THE ARTICLE

The disposition of this article is to start with the theoretical framework of the different central historical arguments of the organizational improvisation. The authors then present the methodology used to collect the theoretical and empirical data. The article will then describe the social setting of the chosen company in order to introduce the reader. The main part of this article is the section called “Analysis and empirical material”; there the analysis of the company will be presented together with further empirical material to support the analysis. The analysis section ends with an overall analysis answering the two research questions and present positive and negative outcomes of managing a company without vision, strategy or plans. Lastly the authors present implications for further research and conclude the article.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A common field of interest in prior research on organizing is focused on the use of strategy, structures, preplanning in analytical and linear manners, but organizational improvisation enables understanding for how to benefit from e.g. flexibility, spontaneity and creativity (Kamoche & Cunha, 2008). Much of the empirical research on organizational improvisation has been focusing on fast-changing environments, where new product development is the most dominating field of research (e.g. Miner, Bassoff & Moorman, 2001), but also in high risk organizations (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007).

The most common way to research organizational improvisation has been to investigate the triggers, e.g. business opportunities (Mintzberg, Pascale, Goold & Rumelt, 1996), unforeseen or unexpected events such as risks and disasters (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007), and then determine the outcome or consequences, e.g. innovative products or successful business, of the action that was triggered. Thus the organizational improvisation itself remains unknown and uninvestigated since it is just the status before and after the organizational improvisation that is investigated and compared. By its nature organizational improvisation is difficult to study as it happens, since it is unexpected and unplanned, implicating that the researcher has to be in the right place, at the right time to perceive the organization improvisation as it unfolds (Cunha, Cunha & Kamoche, 1999).

The word improvisation is used in many situations and contexts and it can be hard to actually define what the word means. However, Weick explain the word as follow:

“The word improvisation itself is rooted in the word “proviso” which means to make a stipulation beforehand, to provide for something in advance, or to do something that is premeditated. By adding the prefix “im” to the word proviso, as when the prefix “im” is added to the word mobile to create immobile, improvise means the opposite of proviso. Thus improvisation deals with the unforeseen, it works without a prior stipulation, it works with the unexpected.” (Weick, 1998:285)

2.2 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL IMPROVISATION

Cunha, Cunha & Kamoche (1999) argues that there are three stages in the development of literature on organizational improvisation, the stages somewhat differs in focus and how well they address the phenomena of organizational improvisation. First theorists started to use jazz improvisation as a metaphor for understanding improvisation in organizational setting and tried focusing on the phenomena of improvisation in arts but the main interests where on jazz improvisation. The characteristics of jazz improvisation correspond to competencies that a company should have in order to improvise effectively. This trail of theorists emphasis the concept of bricolage, i.e. using whatever resources at hand (Weick, 1998), in jazz improvisation, that the improviser

uses whatever resources he or she has available at the point in time to create something new from it (Cunha, Cunha & Kamoche, 1999). The second stage in the literature was more focused on empirical research and tried to conclude a definition of organizational improvisation, without using the jazz metaphor as much as previous research. The then proposed definition of organizational improvisation focused on the convergence in time of the conception and the execution of an action. The shorter the time is between the idea and the execution, the more improvised the action is (Moorman & Miner, 1998a). However, in the third stage of developing the literature, this definition is criticised for not including all aspects of organizational improvisation and for being a definition that limited and not enabling further research enough. In the third stage, the authors are also turning back towards jazz improvisation as a central theme in understanding organizational improvisation, but criticising authors for drawing too heavily on jazz and pushing the jazz metaphor too far. (Cunha, Cunha & Kamoche, 1999)

Moorman & Miner (1998) suggest that organizational improvisation can be either collective or individual. Individual improvisation is suggested to be performed by one single person, and when several individual's effort is combined, it can be called collective improvisation. Having the jazz metaphor as a backdrop, this reasoning makes sense thus one individual musician's own effort can be determined as improvisation, in a solo for example, and when a group of musicians play together, support each other and interact in the performance of music, it can be determined as collective improvisation, such as a jazz band.

Cunha, Cunha & Kamoche (1999) tries to develop a more solid definition of organizational improvisation "free of any strings attached to improvisation in jazz" and their thoughts draw from research of different trends and themes in the literature on the concept. They present a definition that merges the two points of views; improvisation as convergence in time of idea and realization; and improvisation as bricolage. Their definition is:

"Improvisation is the conception of action as it unfolds drawing on available material, cognitive, affective and social resources".

Leone (2010) is critical to the main part of the earlier contributions in this theoretical field as the author fails to agree on common definitions of the concept of organizational improvisation. She argues that it is not surprising that the earlier research is not sufficient because it sets out to create a general framework for the complexity of improvisation by massively drawing on metaphors. In her paper Leone (2010) also questions why the earlier researches did not investigate the act of the individual improvisation further and she concludes that it is not clear how improvisation can be a form of strategizing. Leone (2010) writes that the future research in this area should be about the issue on improvisation under a conceptual and explanatory point of view. For a full overview of the field of organizational improvisation and critiques to the same, Leone (2010) is recommended.

2.3 IMPROVISATION AS CONVERGENCE IN TIME

According to some of the theory on organizational improvisation, a requirement for improvisation to happen be that the planning and execution of an action is converging in time, or at least that both happens in a short period of time (Cunha, Cunha & Kamoche, 1999; Moorman & Miner, 1998). Often improvisation is described to be related to urgency or a need for action rather than deliberate planning, thus the action and planning tend to converge (Weick, 2007). Moorman and Miner (1998) develop this notion even further and suggests that the shorter the time is between conception and execution, the more improvised the action is. There can be different circumstances that create a need for the execution to converge with planning, Weick (2007) discuss different risk, threat and emergency circumstances where the need for quick action is a must, where Moorman & Miner (1998) focuses on new product development and in the new, fast-moving environments improvisation is needed to keep the pace with competitors.

2.4 BRICOLAGE

The meaning of the word bricolage is “a construction made of whatever materials are at hand; something created from a variety of available things.” (Weick, 1998). In literature on organizational improvisation there is a focus on the time issue of the improvisation and in that the execution of an action is converging with the planning of the action there are little or no time to mobilizing provide enough, or those most appropriate, resources (Cunha, Cunha & Kamoche, 1999). This implies that the organization needs to use those resources that are at hand at that time. Therefore the term bricolage can be used to talk about the resource allocation in organizational improvisation.

There is another aspect with bricolage, apart from just using the available resources, arguing that bricolage is also about modify and redefine (Cunha, Cunha & Kamoche, 1999) the resources at hand by using them in a way different from the way the resources where intended to be used.

A person that engages in bricolage is called a bricoleur and the materiel a bricoleur use is not project-specific (Weick, 1998, p.63). Typical for a bricoleur is that he or she sees the possibilities with the present resources and what purposeful can be done with them, instead of just assembling them and hope for the best. The organizational improvisation is based on how an organization can relate and deal with the unexpected and the volatility of changes in the new globalized market. (Weick, 1998)

2.5 TIMING AND INTUITION

Knowledge has during a long time been divided in two different groups; tacit and explicit knowledge and there has been a robust debate about the nature and the relationship between them two (Kamoche & Cunha (2008). Kamoche & Cunha (2008) describe it as: explicit knowledge is codified and transmittable in systematic language,

whereas tacit knowledge is rooted in action within a specific context, has a personal quality, and is difficult to formalize and communicate.

In the literature, the notion of intuition is dealt with in the article by Kamoche & Cunha (2008) as they said that organizational knowledge is created in organizations by and through people, acting either as individuals or in teams. Further, intuition can be seen as the tacit knowledge to know when it is a good time to take a decision and action. They argue that tacit knowledge is created through organizational improvisation due to its spontaneous and unplanned responses to unforeseen challenges. Weick (2001) writes that the tacit knowledge and improvisational action is an extension of more traditional and fundamental skills and he also argues that; discipline, practice and experience are the base of intuition.

Some confusion can be raised about what timing actually is. According to Modern Language Association² the word 'timing' can be defined as:

"The selecting of the best time or speed for doing something in order to achieve the desired or maximum result."

In this article that definition is used for the word timing. If the timing is good or bad seems to depend on what result is achieved by the action, hence if the timing is good, or even if the timing is 'right', can only be determined after the action is taken and the result can be evaluated. Connecting intuition and timing together implies that the intuition serves as guidance to determine the likelihood of an action being done when the timing is good or right. Noteworthy is that the timing can never for sure be said to good or right, but due to intuition a qualified assessment can be done.

2.6 MINIMAL STRUCTURES

Moreover, Kamoche & Cunha, (2008) state that improvisational action is a combination of intuition, creativity and spontaneity based on minimal structures. Minimal structures derives strongly from the jazz improvisation and according to Kamoche & Cunha (2001) minimal structures can be seen as a small set of rules that give the improviser enough references to know how to relate to the music and to the fellow musicians. Vera & Rodriguez-Lopez (2007) develop the notion of minimal structures and suggests that the notion of minimal structure can be applied to organizational culture, where the culture as minimal structure provides indirect control through ideology and cultural values. Further they argue that:

"Experimental cultures are those that promote action and learning by doing and are tolerant of 'competent' mistakes – those that result from novel ideas and not from flawed execution." (Vera & Rodriguez-Lopez, 2007, p. 310)

² Modern Language Association (MLA): "timing." Dictionary.com Unabridged. Random House, Inc. 14 May. 2011. <Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/timing>>.

Minimal structures are more than often implicit and tacit, Kamoche & Cunha (2001) concludes.

2.7 DEGREES OF IMPROVISATION

Degrees of improvisation are the extent to which action is different from the script or plan. The terminology of degrees of improvisation has strong connections to the jazz metaphor, where the idea of there being a script or plan in organizational improvisation comes from the notes in jazz. The improvising jazz musician improvise by diverge from the notes, determined by the composer, and creating new music by taking bit and pieces from the composition. It is suggested to be four forms of improvisation (Weick, 1998); interpretation, embellishment, variation and improvisation. Interpretation is the least divergence from the determined notes and improvisation has “little or no resemblance” (Berliner, 1994, via Weick 2001) with the original notes.

2.8 REASONS FOR IMPROVISATION

When reading the theory on organizational improvisation the question why organizations improvise is briefly discussed and the answers seems to be that organizations improvise when there is no plan or strategy that covers the needed action, thus when the need for that action is unforeseen. An exception from this is Vera & Rodriguez-Lopez (2007) that, even though they admit the sometime necessity of improvisation, states that individuals and organizations also may use organizational improvisation in an effective emergent strategy implying; capturing improvisation capabilities in everyday organizational activities

3 METHODOLOGY

To answer a research question is it important to come up with a research design, which best would enable the collection and analysis of data (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The research design should therefore be applicable to understand how a company can be managed without a vision, strategy or a plan. According to Bryman & Bell (2007), for an article with focus on a single organization, a case study is appropriate. The present case study was therefore focused to the use of qualitative methods consisting of semi-structured interviews, informal interviews, conversations and non-participative observation.

3.1 PRACTICAL PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION

The authors realized at the beginning of this study that it would be useful to spend much time at the company, thus after presenting their idea to the CEO the authors therefore got the opportunity to have an office at the company. The authors used their office as their study place from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm during three months. Their presence at the company enabled a qualitative approach allowing them to construct their own understanding of the studied company by being a part of the corporate culture. The empirical material was, apart from semi-structured interviews, collected through conversations, small-talks and informal interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2007) and written down in field notes. These spontaneous methods of collecting data were often conducted during the lunch breaks or during short meetings in the corridors.

The CEO and the other employees' at the company were during the whole case study incredibly open and friendly and gave the authors all information that they asked for. The employees where also interested in how the study proceeded, which made it easier for the author to ask questions and have conversations with the employees, due to a general interest.

The authors had during the three months three formal semi-structured interviews together with the CEO, in total that summed up to around five hours of interviewing. Over a period of three weeks the authors intended to do one hour-long semi-structured interview with the managers for each business area and function in the company. However, due to vacations and busy schedules, the financial manager, one business area manager and the store manager were not interviewed. The interviews aimed to give the authors a good overview of the dynamics of organisation works. The authors also got the opportunity to attend a quality meeting as non-participating observers. Each semi-structured interviews was, in accordance with the respondent, recorded in order to allow the authors to re-listen the interviews to make sure that no information was missed. The interviews were conducted in a neutral place in the company and the authors promised the respondents to not mention them by name in the article, thus making as sure as possible that the respondents gave also information that could be sensitive.

As the authors had done formal semi-structured and informal interviews they began to transcribe the material so they in a later stage easily could analyse the interviews together with the theoretical data that were used in this paper. All semi-structured and informal interviews were recorded and listened to afterwards and if needed written down. All observations of interest were down written in field notes.

In order to keep the anonymity of the company and the respondents all

Interview list		
Interviewee	Type of interview	Job description
CEO	Formal	Owner & CEO
Responder 2	Formal	Employee support functions
Responder 3	Formal	Manager support functions
Responder 4	Informal	Employee support functions
Responder 5	Informal	Employee support functions
Responder 6	Formal	Long time employee
Responder 7	Formal	Sales manager
Responder 8	Formal	Sales manager
Responder 9	Formal	Sales manager business area
Responder 10	Formal	Manager support functions
Responder 11	Formal	Sales manager business area
Responder 12	Formal	Manager support functions
Responder 13	Informal	Employee sale support
Responder 14	Formal	Manager support functions
Responder 15	Informal	Employee support functions
Responder 16	Informal	Employee support functions
Responder 17	Informal	Employee support functions
Responder 18	Formal	Manager support functions

3.2 DATA ANALYSIS

The empirical material has mainly been analysed through discussions between the authors, but also the supervisor has contributed by questioning the author's conclusions and pointing to interesting aspects of the empirical material. One big advantage of the authors being at the studied company is the possibility to as soon as necessary ask employees for clarifications and explanations. Since the material has a qualitative character there has not been a need to statistically analyse the material. However, when discussing the empirical material the authors have developed models and charts to comprehend and classify the dynamics and organizing in the company. The concept of strategic and individual improvisation as presented in this article is to a large extent also the model and classification that helped the authors to analyse the empirical material.

The authors have tried to be as neutral as possible when collecting the empirical material. But it is important to note that the authors are critical aware that the

conclusion may have been coloured and influenced by the company's culture during the three month spent at the company.

3.3 LIMITATIONS

The authors can afterwards note that a case study during all workdays for three months build up to a tremendous amount of impressions, thoughts, observations and field notes. The authors found it very difficult to translate all tacit knowledge and written material into an article of this kind, thus one limitation is that the authors had to pick out and present just a part of the empirical material.

4 THE SETTING

In this section the authors will present the setting of the company and try to give the reader a good picture of how the company and culture works within the company. The first section will present how the company works internal and external. The second section will present the four most important part of the cooperate culture.

4.1 THE COMPANY

The company, as it hereafter is called, has there headquarter situated in an industrial area in a larger town in Sweden.

The company has been around for more than 50 years and the company's products are present almost everywhere in the society. The company's product range is broad but the common theme is products that other companies use in their production, more specific the product range focuses mainly on disposable and single use products. To exemplify, the products are the containers people take away their food in or the carrier bag people bring home the groceries in, but also the chemicals a restaurant use to clean the kitchen or the work clothing the employees in car repair shop has. Therefore many people get in touch with products from the company without knowing they are.

The company's products can, more or less irrespectively of what product it is, be delivered with or without the customer's own print on it. Paper and plastic bags for all kind of stores has practically always a customer print on them, this goes as well for paper mugs to large cafes that want branded mugs to enhance the consumer experience of drinking their coffee. The company does not have their own manufacturing, but they have agreements with producers, mainly in China, enabling them to provide the customers with everything they want. When the company order products from China there are money to save if the quantities are large, hence the company has an inventory where products are stored and can be delivered in stages to the customers. In that way the company can offer an additional storage service to the customers that want to order large quantities of custom printed products, but also deliver the products with much shorter lead times.

The most significant part of the sales is done through salesmen that visit customers at their workplace; they are out in the field, as it is commonly called in the company. A salesman's primary task, as it is describe by the sales managers³, is to find and attract new customers and to collect enough information to do a quotation, including such as; which products the customer want, the pricing of the products, the quantity of the product and the print on the product if there should be any. A salesman would probably add the task of keeping the relationship and keep him or her as a customer.

3 Respondents 2, 20, 9

After that the salesman hands over the information to his or her own support person, whose function is called sale support. The purpose of the sale support is to help the assigned salesman with paperwork, looking up things and basically make sure that the salesman can spend as much time as possible out in the field.

When a new customer has approved the quotation it becomes an agreement, which the customer can order replenishment according to. As long as the agreement is not changed, the salesman is not supposed to be involved in the process, thus all ordering on agreed products should be done through the customer service or the website. The customer service's function is to receive and place orders according to existing agreements, thus employees at the customer service are constantly attending the telephone loop that customers and other calls to.

However, to the employees, the organization seems to see the logical and apprehensive. There are two major parts; one sales part, which organizes the salesmen, and one part with all the support functions that are required. The sale support, as talked about above, is in the support function together with; purchasing, logistics, graphics, environment and quality economy, customer service, the stores and IT.

But there is also a division according to the type of customer, or according to type of product types, depending on how you chose to view it. The divisions are called business areas and there are three of them; restaurant, packaging and food service. Besides these business areas the company provide customers with; clothing, office supplies, receipt rolls, cleaning products and printer toners. The company has made it possible for the customers to also buy their products from their two own stores. The stores are located at two strategic locations in Sweden, the first store are placed in the middle of Sweden and the second store which were recently opened is located in the south part of Sweden.

There are around 40 salesmen in total in the company that are spread around the country. Theirs everyday life consists of much time alone in their cars and at hotels. The CEO is aware of the salesman's hard situation and at the same times their importance for the company so he says:

"It is important to understand that the sales department is where the company's revenues comes from and you should therefore treat those persons a little extra. I know that the support function can sometimes find that the "salesman" gets special treatment but I think they maybe not really understands how hard it is to be out there on the field.⁴"

The CEO is therefore trying to motivate the company salesman's team by giving them one-second sales bonus. Except for the common company bonus, are the salesman also getting a personal bonus, which is based on how much they sell. One manager says:

⁴ CEO

"The Salesman gets two bonuses, an annual that all employees gets and one individual. I am driven to sell and be able to influence my own bonus. I'd rather have my sale bonus and I even believe that our cooperation between the areas would be worse if salespersons had to share the second bonus too."⁵

This sales bonus is creating a lot of internal competition between the salesman that often is positive but can sometimes be negative. The negative part of the internal competition is that unfortunately the salesman sometimes does not their best to helping the other collages because they are afraid of losing some of their own bonuses. The company has also two sales conferences each year to motivate and show new products to the salesmen so they can sell more and it gives the salesman possibility to meet colleagues all over Sweden. There is a employees in the support functions within the company how thinks that the salesman team are bias and get special treatments which creates some frustration One employee says;

"I have worked at this company during a long time but it's does not pay off. We in the support function are treated as a cost when the sellers are treated as a profit but it is just to accept. Everyone in the company can't be a star, a team need a defender to."⁶

The frustration among the employees are mostly based on that they feel no appreciation from the CEO. They also have a feeling of that they are treated as costs while the salesman's are highly prioritised. Another large part of the frustration of the employees is that they hardly ever get the opportunity to discuss their salary or almost never can get arise.

4.2 THE CORPORATE CULTURE

The CEO together with his father is the owner of the company. The CEO believes it is important that the employee understands the entrepreneurial cooperate culture. The four most important parts of the corporate culture is;

1. The employee should always put the company and the collective at first. The CEO explains that;

"No matter how good a person is, they can never be responsible for something without understanding the culture."

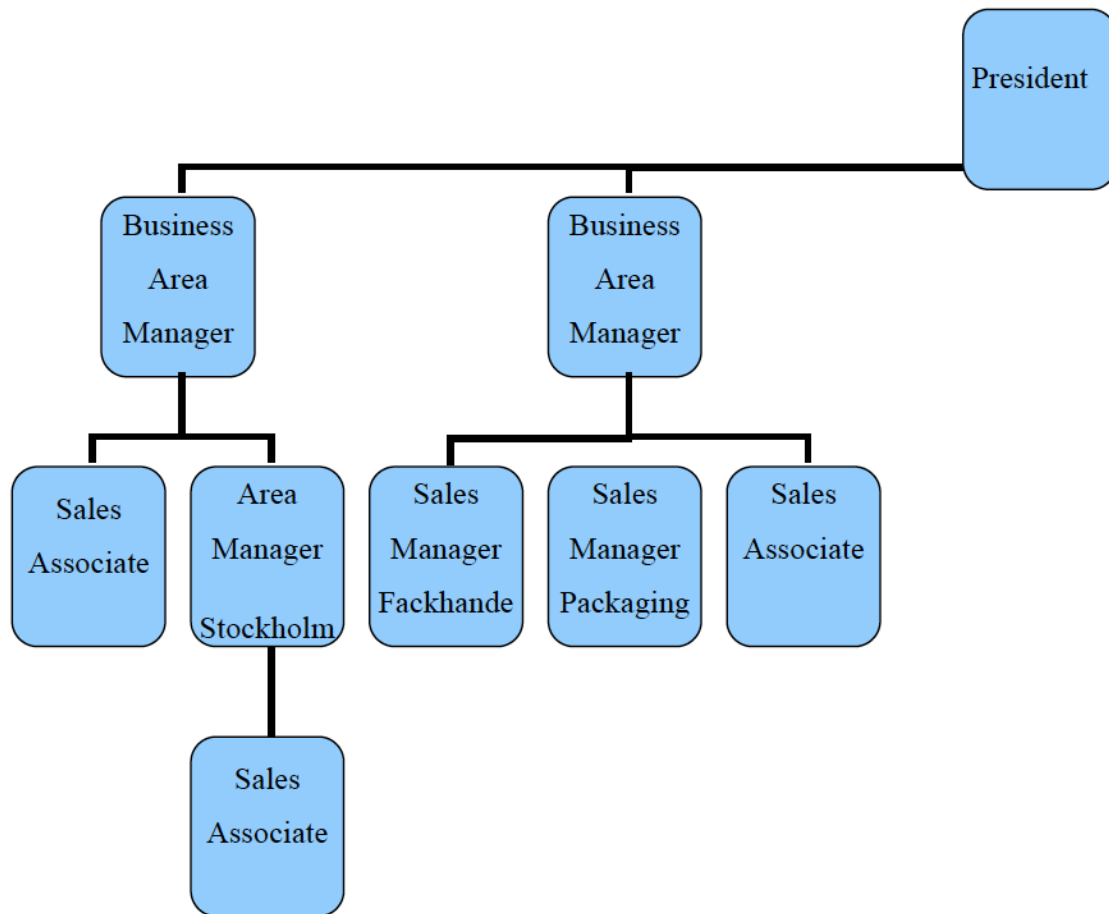
The employees have to take a common responsibility to make the company competitive strong so the employees' have a work. The employee should therefore always try to sell as much as possible and be the winner at almost any price.

2. When looking at the organisational chart is it clear that there are three levels of hierarchy; **(1)** CEO, **(2)** managers and **(3)** employees. The layout and the

⁵ Respondent 11

⁶ Respondent 2

presentation of the organisational chart show that the organization and the hierarchy levels within the company are not so important. The company has a flat organization, this contributes to the notion that employees should be open to change tasks and have a willingness to solve problems. It is important to get the employee to understand that they must do everything to solve a problem, even though it may not directly be an issue on his desk. However, the hierarchy is not that taken into account a manager's position is merely connected to "upgrading" of the work.



FIGUR 1, PART OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHART PROVIDED BY THE COMPANY

3. According to the CEO is the core aim for the company's culture to sell as much as possible and always do your best to make the company grow and make profit. The CEO says:

"An employee at the company shall always try to sell as much as possible and be the winner at any price. It is important to not go over dead bodies to achieve a goal.⁷"

⁷ CEO

The company culture inspires the employee to always try to achieve better sale results than last year. The company are not trying to predict the future by using budgets, the only there is, is to always sell more than last year and same month last year. The sales numbers has a very important and relevant part within the company. The employees are often discussing the company from the basis of numbers. The employees' strong desire to always sell more is based in one important thing: The employees' bonus is based on a single percentage out of the company's profits. The good figures have during the past ten years constantly risen, which has created a positive atmosphere but one employee, said during a lunch break;

“Without the high bonus, which it has been the recent years, the salary will not be competitive. If I could choose, I will pick a higher fixed salary than an uncertain bonus. The bonus does not gives me the same security and it makes it also harder for me to apply for a bank loan.⁸”

Unfortunately has the bonus drastically decreased during the last year because of some new investments, which has created some frustration. The employees' low bonus makes the salary in the company not competitive in comparison to other similar jobs.

4. The fourth important part of the company culture is that the employee should always prioritize his or her task after what is most important. The company does not have strategy that could give clues or signals of what is coming in the future, and there is not that much information in the company. One example of when the employees had to reprioritize were when the two employees responsible for a small inventory with samples, were informed by the CEO that the inventory had to be moved due to a conversion of the premises. The CEO showed them, the two rooms they should fit the inventory in, and were asked if they thought it was enough space and if they could move the inventory there. Of course they could do that.

They both had other main tasks but had two hours per week set aside to manage the inventory. Their regular manager did not wanted them to spend more time on the move than they had assigned for it. Unfortunately two hours were not enough to complete the task time, thus the move was not ready within the given time.⁹

This example above shows how the CEO goes directly to the employees without informing the middle managers which resulting in that the middle managers feel that they have very little influence over their own staff. A basically part of the interviewees, that are managers of some kind, said that they often find it difficult to inform and help their employees because the company's plans not are communicated. It is very common that plans changes, which make it hard for a

⁸ Respondent 17

⁹ Respondent 13

manager to inform his employees since he or she then will be accountable that the plan will be effectuated, and will probably be questioned if the plans are changed.

The lack of information about how decisions are made and what will happen in the future makes it difficult for the managers to communicate the situation to their colleagues. The managers argue that it creates frustration for the person because they do not know where they are heading.

5 ANALYSIS AND EMPIRICAL MATERIAL

In this section the authors will present their analysis and hence their findings. Parts of the empirical material will be described in more detail in order to support the analysis. Most of the sections are structured with the empirical material first, then the analysis is laid out and finally the findings are stated.

5.1 STRATEGIC IMPROVISATION

In this section the authors will present the notion of strategic improvisation which they suggest can describe the way the company is managed. Further, the strategic improvisation is suggested to consist of resources, ideas and timing. This sections purpose is mainly to present the proposed concept to the reader.

A sales manager for one of the business areas was asked what made the company open a new store in the south part of Sweden. He said that he had not been involved, but based on how the company usually faces new things he answered:

“I think it was all about; resources, i.e. the right people, the timing and a valuable opportunity, hence most of it fell into place. With that said, time will show if it was the right decision.”¹⁰

Later, the same manager emphasized the timing aspect of the decision, stating that:

“It’s all about one thing; timing.”¹¹

The excerpts above by one of the managers on what made the company to open a new store implies two things, first; when resources, timing and an opportunity coincide action is taken in the company. Second, the company usually take action even though the outcome cannot in detail be assessed.

Based on the observations, field notes, interviews and conversations from their three months at the company, the authors suggest that one kind of organizational improvisation in the company consists of three major components; resources, ideas and timing. This type of improvisation can called *strategic improvisation* thus it explains how the company strategically improvise to develop and choosing which actions to take.

In short, strategic improvisation occurs when the sufficient resources are available to an idea with potential, at a timing assessed to be good. The key is that all three of the components have to match up; if one of them is missing there cannot be any improvisation. A really good idea can have been developed in the company, the sufficient resources can be available, but if the timing is wrong, there is no improvisation. Opposite, the timing can be suitable, the idea is good but the required resources may not be available.

¹⁰ Respondent 9

¹¹ Respondent 9

The strategic improvisation explains how the management choose what action to take and when to take that action. Underpinning the strategic improvisation, mainly the timing component, is the use of intuition. The intuition is used to assess the timing, it helps to enhance the ideas to match the company's needs and finally, the intuition guides the allocation and recruitment of resources. Since the CEO is taking almost all decisions in the company, it follows that it is to a large extent his intuition that forms the improvisation. But it should be noted that the CEO is very open and gladly listens to input from others hence it is not only the CEO's intuition that guides what paths the company should follow as for example was the case with the new store in south of Sweden.

The strategic improvisation enables the management to actually take fast decisions and enable an agile ability. When looking at the empirical data, it can be argued that improvisation in the company is not, by default, forced by urgency. The empirical data shows that improvisation happens when it is assessed to be good timing.

5.2 THE CHOICE OF NOT HAVING A VISION, STRATEGY OR PLANS

In this section it will be argued that the company does not have a vision, strategy or plans, instead the company seems to improvise when deciding what path to follow towards the future.

5.2.1 Empirical Material

According to the CEO a key factor to be successful is to always dare to make small changes and trust the gut feeling. Because of the difficulties to assess the market forward the CEO believes is it better to skip the long-term strategy and concentrate on the flexibility, quick decisions and react to the environment. The CEO said that:

“What we decide today will unlikely be true tomorrow, so it is no point to think too far into the future. The company shall therefore always try to make the best decisions based on the day-to-day information, instead of take decisions about the future.”¹²

The CEO's business philosophy that is described in the quote above is typical for how the company is managed; instead of predicting the future and let that guide decisions, decisions are made day-by-day and guided by what seems to be best at that time. The company's history of father and son as leaders, CEO's and managers has shaped the company to what it is today, thus the business philosophy is well integrated in the company.

Some of the respondents argued that they believe one of the reasons for the CEO not wanting a vision and strategy is that the management may be questioned in case the vision and strategy are not followed or achieved. The CEO did not explicitly mention that

¹² CEO

explanation, but he did explain that the employees in the company need to be flexible and follow whatever tasks are most important to the company at a specific moment, irrespectively of what was told yesterday. He argued that since things changes so fast the plans and strategy that seem reasonable today may be totally wrong tomorrow, therefore all employees has to be able and prepared to change focus quickly. A further reason to not have a vision, strategy or plans, the CEO argued, is that if a company have a vision and strategy, there is a risk that the employees, including the management, get lost and lose focus of the core of the company. This can be seen as an expression for the CEO's approach that it is what one do and accomplish on a daily basis that is important.

Many of the respondents also explain the lack of goals with that they also think there is a hesitation by the management, and the CEO, to avoid goals that upon completion will give employees satisfaction, hence lower the strive and hunger for more. This is somewhat confirmed by one of the managers¹³, as well as the CEO who said:

"I don't like goals because people can feel too relaxed and it can take the edge of their competitive instinct if they fulfil the goals. And in some way goals can limit a person, when the goal becomes the limit."¹⁴

When looking for signs or artefacts in the company that indicate the presence of an explicit vision, aims or purpose, one will not find much. Basically there are two things; a business idea and a common notion that there is an underlying goal of to sell as much as possible. Starting with the business idea; at the company's website a business idea is stated, which is:

"The company will, without intermediaries, offer our customers overall solutions that meet the requirements of professional users in terms of function, breadth, availability and pricing"¹⁵

When asking the CEO and some employees what the business idea actually means, the part with 'overall solution' is said to imply that the company want to reduce the numbers of suppliers for the customers by offering as much as possible and be the customer's major supplier. The use of the word professional is said to explain to imply that the company have products with good quality.

One way the business idea, however, can be said to be reflected in the company is the fact that the company has a very broad range of products, and the CEO and other employees have a strive to extend the product range to include even more products that a customer might need. But even though the company has a lot of products the organizational structure is not particularly adapted to help the employees to offer an 'overall solution'. Since there is the division of business areas according to different types of products, to what extent the company offer an overall solution is dependent on

¹³ Respondent 7

¹⁴ CEO

¹⁵ The company's website

if the salesmen contact other salesman with the required competence in another business area.

Further indications that the business idea is not used as a reference, is that employees seem to not consider their work as a contribution to the business idea in any particular way, hence the business idea is not the primary reason for their work.

In order to find a uniting goal, aim, purpose or reasons for being in the company, many employees, including the CEO and top managers, have been asked: What does the company? Is there a vision or strategy? No one answered according to a fancy vision statement or reasons for being that are learnt by heart. A few employees referred to the business idea, but most employees did not have a direct answer.

When the employee not have an answer, the authors explain how they mean, essentially everybody, after some reflection, say that the company's purpose is to grow and sell more and that they do not know about any vision or strategy.

"The only goal I can think of is to sell more, but none more visionary goals."¹⁶

Some of the respondents express it in terms of: "I think the CEO's goal is that the company should grow", hence they take the CEO's, non-explicit, aim as the aim for the company. Some employees also express that the CEO and the managers closest to him might have a vision and a strategy, but they are not communicated.

A consequence of the philosophy to not predict the future is, as many of the respondents stated, that the company often take chances. They argue that one can never know what's right and what's wrong until afterwards, thus the company has to take chances. This is articulated in four of the interviews and, for example, one long-time employee says:

"We don't know if it [the new idea or opportunity] works, but it's worth trying. If it turns out to not work we change it. We don't put that much effort into detailed planning or investigating; if it seems good, we go for it. ... if you plan everything, you will never get started."¹⁷

One concrete example of the approach to not predict the future and how that is done in practice it explained in the following example:

The company has one system for handling all the logistics, and one system for sales. The store that sells clothing had until then done all their logistics and deliveries through the sales system, but as the company wanted to sell to a new geographical market the company wanted to include the clothing department into the logistics system. In a conversation with the logistics manager he said that there could be some logistically consequences of selling cloths as well to that new market.

He was asked:

¹⁶ Respondent 3

¹⁷ Respondent 6

“Do you start to prepare for those consequences now, right away?”

He answered:

“No, you see, here at the company, when there is something new that should be carried out, we start with implement the system, for example, without having figured out or thought through all possible side effects or consequences in advance. We start and see what happens. Maybe we can think of potential consequences, but we also know that we can't predict everything, so instead of spending time and resources on tackle things that *might* happen, we wait for them to actually happen. In that way we almost never end up doing unnecessary things. We plan things to 80 percent and then we implement, and we fine tune the last 20 percent of the processes or systems as the case might be. We solve the problems along the way.”¹⁸

The understanding that there is no point of predict the future, is further supported by one of the sales managers that stated that no one knows what the company's business is in half a year, maybe they totally shifted to another business they find profitable.

“If you come back in a half year the company's business might be shifted to whatever else we can sell then.”¹⁹

A manager in the support function talked about two advantages with not having strategy. The first is:

“A great thing of not using a strategy is that we never have to feel that we are doing something that we shouldn't do, since it is not stated what we should do: it also gives the company a great opportunity to directly adapt to the market, thus when I get a new assignment from my manager I am supposed to start the project immediately. Even though I never really know what the purpose and consequence of my tasks is.”²⁰

The second weakness for the company to be managed without a vision, a strategy plans or goals can be that the employees have a hard time to know where the company is heading. The employee's uncertainty of where the company is going, has been shown trough out the observations and has led to that the employees are getting less intrinsic motivated and involved.

“All the fast day-to-day decisions can damage my intrinsic motivation, it is hard to constantly adjust to all new tasks.”²¹

Losing their intrinsic motivation can lead to employees focusing too much on the salary and the company's bonus system instead of be motivated by the goal, purpose or mission of the company. The same support function manager as above said:

“There are plans in the company, but they are not pronounced. I think it would increase the motivation for my co-workers and me if the CEO could tell more about the

¹⁸ Respondent 14

¹⁹ Respondent 7

²⁰ Respondent 3

²¹ Respondent 18

company's future and which career opportunities I have. There might be a hesitation due to that some ideas might not be implemented, but I do not think he needs to make such a big deal out of it."²²

After a while, as the authors could not identify an explicit purpose, aim or a vision for the company, they asked the CEO what drives him to continue his hard work. He answered:

"I want to see how far I can go with my business. I want to make it as large as possible."²³

This aim is however not mentioned by anyone else in the company, and seems certainly not be known to anyone else, even though it cannot be verified that no one knows about the CEO's personal aim.

5.2.2 Analysis

To start with, there are two notions presented in the empirical material that can at first sight be similar to goals, that is; the understanding that what the company does is to sell as much as possible, and the CEO's personal aim to make the company as large as possible. These two undefined expressions are not explicit and

In the studied company there are no signs of attempts to predict the future. There is no vision, strategy or plan and there are no explicit expectations on the future, which mean that when things happen, they are unexpected. Things, ideas, opportunities, events or whatever may happen, will be taken care of as they happen. Further, there seems to be an understanding that there is no point of adapting to potential consequences of events that might eventually happen, *because if they don't happen, that adaptation is a waste of resources and time*. This understanding may not be well recognized, but many of the employees mentioned it, and the authors argue it is a common understanding. It can be concluded that the company does not predict the future nor try to figure out the best way to adapt to it in the long term.

In the theoretical framework, the understanding of the word improvisation draws upon Weick's (2001, p.285) explanation; improvisation deals with the unforeseen, without prior stipulation, and works with the unexpected. This is to a large extent similar to the way the company is lead, without vision, strategy, plans nor predictions. *The company do not have explicit a vision, strategy or plans and do not want to predict the future, implies that the company face the future in another way.*

There is a lack of literature within the field of organizational improvisation that deal with how companies and organizations improvise on a strategic level. Therefore, it is hereafter *suggested that organizational improvisation is present in two different types in*

²² Respondent 3

²³ CEO

the company; strategic improvisation and individual improvisation, to meet the opportunities, problems or other events that occurs with help of bricolage and timing

One thing that differs between the organizational improvisations described in the theoretical section and how the company is managed is the reasons for improvisation. In the literature it is often suggested that improvisation occurs when there is no time to plan and investigate different options of action. It can for example be situations of urgent need for action to prevent a disaster or when something unexpected happens (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). Underlying this notion is an assumption that there is a prediction of the future or a plan, and that the unexpected event is not captured by that prediction or plan, hence there is a need for improvisation. It is implied that if the prediction or plan actually captured the event, there would not be a need for improvisation, since it then was not unexpected and would be planned for. In the literature, organizational improvisation seems to be seen as more of a “second option”, when the plan or strategy is not applicable. *The authors argue that the notion of reasons for organizational improvisation could be broaden and suggests that it is possible for an organization to deliberate improvise.*

The analysis in this section can be summarised into the following points:

- There is a notion in the company to not put too much effort into things that just *might* happen, thus an agile ability is identified.
- The company does not have an explicit vision, strategy or plan to predict the future, hence something else guides the decision-making.
- Organizational improvisation is seen in the company via strategic improvisation and individual improvisation.
- It can be a deliberated choice to use organizational improvisation.

5.3 RESOURCES

In this section the first of the three components of strategic improvisation will be described and analysed.

5.3.1 Empirical Material

The empirical material indicates that the CEO makes sure to have sufficient resources available. The resources are mainly are mainly; employees, premises and financial assets. It should be noted here that employees are not seen as merely resources, but the fact is that employees are a resource that enables the company to effectuate new developments.

The CEO is constantly making sure that the company has slightly over employment, thus the company never have a shortage of employees. Hence there are always some personnel to allocate to new projects or implementations thus those resources are buffered.

The empirical matters supports this statement now follows. Further, the CEO is very careful about who is recruited in the company. He mentioned that:

“My employee philosophy is that we should avoid external recruiting people to more qualified positions as far as possible; the reason for this is that you can never know how a person performs in advance.”²⁴

The CEO tries to, as far as possible, to recruit internally from the inventory, the stores and the customers service, thus having an understanding for the personality and interests of the one being employed. The following quote is typical for how the promotion process works in the company:

“We needed a person to a spot in the support function so I began to observe one guy who worked in the store. My understanding was that he is positive, hard working and had done a good job. So when the timing was right, I gave him the opportunity to advance to the purchase department. He has had a fast career in the company.”²⁵

Complementing this quote is the testimony from the man that was promoted. Because this happened during the time the authors were in the company, they could study the improvisation as it happened. The authors had lunch with the employee on a Friday; he then worked in the store but had when he got hired expressed that he in the long run wanted to be promoted to work in the support functions instead; he, however, had not got any indications when an eventual promotion could come in question. When meeting the employee the Monday after, he told the authors that he just start working in the support functions. He was asked how that happened, since he did not know anything on Friday at lunchtime. He told that on Friday afternoon he was called to the CEO's office and got offered a promotion, starting Monday morning. He was surprised but took the offer without hesitation.

Further the CEO said that when the employee was hired in the first place there was no position available in the support functions, so he got to work in the store. Later a purchaser approached me with a need for an additional employee to help him out, due to the reorganization we had undertaken, this was about a week before the actual promotion the CEO said. So the promoted employee was offered that position, but that the need came in the purchase department is just a coincidence, it could have been everywhere else in the support function. Hence, the CEO said, the promoted employee became employed in the first place without there being a specific position for him so he started in the store, and the further empirical material indicate this is a common procedure in the company.

One basic belief the CEO has is that employee's personality and the relationships employees has with each other, as well with him, are very important. He has throughout the case study returned to the importance of recruiting people that has according to him,

²⁴ CEO

²⁵ CEO

the right mindset and that fit in to the company and with the culture; he argues this is one of the most fundamental success factors in the company. Even though the CEO rather recruits internally then externally, there is of course a need to hire new people mainly to the inventory one of the stores or customer service and when it comes to hiring new employees the CEO is always attending. He said that he thinks he has a good knowledge of people and that is essential to be able to assess if a person will fit in the company. Important to note is that the CEO is humble when saying this, but he also said that the responsibility for recruiting as well as being the human resource manager is one responsibility that he not want to let go. It is too important should be noted that there is no official function that is called human resource, but the CEO is the one responsible for such issues, as; recruiting and setting all employees salary. However, a significant part of the respondents think that the CEO having the human resource responsibility can be frustrating; the following quote express a somewhat common feeling:

“In my duties as manager it is included to take care of my employees but it is hard for me to do that when I am not allowed to take all decisions, recruitments and discuss salary within my own area and employees. A way of solve this problem is to create new functions such as HR.”²⁶

When the CEO discusses the issue of him being the human resource manager, he argues that he is most appropriate to have that responsibility because the employees and the recruitment process is thus important part of how he manage the company. The CEO has the opinion that recruiting is more of an assessment based on intuition than based on rationality and it becomes evident in the following excerpt:

“If you write some different criteria’s and characteristics of the person that you want to hire you will after a while understand that this perfect person does not exist. It is therefore better to choose a person with great personality that you believe can deliver. I give the new employees different work tasks to choose from, because that gives me a good picture of what kind of tasks he or she likes.”²⁷

Moving on to other resources, the empirical material shows that the CEO does not hesitate to have some extra premises empty, just in case they will be needed in the future this is done though the real-estate a company. This is also a way of buffering resources and since the company already has premises there is no need for acquisition of new premises. In that way the company avoids acquisitions, which can take time, been forced due to time constraints or be a poor piece of business.

During the authors time at the company it was decided that the office should be expanded into new premises. The new premises had the layout of an office landscape, and later it was decided that the customer service was the department that should be relocated. This event will be referred to at some point in the remaining part of the article. The example is relevant to describe the CEO’s approach to buffering resources:

²⁶ Respondent 3

²⁷ CEO

“The decision to move customer service was based on that we needed more space for customer service and we had a hard time leasing out a part of the property which gave us the opportunity. To be honest, we did not put that much effort to lease that out that premises, the cost to have it empty was not too high and I thought that it might become useful in the future. So now when the need for more space was identified, it showed to be a good decision to not lease it out.”²⁸

The company’s financial assets and liquidity are good and are made sure to be available and therefore can be seen as buffered, thus money is no direct barrier to act and implement new things; it also mean that there is no need to take time to save money or apply for bank loans. Again, the CEO:

“As long as you have good people and money, you can do everything.”²⁹

5.3.2 Analysis

The analysis starts with the situation when the employee got promoted, thus there are a number of interesting conclusions to be drawn from that situation. First, *it all happened very fast*, the time of one week from the conception of the need an extra employee to they started in the new position it to be seen as fast. But also the actual promotion, the employee got the offer one afternoon and on the morning the workday after, he started. According to many employees and the author’s observations at the company this fast action is rather common.

Second, it is interesting that the employee was hired in the first place without there being a direct need. Of course there might have been a need in the store, but both the CEO and the employee was in agreement that was a temporary and that he in the long term should move to the support function when there was a need. *People in their first job at the company are somewhat in a buffer zone waiting for new tasks, and it may not be decided from the beginning what positions or work tasks a new employee will have.*

This enables the management to use resources, employees in this example, in ways that may not be intended from the beginning, if it be more suitable. This strongly connects to Cunha, Cunha & Kamoche (1999) that argues that in bricolage the resources may be redefined or modified to fit a new purpose.

Thirdly; when the implementation responding to the need in the purchase department was initiated, the CEO did not start to look outside the company, he started to look at the resources the company already had. And *this is the main connection the authors want to make to the notion of bricolage; when there is a need for action, the CEO look at whatever resources that are at hand, which coheres with the theory of bricolage.*

When analysing how resources in general are viewed and used in the company it seems to have strong similarities with bricolage. Throughout the empirical material it is

²⁸ CEO

²⁹ CEO

indicated and stated that the CEO of the company believes it is important to buffer resources. The use for each resource is usually not known when the resource is obtained, but the CEO believes that the company will have use of the resources in the future. In one of the interviews the CEO explicitly stated that he never want to run out of resources, thus that would limit the company's ability to take action. *In this way it can be argued that the CEO buffers resources, thus make sure that there are resources available when they are needed in the future.*

The approach of how to use the resources in the company are similar to what Weick (2001) claims that a bricoleur does, when he or she does not only put resources together and hope for results, but reflect on how different resources (and ideas) best fit together and match resources together deliberately. It seems reasonable to call the CEO a bricoleur that deliberate are employing those people that he think fits in the company, and promote those that he believe in and believe will make a good job. Interesting is that *this opportunity to choose and handpick the staff at the company, to large extent is due to that the company buffers resources, and hence is not forced to recruit unknown persons when a need is conceived.*

The three types of resources; *employees, premises and financial assets*, enable the company to face new challenges and take quick action since there is no lead time to obtain resources prior to every new action or change that should be implemented. The methodology of buffering resources is not described in theory on bricolage, but the way that resources are mobilized and handled once a need or idea is conceived can be explained as bricolage. Since the mobilization of certain resources usually is not related to a specific action or implementation, that enable bricolage when something will be implemented, thus the company can use whatever resources that are at hand. One key point of *bricolage in the company is that it does not happen before the implementation* in which the resources will be used, is initiated.

A key to the use of resources in the company is that the person that takes major decisions has control and knowledge about the utilization of the resources. One practical example of this were when a new office landscape were arranged, the CEO was asked why the new arrangements were done at that specific time (in February), he answered that the person responsible for IT was busy during the fall and he had time in February. The CEO did not discuss it with him, but the CEO knew he had much work to do in the fall. Because IT were such big part of the new office landscape, with new computers, printers, servers etc., the IT person was a significant resource in that project. Therefore the CEO waited with the new office landscape. This reasoning leads to the conclusion that *a bricoleur has to have control of the resources in order to improvise*, but also that a bricoleur need rather extensive knowledge about the resources in order to assemble them deliberately.

The analysis in this section can be summarised into the following points:

- Decisions are implemented fast hence there is often a short period of time between planning and implementation.
- When there is a need for action, the CEO look at whatever resources those are at hand, which coheres with the theory of bricolage.
- It can be argued that the CEO buffers resources, thus make sure that there are resources available when they are needed in the future.
- Employees, premises and financial assets are the components of strategic improvisation.
- Bricolage does not happen before an implementation is initiated.
- A bricoleur has to have control of the resources in order to improvise.

5.4 IDEAS

5.4.1 Empirical material

The second component of strategic improvisation to be explained is the notion of ideas. What the authors, according to the empirical material, consider as an idea are; a project, a business opportunity, a change, a solution to meet a need, a thought or anything else that can be effectuated and implemented in the company. In strategic improvisation the ideas determine what to improvise and what action to take.

The culture at the company is rather open to new ideas, as the previous empiric shows. The three following excerpts describe how ideas are viewed upon. One of the business area sale managers describes his approach:

“If I got a new idea, I would talk about it with the CEO. One thing I’ve learned is that if you have an idea you should go for it. If it works, you go for it, if not; you ditch it and move on. One cannot plan or figure everything out before you try it. It should be fairly well planned, but not too much, in order to go for it and try. If I got an idea I would not dig too deep into it, I would mention it to the CEO and go for it.”³⁰

A long time employee said that:

“We don’t know if it [the new idea or opportunity] works, but it’s worth trying. If it turns out to not work we change it. We don’t put that much effort into detailed planning or investigating; if it seems good, we go for it. ... if you plan everything, you will never get started.”³¹

As previous described in section 5.1, the CEO is open to new ideas and he could be characterised as an entrepreneur; hence he is interested in new business ideas and suggestions that can improve the company. Some of the respondents described the CEO as an ideas man and the common perception is that mainly all new ideas come from the

³⁰ Respondent 11

³¹ Respondent 6

CEO. However, the CEO is open to everyone's ideas and is keen to get involved in new ideas before they are fully developed. This is the notion of the rule of 80/20; if one employee has an idea, he or she should develop it to around 80 per cent and then discuss it with someone, the CEO for example, and they will finish the last 20 per cent together. Irrespective of origin of the idea, the CEO has always the final decision whether to go with an idea or not, and because of that the CEO can often be seen as the father of many ideas, even though they originate from some employee and are developed in cooperation. The CEO explained that:

"The decision process can sometimes be quite long because the employee who is coming with the idea does not have the big picture. The person who comes with the new idea is often very into on his new idea, which is good, but sometimes the person needs to be aware of the complexity of the company. That is one of the biggest reasons that I want the employees to have their ideas 80 percent finished so that we can take the last 20 percent of the decision together."³²

This notion of involving the CEO is well spread in the company. One of the business area sales managers said:

"When it comes to new ideas it is important to remember that everybody else is not familiar with the problem. If it is not trivial, it is important to involve others. Slow down and explain the problem, not present their solution. But present the problem and maybe we together, can come up with a solution that is three times better than if you had done it alone. It doesn't matter who comes with the solution or hatching the idea. There is no prestige in it. It's much more fun if someone who was employed 14 days ago has the idea and solves the task, than if the CEO, Person 1, person 2 or person 3 solves it. But you should never hesitate to try your ideas"³³

As this excerpt, as well as the empirical material in general, shows; an idea can come from anyone in the company and by the CEO and the business area sale manager quoted above, encouraged to come up with new ideas and creative solutions. But since the CEO basically is the only one that reflects upon the company in other ways than just day-to-day operations, he is most likely to come up with new strategic ideas. At least two of the respondents explicitly said in the interviews that they would like to think forward and visionary for the company, but they got too much to do so they do not have time to think about the company's future. One manager in the support function said:

"I have got so much to do that even though I want to, I don't have time to think about the future. I would really like it, I'm sort of visionary and strategic as a person, but it is just too much to do on daily basis."³⁴

In line with this, the CEO said that the visionary and strategic work is not their headache, if the future should be thought of at all, it is his task. Further he said that at the company

³² CEO

³³ Respondent 9

³⁴ Respondent 18

they should focus on the day-to-day work, we handle the opportunities and difficulties that we face today, not those of tomorrow.

Further the CEO said that he got a bunch of ideas and improvements that can be done in the company:

“So, when the timing is right and we have some employees willing to take on one of the projects, we go for it. But I do not want to express those ideas because time change fast and maybe those will not be appropriate later on.”³⁵

5.4.2 Analysis

The CEO can sometimes be a bottleneck for ideas, and that is in two ways. First he is the one deciding what should and what should not be done, which results in *that every major decision has to go through him and this can limit the pace of innovation* in the company. Second, the CEO is the only one that, according to him, is supposed to reflect about the future, which means that new ideas are limited to his ability and imagination.

The CEO said during one of the interviews that since the company always tend to have some over employment, he is challenged to make sure that all employees has tasks to do. For ideas, this reasoning has two effects. First, *the CEO is somewhat forced, often by himself, to come up with new and good ideas that can employ the employees*. Second, since the employees are provided with projects and tasks they are essentially always busy and occupied with day-to-day work, *hence they do not have time to be visionary, think about strategy or the future of the company*.

The analysis in this section can be summarised into the following points:

- The pace of innovation in the company is limited by there being only one person deciding which action to implement and which to wait with.
- The employees are constantly assigned with tasks in order to have work to do.
- The maximising of work limits the employees' ability to be innovative.

5.5 TIMING

5.5.1 Empirical Material

One of the CEO's basic principles is that the timing of *when* something is done is essential and crucial. He described it according to the following two excerpts:

“I want to show my employees that the timing of a decision is more important then what the decision is all about.” and “There are few decisions that need to be taken very quickly. You have to work quickly, but the timing is more important than speed.”³⁶

³⁵ CEO

³⁶ CEO

“My leadership philosophy is based much on getting the employees to come to me before the current idea is clear. I want to show my employees that the timing of when a decision will be made is more important than the decision itself.”³⁷

During one of the interviews the CEO explained what type of intuition and trigger he looks for in a salesman:

“I like people who has the competitive spirit and wants to win just because it is a competition. It is like; if you have ten salesmen that can win a cheap pen in a sales competition will they anyway do their best to win the competition, no matter the prize. It is very important that you always want”³⁸

Further the CEO at one point argued that in order to assess when the timing is good, it is important to be open and sensitive to input. He said:

“In order to be able to make quick decisions, it’s a must that I get to know my organization. ... In order to make the right decision about the company’s resources and actions I have to be available and responsive to different signals.”³⁹

The ability to assess when the timing is good or not for actions to be made is according to the CEO of the company’s key strengths; hence, he thinks that timing is tightly connected to intuition. Therefore the CEO want all decisions to go through him so he can, based on his experience and intuition, assess whether the resources are sufficient, the idea has potential or need enhancement and lastly if it the timing is good.

It is, however, recognized and respected by the managers and employees that the CEO actually has a lot of experience and ideas. But it is also very respected that he owns the company and has built it from scratch, implying everything in the end concerns his private money. These two following quotes are good examples of employees and managers view of the CEO, his experience, knowledge and analytical ability.

“If I have a problem he has amazing experience and has probably faced the issue or idea before.”⁴⁰

“I been in the company for long time, but it still amazes me that when I have thought on an idea for some time and I have maybe three implications and perspectives on it, I ask the CEO and on standing feet he counter with seven implications I haven’t thought of.”⁴¹

Further, the notion of the CEO as experienced and knowledgeable has great importance in creating a way of working that includes that the CEO want and should be involved in all major decisions and that the CEO even wants to be a part of almost every decision in the company.

³⁷ CEO

³⁸ CEO

³⁹ CEO

⁴⁰ Respondent 9

⁴¹ Respondent 3

The CEO being involved in basically all decisions can, as described above, be one of the reasons for the company being agile, as one employee putted it:

“Things are implemented when there is a need for change and the decision goes often quick in the company. The reason that this works is because it is only one person who takes all the decisions; he has the vision and the power. Also, he doesn’t need to consider shareholder’s interests or equity, since that is himself.”⁴²

5.5.2 Analysis

According to most of the theories on organizational improvisation the issue of time is discussed in terms of the convergence in time of planning and execution. According to that notion, the question of when something is improvised, when planning and execution converge in time that is, is somewhat irrelevant, thus as soon as a need for action is discovered the organizational improvisation take place. Traditionally an organizational improvisation is argued to be forced by for example urgency, a risk, threat or competitors to take place as soon as possible. This is coherent with the overall theory of organizational improvisation; if the action is not forced, there is no need for organizational improvisation since the action can then be planned, evaluated and discussed. This lead to the conclusion that *organizational improvisation not only occurs when there is a need for fast action and there is no time for planning, organizational improvisation also occurs when it is assessed to be good timing for that action.*

Putting theory and empirical data together seems to suggest that there can be two different approaches deciding when organizational improvisation occurs, either; the time pressure or at a time that is assessed to be good. The time pressure is widely described in the literature, when there is urgency and an organization is forced or pressured to act, and due to time pressure there is no time for planning and the conception of the urgency converge with the execution of the action. The other approach to when an organizational improvisation happens is what, according to the empirical material and concluded above, can be called timing. *Timing it is when the organization chooses to act because the time is assessed to be good for a specific action. When; when it happens is more important than it happens quickly.* Hence we argue that *just because an idea is conceived does not automatically imply that it will be implemented, especially not implemented immediately.*

The timing, can be, but is not always just certain a point in time. The authors suggest that good timing is to be seen as more of a timeframe and the timing can possibly be good over a period of time. In the case with the new office landscape, the right time was from late autumn due to the conception of the idea, but the personnel that would be required to reorganize the premises were not available. However, the timeframe of the timing was not ending yet so there was no need to force the implementation. Later, when the sufficient resources were available the implementation, and planning of it, started.

⁴² Respondent 3

The concept of bricolage can be somewhat confusing in the light of timing being a timeframe and the argument that it is possible to wait for the sufficient resources, because the literature states that bricolage is when one use the *resources at hand*. And waiting for enough resources to be available can hardly be said to be the same as to use the resources at hand. *But to clear the confusion it can be understood as that bricolage happens when the implementation of the project is initiated, and as long as the timeframe of timing is open, there is no need to force an initiation.* But when the timeframe comes to an end and the implementation or the idea has to start, then the resources at hand are utilized.

Further, in the company, *strategic improvisation happens when the planning of an action and the execution of the same, converge in time.* And drawing on the conclusion that the reason for strategic improvisation is not by default due to time pressure, *we argue, that the conception of an idea and the planning of that idea cannot, time wise, be assumed to always be the same.*

However, in the long term, if the company aims to grow, it can be a problem that all decisions more or less being cleared with the CEO, thus it may be a bottleneck. Another aspect of the CEO being involved is that, due to his authority, both in terms of person and position, employees that are intimidated by it can hesitate to go to the CEO and discuss things.

Just because all three components match, the authors are questioning that strategic improvisation actually happen just because of the match. What actually triggers the improvisation and why it is triggered? Trying to find an explanation has puzzled the authors throughout the case study, thus it is subtle it is hard to identify. *The authors' suggestion is that a final trigger for improvisation in the company is related to the CEO's personality.* The authors identify a strong entrepreneurial spirit that endows the courage, will and instinct to try an idea just in order to see if it is achievable. What the idea is all about is not of importance. It is more important to try a new idea and fail, then stay on the safe side and not try thus you will never know if it is achievable. This can explain the company's

Further, *this finding to a large extent explains why it is not important for the CEO to have a vision, purpose or goal* for the company. The entrepreneurial spirit makes that the only thing of importance is to see how large the company can become; it is not important why the company should be as large as possible.

The analysis in this section can be summarised into the following points:

- Organizational improvisation not only occurs when there is a need for fast action and there is no time for planning but also when it is assessed to be good timing for that action.

- Timing is when the organization chooses to act because the time is assessed to be good for a specific action, hence when the action happens is more important than it happens quickly.
- It can be understood that bricolage happens when the implementation of the project is initiated, and as long as the timeframe of timing is open, there is no need to force an initiation.
- Strategic improvisation happens when the planning of an action and the execution of the same, converge in time.
- Just because an idea is conceived does not automatically imply that it will be implemented, especially not implemented immediately.
- The authors' suggestion is that the final trigger for improvisation in the company is related to the CEO's entrepreneurial spirit.
- That the entrepreneurial spirit makes that the only thing of importance is to see how large the company can become; it is not important why the company should be as large as possible. This to a large extent explains why it is not important for the CEO to have a vision, purpose or goal

5.6 INDIVIDUAL IMPROVISATION

5.6.1 Empirical material

The empirical material shows that the company's employees are constantly trying to catch up all the new projects that the management decides will be effectuated. Because there is no vision, strategy or explicit goals the company, the employees cannot predict what tasks will be assigned, virtually all new tasks are unexpected and unforeseen. Employees explain they deal with new unexpected tasks as they happen and are received. It is important that the employees act quickly and do not wait to tackle the new tasks. The CEO described it as:

"I'm to some extent looking for the type of persons that above all can work in different projects. [I can say to an employee] 'Now this [a new project] is most important.' He answers: 'But you said that [the current project] is most important.' And I tell him: 'Well, I did, but now it's new times and this [the new project] is most important now.'"⁴³

The CEO explained in interviews that a new task or project to an employee is more of direct management to show what their priority and effort should be focused, rather than just adding to the pile of work. The latest task is often the most prioritized and the CEO value the ability to quick shift priority and focus, due to the ever changing market and focus of the company as such. Employees imply that assigned tasks are never possible to postpone, usually the timing when assigned is assessed to be good and therefore the tasks or the projects have to be carried out when they were assigned. Consequently the current work at hand has to quickly be finished or put aside. The CEO on employees' prioritization:

⁴³ CEO

“Just because I give an employee a new task does not imply that the he or she has too little to do, it’s more about getting the employees to priorities among their duties.”⁴⁴

When a new task or project is assigned it is discussed when it should be finished, but how a certain task should be accomplished is very seldom discussed. One manager in the support function explained:

“When I get a new task we do not discuss WHY and HOW, it’s more about WHEN the task is finished. I have to improvise and find all necessary information needed to solve my new task. The most common thing is that I ask my colleagues, look at the Internet or goes to different fairs.”⁴⁵

Since the factor of importance is when something is finished, it is up to the individuals to solve how it should be effectuated. Common for all employees is that the tasks or projects are just vaguely described without concrete instructions.

Throughout the empirical material are indications that it is important that employees in the company are generalists and have broad knowledge about different areas in the company, thus they can be assigned tasks not only in line with their current tasks. One advantage is that the employees can get a dynamic in their work tasks, somewhat similar to a job rotation. Further, employees general knowledge give the management ability to assign tasks to the employee that happens to be most suitable at the moment but also giving the opportunity to without further ado relocate resources, hence quick action is possible.

The job descriptions that are explicitly stated on paper are rather broad, instead, as shown above; detailed job descriptions change often and are given through word of mouth. One reason for not having detailed descriptions is motivated as:

“If I write down all the specific information about what an employee should do that will lead to a belief of that an employee can deny responsibility if something happens which is beyond the written job description. It is therefore important to get the employee to understand that he must do everything to solve a problem, even though it may not directly be an issue on his desk.”⁴⁶

5.6.1.1 ONE EXAMPLE OF INDIVIDUAL IMPROVISATION

In order to more concrete exemplify how employees in the company actually deal with unexpected events one situation will be described.

At the company there has been conducted an employee survey. The survey was finished but the results had not been revealed yet. At the same time, it was time for personal development conversations between the managers at each business area and their staff. At a quality meeting one of the area managers raised the question if it was possible to get to see the results divided by business area and use that as a part of the basis for the

⁴⁴ CEO

⁴⁵ Respondent 3

⁴⁶ CEO

employee conversations. Most attendances at the meeting thought it was a good idea and the person in charge for the survey was okay with that and that it would probably not be any problem to get the info sorted in that way, so the meeting agreed to do so. However the person responsible for the survey was not the one that actually managed the survey. After the meeting the employee managing the survey got the task to gather the results in lists sorted per business area, the authors asked him how he reacted and what action he took when he got this unexpected task.

He said:

“Well, since it is Friday afternoon now, I’ll probably do it the first thing on Monday. I don’t know how to do it, but I know the function is in the survey program somewhere, I’ll figure that out.”

He was asked;

“Is there other things you have set on hold, in order to accomplish your new task?”

He answered;

“Yeah, sure, but that’s how it is here at the company, you always get new tasks, big or small, that you have to do right away”.⁴⁷

5.6.2 Analysis

In the literature on organizational improvisation some authors argues that the improvisation happens when the planning and the execution of an action is converging in time, or at least both happens in a short period of time (Cunha, Cunha & Kamoche, 1999; Moorman & Miner, 1998). The empirical material presented above implies that new tasks assigned to employees are unexpected, unforeseen and cannot be anticipated. At the same time there is a time constraint that the company there are strong signs that the employee has to figure out how to accomplish tasks at the same time as they accomplish them; hence it can be seen as organizational improvisation.

Both the CEO and different employees argues that how something is implemented is irrelevant, what is interesting is the result and when that is accomplished. A task is virtually always given to one person, and not to a group of employees, thus they are individual tasks. Because new tasks are unexpected and unforeseen as well as there are no clues no how to implement, the authors call this way of solving problems for individual improvisation, since it is similar to what the literature describe as organizational improvisation. The individual distinction derives from the individual nature of tasks in the company, compared to the organizational improvisation that mainly talks about group improvisation.

Further, one key that enable individual improvisation in the company is the strong corporate culture. The empirical data shows that the culture in the company is using as

⁴⁷ Respondent 15

Kamoche & Cunha (2001) says minimal structures that makes the employees willing to spontaneously change of duties, even though they do not really know why or how they will implement the new task is because the company unseen rules. The company has as Rodriguez-Lopez (2007) also says that the company's ideology provides indirect control of how the employees should handle in specific situations. This flexibility, the authors argue, is one of the key factors why the proposed new tasks, resulting of the strategic improvisation, can be accomplished and effectuated fast and quick. The authors thinks that one of the biggest reason that makes people follow the ideology of the company as Rodriguez-Lopez (2007) writes about is that the employees have a big trust in the CEO. This trust comes from that the CEO has during the last 10 years built up a company, which the employees now are feeling safe in. Consequently the authors argue *it is very important to have a culture that influences the employees to be willing to gain new knowledge about different areas within the company.*

One thing that struck the authors during their time at that company is that almost all employees seem to embrace change and that the ever-changing characteristic of the company is one thing that attracts employees to the company. *Another key in the culture implying employees' flexibility is the unimportance of hierarchy*, which lead to the fact that employees very seldom feel downgraded or given lower status when they are assigned new tasks.

That hierarchy is unimportant within the company can be seen in for example the fact that titles are not important and rarely used, it can be seen in that the CEO or managers rarely use their position to force things to happen, but it can also be seen in that the employees talks about the mangers in terms of personality rather than position.

A result of managing the company through strategic improvisation is that it is only the CEO who takes the visionary and strategic decision. The authors believe that not giving the employees opportunities to be creative, results in that the company are missing a lot of interesting and innovative solutions to develop their work in their own fields. This is simply reducing the innovativeness in the company. *The authors argue that the company would benefit from making to most out of the creativity and experience among all of the employees.*

Through the case study it can be seen that the CEO and his closest managers appreciate if employees come up with new ideas and contributed to the development of the company. One of the managers even said that he thinks it is more fun if a newly employee come up with the next great idea, instead of one the managers. However, this seems to be non-conforming, thus the employees do not feel they have time to think about new ideas and possible future implementations. The CEO described that he feel a pressure to come up with new ideas and projects to make sure the employees are employed. *The authors argue that another way might be preferable*, that is; to let the employees be employed to 90% with daily tasks and to use the rest of their time to *be creative and innovative to come up with the next great idea.*

One disadvantage with giving the employees a new variety of tasks in an improvised and spontaneous way is that people can feel powerless and out of control of their work, and by the fact that they sometimes can be relocated without being asked in advance.

The analysis in this section can be summarised into the following points:

- It is very important to have a culture that influences the employees to be willing to gain new knowledge about different areas within the company.
- Another key in the culture implying employees' flexibility is the unimportance of hierarchy.
- The authors argue that the company would benefit from making the most out of the creativity and experience among all of the employees.
- The authors argue that the company would benefit from lightening the workload on employees, hence opening up for innovation.

5.7 OVERALL ANALYSIS

5.7.1 How can an organization be managed without explicit vision, strategy or plan?

The first research question for this case study is "How can an organization be managed without explicit vision, strategy or plan?". As explained in the introduction the question from one perspective aims at investigating what guides a company without vision, strategy or plans in assessing which decisions to take and what path to follow. Further, the question also aims at how a company actually is managed and how that can be described.

In the previous analysis it is argued that employees in the company improvise strategically and individually and it is explained how they improvise. The strategic and individual improvisation will now be connected to each other and the dynamics of the overall organizational improvisation in the company is argued to be the way the company is managed.

Because of the buffering of resources, an idea can be realized as soon as the timing is assessed to be good, there is nothing holding the company back from effectuating immediately. But buffering resources, already having an idea and just waiting for the timing that is evaluated to be good; can by first sight seem to not be improvisation, since the idea can be planned in advance and therefore is disqualified as an improvisation. Here we, despite that the idea is conceived in advance, argue that this is to be seen as improvisation, in contrast to some of the authors in the theoretical field that argue that as soon as an unexpected need is realized or conceived, organizational improvisation occurs. The authors' argument is that even though it is possible to plan

how the idea should be implemented in a good manner, in the company, the implementation is not planned further. This relates back to two things; the notion that an implementation should not be planned fully until it is implemented, and that there is no point of planning actions that may not be realized. The authors argue that even though an idea is known, it is not planned until the timing is assessed to be good; hence it can be seen as organizational improvisation thus the planning and execution converge in time.

In order for the strategic improvisation to be successful way to manage the company, the new unforeseen tasks and projects that the strategic improvisation results in has to be effectuated, otherwise the way of management would not work. Therefore, there is a strong need for the employees to be flexible and willing to take on the tasks given by the CEO. The way employees handle the unexpected new events, tasks and duties can be called individual improvisation.

How the degrees of improvisation, mentioned in the theoretical section, relate to organizational theory can be described in different ways. The authors suggests that the script, from which the organization improvise, can be seen as a path or strategy that leads to the organizational aim, often referred to in terms of a vision. The path is suggested to be the strategy outlining what action to take to reach the organizational aims. When an organization take actions and decisions that diverge from the plan or strategy, that can be considered as organizational. The more the taken action differs from the strategy or plan, the higher degree of improvisation that is. However, since the company does not have a explicit vision or strategy

In closing the answer to the first research question, it can be concluded that the *form* for strategic improvisation (i.e.; having a potential idea, sufficient resources at a time assessed to be good) is a matter of routine, simply because it follows the same pattern every time organizational improvisation occurs. This routine is seldom differed from, in fact the authors have not seen a single example when the concept do not apply.

5.7.2 How is a company agile?

Two things that makes the company more agile and able to take fast strategic decisions is having one majority owner, but the advantage to fast responsiveness is that the owner also is the CEO. The CEO can therefore take fast and important decisions without having to discuss with anyone

Except the importance to have fast decision-making processes, to be agile is it also important that management dare to take chances. Through the empirical data it is showed that the company dares to take decisions on new investment even though they really don't know what the outcome will be. This seems to be incredibly important since many of the respondents argue that they never can plan and know for sure how the market will react to the new idea. Further, the empirical data indicate the notion that it is better to put resources into dealing with the consequences of an idea when those

occurs, than to use resources to plan for things that do not arise. This can be seen in the company's actions to react quickly to the market and to launch an 80 per cent ready idea and afterward work out the remaining 20 per cent according to the reactions you get from the market, this approach make the company agile.

Another important part of getting a company to react quickly to customer demand is to have a flat organization without hierarchy thus it will make it easier to move employees around. It is therefore very important to create a culture promoting employees to always be ready to change work position without questioning the management decisions. The employee's main task is to focus on solving the short-term projects instead of trying to understand the long-term aspect of what they are doing.

Another issue enabling the company to act in an agile way is the fact there is no strategy or plan the company has to stick to or stay true to. Which path that is right to follow can depend on what parameters that a company has to take into account. More specifically, if a company does not have any strategy, that does not have to be taken into account. This together with; the broad business idea, and the notion that "sell more in order to grow" is what the company do, leads to the fact that everything that potentially can increase the sales figures are valid actions and can potentially be the right way to go.

An employee's acceptance to constantly have changing and undecided tasks is an important aspect of management to be flexible on the market. The authors mean that a growing problem is that employees at the company feel a frustration of often change working tasks without getting any information or warnings and to work without getting any overall information of how the business goes. All this lack of information makes the employees unmotivated. The employees believe that management is withholding information from them because they do not want to give the information out. The reason why the CEO never gives out strategic information is because they usually have no information about the future to give out. The authors mean that the problem in this situation is that the employees don't know that the management are improvising, acts and takes decision on how the market develops instead of doing strategic plans.

6 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The authors have during their time with this article understood that they only have scratched on the surface of the theory of organization improvisation. Further research has opportunity to contribute the theory of organizational improvisation in different areas, but of most interest are the following;

1. How can it be further understood that organizational improvisation can be a way of deliberate management and not only due to time pressure?
2. The notion of timing, is in this article understood as a timeframe rather than a certain point in time, can be further developed?
3. In the present article the intuition underpinning the strategic improvisation and the decision-making is mainly connected to one person. How can an organization spread the innovativeness, intuition and decision-making throughout its employees, in order to enhance both the strategic improvisation but also the employee's individual improvisation?

7 CONCLUSION

In this article the authors develop the theory on organizational improvisation and suggest an understanding of how a company, through strategic and individual improvisation, can be managed without explicit vision, strategy or plans.

The company is managed in a way that enables quick adaptation in order to take advantage of opportunities and needs. The characteristic of the organization also gives the ability to quick facilitate and implement ideas and developments. The authors argue that the company's way to improvise organizationally, that is, strategic and individual improvisation is how the company is agile.

8 REFERENCES

8.1 BOOKS

Bryman, Allan & Bell, Emma, 2007, *Business research*, Oxford University Press inc., NewYork.

Alvesson, Mats, & Sveningsson, Stefan, 2007 *Organisationer, ledning och pocesser - Strategi- analyser, processer och identiteter*, Pozkal,Poland.

Weick, Karl E & Sutcliffe, Kathleen M., 2007 *Managing the unexpected- Resilient Performance in an Age of Uncertainty* Second edition, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., San Fransisco

8.2 ARTICLES

Crossan, Mary, Cunha, Miguel Pina E, Vera, Dusya & Cunha, João, (2005) Time and Organizational Improvisation, *The Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Jan., 2005), pp. 129-145

Crossan, Mary & Sorrenti, Marc (2007), Making sense of improvisation; *Advances in Strategic Management* 1996, vol 14, 155-80; reprinted in Kamoche, Ken N., Cunha, Miguel Pina E., Cunha, João Vieira da, (2002), *Organizational improvisation*, simultaneously published in the USA and Canada by Routledge, New York.

Cunha, Miguel Pina E, Cunha, João Vieira da, & Kamoche, Ken (1999), Organizational Improvisation - What, When, How and Why, *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Volume 1, issue 3 pp. 299-341

Kamoche, Ken & Cunha, Miguel Pina E, (2008), Improvisation and Knowledge - the challenge of Appropriation, *Management Research*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 93-106

Kamoche, Ken & Cunha, Miguel Pina E, (2001) Minimal Structures: From Jazz Improvisation to Product Innovation, *Organization Studies* September 2001 22: 733-764

Leone, Ludovica (2010) A critical review or Improvisation in Organizations: Open issues and future research directions. Conference Paper on "Opening Up Innovation: Strategy, Organization and Technology" at Imperial College London Business School, June 16-18, 2010

Miner, Anne S., Bassoff, Paula, & Moorman, Christine, (2001), Organizational Improvisation and Learning: A Field Study, *Administrative Science Quarterly* Vol. 46, No. 2 (Jun., 2001), pp. 304-337

Mintzberg, Henry, Pascale, Richard T., Goold, Michael & Rumelt, Richard P., (1996), The "Honda Effect" Revisited *California Management Review* Vol. 38. No. 4 Summer 1996

Moorman, Christine & Miner, Anne S., (1998a) The Convergence of Planning and Execution: Improvisation in New Product Development, *The Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 62, No. 3 (Jul., 1998), pp. 1-20

Moorman, Christine & Miner, Anne S., (1998b) Organizational Improvisation and Organizational Memory, *The Academy of Management Review* Vol. 23, No. 4 (Oct., 1998), pp. 698-723

Vera, Dusya & Rodriguez-Lopez, Antonio, (2007), Lessons from the American Revolution *Organizational Dynamics*, Vol. 36, No. 3, pp. 303-319

Weick, Karl E. (1998) Improvisation as a mindset for organizational analysis *Organization science*, Vol 9, No. 5, pp. 543-555