



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET
HANDELSHÖGSKOLAN

Internal communication within complex change projects

A qualitative study of the WIL project at IL Recycling

Paper within management

Author: Lena Fransson

Carin Lundgren

Tutor: Rebecka Arman

Gothenburg June 2011

Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge the following persons for helping us with this thesis.

First, we would like to express a special thanks to Kerstin Andersson, Vice President at IL Recycling for her time, effort and cooperation.

Second, we would like to thank the personnel at IL Recycling and Ekan who participated in the interviews. Without their help the thesis would not have been possible to write.

Lastly, a thank to our tutor Rebecka Arman for her support and knowledge.

Lena Fransson & Carin Lundgren

June 9th, 2011

Master thesis within management

Title: Internal communication within complex change projects

Authors: Lena Fransson and Carin Lundgren

Tutor: Rebecka Arman

Date: June 2011

Key words: internal communication, communication process, noise, information overload, formal communication, communication channels, project, project communication, communication plan.

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the internal communication process with a significant project, such as the WIL project, that is involved in an organizational change which needs to be communicated to many parts in the organization.

Background: IL Recycling, who operates in the recycling industry with services of all kinds and materials, is a company that uses projects as a form of developing their business. Due to a poor implementation of a new business system IL Recycling suffered from displeased customers and decreased profitability. A process oriented project, called WIL, including the entire organization was initiated. The purpose of the project is specified to become “One IL”, meaning to work together for improved quality, simplification and efficiency. To work with this project of change in the entire organization a well-structured communication is needed. Within these subjects; projects and communication, a qualitative study at IL Recycling has been conducted.

Method: The study has been performed by using a qualitative method. Fifteen interviews of employees in and outside of the WIL project have been used for data collection. The interviews were semi-structured to be able to get a deeper understanding. The theoretical framework used when analyzing the empirical material includes earlier research in the areas of projects and communication.

Conclusion: To conclude, one of the successes of the WIL project is that all employees are aware of its purpose. However, the findings indicates that the internal communication in the WIL project have some difficulties. The communication process involves some noise and geographically and positional communication differences which can affect the outcome of the project.

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Change is a complex phenomenon and there are several reasons for why an re-organization does not always reach its purpose”

(Heide et al., 2005, p. 151)

1.1 Problem discussion

Today the project structure of business, or the temporary organization, is more common or even the standardized process of doing business (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995). The reason projects are increasing is due to the shortened life span of products, globalization and technology pushing rapid adoption, so called hyper competitive business environments (D’aveni, 1994). The complexity of projects is also increasing due to cultural differences, time zones and politics when acting globally, but also due to an increasing number of stakeholders (Brown & Hyer, 2010). Cicmil et al. (2009) states that the increased interest of projects, and its management, is due to notions of modern society characterized by standardization, large-scale operations and bureaucracy. The authors also state that the increasing project form is caused by a rapidly changing environment, more complex products and services, and the intensified information transitions in production processes. The project structure suits both large and small assignments, but always has to achieve results and reach their goals (Tonnquist, 2008). When using a project structure, the communication is the most important characteristic (Brown & Hyer, 2010).

IL Recycling is one company that uses projects as a form of developing their business. They operate in the recycling industry which includes services of all kinds and materials (IL Recycling 2011a). During the last couple of years IL Recycling has expanded rapidly with a clear focus on the external growth rather than internal development. Even though IL Recycling had a rapid growth they suffered from displeased customers, less profitability, faulty communicational processes and inefficiency. A few years ago IL Recycling then implemented a new business system (Vice executive president, personal communication, March 31, 2011). Due to the work with the new systems the lack of coherence within the internal processes was apparent and the organizational culture had a climate where the mistakes made by employees were not learned from in order to make improvements (Ekan’s external project leader, personal communication, March 1, 2011).

Together with the management consultancy firm Ekan they have worked towards changing the processes by creating a project, the WIL project (Vice executive president, personal communication, March 31, 2011). The WIL project started 1st of March 2010 and has an ending date the 30th of June (Ekan’s external project leader, personal communication, March 4, 2011). The name WIL has a threefold purpose; We for working as one entity, Wheel for continues spin of improvements and a to be able to navigate, and lastly IL that work together, so We IL was shortened into WIL. IL Recycling’s entire organization are involved in the project, however the focus of the project lies on the process from order to payment, in the area of environmental services and recycling. The focal points are improved quality, simplification and efficiency. The project was initiated to improve the customers’ satisfaction and for IL Recycling to reach the vision of the company (Internal material, WIL, IL Recycling). The purpose of the WIL project is to develop a process oriented mode of operation where IL Recycling becomes “One IL” (Internal

material, WIL, IL Recycling). According to Heide et al. (2005), organizational change is related to the employees' knowledge and understanding of the change and therefore internal communication is vital.

IL Recycling has from the beginning had a strong focus on the communication in the project, due to its complexity and that it included the whole organization. A communication plan was created to be able to design this important aspect of the project. If the projects communication is inadequate in the WIL project, the intended outcome may not progress as planned (Vice executive president, personal communication, March 31, 2011). Studies have showed that deficits in the internal communication of organizations are one major factor that affects the outcome of an organizational change process (Johansson & Heide, 2008). This leads us to the communicational issues at IL Recycling, and whether the information concerning the project is transmitted, received and understood throughout the organization, by both employees involved in the project but also those affected by it.

This is why the primary research question is to look at the process of communication within this WIL project and the connection to the goals of the project. We have gained access to interviews in order to find out how communication was perceived by people directly involved in the project and not directly involved the project.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the internal communication process within a significant project, such as the WIL project, that is involved in an organizational change which needs to be communicated to many parts in the organization. The research questions for this study will be:

- What are the characteristics of the communication process within the project?
- How has the information about the project reached all levels and parts of the organization?

1.3 Disposition

The thesis is hereafter structured as follows; the next chapter presents the theoretical framework, including the concepts of communication and projects. Thereafter, the method is presented, which includes the study-process of this thesis, the qualitative method used and how data was gathered and analyzed. The trustworthiness of the study is also discussed. Then, the empirical data is presented in two parts. The first part presents the whole organization of IL Recycling followed by a description of the WIL project. The second part of the empirical data includes material collected from qualitative interviews. The next chapter provides the analysis of the empirical data in connection to the theoretical framework, followed by the conclusions. Finally, reflections and suggestions for further studies are presented.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents theories that describe the concept of projects and communication. First, theories about projects are discussed. Then internal communication including communication in change and Gerbner's model of communication including difficulties with the concept is presented. Thereafter, various channels for communication are explored including project communication. Lastly, a summary of the theoretical framework is presented.

2.1 Projects

To show the difference between operational activities in an organization and a project, the project attributes are presented. The purpose of this thesis is to look at the communication of a specific project, to do that it is helpful to know what the features of a project is and how it differs from every-day activity in an organization. According to Brown and Hyer (2010) the characteristics of a project can vary but one can divide them into eight attributes; driver, source, customer degree of uncertainty, expected outcome, organizational reach, scope, degree of complexity and strategic level. Asking questions of why the project exists, for whom, how big it will be, who will benefit, etc. benefit the management of the project.

“Effective and frequent personal communication is crucial to keep the project moving, identify problems, solicit suggestions for improving project performance, keep abreast of whether the customer is satisfied and avoid surprises”

(Clement & Gido, 2006, p. 360)

To keep the project afloat and have a common understanding in the project team, how the members and leader communication is important (Antvik & Sjöholm, 2007). If the goals, plans, result-reports and information about changes are not communicated, the project cannot proceed and survive, this is the reason communication is vital in a project (Tonquist, 2008). There is both internal and external communication (Heide et al., 2005). Since we are looking at the information distribution within a project, only internal communication is presented.

2.2 Internal communication

A well-structured internal communication is important, and that all the employees are seen as a resource in the communication process. To give the employees an overview of the work, create a common understanding of the goals, and to create motivation and a feeling of belongingness are a few reasons why internal communication is important (Erikson, 2005).

Heide et al. (2005) divide internal communication into five areas depending on the purpose of the information communicated;

1. *Operative communication*: connected to daily operations.
2. *News communication*: status of past, present and future events and position, which are usually presented through internal newsletters, intranet and meetings.
3. *Management and change communication*: includes goals, targets and management decisions, such as budgets, policies and production manuals.
4. *Value and cultural communication*: information of the values, ethical principles and cultural standpoint of the organization.
5. *Communication for socialization*: information for social gatherings, events and activities.

Except for the purpose communicated, the communication also differs depending on the environment. This is why the concept of communication while an organization operates in a changing environment will be explained.

2.2.1 Communication in change

Change management is something that organizations deal with on a regular basis (Heide et al., 2005). The project discussed in this thesis is a change that is being communicated with an organization. In a change process communication is vital since it can create innovation and stability, but also contribute to safety and the feeling of an organized environment (Heide et al., 2005). Kotter (1995) argues that communication is one of eight key steps to consider when transforming one's organization. One aspect, that Kotter (1995) highlights, is that a lot of information communicated from top management to lower levels of organization is incomprehensible to the employees. While the concept of communication within a change has been clarified, the way the communication process looks, independent of how the environment looks, will now be further explained.

According to Pijpers (2010), information is what we communicate between each other and to be able to understand the information that is being transmitted one has to understand how it is transmitted. To understand how the information flow has looked like, at the organization in this report, we now do this by further explaining the process of communication.

2.2.2 Communication process

The process school of communication, meaning the transmission of message from a sender to a receiver, is commonly presented by Shannon and Weaver's model of communication. The model is a linear process where the main idea is to find out how to, most efficiently, use the channels of communication (Fiske, 1990). According to Heide et al. (2005), communication consists of processes where people interact with each other in a complex and creative manner. The complex aspect of the communication process is seen in Gerbner's communication model (see figure 1), where the base for the model is the linear process, but it also highlights the important aspects of perception and meaning (Fiske, 1990).

According to Gerbner, the communication process is composed by an event in the external world (E), which is perceived by a human or a machine (M) and E_1 is M 's perception of the event. This horizontal process Gerbner defines as the perceptual dimension. The human perception is based on a fit between external stimuli and internal thoughts and concepts. This fit involves features as cultural aspects, noise and personality that affect the outcome of the perception of the information (Fiske, 1990). The closer the mental model of the people involved is the less communication is required (McShane & Steen, 2009).

After the perceptual dimension the vertical dimension follows, which includes the transformation of E_1 into a signal that is called the message (SE). The form of the message differs and a vital aspect for the communicator is to find the best form. Furthermore, the content of the message is important. These two parts, the form and the content, are dynamic and interactive. When the message is formed it is sent to the receiver, who interprets the message that then becomes that person's reality. The perception of the receiver does not have to be the same as the sender, which

makes the communication process complex (Fiske, 1990). McShane and Steen (2009) argue that the more similar experience and knowledge about the subject that is communicated the receiver has, the easier the communication is. Inexperience and lack of knowledge can then be seen as a type of noise, which will be presented below.

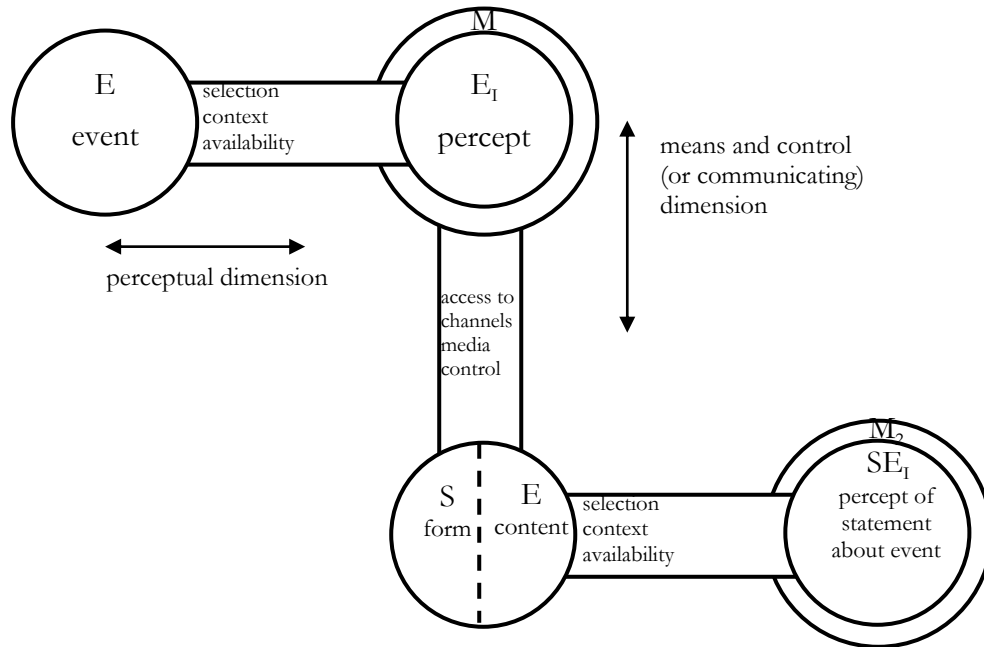


Figure 1: Gerbner's model (modified) cited in Fiske (1990)

2.2.2.1 Noise

Communication is not an effortless process; it involves continuous disorder and can include for example psychological, social and structural barriers that influence the message (McShane and Steen, 2009). This interruption is referred to as noise and is anything around a message that disrupts the signal from the sender to the receiver. Thoughts or an uncomfortable chair in a meeting can be a type of noise. The noise can create different understandings of a message which can change the intended meaning (Fiske, 1990). The author also claims that the person communicating should take account of the recipient's response, since it increases the acceptance of the message. Different understanding about messages can also be caused by information overload.

2.2.2.1.1 Information overload

According to Pijpers (2010) there are, as the term organizational communication, several definitions of the concept information overload. One short and understandable definition of information overload is Eppler and Mengis (2004); "receiving too much information" (p. 326). Information nowadays is more complex than before and has due to technology become even harder and more complicated to understand and cope with (Pijpers, 2010).

Five causes of information overload are, according to Eppler and Mengis (2004), immediate and emerge usually in combination with each other. The first cause is the person receiving the information. Some factors that determine if a person will have information overload is attitude, qualifications, skills and experience (Pijpers, 2010). Second, is the information itself, which include its quantity, frequency, intensity, and quality. Third, is the task that needs to be completed

and the responsibilities of the employees. Forth, is the organizational design, which is the formal and informal work structures, may contribute to employee's perception of an overload of information (Eppler and Mengis, 2004). The last, and also the major cause of information overload, is the development of information and communication technologies such as the Internet (Pijpers, 2010).

Eppler and Mengis (2004) claims that the more information a person gets the more difficult it is to process the information into knowledge, which can cause frustration, stress and anger. Much focus has been on the receiver, but the sender can actively work to minimize and control the information. Examples of this are to time it well, provide an overview of the information, visualize the information, keep it consistent, make it personal, make it interactive and make it accessible (Eppler and Mengis, 2009). When on the subject of controlling information, the questions regarding who is responsible for the communication process to be completed, will be discussed further.

2.2.2.3 Access – push and pull

When looking at a communication process, understanding the mentality of who is responsible for receiving information is an excessive part of knowing how information is distributed in an organization. It is also a part of understanding the process in the project examined in this thesis. Traditionally, the method of keeping employees informed has been to lay the responsibility of communication with the work force on the management, where the management has had the role of accommodating information and the employees only has to receive information. This is called “push”, when management is pushing information towards the employees. However, if a member of an organization looks for and acquires information on their own, it is the concept of “pull”, as the employee pulls information towards themselves (Bark, 1997). The members of the team must proactively search for information and receive it, instead of waiting until next meeting or until another team member presents the information (Clements & Gido, 2006). The communicational channels that can be used in both a push and pull mentality is presented below.

2.2.2.4 Communication channels

Now that we have presented what the internal communication is, which is what a project communication process includes, the communication channels are presented by explaining the concept formal, verbal and project communication.

2.2.2.4.1 Formal communication

Communication passes through both formal and informal channels, both equally important in organizations. According to Bloisi et al. (2003) formal communication channels are created by managers for a source of daily communication of organizational work. The informal communication channel is sometimes called “the grapevine” and is a great source for information (Modic, 1989). Although “the grapevine” is important in an organization, the informal channels will not be discussed further, since this thesis looks at the formal channels of information distribution used in a project.

Downward, upward and horizontal communications are different ways managers can communicate and obtain information from other stakeholders in the organization. Downward communication helps managers reach the employees in the entire organization, which can for example be presented by speeches, memos, procedure manuals and company newsletters.

Upward communication channels gives the managers information about the employees daily work and can take the form of face-to-face meetings, suggestion boxes, open door policies and employee surveys. Horizontal communication is seen among peers, employees, divisions and work groups (Bloisi et al., 2003). The information may be communicated upward, downward or horizontal, but it may also take different shapes, such as verbal or nonverbal (McShane & Steen, 2009).

2.2.2.4.2 Verbal communication

Nonverbal communication may be artifacts such as personal appearance, physical appearance or objects employees use in their environment. Body language and facial expression are also a type of nonverbal communication channel (Kreps, 1990). However this study will not include an investigation of non-verbal communication, since it focuses on the information transmitted by formal verbal sources.

Verbal communication includes both written and spoken form and is both highly important for organizations (Kreps, 1990). When using written channels the risk of misunderstanding and errors are minimal and the information is available whenever the reader wishes. However, the written forum creates little opportunities for two way communication. Spoken channels on the other hand include much involvement and are a cornerstone for development in organizations (Erikson, 2005). It makes people interact both personally and emotionally (Kreps, 1990) and can include immediate feedback (McShane & Steen, 2009). This thesis focuses on verbal formal communication with a project setting, which will be further developed below.

2.2.2.4.2 Project communication

The number of channels to transfer information in a project increases with the number of involved stakeholders (Antvik & Sjöholm, 2007). As mentioned, there are many types of communicational channels, as meetings, reports, schedules, email, video conferences or just talking to you coworker during the coffee break (Macheridis, 2005).

Within these channels there are different subcategories, for example there are many kinds of meetings. According to Clements and Gido (2006), the three most important types of meetings are status review meetings, problem-solving meetings and technical design meetings. The authors also state that the meetings are vehicles for reinforcing expectations of stakeholders and increasing commitment for the project team. Another communication channels subcategory is the communication plan.

2.2.2.4.2.1 Communication plan

According to Brown and Hyer (2010), designing a plan for a project group communication may act as a tool to get the right stakeholders the right information at the right time. By planning in advance the risk of mistakes and irritation from stakeholders is decreased (Tønnequist, 2008). To plan for future communication processes can make resources more easily attained but also to decrease uncertainty from the customer of the project. It can also contribute to the result of the project and information of change progress is more easily distributed (Macheridis, 2005). This is the reason we saw this as something useful to look at when examining the information sources within the project examined in this thesis.

The communication plan has two different dimensions; communication within the team, and with key stakeholders. The most important aspect with the communication plan is to tailor the communication process and use appropriate formats for the different stakeholders (Brown and Hyer, 2010). Tonnquist (2008) claims that the communication plan, not only should entail the information distribution, but also a guide about the information that is to be collected.

2.3 Theoretical emphasis

We present our empirical emphasis in the format of a model. The focus of the thesis is the internal communication that takes place in a project that communicates a change, and the information transmitted through the information channels within the project. Within this field we have chosen theories from the project field, containing information about Brown and Hyers (2010) project attributes.

To fully grasp the project communication we have focused on the area of internal communication. With the area of

internal communication in change, since if you are not successful when communicating internally during change the outcome of the process can be affected (Johansson & Heide, 2008). Pijpers (2010) argue that information is what we communicate between each other and to be able to understand this information, one also has to understand its process.

The communication process is described through Gerbner's communication model as described and modified by Fiske (1990) which includes not only the linear process of transmitting information but also features of perception and meaning. Included in the process is the concept of noise (McShane and Steen, 2009), and a form of noise, information overload (Pijpers, 2010). Within the process the different communication channels are presented in order to know and understand how information is transmitted. There are several types of communication channels, formal, informal, up-ward, downward and horizontal, verbal, which are all presented in this study. The channels in which information is transmitted can be in the shape of meeting, reports, schedules, email, intranets, video conferences, or informally during lunch (Macheridis, 2005). Lastly, on information channel, the communication plan, is mentioned, since risks of mistakes are decreased due to planning in advance (Tonnquist, 2008).

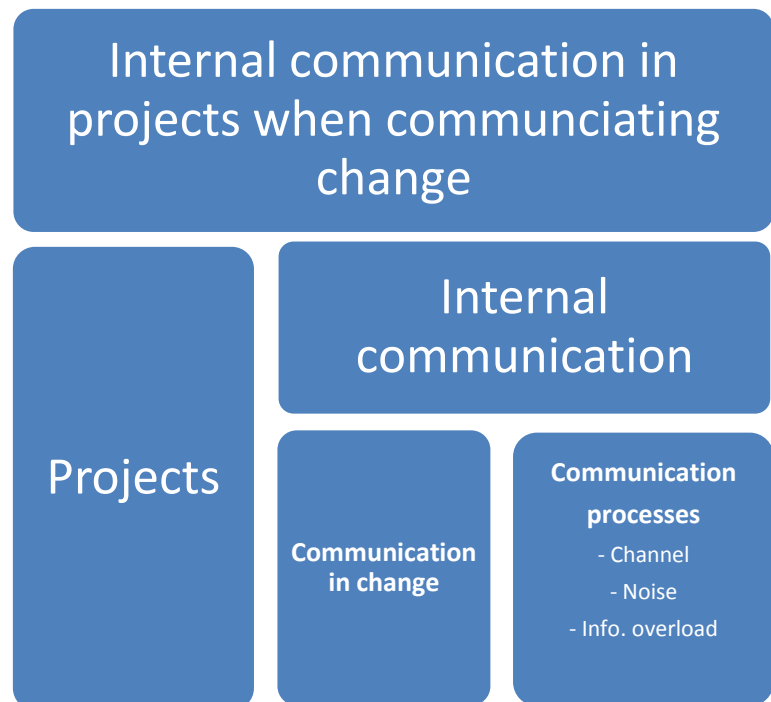


Figure 2. Theoretical framework

3. METHOD

In the following chapter, the chosen method will be presented. It firstly describes the start-up phase and thereafter our data collection process which include a description of our interviews. Lastly a description of the data analysis process and a discussion about the trustworthiness of the study is presented.

3.1 Start-up phase

Due to previous studies in communication and project management we wanted to look at the communication process of a project. The process started with an initial contact with the consultancy firm Ekan. Through Ekan, who works with a project structure, we learned that IL Recycling had a significant change project in progress. After discussions with the companies we decided to cooperate on this thesis to learn more about the communication process of this specific project that Ekan assists IL Recycling with. We proceeded by forming the purpose of the thesis which was completed in cooperation with IL Recycling. We did this since we wanted the greater learning of this thesis to be connected both to an organization in practice as well as an academic audience. After the initial contact with Ekan, they have had a smaller role in this thesis, since the focus lies on the communication process at IL Recycling. Now the chosen method of the study is presented.

3.2 Qualitative method

There are two different methods that can be used when conducting a study. The method we have chosen is the qualitative method, which is a helpful way to observe and get a deeper understanding of a subject (Gummesson, 2000). Due to the nature of the thesis and the investigation of the communication process of the WIL project we have chosen to use a qualitative method, since it allows us to learn about this matter more in-depth. We have not collected numerical data and are not interested in the statistics of the communication, just the employee's perception of the communication process. This is the reason for why we have chosen a qualitative method.

According to Bryman (2002), it is hard to generalize the answers of a qualitative study. However, though the result of this thesis cannot be directly transferred to another similar project but parts of it can contribute to learning and a deeper understanding on the internal communication in complex projects in change.

3.3 Study setting

The project that we are studying for this thesis, which is located at IL Recycling, is spread throughout the many geographical locations and hierarchical levels in the organization. The focus of the project lies on process from order to payment, in the area of environmental services and recycling. The project is led by a steering group of a few employees together with a project management (see figure 3). These two groups have worked closely with the project and reference groups. From the project group, several work groups have been developed which are spread in the organization. One important target group of the project is employees dealing with the daily operations (Internal material, WIL, IL Recycling). We have interviewed people from both management within the project group and from the employees that will deal with this change on a daily basis.

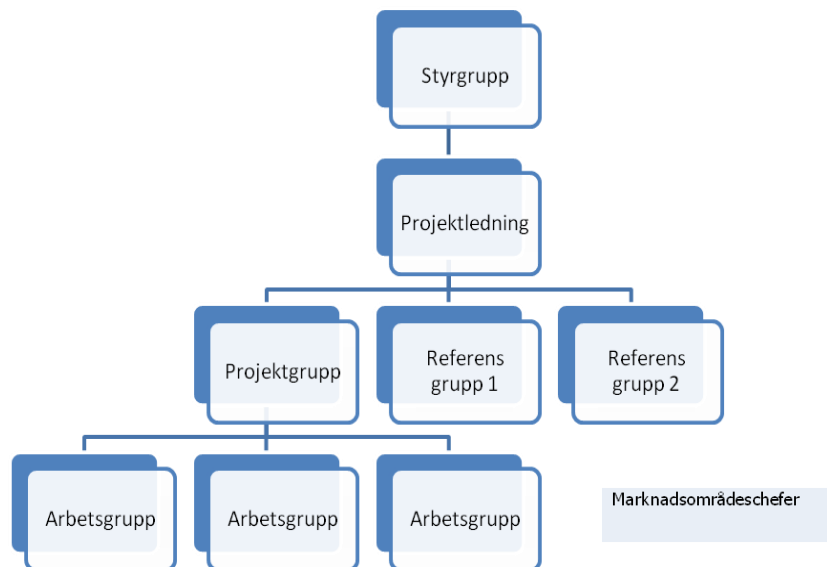


Figure 3: WIL Project Matrix (Internal material, WIL, IL Recycling).

3.4 Data collection

While deciding on the method of collecting data, interviews, surveys and observation were considered. Surveys were decided not to be helpful due to the interest in the perception the interviewees has of the communication process, which is attained more easily by talking freely about the subject matter. Observation was also discussed and excluded due to the time limit, since it takes a long time to observe a matter in order to get valid results (Bryman, 2002). Observations were also seen as an inadequate way of gathering data, since questioning the employees about the project and communication process were seen as a necessity to fulfill the purpose of this study.

3.4.1 Pilot study

We performed a pilot study before conducting the interviews at IL Recycling. This was done to investigate whether the material prepared for the interviews were applicable. By asking the same questions which are intended to be asked in the real study allows one to discover errors in the interview material ahead of time (Bryman, 2002).

We decided to interview a classmate that is also writing a thesis since she is aware of the importance of the interview questions. After we conducted the pilot study several questions were modified to be more comprehensible, and one question was deleted from the study due to the similarities to another question. The pilot study allowed us to practice the interview, appreciate how long it would last and see if the questions were clear and relevant.

3.4.2 Interviews

As established, the data was collected through qualitative interviews. Often qualitative interviews consist of unstructured interviews, which mean that the data collector has a theme in mind and not specific questions. Having an unstructured interview also means that the questions may be different depending on the interviewee and the conversation style is informal (Bryman, 2002).

For this study, however, we consider the data collected from unstructured interviews to general and we would like to go more in-depth and guide the employee to specific aspects of the WIL project and its communicational processes in accordance to our theoretical framework. This was done by semi-structured interviews, which according to Bryman (2002), is when the interviewer has a set of base-questions which it uses, but the order and emphasis can vary. Although we had a set of questions we made it clear to the interviewee that elaboration and reflections were desirable and the interview climate was informal and open.

We interviewed fifteen people for the communication process and two people about IL and the project, the vice executive president of IL Recycling and the external project leader from the consultancy firm Ekan. The two initial interviews lasted for about one hour and the other interviews lasted from 15-50 minutes, but most were around 30 minutes.

All interviews, except one that was held at Ekan's office with one of their staff members, were conducted by telephone. The reason for this was the locational issues. We were located in Gothenburg while IL headquarters is located in Stockholm, and to make sure that we covered all geographical aspects of the communication process all interviewees were located in different parts of Sweden. If we have conducted these interviews face-to-face the results may have differed, since one can see non-verbal gestures and expressions. Also the age, sex and position in the organization varied for all interviewees, to get a general picture of the organization. The language in the interviews was Swedish, since all the interviewees were Swedes, which enabled them to express themselves without restrictions.

Out of the fifteen people interviewed about the project nine were directly involved in the WIL project and six were not directly involved. The nine directly involved in the project were one member of the steering committee, the project customer, the project leader, the person responsible for communication from the consultancy firm Ekan, three members of the project group at different locations, the person responsible for communication in the project group and an operative executive who is also a member of the steering committee. The interviewees not directly involved in the project were one sales area executive, a customer service executive, two sales assistants and two employees of the sales staff (Find the list of interviewees in Appendix 2).

The sample method used in this study was a convenience sample, which is used when there is a restriction availability of the interviewees. The researcher then uses persons that are available at the moment to be researched (Bryman, 2002). The interviewees were provided to us with help from our contact person at IL Recycling.

The interviews were recorded, in order for us to listen to it multiple times when conducting the empirical material and to assist the interpretation and understanding of the interviews. Before recording the interviews, permission to record were acquired, to ensure a comfortable interview climate. Both of us were present at the interviews, one asked questions while the other took notes. Having both of us present increased the possibility for us to interpret the interviewee's answers from several perspectives.

When formulating the questions we had the theoretical framework in mind and interpreted the theories into questions that were intended to be easily understood by the employees. The purpose of the study was also kept in mind when formulating the questions. The interviews started by questions (see Appendix 1) more general about the WIL project and what the interviewees knew about it, who were involved and what expectations they had on it. We asked about the project itself since we wanted to find out how much information about the project has reached the employees in the entire organization. Later, the communication process in the project was covered with questions about channels, amount of information, responsibility to receive information, difficulties and successes with the communicational process. In addition, a question about the communication plan for the project was discussed. The interview ended with additional comments or questions and appreciations for participating. Now the presentation of how the data we collected through the interviews was analyzed will follow.

3.5 Data analysis

After the interviews were conducted we listened to the records to make sure that we had all relevant data to make the analysis valid. By listening and taking notes, the recollection of the interviews is enhanced and one gets a more accurate picture of the interview (Bryman, 2002). We wrote down, in Swedish, what the interviewees main points were for all the questions, which can be received upon request. After we had collected the empirical data, which was divided into information about IL Recycling, the WIL project and the two groups of interviewees, the data analysis proceeded. We then sorted the notes by labeling different data by the heading that we have in the theoretical framework, to make the analysis process easier. The data was analyzed, and presented in order of the theoretical framework, by discussions about the relationships between data and theory. How we evaluate the trustworthiness of the study is further explained below.

3.6 Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), qualitative studies should focus on the trustworthiness of the study rather than on validity and reliability that are more common for quantitative studies. Merriam (1995) also emphasize trustworthiness as an important aspect in connection to qualitative studies. The concept trustworthiness for qualitative studies includes three terms which are; credibility, transferability and dependability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

One criterion for a study to have higher credibility is when it has used several data sources (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Our study includes fifteen interviews with employees from various locations in Sweden. There were a mix of the person interviewed based on educational status, personalities, ages and sex. By including interviewees from inside the project and from the organization we believe that our study is credible for the reason that it reflects the project climate that exists at IL Recycling.

The next term, Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasize is how transferable ones study is. For a study to be transferable it has to include “thick description” of the culture (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) or as Merriam (1995) states involves to what extent the results of a study can be applied to other situations. Since we have interviewed employees from the WIL project and the

organization, and in addition collected data about IL Recycling our aim have been that this study includes “thick descriptions” of the climate. This can then be transferable through IL Recycling’s entire organization and particularly when working in project form.

Dependability is concerned with the availability of how the study was performed and if the result of the study would be the same if it was conducted once more (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Through our method part, where we describe how, when and with whom our research was conducted it is intended to make the study dependable.

4. EMPIRICAL PRESENTATION

This chapter presents the history of IL Recycling and how the organization is operating today followed by a short description of the WIL project. Further, the employees' perception of the project are described, both from employees directly involved in the project and from employees not directly involved.

4.1 IL Recycling company description

IL recycling was founded in 1951 by the name “AB Industrileveranser” and started out supplying Westerviks paper-mill with recycled paper. Today, this national company, with more than 20 sales offices and many production plants spread nationwide and in Poland, supplies recycling-services of all kinds and materials and has a wide clientele in most industries (IL Recycling 2011a).

The business idea of IL Recycling is as follows: “We identify, extract and utilize the value in our customers’ waste and residual products. Our starting point is that waste is an important raw material and that new values can be created from all kinds of normal waste” (IL Recycling, 2011e, p. 29). Their core values are; create value, take responsibility, be innovative and be present. Financial and environmental, that they increase value by increasing efficiency for the raw material that is recycled from waste, that they dare more by being innovative and that their presences increases cooperation which contribute to success (IL Recycling, 2011b).

IL Recycling focuses on long-term relationships that promote sustainable development, which stands for a long-term business, social and environmental result of how they convert their business idea. Their responsibility work is shown in figure 4, where the interaction between social responsibility, finance and environment is related to employees, customers and suppliers and environment and climate impact (IL Recycling 2011c).

The corporate group of IL Recycling consists of fully owned and subsidiaries, which are parted into operational units, which are led by an operational executive and board of directors. IL Recycling group has four owners; Fiskeby Board, SCA, Smurfit Kappa and Stora Enso. It is led by an executive president, executive vice president, the operational executive and the strategic development and sustainability executive. Basic tasks for the management of IL Recycling group are focusing on strategic issues (IL Recycling, 2011d). Last year, 2010, IL Recycling had a turnover of 2 083 MSEK and had 617 employees (IL Recycling, 2011e). The management of IL Recycling group has recently, which is linked to strategy, initiated a more process oriented work method and the project to introduce this to the organization is now presented.



Figure 4: IL Recycling responsibility work, IL Recycling 2011c.

4.2 The WIL project

The purpose of the WIL project is to develop a process oriented mode of operation where IL Recycling becomes “One IL” (Internal material, WIL, IL Recycling). The project has two overall goals:

1. To implement *a model and methodology for work of change for a process oriented mode of operation*. This should create insight, motivation, engagement and participation, which should be able to be reused for IL Recycling’s continuous work of change and process orientation.
2. Parallel with the first goal create a methodology for the **processes from order to money on the account**. It should be based on to identify, develop and create a better administrative mode of operation and through that create conditions for more satisfied customers.

The goal of the communication in the project is to prepare for the change that the WIL project should accomplish. This goal should be followed by relevant and a good amount of information, participation, clear communication of goals and continuously updates of activities and results in the project. To be able to accomplish this, specific channels for communicating information is specified:

- Microsoft SharePoint (IL) – a database where documentation for the project group is published, which are visible for the entire organization.
- Intranet – general project information where the “Weekly WIL” is updated every week.
- Billboard – the information should be changed every week by the local information responsible.
- Office TV screens – should be a complement for the billboards (at some offices).
- Meetings at the office – the information should be spread by the market area managers.
- Email – should be used when information has to be spread rapidly in the organization.

According to the communication plan the different types of meetings that should be held are project management meetings, project group meetings reference group meetings, steering group meetings, office group meetings and work group meetings for “Fast Returns”. There have also been workshops and a launch tour, on different geographical locations.

4.3 Project members and employee perception

The material is presented in three overall themes which are the perception of the project, the perception of the communication and lastly the perception of the communication process. The themes will be presented in paragraphs based on the interviews of people involved in the project and employees out in the organization.

4.3.1 Perception of the project

Purpose of the project

The interviewees that were directly involved in the project had a common understanding of the projects purpose. Several interviewees explained that the project was developed due to a previous change of business system which made it clear that the company needed to develop together.

Collective processes, mutual way to work, simplicity, effectiveness and improvement were the keywords the interviewees used when they explained what the WIL project purpose included. Two of nine interviewees used the term “One IL” when explaining the purpose of the project.

When the interviewees that were not directly involved in the project talked about the project and what they knew about it, there are a few words that most of them mentioned; improve the work, work more unanimous, simplify processes and increase efficiency. Some explained the purpose in terms that the management has used and some had a harder time explaining it, but everyone knew about the project and what it is meant to do for the organization.

Involvement and liability of success

All the interviewees that are involved in the project clearly stated that everyone at IL Recycling is involved in the WIL project. How the involvement is performed differed depending on the employee’s position in the project group and organization. Seven of the nine employees interviewed within the project highlighted the project group of around ten employees as a clear influencer of the project. Two persons stressed how important the participation of the market area managers was. The perception of the responsibility for the success of the WIL project differed slightly, however the majority of the interviewees involved in the project stated that the project group has the major responsibility. The managers at different levels in the organization were also seen as important for the outcome of the project. One interviewee also emphasized Ekan, and another the project leader of WIL as key aspects for success. The organization as a whole was also emphasized as an important player in the success of the project.

When discussed who’s involved in the WIL project with employees that are not directly involved, the perception differed. Only one of the interviewees answered that the whole organization was responsible, and the rest named the project members that are closest to them, the project leader and the CEO. When talking about success and who is viable for the completion of the project the most common answer was the customer who ordered the project, the consultancy firm together with IL Recycling. One interviewee did not have any opinions about the subject, one said the CEO and only one answered that everyone is involved in the success.

The expectations

The expectations of the interviewees within the project were high, but one interviewee pointed out the expectations as pretty low because the change will probably take time. One interviewee’s expectations were to be more customer-focused. The employee said “I would like to put time and effort externally rather than internally”. Two interviewees that were involved in the project expected the project to create a tool box for the process orientation that IL Recycling started to develop. “One IL” and working together was a common expectation. One interviewee said “You should be able to call any office and get the same answer to the same question”. An interesting quote, connected to the expectations to work together and alike, was “It feels like the organization becomes a bit smaller due to this project”. The importance of feedback throughout the projects ending, but also continuously in the future was pointed out by one interviewee. Another employee involved in the project highlighted the goal of effective solutions for customer satisfaction and better profitability.

All the interviewees that were not directly involved in the project had positive expectations for the outcome of the project; they all said it would be an improvement of the way they work. One interviewee expressed concerns with the time it would take to implement, but also said that the outcome will probably be positive. Some claimed to have felt scared of changing in the initial phase of the project, and that the project would mean a great deal of extra work. However, they all agreed that they today think that there will be improvement due to cooperation among the different offices with a common work processes. This would then lead to less time to figure out how to do things but instead learn how to do things.

4.3.2 Perception of the communication

Communication style

The communication style in the project was discussed during the interviews with the employees within the project and six out of nine saw it as open, some even thought it was extremely open meaning that everyone could participate and reach information about the project. One interviewee emphasized that the communication style was pretty open and different in an IL Recycling perspective. Another said that in comparison with other projects the WIL project was very open. One interviewee involved in the project also viewed it as open towards the organization, but more close and unstable inside the project group. One employee mentioned that it may have been due to time scarcity. One interviewee explained that the communication has been open, but the information of activities and actions has been more bureaucratic.

Two of the six interviewees from outside the project called the communication style open. One employee said it is open dependent on who is sending the information, while another claimed that it is both open and closed, depending on what information it concerns. One person said that if you have not been involved you do not know at all how the project is progressing, while another claimed that there is always information to be obtained on the intranet. One person outside the project said that time is an issue and that there is no time to receive information about a project one is not involved in. Another interviewee mentioned the issue of information language, claiming that the business-English used when communication news for the WIL project is hard to understand for some of the employees.

Intended / perceived information

Concerning the fit between the intended and perceived information in the project four of nine interviewees from inside the project believed the information to be perceived exactly as intended. Three interviewees thought that the perception of the information differed. One thought it may be due to bad communication of the information material, but also that much information was published on the intranet and some roles in the company does not use it in their daily work, such as the truck drivers. One interviewee explained that the importance of the information have been clear for everyone in the organization.

When talking to the interviewees outside the project about the sent information in the WIL project, everyone but one employee was slightly negative towards the fit between intended and perceived information. One employee said that it is impossible to perceive information exactly as intended and another explained it is sometimes perceived right. A third made clear that the organization is too large and complex to reach out to all members as envisioned.

Responsibility of receiving information

All the interviewees directly involved in the project explained the responsibility to receive information as twofold, it is the management's reasonability to send a good amount of information and the employee has a responsibility to search for information that the management has communicated. One interviewee saw it as 70-30 or 60-40 responsibility where the management has the superior responsibility. The management's obligations include communicating the information in a good way that makes the employees know where to reach it. In addition, the employees have to listen and try to understand the information but also search for it. Another saw the leadership as important in order to be able to screen what the employees need to understand and what some of the employees may see as interesting.

The responsibility was, according to one interviewee outside the project, the project leader who should make sure that all members of the organization take part of the information. However, the interviewee proceeded by stating that it is also its responsibility to find information, but it is hard to find information when one does not know what to look for. The rest of the interviewees not directly involved in the project agreed that it is up to both management and the employee to make sure the employee is informed. Two mentioned the lack of time as an obstacle against looking for and receiving information. One also stated that it is important for management to make sure that the employees know how to look for information and what information to search for.

Communication plan

All the interviewees directly involved in the project had heard about the communication plan, and three of them were involved in the creation of it. However, no one except the creators of the communication plan could specify what it included and if it had been implemented.

Only two out of the six interviewees outside the WIL project had heard about the communication plan for the project. The two who had heard about it, did not remember its content and did not know if it has been implemented.

Troubles/successes with the WIL-projects communication

In general, the interviewees inside the project had positive attitudes towards it, but some ideas of areas to develop were expressed. For example, one person would have liked to see more information on the intranet. A couple would have liked more forward planning of some events and meetings, since everyone has other tasks and obligations outside the project. They felt somewhat unprepared of what information that was going to be communicated. Another area that one employee involved in the project saw as less successful were the reference group meetings while another said the opposite. The meetings were good in the beginning but lost focus in the later phases of the project. One aspect that an interviewee mentioned was the communication between Ekan and IL Recycling. The interviewee felt that since the employees at IL Recycling were not used to the consultancy language much time and effort on understanding the information were made, which in hindsight may be clear. Another claimed that sometimes time was an issue with the communication between Ekan and IL Recycling, meaning that it was hard to get in contact rapidly.

One interviewee not directly involved in the WIL project stated that it would have liked to attend one of the informational meetings that one from each office attended; it should not have been the same person attending every meeting. It appeared that there was a regional difference to how much information from market area managers the employees outside the project received. Another interviewee said that it would have liked to see more detailed information to clarify some aspect of the project. Three of the interviewees were happy with the communication processes that has been, but one of them asked for more continuity of the reference groups. Two commented on the “Weekly WIL” and that it was a good way to present information on the WIL project. Another would have liked to see more up-dates on the events in the project. Lastly, one interviewee commented that it is very important to be informative in a project stating that “everyone yearns for information, how to communicate does not matter as long as you do it”.

4.3.3 Perception of communication process

Amount of information

Regarding how the interviewee involved in the project felt about the amount of information in the project a difference of perception was detected. Two of nine interviewees believe it has been too little information and one of them said “there is always a need for more information”. Another interviewee think that there has been enough information, but thinks that the experience of others may have been that it has been too little. There has been a fluctuation in the amount of information, according to two interviewees, sometimes too little sometimes too much. One also wanted more information in connection to the first launch of the project out in the organization, were the person felt somewhat unprepared.

There are big differences in what the employees outside the project think about the amount of information sent to them. Two out of the six interviewees said that they are satisfied with the amount. One claimed that more information definitely is needed, and more feedback from the employees that work with the system, that is being improved, every day is needed. Again, the issue of time is raised by one interviewee who claimed that time holds it from receiving information, and the information that the employee does receive can be vague. One of the interviewee’s mentioned that the reference groups could have been used more towards the end of the project, as it did in the beginning. Lastly, one interviewee wished to have less information more often, than a lot of information infrequently.

Channels

The channels which most interviewees, who were directly involved in the project, said were used in the project were email, the intranet and meetings. Sometimes email included links to the intranet where more information could be gathered. Several interviewees highlighted the “Weekly WIL” on the intranet, which were some comments together with a picture of an employee that was involved in the project. The meetings were performed over telephone, web or face-to-face. Two interviewees also presented workshops as an important channel in the project.

Four out of the six interviewees outside the project claimed that the intranet is the most commonly used source for receiving information. Email was used by everyone, both when sending and receiving information. Five of the interviewees claimed that the most efficient way of

transmitting information in this project has been through meetings, workshops and other verbal communication channels.

One of the interviewees involved in the project explained that the WIL project includes a gigantic structure of different type of meetings. There have been management team meetings, project meetings, work group meetings, local meetings, market meetings and reference group meetings. Two days of physical meetings with presentation by the management team was held in the beginning, one interviewee explained. Another interviewee inside the project highlighted the importance of the reference group meetings where test-runs of tools and standardizations was made. One interviewee stated that it had been a large amount of meetings for this project, but that it had been good with both physical, telephone and web meetings.

When talking about what kind of meetings the employees that are outside the project have been attending, the workshop is mentioned by two persons. These have been for two days and according to them very informative. One employee said the only meeting it has heard about is when they call one employee from every office and have meetings to inform about the project. Three mentioned the market meetings when information is spread. It seemed that when the WIL project was a recurrent item on the agenda of the weekly meetings, the knowledge about the WIL project was higher. One claimed that the only information it gets is from a customer service meeting when the management taught the employees about the new processes. The interviewees inside the project's perception of two way communication differed. Some said there had been several opportunities for the employees to express their thought, such as workshops local meetings and on the webpage. Others said that aside from the workshops there has been little two-way communication.

All employees not directly involved in the project claimed that there is opportunity for them to give feedback. However, one said that it is hard to give feed-back on a matter that you know little about, but knew that there is a specific e-mail that feed-back can be sent to. Another interviewee said that the employees could give in-put in the initial phase of the project, and now the employees can send opinions through the intranet. Two employees of the six that are outside the project claimed that the only feed-back opportunities are meetings and the workshops when the start-up-package was presented. Another employee claims that if a manager requests feed-back he will receive it, but only when he or she asks for it.

Perception of what is a good channel

The majority of the interviewees inside the project preferred physical meetings. However, it depends to whom and what kind of information that is communicated. Sometimes email was good, especially when the information was needed to be communicated fast and to several employees. Other times the intranet was preferable because that information many employees sees since it is the start page on the web. One highlighted that email and the intranet even complement each other. One employee explained that web-meetings may work occasionally, depending on the purpose of the meeting, but has not been the most efficient way of communicating. However, another said that the web-meetings have worked better than telephone and email. Another employee inside the project perceived the telephone and email was the less effective way to communicate in the project since much discussion were needed. Two

interviewees mentioned the intranet, but thought it could have been used better. For example, the information was not updated which made it a less attractive source for getting information.

One of the employees outside the project claimed that the channels used in this project probably are good if you get to attend the meetings, which this employee has not. Another employee claimed that the channels used for this project has worked fairly well, but information that has been sent has not been detailed. Another employee not directly involved in the project said that it had received the information that is required for understanding the project, but the rest of the organization probably does not embrace the information. One employee claimed that the best channel has been verbal communication and the intranet. Another employee liked the variation in communication, using several channels. The intranet seems to be popular with most employees.

To summarize, the empirical material has had a clear regional and positional difference. Interviewees inside and outside the project have had different perceptions of how the communication have worked internally in the WIL project, which will now be discussed according to theories presented earlier in this paper.

5. ANALYSIS

This chapter includes the analysis of the data collected. Both the interviews and other documents are analyzed by using the theories presented. The analysis is presented in the order of the theoretical framework to keep the thesis coherent and easy to follow.

5.1 Projects

It is important, which to Brown and Hyer (2010) states, that one knows what the project attributes are. Due to planning and cooperating with Ekan, a detailed plan was constructed ahead, so everyone in the organization could know why the project exists, for whom it existed and the benefits. It was clear during the interviews that all interviewees knew what the purpose of the project was. The employees outside the project could also mention many people involved in the project groups. For everyone affected by the project, knowing the attributes is very helpful for the success of the project (Brown & Hyer, 2010). We argue that one of the successes of the WIL project is that all employees are aware of its purpose, who are involved and what the intended benefits are.

5.2 Internal communication

Internal communication, according to Eriksson (2005) is vital for organizations, and he highlights the importance to see employees as a resource in this process. IL Recycling has from the beginning put efforts into structuring their internal communication in order to get as many employees as possible involved in the WIL project. Workshops, reference meetings and the “Weekly WIL” are some examples that go in line with Eriksson’s (2005) view of involving employees in the communication, to feel motivated and a sense of belongingness. However, some employees who are not directly involved in the project expressed that they would have appreciated being more involved in the project. One interviewee stated that it would have liked to attend one of the informational meetings that one from each office attended. This clearly indicates that some employees of IL Recycling have the desire of more involvement in the project, which suggests that there is a need for belongingness. Others felt that the participation in the project was sufficient. This differentiation of how involved the employees perceived themselves in the project may indicate that the communication of the WIL project differ on a geographical or regional level. Some regions involved the employees more than others, which can affect the perception of the WIL project. But it can also be due to that people have different mental models and feel the need of participating in different ways. This will be discussed further while analyzing the communication process.

Heide et al. (2005) present five areas of how communication can be divided depending on the purpose of the information communicated. One of these are the operative communication which is information connected to daily operations. All the interviewees can explain what the project concerns and what improvements it can bring to the company. However, the information that transmits to the operative work force differs. Some offices have the WIL project on the agenda at their weekly meetings, while some just discuss it at project workshops. This differentiation can create a gap between the operational activities of different divisions. Also the employees’ perception about the projects’ importance can be irregular due to this differentiation. In the long-run, since the operative communication differs, the change will be affected and may not have the

intended outcome. As Johansson & Heide (2008) explain, irregular information flows are a common contributor to a failed change process. We argue that IL Recycling needs to be more aware of the importance of a coherent information flow throughout the organization. IL Recycling presents in their communication plan a comprise plan of how to execute a coherent communication process. However, we argue that there is still some room for improvements on a regional basis.

Another area Heide et al. (2005) present is the news communication, which includes updates of the past and the future. The communication plan emphasized the intranet as an important channel for updates about the WIL project, such as the “Weekly WIL” and future plans. There were positive attitudes from all the interviewees about the “Weekly WIL”. Showing different employees’ experiences of the project, we argue, have created a mutual understanding of the purpose of the project. However, some employees wanted the progress update to be more frequently updated, especially on the intranet. One employee stated that it is not interesting to read updates that are several months old. We argue that the intranet is a channel that is much used by the employees, and IL Recycling is in need for a more structured way of updating the intranet. This may act constructively to benefit the internal communication.

Heide et al. (2005) also present management and change communication as an area of internal communication. The WIL project has a steering and a project group that manages the project. They have the responsibility to communicate the changes to the entire organization. Much responsibility is put on the market area managers, and according to the interviews the market area managers has been important for the change communication, containing goals and management decisions. However, a few interviewees had concerns about the internal project communication, which they believed sometimes were unclear and the information unprepared. This made them feel insecure when communicating further, to others. As Heide et al. (2005) claimed, when communication is insufficient the employees do not feel safe and organized. Insecurity can lead to mistakes and due to this we argue that IL Recycling should to consider evaluating their management communication. The information by the project management would have benefited from being less vague.

The other two areas of communication, value and culture communication and communication for socialization, can both be detected in the WIL Project as well. Firstly the goals and values of the WIL project have been communicated through many channels and were clearly understood by all interviewees. The communication for socialization has occurred on a regional basis, due to different events occurring on different geographical locations. The conclusion of the five areas of dividing communication is that they all exist within the WIL project and has been successful on various levels.

5.2.1 Communication process

Gerbner’s communication model as described by Fiske (1990) illustrate the communication process by horizontal and vertical dimensions. The model can be applied at IL Recycling’s communication process concerning the WIL project. The project was first initiated by the top management and the information regarding the project is transmitted from the steering group, the project management, the project group to the local offices and workers. Heide et al. (2005),

claims that communication consists of processes where people interact with each other in a complex and creative manner. The involvement of many stakeholders has clearly made the communication process complex in the WIL project, but have on the other hand created creative solutions through for example the workshops. We have through the interviews identified some development areas regarding the content (E) of the information and the form (S) of the information in the WIL project. Its content and progression have been communicated by different channels and in diverse forms which hereafter will be investigated and discussed.

5.2.1.1 Noise

Fiske (1990) defines noise as anything around a message that disrupts the signal. Since the employees are working in their regular position at IL Recycling but are also simultaneously involved in the WIL project, a large amount of misunderstanding and noise can occur. In the constellation of the WIL project we identify the distribution of time and stress as a type of noise. This can be seen when one interviewee felt unprepared before the launch of the project, and other interviewees explained that they felt scared of the new changes in the organization, in the initial phase of the project. These types of feelings can disrupt the meaning of the message and can therefore be seen as noise.

Another type of noise identified in the WIL project is connected to the language. One interviewee mentioned that it is sometimes hard to understand the business-English that is communicated and another pointed out the different types of language Ekan and IL Recycling uses in the process. Ekan uses a more academic language, than the employees at IL Recycling. These two examples clearly show a disruption in the communication process that may change the meaning of the message. If the employee does not understand the meaning of the information, the outcome and perception of the information may diverge.

We argue that IL Recycling should be more aware of the noise that exists in the WIL Project both in the form of language differences and other personal factors as perception of time and stress. As Fiske (1990) claims, the communicator should expect a response from the receiver to the message transmitted. This will increase the understanding of the intended message.

5.2.1.1.1 Information overload

According to Eppler and Mengis (2004) there are some factors that decide if a person will have information overload, mentioned in the theoretical chapter. The employees at IL Recycling common perception is that there was too little information, therefore that no information overload in the project can be recognized. One interviewee even said “there is always a need for more information”.

It is interesting that the employees do not perceive information overload, since there are more information than usual to handle, the regular work information and the project information. One reason why the employees do not feel that there is an excess of information may be their attitudes towards the project. This is in line with what Pijpers (2010) and Eppler and Mengis (2004) argue, the perception of information overload is due to, among other factors, attitudes. The employees seemed interested in how the change is proceeding and are therefore recipient to the information. A well structured communication plan was created which may have helped the communication to not become excessive. We argue that this is one of the reasons why there has

not been too much information floating around. However, since the employees ask for more detailed information, there has probably not been enough information and all parts of the communication plan did not occur. One interviewee would have liked less information, more frequently, than a large quantity at once. This is supported by Eppler and Mengis (2009) who argue that the sender can actively work to minimize and control the information that is communicated in an organization. We therefore argue that IL Recycling have controlled and minimized information, but perhaps it is too controlled. It is positive that there is no information overload at IL Recycling's WIL project, but the interviews have indicated that there is too little detailed information.

5.2.1.2 Push and pull

In the WIL project much information has been given to the employees, which is what Bark (1997) calls push. In order for the whole organization to understand that there is an effort change in the organization, the push method has to be used. However, since the WIL project is dependent on the cooperation of the whole organization the pull method, which Bark (1997) explain as when employees look for and acquire information on their own, is needed. This has according to the communication plan been possible through the intranet, Microsoft SharePoint (IL), billboards and office TV screens.

All interviewees agree that the responsibility of receiving information is both the employee and management. Employees should actively search for information, but the management has an obligation to make sure that employees know how and what to look for. Here the attitudes of the employees directly involved in the project differ from the ones not directly involved in the project. Some interviewees who are not involved claim that there are obstacles, noise, for receiving and searching for information, such as time and not knowing what to search for. We argue that the interviewees are ambiguous when discussing whose the responsibility of attaining information is. They claim that both management and employees are responsible, but at the same time some request more detailed information. An idea can be for the management to be more clear that the individual member of the organization has a responsibility to acquire information independently, at the same time as they instruct how and what information to look for.

5.2.1.3 Communication channels

5.2.1.3.1 Formal communication

Bloisi et al. (2003) present three types of formal communication directions that's occur in an organization; downward, upward and horizontal.

Downward communication has been used frequently in the WIL project and it has been important in this project since it includes a change in the entire organization, which are decisions made by management that needs to reach all employees. The interviewees', who are not directly involved in the projects, knowledge about the project and its purpose shows that the downward communication have been sufficient. On the other hand, a few interviewees believe that the information could have been easier to attain, regarding the intranet and the lack of information during some regional office meetings which exemplify weaknesses in the downward communication. We argue that an improvement in the intranet to be more user-friendly may lead

to more active users which may make the downward communication more efficient. Also, that all regional office meetings should include the WIL project as an item on their agenda.

The upward communication in the WIL project is possible in several channels, for example by email, the intranet and workshops. All the interviewees said that they had been involved and contributed with thoughts to the WIL project, but mostly in the beginning of the project. One employee claimed that it was hard to give feed-back since it did not know much about the content of the project. It is hard to contribute when you are not directly involved in the project; however this project focuses on the employees who have contact with customers on a regular basis. It is interesting to see that the employees know how to communicate with the management of the project, but they chose not to. Therefore, we argue that the upward communication, such as feed-back and open dialogue should be developed, or at least used in a broader sense. The employees who have contact with customers needs to understand the importance of the project, the project will not facilitate an organizational change and the new processes will not be used.

One of the objectives of the WIL project is to communicate and cooperate between regions and offices for a more efficient work of operation. This cooperation between departments, regions and offices Bloisi et al. (2003) call horizontal communication. Due to the projects structure, several regions, levels of authority and different organizational areas are cooperating more horizontally. We argue that the project in great measure perform horizontal communication, some examples of this has been the constellation of the project group, the launch tour and the workshops.

Bloisi et al. (2003) claims that downward, upward and horizontal communication is equally important. However we argue that IL Recycling does not put equal emphasis on the three. More focus has been on downward and horizontal communication and we argue that the upward communication should be developed further.

5.2.1.3.2 Verbal communication

According to Kreps (1990), verbal communication are achieved both in written and spoken form. The management of the WIL project has used both written and spoken communication, such as email, intranet, meetings and workshops, which Kreps (1990) see as equally important. However, spoken channels are better for two way communication and integrating people in the development of an organization (Kreps, 1990). This is seen in the WIL project where workshops and meetings were a cornerstone in the development of the project. It was also, together with the intranet, the most popular source of information during the interviews. This is in line with what Kreps (1990) emphasize; that people interact more on a personal and emotional level. Based on this we argue that having meetings to communicate the work of change in the organization have made employees understand the purpose of the project; however more face-to-face meetings throughout the whole process may have encourage people to interact even more.

The commonly written channels used in the WIL project are emails and the intranet. Several of the interviewees liked the “Weekly WIL”, but requested more detailed information about the project. One source of written information that was available but less frequently used was the

Microsoft SharePoint (IL). This is one channel that we argue IL Recycling should advertise through the organization, since it already exists and demands no extra investments.

5.2.1.3.2 Project communication channels

The WIL project has many stakeholders. The communicational channels increase with the number of stakeholder a project has (Antvik & Sjöholm, 2007). This is in line with the WIL Project and its many communicational channels as the workshops, reference meetings and the “Weekly WIL” discussed earlier.

According to Clements and Gido (2006), the three most important types of meetings are status review meetings, problem-solving meetings and technical design meetings. From the interviews one can see that most of the meeting about the WIL project has been status review meetings. Where updates about the project are presented, this includes market area meetings and local meetings. Problem-solving has been incorporated within the meetings of the project team and the steering group meetings. Technical design has been presented at work-shops where there has been an introduction to the new processes. Although theory suggests that the information is easier transmitted when there is a clear focus on the meeting this cannot be detected at IL Recycling. We have seen that when managers have continuously involved this project in every meeting as an item on the agenda, the employees in that region are more knowledgeable about the project. Since IL Recycling wishes to have “One IL” with this project, including it in daily communication may increase its success.

5.2.1.3.2.1 Communication plan

The different communication channels mentioned in the communication plan was Microsoft SharePoint (IL), the intranet including the ”Weekly WIL, billboards, office TV screens, meetings at the office and email. When talking to the employees the intranet is mostly mentioned as well as meeting and emails, however Microsoft SharePoint is not mentioned once and neither are billboards or TV screens. This means that though there has been an attempt to inform through these channels, it has not reached the employees. Also, as mentioned before; though there was clear favorable attitudes towards the “Weekly WIL”, the other information about the project seem to be poorly up-dated.

The interviewees who were directly involved in the project were all aware that there was a communication plan. While none of the employees outside the project were aware of it. This is according to Brown and Hyer (2010) a faulty communication plan since all stakeholders should know its content. Out of all the interviewee only the once involved in creating the communication plan had an opinion of whether it has been implemented or not. This tells us that the communication plan only had been used by management and not the entire project team or the rest of the work force. In support of Tonnquist (2008) we argue that by taking part of the communication plan the employees not involved in the project could have reached information on what type of information to collect and how to reach it. If the employees would have known this, it may have been easier for them to search for information on their own. This could have decreased the project management’s responsibility to communicate.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

6.1 Conclusions

Here we answer the two research questions present in the purpose. The conclusion is what we argue is the most important learning's from this study and the analysis conducted from the data collected. The conclusion derives from the academic background of theories in connection to the learning we received from our data collection. A substantial project, such as the WIL project, that involves an organizational change, has a complex internal communication structure. By looking at this project, we contribute to a greater learning about complications of the internal communicational processes of change projects.

- **What are the characteristics of the communication process within the project?**

We argue that one of the successes of the WIL project is that all employees are aware of its purpose, who are involved and what the intended benefits are. However, there has not been enough up-upward communication, which could be an aspect the IL Recycling could develop further.

There are some types of noise in the communication process, before the information reaches the employees, as the analysis illustrates. One example is the lack of time to receive information, due to daily work load. The language was also mentioned as a type of noise when transmitting information, both the business-English that some information is in and the academic language that Ekan uses. IL Recycling should be more aware of these types of noise in time and language.

According to our analysis there has been no information overload detected in the project, which may be due to the positive attitudes employees has towards the project and the interest they take in its progress. The analysis indicates that the “Weekly WIL” has created a mutual understanding of the purpose of the project. It is good that there is no information overload at IL Recycling’s WIL project, but the analysis has shown that there is too little detailed information. One way to do this, a more organized way of updating the intranet could be developed, while also making it more user-friendly. Another source of information IL Recycling could advertise more through the organization is the Microsoft SharePoint (IL).

The responsibility of attaining information is ambiguously perceived at IL Recycling, our analysis shows. To increase awareness of who is responsible for attaining information the employees should take part of the communication plan. This is an easy way to inform the employees not involved in the project where they can reach information and what type of information to collect.

- **How has the information about the project reached all levels and parts of the organization?**

According to the study, the most commonly used communication channels of reaching employees with information is the intranet and by workshops such as instruction and launch meetings. All the interviewees can explain what the project concerns and what improvements it can bring to the company. There has been a differentiation of how involved the employees perceived themselves in the project on a regional level. Some regions involved the employees more than others which have affected employees’ knowledge about the project. Although the

communication plan entailed how to coherently communicate project information through the organization, there is still some room for improvements on a regional basis.

Managers who continuously have involved this project in every meeting as an item on the agenda, the employees in that region are more knowledgeable about the project, which is why we argue that all regional office meetings should include the WIL project as an item on their agenda. Since IL Recycling wishes to have “One IL” with this project, including it in daily communication may increase its success.

6.1.1 Practical implications for internal communication in complex change projects

Although this has been a study concerning a specific project, we come to the conclusion that some general parallels can be drawn to internal communication in complex projects in change.

- Consider noise within the communication process, such as language and time restrictions, by using up-ward communication and feed-back.
- The information flow needs to be controlled in a change project in order to have an appropriate amount of communication. If you get too little information employees do not understand the changes that is about to be implemented and if there is an information overload the messages do not reach the receiver.
- The communication plan should be promoted and used, by both project management and employees in an organization, to clarify where information can be found and where it should be presented.
- The intranet is a good communication channel for every-day communication, news and updates, while face-to-face meetings and discussions are appropriate when designing and implementing a change.
- It is important to consider that the information should be equally communication throughout different geographical locations and departments that is effected by the change project.

6.2 Suggestions for future studies

Further studies can be made within IL Recycling and why there is a different perception in the interference in communication. Different people perceive these disruptions differently, which indicates that the mental models differ. An interesting subject to further research could be why or in what way this mental model differs and how they can be altered.

Another contribution to the field would be to investigate what causes information overload. As we have seen in this study there was a great deal of information transferred through intranets etc. However there was no sign of information overload although according to theory there is more often an information overload when there are a lot of information sources.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Interview guidelines

Introduction

1. Short presentation of us and the purpose of the thesis
2. What is your position in the project/organization?
 - a. Geographical location

The project

1. What do you know about the project?
2. Who are involved in the project?
 - a. Who is responsible for success?
3. What are your expectations of this project?

Communication

1. What is your general perception of the communication style in this project?
 - a. Open/bureaucratic?
 - b. Do you think it is perceived in the same way the sender intended the information?
2. How has the process of communication been?
 - a. Amount? Enough/too much/too little?
 - i. What channels? Email, intranet
 - ii. Meeting → what kind of meetings, start up, problem solving, status review?
3. What is a good way/channel to transfer information according to you?
4. What does the dialog look like, feedback, two-way communication, follow-up?
5. Who has the responsibility that you receive information?
6. What do you know about the communication plan?
 - a. If yes, do you think it has been implemented?
7. Have you had any trouble communication, up or down, within the project?
8. Additional comments / Questions?

Appendix 2 - List of interviewees

Initial interviews/meeting

1. Vice executive president, Stockholm – March 31, 2011
2. Ekan external project leader, Gothenburg – March 1, 2011

Interviews about the project and its communication

Directly involved in the project

1. Member of steering committee, Stockholm – May 2, 2011
2. The project customer, Bromma – May 4, 2011
3. Project leader, Stockholm – May 4, 2011
4. Responsible for communication, Ekan, Stockholm – May 2, 2011
5. Member of project group, Älvsbyn – May 3, 2011
6. Member of project group, Malmö, – May 2, 2011
7. Responsible for communication, project group, Bromma – May 2, 2011
8. Member of project group, Stockholm – May 2, 2011
9. Operative executive / Member of steering committee, Västra Götaland – May 3, 2011

Not directly involved in the project

1. Sales area executive, Örebro – May 4, 2011
2. Customer service executive, Malmö – May 3, 2011
3. Sales assistant, Norrköping – May 3, 2011
4. Sales staff, Umeå – May 3, 2011
5. Sales assistant, Göteborg – May 4, 2011
6. Sales staff, Västerås – May 4, 2011