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"Every change is difficult"

− A case study of employee behavior in Mölnlycke Health Care's intranet.

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Abstract

Due to the outstanding success of social media during the first decade of the 21th century, the business sphere has become aware of the economic potential within this segment of the market. Companies of all sizes aim to have some sort of presence on social media-related websites, and moreover, incorporating social features into the corporate intranets. Thus, there has been a shift in intranet design towards adopting the features of social media. In this case study, we examine the implementation of the global company Mölnlycke Health Care's new intranet. The company has previously been a divided one, and the new intranet was launched with the intention of making the employees more committed towards the company as well as their colleagues – thus creating a more united company. Our findings made it clear that the employees' intranet behavior was characterized by the fact that the employees first and foremost visit the intranet in work-related purposes and use it as a tool in their daily work. Even though all employees demonstrated some sort of commitment towards the intranet, there were large individual differences in the level of contribution – with a general inclination towards passively following what happens on the intranet. The passive behavior was predominantly explained by the employees not experiencing a connection to the areas described in the articles, or lacking a reason for contacting other employees. This case study is summed up by giving recommendations for future development of the intranet, regarding how to encourage the employees to use the intranet more and increase the employees' intranet commitment.

Keywords: Intranet, social media, user contribution, commitment, online behavior.

Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

In this section we describe the rise of social media and how it has affected the design of intranets. We also outline the purpose, research questions and disposition for our case study.

During the first decade of the 21th century, the attention of both organizations and individuals has been increasingly drawn to the phenomenon of social media. In 2010, approximately 28,7% of the world's population were Internet users (Internet World Stats, 2010) and around 22% of the total Internet usage time was spent on social media related websites (The Nielsen Group, 2010). Several market analyses and surveys of online consumer behavior point in the same direction: social media is obtaining more and more market shares. This trend has been growing steadily for the last couple of years and is not yet showing any signs of declining growth (Eurostat, 2010; The Nielsen Group, 2010; Universal McCann, 2010.). Furthermore, numerous column inches are written about social media every day in blogs, academic journals as well as newspapers. In other words: a lot of people are using social media, and – moreover - constantly talking about it. But what *is* social media?

On a conceptual level, social media can be explained as a technological infrastructure that facilitates virtual social interaction (Hermkens et. al., 2011). Social interaction is made possible through different functions on the websites. For example, users may create a personal profile and comment on other users' activities through posting messages or "chatting" in real time, as well as uploading their own information. With the escalating usage of social media, the business sphere has become aware of the economic potential within this segment of the market. Companies of all sizes are directing marketing efforts towards social media-related websites, such as buying advertising space and creating company profiles or company blogs (Ingram, 2010). According to a survey report performed by marketing agency White Horse Marketing (2010), approximately 80% of companies have some sort of presence in social media, and 50% have a social engagement with their customers through the social media on a daily basis.

However, the striving for social interaction is not limited to the company-consumer relationship. Companies are also attempting to promote social interaction *within* the company, and not only between the management and employees but also between the employees themselves. This internal communication is manifested for example through blogs, where the employees publish posts concerning various corporate topics that other employees are encouraged to comment on and

discuss (Finin et al., 2007). Another tool for boosting social interaction within the company is the company *intranet*. An intranet is a protected computer network accessible exclusively to the employees, providing possibilities for communication and sharing information. The use of intranets began in the later years of the 1990's, and in 2010 around 80% of large western-based enterprises (with 250 or more employees) were using an intranet (Eurostat, 2010). Initially the intranets were mostly used for traditional top-down communication, through management posting information on digital message boards. However, as technology progressed and the creation of knowledge increasingly became considered a crucial success factor for companies - the user demands for collaboration-friendly functions escalated. The intranet shifted from being foremost an administrative tool towards adopting the features of social media (Amcoff Nyström, 2006).

This shift has given rise to the relatively new concept of the *social intranet,* which thus refers to an intranet with social media features. In this case study we define social media features, or rather "social features", on intranets as functions enabling interaction and communication, for example: comment boxes that allow employees to comment on posted information, discussion forums, creating a "profile page" on which personal information is published, etc. The advances of social intranets implicate the increased use of functions that allow bottom-up communication, for example the possibility for employees to leave comments on articles or blog posts published by the company executives. Though few companies have developed ways of measuring the value created by social media on the intranet, it is still considered a desirable design and the social intranets are more and more becoming integrated into the structure of both small and large companies (McConnell, 2010).

In conclusion: marketers, managers and web-designers share an idea about the strategic advantages of social intranets and the employee contributions it supposedly stimulates. But will the employee's commitment to the intranet be boosted simply by redesigning it? Through our case study we hope to bring clarity to this question. We examined the implementation of a new intranet with social features at the global company Mölnlycke Health Care. The company has previously been a divided one, with the different divisions of the company being somewhat marked off from each other. Therefore, the company sees the new intranet as a tool for making the employees more committed towards the company as well as their global colleagues through engaging in the intranet, in order to make Mölnlycke Health Care a united company. In their own words: Mölnlycke Health Care wants the intranet to "drive commitment". In this case study, the concept of commitment describes the strength of a relationship. Therefore, a high level of commitment towards the intranet can be manifested through employees actively contributing to the intranet by for example using functions

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such as making comments on articles and contacting other employees. A low level of commitment can be manifested through employees using the intranet passively – i.e. following what happens but never contributing themselves – or by resisting usage and thus using other ways of communication.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this case study is to analyze the employees' behavior in Mölnlycke Health Care's intranet by mapping out what characterizes their behavior and how committed they are to the intranet, as Mölnlycke Health Care has previously been a divided company and believes that the employees' commitment to the intranet may influence the overall dedication to the company.

1.3 Research questions

The following research questions are used to bring clarity to the purpose of our study:

Q1. What characterizes the employees' behavior on Mölnlycke Health Care's new intranet?

Q2. Which aspects of the intranet are the most/least appreciated?

Q3. What affects the employees' decision to either actively contribute or passively follow what happens on the intranet?

1.4 Disposition

Our paper has the following disposition:

1. *Frame of reference* - a review of previous research related to our topic. Thereafter we present an overview of the main research areas.
2. *Case study background* - an introduction to the case company as well as a description of the intranet we will be studying.
3. *Research design* - we discuss why we chose to do a case study as well as how data was collected and analyzed.
4. *Empirical data* – a presentation of the collected data from the company and the held interviews based on the structure of our research questions.
5. *Analysis* – we reflect on how the empirical data answers our research questions, and place these answers in a wider theoretical context.

6. *Conclusion* – a summary of our observations and analysis. Finally, we conclude the case study by giving our recommendations for the company.

2. Frame of reference

In this section we discuss previous research and relevant literature. We start with a literature review and thereafter give an overview of the main research areas. We will present the main points from each area, and describe their significance for our case study.

2.1 Literature review

The aim of this case study includes developing an understanding for what affects the employees' decision to actively contribute to or to stay passive on the intranet. – i.e. motivational factors behind employee behavior. A frequently reoccurring concept in the search results we have encountered is "Web 2.0", and it is used to describe the shift toward social features on the Internet. Stenmark (2008) discusses the concept and points to the absence of a clear definition of it, but in brief we can conclude that Web 2.0 is the Internet's transition from being mainly a tool for providing information to becoming a platform for social collaboration. A keyword in describing Web 2.0 is *participation*, as the new technology enables users themselves to share and edit information, and it is thus no longer the traditional content providers that are in charge of spreading information.

Nevertheless, in searching for previous research on the topic of intranet participation, the results we found were almost exclusively related to Knowledge Management. Several articles discuss how to promote sharing of knowledge (Hansen et al., 1999; Clark and Cooper, 2000; Hall and Goody 2007; Staples and Webster, 2008.), and the benefits that can be obtained by companies using Knowledge Management-systems (Janz and Prasarnphanich, 2003). In addition, we found several attempts to identify so-called success factors in both boosting intranet participation (Chiu et al., 2006; Pellegrino, 2003; Corso et. al., 2009) as well as in implementing Knowledge Management systems (Alazmi and Zairi, 2003; Wong, 2005; Conley and Zheng, 2009), and giving guidelines on what to keep in mind when using the intranet as a tool for Knowledge Management (Edenius and Borgersson, 2003). Recent articles also discuss the use of social software as a tool for Knowledge Management (Payne, 2008; Williams, 2011) and point out the benefits that organizations might obtain by using tools for social networking at the workplace (Mills, 2010).

Unfortunately, as these articles merely explain what does or does not happen - but not *why*, they do not provide us with sufficient information to help form a background for our case study. The

scarcity of literature discussing the motivational factors behind intranet participation that we experienced has prompted us to construct our theoretical frame of reference mainly using Maria Spante's (2009) dissertation *Connected Practice: The Dynamics of Social Interaction in Shared Virtual Environment,* seeing that it – as far as we identified – is the only attempt to move deeper into the topic. Although Spante's (2009) dissertation constitutes our theoretical base, the theoretical frame of reference is nonetheless complemented by joining together relevant excerpts from other research areas.

2.1.1 Connected Practice

Maria Spante's (2009) concept of "connected practice" is defined as the dynamics of social interaction in technical systems. Spante (2009) argues for the intertwining of technology and social interaction over time. The concept of connected practice encompasses a *both/and view* on technology, this means that technology is not viewed as only a *tool for* or a *key feature in* the virtual social interaction, but is instead considered to be both. Furthermore, Spante (2009) refers to the incorporation of the time dimension into her research as *process-based*. The process-based research method represents the notion that research objectives should not be limited to snap shots of a present situation, but instead be studied over time. Process-oriented research thus allows the researcher to more fully apprehend the complex fusion between technology and social interaction, by enabling the observation of *"small but important details"* (pp. 28).

This process-based view is also significant in understanding how the social interaction on the intranet evolves over time. The process of developing a social structure on the intranet, by weaving together social and technical aspects, takes time. For our case study this must also be taken into consideration, considering that the intranet is new. Since the concept of connected practice implies that the users must be given time to develop a common practice, this could only be done by using the intranet over longer time. Thus, the employees may not yet have had sufficient time to develop the social structure that will form the framework for their online behavior. Spante (2009) emphasizes that studies of social interaction in technical systems should be carried out over time, but also that it is difficult to do so. By not having the possibility to study Mölnlycke Health Care over time we will therefore in our study present a snap shot of the current situation which we hope will shed light on present obstacles and opportunities for the intranet.

Furthermore, Spante (2009) claims that in order for a shared virtual environment to be appreciated and used, it needs to match users' preferences. Technology is less accepted as a tool for connecting

people and interact if the user is having difficulties in figuring out how to use the technology. The users' technological skills are therefore a key factor for smooth virtual interaction. Spante (2009) shows that long-term users stressed the importance of the virtual environment's design. Long-term users remained faithful to their old virtual environments despite the fact that new ones with more sophisticated functions appeared. The motivation for this loyalty was, according to the users, that they valued the familiar technology and the social environment that had been created over time. This gives a valuable insight for our case study: in order to encourage long-term loyalty to the intranet, it is important to preserve a design that has proven to match users' preferences.

2.1.2 Arguments against the idea of a social intranet

As described in the introduction to this case study, activity on the Internet is becoming more and more focused on social media. This has affected the construction of intranets, as intranets have shifted from being first and foremost a tool for top-down communication towards promoting bottom-up communication through adopting social features. Stenmark (2008) questions whether intranets will evolve in the same direction as the Internet. He provides examples of claims stating that due to differences in attitudes and cultures between the corporate world and the society, there are large differences in how technology is being used. Stenmark (2008) goes on to state that the Internet has always provided its users with information in a democratic way and been bottom-up driven, while a company per definition lacks democratic traits and the corporate information is normally distributed top-down. Another important aspect is that social media is a decentralized meeting place where people can meet and discuss. The users are able to change and update the content and readers and writers are considered to be equals. In contradiction, Stenmark (2008) claims that the information on intranets normally derives from a few employees responsible for updating the intranet, thus making it a highly centralized process. His conclusion is that it is too early to say whether the new social features can be successful in a corporate intranet and asks for further research on the topic. More recent research by Thiry-Cherques (2010) agrees with Stenmark's (2008) skepticism against companies' attempts to incorporate a more democratic structure into the intranets. In *Intranets: A semiological analysis,* Thiry-Cherques (2010) interprets the deeper meaning of the signage used on 22 existing intranets, and through this analysis draws the conclusion that:

> *"Although the superficial structure of the intranet is communicative and open, its deeper structure supports a control and restriction system"* (p. 718).

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Thereby Thiry-Cherques (2010) strengthens Stenmark's (2008) argument for a conceptual conflict between the centralized nature of intranets and the decentralized structure of social media. By mapping out how employees are using the intranet at Mölnlycke Health Care and how information is perceived and managed, our case study will contribute with an employee viewpoint to this conceptual conflict. Nonetheless, our research is not limited to the investigation of whether the employees are *able* to participate in changing and updating the information, but also concerns their *willingness* to participate.

2.2 Overview of the main research areas

To sum up, the reviewed literature can be divided into three main areas: Knowledge Management, intranets and social media. Although some of the previous research contains a combination of these areas, we will still make an attempt at presenting the main points from each research area.

2.2.1 Knowledge Management

The reviewed literature in the Knowledge Management area is mainly focused on implementation of Knowledge Management-systems. Promoting knowledge sharing within these systems is also an important aspect, as a cooperative learning-culture is perceived as something that influences the organizational performance (Janz and Prasarnphanich, 2003). Both Hansen et al. (1999) and Janz and Prasarnphanich (2003) draw attention to the general importance of Knowledge Management for companies. Furthermore, Hansen et al. (1999) stress the importance of actively choosing a Knowledge Management strategy - as opposed to just adopting what is trendy at the moment. Conley and Zheng (2009) emphasize the importance of organizational context as an influence in the success or failure of Knowledge Management projects. The organizational context is central also for Hall and Goody (2007), who address the issue of blaming failed knowledge sharing initiatives on organizational culture. Instead they suggest the focus to be directed towards recognizing power structures between actors within the company, as this will enable an understanding for what lies behind the failure. The identification of these underlying factors will facilitate the dealing with implementation problems. Another aspect of implementation that needs consideration is identified by Wong (2005). According to Wong (2005) the support of top management is a critical success factor, facilitating the implementation of Knowledge Management systems. The importance of top management support is also identified by Alazmi and Zairi (2003). This means that if top management promote Knowledge Management systems and use them themselves, employees are likely to imitate this behavior. But the mere existence of a Knowledge Management-system is not

enough to make employees use it. As Clark and Cooper (2000) found in their research about collaboration in Knowledge Management-systems: just having the right technology is not sufficient for boosting collaboration.

This aspect is further developed by Wong (2005), who states that the crucial key to employee participation in Knowledge Management-systems is personal motivation, because if the employees are not motivated to use the Knowledge Management-system - they won't. Alazmi and Zairi (2003) also claim that the use of a Knowledge Management-system must be simple, straightforward and efficient; otherwise people will be discouraged from contributing to it. A parallel to our case study could thus be that in order to make employees use the intranet, efforts must be made to ensure that employees themselves *want* to use it. Additionally, both Wong (2005) and Chiu et al. (2006) highlight the importance of building an atmosphere of trust, between both individual employees as well as groups, in order to promote knowledge sharing. Without mutual trust employees will be reluctant to contact each other. Staples and Webster (2008) also point out trust as a critical factor as their research demonstrated a strong positive relationship between trust and knowledge sharing. In conclusion, previous research from the reviewed Knowledge Management literature identifies some factors that are significant for successfully implementing new technology:

- ⚔ Awareness of power structures within the company
- ⚔ Support of top management
- ⚔ Stimulating the employee's motivation
- ⚔ Creating an atmosphere of trust between the employees'

2.2.2 Intranets

Regarding the reviewed literature in the intranet area, Corso et al. (2009) point to the importance of anchoring the intranet within the organizational reality, since the employees will not use the intranet unless it responds to their needs. Another aspect of this is discussed by Pellegrino (2003), who describes the problems that arise when the expectations of the new technology (i.e. the intranet) meets the employees' reality in the workplace. According to the author, the implementation of new technology is a slow process, and it takes time for it to become a part of the employees' routines. Though the purpose of the intranets is facilitating everyday work, many employees prefer to stick to their old routines: contacting each other through mail, phone calls or face-to-face meetings. Employees prefer old routines since they perceive them to be faster and more efficient than spending time on creating new routines on the intranet. An important implication for our study, conceived from Pellegrino (2003) and Corso et. al (2009), is therefore that having an understanding

of the employees' needs and identifying their "shortcuts" is an important aspect when implementing an intranet. In order to encourage employees to use the intranet, efforts should be made to translate their shortcuts to the intranet and making sure that the intranet provides the employees with what they need. Thus:

- ⚔ Anchoring the intranet in the employees' reality could encourage the usage of the intranet.
- ⚔ If the employees' shortcuts can be incorporated into the intranet it could boost the employees' willingness to use it.

2.2.3 Social Media

In the introduction to this case study we discussed the rise of social media. It is a vast research area and our focal point in the reviewed literature has been how social media merges with intranets. Social intranets, intranets with social features, are a new concept that is currently appointed the most significant intranet trend for 2011 (McConnell, 2010). Mills (2010) and Williams (2011) are optimistic about the opportunities of implementing social intranets, and Payne (2008) states that social software such as blogs can boost an organization's collaboration capability, and thereby lead to business success. However, not all researchers agree. Both Stenmark (2008) and Thiry-Cherques, (2010) are skeptical towards the social intranets due to what they perceive to be a conceptual conflict between the centralized nature of intranets and the decentralized structure of social media. Additionally, Edenius and Borgersson (2003) state that information would be loaded in excess if everyone was a good contributor to the intranet. In conclusion, the previous research from the social media-area leaves us with two crucial considerations:

- ⚔ There is no consensus regarding the advantages and disadvantages of incorporating social features into intranets.
- ⚔ In encouraging employees to actively use the intranet, the company should be aware that full participation from every single employee is not desirable, since this is likely to become counterproductive.

Even though we obtained some valuable pointers from the reviewed literature that helped form a context for our case study, something *more* was needed in order to fully grasp the dynamics of online behavior. As described in the Literary review-section, we found that Spante's (2009) concept of connected practice constituted what was missing, as it linked technology and behavior together. The concept of connected practice adds a depth to the previous research, and the both/and-view on how technology and behavior affect each other provides a fuller understanding of online behavior. The aspect of time in Spante's (2009) process-based view also enables us to place the behavior on

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Mölnlycke Health Care's intranet in a wider context. In other words: using the process-based view allows us to view the behavior observed in this case study as a representation of an early stage in creating the common practice on the intranet.

In this case study, the behavior we investigate is related to the individual employee and his/her relationship to the intranet. The strength of the individual employee's relationship to the intranet is described by *commitment*. We use the term commitment as a tool for mapping out different types of relationships to the intranet. This allows us to sort the employees' behavior on a scale that ranges from "minimum commitment" to "maximum commitment". For example: on the minimum commitment end of the scale we find employees that resist usage of the intranet by actively avoiding it. In the middle we find employees with medium commitment, who use the intranet passively and follow what others do online, but never contribute themselves. On the maximum commitment end of the scale we find those employees who not only use the intranet, but also actively contribute to it, for example by commenting on articles or contacting colleagues.

Scale of commitment

Resisting usage   Passively following   Actively contributing

Minimum   Maximum

2.2.4 Image 1

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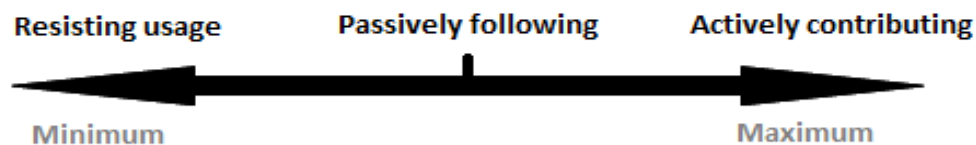
3. Case study background

In this section, we will provide background information on Mölnlycke Health Care and describe the new intranet.

3.1 An introduction to Mölnlycke Health Care

Mölnlycke Health Care provides surgical and wound-care products for the professional health care sector. The company has a global presence with approximately 6700 employees. The sales offices are located in 30 countries all over the world. There are mainly two divisions: Wound Care and Surgical. (Mölnlycke Health Care, 2011). Mölnlycke Health Care has previously been a divided company, and until the launch of the new intranet had several autonomous intranets for separate departments and markets. These intranets had a more traditional design that structured the information hierarchically in a so-called tree-structure. The executives of Mölnlycke Health Care identified a need for increased global collaboration amongst the employees, and decided to re-design the company's intranet structure in order to achieve this. In the words of the Internal Communications Manager:

> "*The world has changed and therefore the communication within the company also needs to change*" (Persson, 2011).

Thus, the existing intranets were to become one, with the main purpose to:

- *Communicate the company's strategy and culture*, to encourage employees to keep an eye on what's going on within the company and create a sense of unity.
- *Drive commitment*, not only commitment to the company but also to other departments and employees.
- *Improve efficiency*, so that employees can find what they need when they need it.

The process of creating a new, global intranet was initiated through a global survey performed by external IT-consultants. When a company decides to design a corporate system such as an intranet, a problem that may occur is that the company wants to adopt current trends that they think will bring success, without anchoring it within the company's reality. Thus, the company's representatives may not fully understand what they are asking for, and yet the hired consultants have no choice but to deliver the product. Therefore, in some cases the outcome can turn out to be an extremely sophisticated product that no one uses because it is too complex (Corso et. al, 2009). However, in

the case of Mölnlycke Health Care the survey performed by the IT-consultants was based on a reference group from the company, and it gave a review of the old intranets and outlined the employee's intranet needs. Additionally, a quantitative survey took place where the employees voted on the intranet functions they found to be important. This strategy can be seen as an attempt to anchor the intranet within the organizational context, thus making an effort to lessen the "gap" between the designed product and the company's reality. Furthermore, strategically important functions were also included, for example "executive communication" - short messages by the executive team, similar to Twitter updates (Persson, 2011).

3.1.1 Visions and goals for the intranet

The social media website Facebook is the most frequently visited website amongst the employees, and according to the Internal Communications Manager her overall vision is for the intranet to become just as popular as Facebook. In other words: to make the employees as committed to the intranet as they are to social media platforms outside the workplace (Persson, 2011). This is an interesting vision considering the complexity of translating the informal networking site of Facebook into a professional context. Another aspect is the question of whether such a translation would even be desirable in reality, or if this is just an example of the corporate tendency mentioned above: the eagerness to adopt current trends. We will discuss this topic further in our analysis. Another future goal is to make the intranet the company's hub for information. The intranet would thereby become the main tool for providing the employees with information concerning the company – and the employees would thus check the intranet on a regular basis in order to avoid missing out on important information. Yet another vision is to make the intranet mobile, that is: accessible from Ipads and Smartphones. This would especially facilitate the contact between the company and the sales representatives, as they spend most of their time visiting clients (Persson, 2011). However, the company's main objective is currently to find out what can be done to increase the employee's commitment to the intranet.

3.2 Describing the intranet

Whenever an employee opens the web browser, the start page is the first page of the intranet. The first page of the intranet consists of several articles that are updated on a daily basis. There are global articles as well as local ones, adapting to the users depending on where they work. The editors of the articles are nominated by the managers of each department. Each article has a link to the profile page of the article's "owner", that is: the employee that publicized it. The readers have the possibility to rate the articles on a scale from 1-5, thereby giving their opinion on how

interesting they are. Considering the open and friendly atmosphere that the company wants to promote on the intranet, the rating of the articles is an interesting function. It raises the question of whether the rating, i.e. judging others, is compatible with the intention to create a friendly atmosphere. We will address this further in our analysis. Furthermore, the articles can be commented on, and we found that the articles generally had 0-2 comments. The comments were mainly short, positive feedback on the activity described in the article. On the first page is a poll where employees can vote on different topics by clicking on the statement that they agree with. There is also a display of short Twitter-messages from the executive team, updated on a regular basis. Also, organizational messages and job opportunities can be found further down on the first page. There is a search engine in the upper right corner, but if employees prefer to click their way to information they can do so by clicking the different tabs that read: About us, News, Product and Sales, People and locations and Self-service. Under these tabs further information can be found. By clicking an icon called My Location, employees can find contact information to co-workers at their own location as well as local messages.

3.2.1 Filling out "My Page"

By clicking the link called My Page, the employees arrive at the page for their personal profile. On this page employees can create a personal presentation including information such as name, gender, title, division, location and contact information. There is also a possibility to upload a profile picture. The personal information uploaded by each employee makes it possible for other co-workers to find the person by using the search engine. Mölnlycke Health Care encourages the employees to fill in any personal information they find relevant, and emphasizes the importance of each employee creating a completely filled out profile. This is done by handing out information on how to fill out the profile, for example in a booklet handed out to the employees or by sending e-mails. Additionally, each time an employee opens the web browser the start page is the intranet's first page – and a "start wizard" pops up and shows what remains to be filled out by the employee. The company promotes all information to be written in English, and the employees are told not to be concerned with linguistic errors. Other information that can be found on each personal profile is the employee's network, which consists of their closest co-workers. However, this network is not quite like other professional networks such as for example LinkedIn, as the network on Mölnlycke Health Care's intranet is mainly thought to provide alternative local contacts if the person one searches for is unavailable.

4. Methodology

In this section we describe why we chose to do a case study and how data was collected and analyzed.

4.1 Research process

We initially contacted Mölnlycke Health Care to establish a contact with a case company. The background for our case study as presented above is the starting point for the collection of the empirical data. We chose to study a specific case in order to gain a deeper understanding for a current situation and thereby strive for theoretical generalizations. The case study approach is a way of organizing data that preserves the character of the object being studied (Stake, 2005). Yin (2009) also claims that a case study is suitable when studying a current event without controlling the situation or the participants. Since our aim is to study the employees' behavior, a case study would allow us to deepen our understanding for the topic without interfering with their perception of the current situation.

After establishing a contact with the case company, we formed a first idea of what would constitute our research area: social interaction on intranets. We began our search for literature within the area in online search engines as well as in the library of the University of Gothenburg. To find previous research that could shed light on this we have used certain key words related to this topic in our searches, such as "Motivating interaction", "Interaction", "Sharing information", "Social intranet", "Participation" etc. As search engines we have used Google Scholar, Academic Search Elite and Business Source Premier from EBSCO. In dialogue with the Internal Communication Manager of Mölnlycke Health Care we got a general understanding of what the company wanted to achieve with the new intranet. Later in the research process we interviewed this person further to deepen our understanding of the company's objectives. Thereafter, we studied a report made by Mölnlycke Health Care's IT-consultants. The report was made prior to the launch of the project of creating the new intranet, and amongst other things mapped out preferences and opinions of the employees. Thereby, we got an insight into the creation of the intranet and the company's thoughts behind it. At this stage of the research process we were guided around the intranet by the Internal Communications Manager.

4.2 Research data

Google Analytics is a statistical tool that provides detailed information about the usage of a specific website (Google, 2011), we have used intranet statistics from the company's Google Analytics-account, such as statistics over page views, to get an overview of the actual use of the intranet. The data presented in our case study was collected on April 11th 2011. However, to enable a deeper analysis of the behavior of the employees, a qualitative research method is preferable (Silverman, 2006; Yin, 2009). We decided to collect qualitative data from the case company through interviews about the employee's online behavior. Interviews provide deeper knowledge of the current situation, which is beneficial for our case study.

4.2.1 Designing the interviews

We had the objective to interview employees in North America, Europe and Asia in order to acquire a sufficient spread of the opinions of employees in different markets. The Internal Communications Manager then contacted managers of various locations within the area, asked them to nominate one or two persons from their local office. We received a list of fifteen interview nominees, who we then contacted. Interviews can be more or less structured, ranging from a fixed questionnaire to completely open conversations (Jacobsen, 2002; Kvale and Brinkman, 2009). We chose to do semi-structured interviews, indicating that we used a template of questions but at the same time were free to follow the respondents' spontaneous trail of thoughts. Semi-structured interviews give the opportunity to gain quantitative knowledge about a case and to understand the respondent's perception of the current situation (Jacobsen, 2002; Kvale and Brinkman, 2009). The template of interview questions allowed us to map out the participants' online behavior. It also provided a foundation for the spontaneous conversation we intended to establish with each participant in order to get more personal information about their individual motivational factors. The full template for our interviews can be found in Appendix 1.

The interviews would preferably have been carried out in person, but the spatial distance necessitated most of the interviews to be held by phone. In comparing the two kinds of interviews, a phone interview does not provide the same face-to-face meeting as a personal interview does. However, telephone interviews are advantageous in our case since they are said to reduce interviewer bias, fasten completion time and expand the geographical coverage without dramatic increase in costs (Blumberg et al., 2005). Considering that the topics treated in our interviews are not of a delicate nature, we find it probable that the quality of the data obtained from a phone

interview can match those from a personal interview. Three of the respondents considered their spoken English to be insufficient and therefore answered our interview questions via e-mail. This signifies a deviation from the semi-structured interviews, and the information obtained can rather be compared to answers to open questions in a questionnaire. Although these interview answers were collected via e-mail, they were used as part of the case study's empirical data as they contained relevant information. All participants were informed that their participation would be anonymous, and that our study was independent from Mölnlycke Health Care. To ensure that the respondents could not be identified through their answers we de-identified all excerpts from the interviews presented in the empirical data, for example by leaving out names and locations. The interviews were recorded, in order for us to be more attentive to the respondent's answers and have a better basis to transcribe the interviews. Recording the interviews also enabled us to go back and listen to the recording afterwards. The transcriptions were done shortly after the interviews were held, in order to capture the essence of the opinions of the respondents (Blumberg et al., 2005). During the process of interviewing the fifteen nominees on our list, we experienced a saturation regarding the obtained information after having interviewed over ten respondents. We found that although the respondents were located in different countries as well as different divisions of the company, their answers were quite similar. After completing the interviews and transcribing our recordings of the phone conversations, both the transcriptions and the written interview answers received via e-mail were printed.

4.2.2 Analyzing the collected data

After printing the interviews we sorted through them together, reading and commenting whilst taking notes of our spontaneous thoughts and reactions. We thereafter highlighted quotes that we perceived to be important, using different colors to mark different topics. By doing this, we soon began to see the emergence of a few themes that the interviews seemed to be centered around. Although the respondents were of different age, gender and ranged from newly employed to having worked for the company for many years – we did not observe any noticeable discrepancies in their answers that could be related to these factors. In other words, the pattern of the respondents' answers did not appear to be related to such factors as age, gender or length of their employment. The next step was connecting the observed themes to our research questions. The citations from each interview that could be linked to a specific research question were put together in a mind map-like structure. Through this process the overall pattern of the respondents' answers was mapped out, and we could subsequently start to compile the data in running text.

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5. Empirical data

In this section we start by describing the statistical data that was collected from the statistical tool Google Analytics. Thereafter, we will present the results from the interviews, sorted by our research questions.

5.1 Research question 1: *What characterizes the employees' behavior on Mölnlycke Health Care's new intranet?*

To bring clarity to our first research question, we used both quantitative data from the website statistics service Google Analytics and qualitative data obtained from our interviews.

5.1.1 Characteristics of the intranet visits

Google Analytics is a web-based tool for collecting statistical data from websites, and we used it to get quantitative data about the quantity, length and depth of visits on the intranet. The number of page views per day has been spread out evenly over the weeks since the launch of the new intranet. Every day the page views amount to approximately 11000-14000, with a small decline on Fridays. There are considerably fewer page views during the weekends, with about 1000 visits a day. Since whenever an employee opens the web browser, the start page is the first page of the intranet, this explains why there are more page views than employees at the company. When it comes to the depth of the visits, 81,61 % of the visitors only viewed one page and 8,11 % viewed two pages. This means that 10,28 % viewed more than two pages. During the weekends, an average visit to the intranet had four page views and the employees also spent more time on each page. On top of the list of the most frequently visited pages were Locations, i.e. different offices, followed by articles on various topics. On the list were also a few sites with product information as well as sites providing self-service for the employees through for example templates and how-to guides.

In the interviews, all of the respondents stated that they use the intranet every, or every other day - in other words we have not encountered anyone who claims to actively refuse usage of it. Prior to the launch of the new intranet, Mölnlycke Health Care announced the undertaken changes and stressed the importance of every employee taking part of the information about the intranet. The company provided instructions on how to use the functions and emphasized the importance of filling out the personal profile. All of the interviewed employees perceived that they had received *some kind* of information about the new intranet and how to use it, either by receiving a booklet with instructions, information handed out by e-mail or by attending information meetings held by

the IT-section. The respondents mainly use the intranet as a tool in their daily work. Additionally, the respondents who most often use the intranet are the ones working in locations where it has been decided that all local information will be put on the intranet. In comparison, on locations where it is *not* standard procedure to put information on the intranet alternative means of communication, like e-mail or phone calls, are used to a high extent to provide the employees with information. Or as one respondent put it:

"*Since people know that not many people visit the new intranet we get information through e-mail*".

The poll on the first page where employees can vote on different topics is popular amongst the respondents since it is a very quick way to give an opinion. Reading an article and making a comment requires a bit more effort and time, and the lack of time is a recurring theme in the interviews. All of the respondents claim that they do not have enough time to surf the intranet for other purposes than work-related ones. This means that when the respondents surf the intranet, they are focused on a specific task and/or to get an answer to a specific question. Thus, they have no time to read random articles or simply to learn how to use the intranet by exploring it in their own time. In other words, because of the fact that the respondents are focused on their work tasks, they do not experience that they have enough time to surf around randomly:

"*My work is mostly to be out on the road. When I'm in front of a computer I have to prepare for my work and have no time to read anything else.*"

"*It takes a lot of time to read the articles and I have to focus on my work.*"

"*I haven't had time yet to take in everything on the intranet, since we've had a high workload recently.*"

An interesting aspect of the lack of time is the observation that the respondents are using different "shortcuts", as mentioned in the review of Pellegrino's (2003) study, to make their work more efficient. In other words, they chose to work in the way that takes the least time. If using the intranet takes too long, they will often use a shortcut like making a phone call or sending an e-mail to colleagues that can help them. In that way they perceive that their work is carried out more efficiently, since they can access the required information faster.

The employees' behavior on Mölnlycke Health Care's intranet is characterized by a steady daily usage. This pattern is visible both in the statistics of Google Analytics and in the information given by the respondents regarding the frequency of their visits. However, what we believe to be the most important characteristic is that the respondents' behavior on the intranet is first and foremost work-related. The intranet is used as a tool in their day-to-day work, and therefore the respondents' visits to the intranet are made for specific, work-related purposes. Because of this purpose-oriented intranet behavior, the respondents do not randomly surf around to explore the intranet.

5.2 Research question 2: *Which aspects of the intranet are the most/least appreciated?*

In answering our second research question we present the most appreciated aspects of the intranet, and explain why the most appreciated function at the same time was the object of the most negative comments.

5.2.1 Positive feedback

Overall, the respondents appreciated the visual aspect of the intranet, and the new design of the intranet was thought to be appealing and "*modern*". As stated above, the poll on the first page where employees can vote on different topics is popular amongst the respondents since it is a quick and easy way to make a contribution:

> "*The ratings and votings are easy and make the intranet more dynamic.*"

Another reason for its popularity is that the respondents perceive that this poll shows that the company values the employees' opinions:

> "*It is good to get opinions from the workers and I like to vote on different topics.*"

Regarding the articles, they were generally said to be interesting, varied and of appropriate length - "*not too long and not too short*". Positive comments were also made about the general language use on the intranet, it was said to be a pleasant mix of formal and informal language. One respondent claimed that:

"The informal and friendly tone of the articles and the comments makes the company much more approachable."

The most appreciated articles often concerned a particular employee, and were claimed to be more entertaining to read because they contained a personal story. Articles about the charity organization "Operation Smile" became popular due to the personal involvement of a few employees. These employees have been involved in Operation Smile as volunteers, and in the articles share stories of this experience. One employee explained:

"Operation Smile is fun to read about because it is more personal. It is easier to relate to when you know that it concerns one person and his or her story."

Operation Smile also had an effect on the most visited personal profiles. According to Google Analytics, the most popular personal profiles were three employees from different European locations. The number of visitors on these three profiles significantly exceeded the average profile page views, and their common denominator is that they were all featured in articles about Operation Smile. Furthermore, the pictures in the articles and comments made by other colleagues were appreciated. The function for comments and suggestions was said to make the intranet dynamic and more interactive. In addition, the employees valued the short Twitter-like messages made by the executive team.

5.2.2 The search function

As mentioned above, the main purpose of the respondents intranet visits have to do with their day-to-day work, and the most important function on the intranet was therefore said to be the search function. The respondents mainly use the intranet to search for product information, company information and manuals that they use in their work. Sometimes they also use it to establish contact with colleagues who can help them with certain tasks. One of the respondents stated:

"I managed to find people I never worked with in other locations to get help with tasks regarding work."

One of the respondents had also been contacted herself through the intranet, as another employee had found her through searching for the specific function that she occupied. As stated above, in launching the new intranet the company stressed the importance of filling out the personal profile

page. However, the respondents overall pointed out the problem of other employees not filling out their profile completely, thus making them harder to find in searching for functions or certain qualifications. Interestingly enough many of the respondents had themselves not filled out their own profile page completely, in most cases the reason for this was said to be the reoccurring theme of lack of time, and in some cases the reason was *''not finding a good enough photo''*. Amongst all of the respondents, the search function was both the most appreciated area as well as the area receiving the most complaints. As two respondents said:

"The search function is much better on the new intranet, and yet it is the area which could still be improved."

"Since the activity on the intranet is centered around a search function which doesn't work very well, everything is gonna collapse if they don't improve it."

Although many respondents claimed that they were having trouble navigating through the new intranet, some of them admitted that this may be due to the fact that they are not yet accustomed to it. One of the respondents, who commented negatively on the search function to a high extent, admitted:

"Every change is difficult. The newly hired people think that the new intranet is good, so maybe I have a different view because I'm used to the old intranet."

5.2.3 Summary for research question 2

The respondents were positive about the intranet's new design as well as the articles, and they overall expressed appreciation for the new functions that allows commenting, voting and rating. The most appreciated function was the search function, as it is an indispensable tool in the respondents' daily work. The demands on the search function are high because of its vital importance, and the respondents were unanimous in their request for improvements of it. That is why the search function was the most appreciated aspect of the intranet and at the same time the one receiving the most negative comments.

5.3 Research question 3: *What affects the employees' decision to either actively contribute or passively follow what happens on the intranet?*

To answer our third research question, we made an effort to map out the respondents' reasons for contributing as well as for staying passive.

5.3.1 Contributing through commenting

As stated above, all respondents agreed on the good quality of the articles. However, most of them had not used the comment box connected to each article. The main reason for not contributing was said to be the fear of making a fool of oneself, either because of language issues - in other words, the fear of misspelling or misinterpreting the contents of the article - or because of the fact that their comment would be visible to the whole organization. As two respondents put it:

"I would certainly think twice before making a comment on an article, because I'm very aware that what I write will be visible to my boss."

"I haven't been using the comment box in the articles because it's seen by the whole company, and you don't want to look silly, do you?"

Another reason for not contributing through commenting was the lack of affinity with the subject or area related to the article. The few respondents who had used the comment box all did so because the article was somehow related to them or their work area. The respondents had made comments on articles related to their own geographic area and on subjects that they had a personal connection to. As described in the *Case Study Background*, the comments were mainly short, positive feedback on the activity described in the article. Generally, the respondents who had not used the comment boxes claimed that they did not see the purpose of commenting on an article that was not related to them. As one respondent asked:

"Why would anyone want my opinion on something that I have nothing to do with?"

However, of the non-commenting respondents, a majority said that they would use the comment box if they read an article concerning their own area. For example, one respondent from [Location A] explained:

"I haven't had any need to comment on an article, but I would comment if there was something that concerned [Location A]. Like if there was something good happening I could write `Good for you [Location A]`."

5.3.2 Obstacles to an active contribution

As stated above, the respondents mentioned experiencing difficulties in contacting other employees on the intranet. First of all, finding other employees was said to be difficult because several employees had not filled out their profile completely and thereby could not be found through the search function. Second, the reoccurring theme of the lack of time made the respondents use shortcuts as a faster way to find information. Third, some of the respondents claimed that they had language problems and thought that their English was not sufficient for interacting with other employees. One of the respondents, who answered via e-mail, wrote:

"First of all, you need to have one language for all employees, and then *you can understand your colleagues all over the world."*

However, the main explanation for not contacting other employees was that the respondents simply did not have a reason for it. The respondents who contacted others mainly did so because they needed help with work related topics - in other words, the respondents needed a reason for interaction. The answers overall stated that the respondents would certainly interact more if their job tasks would require more contact with other employees. The respondents were positive to the opportunities offered by the intranet and see a huge potential in how they could get in touch with other employees around the world. Bearing in mind the widely dispersed divisions and locations, and although some of the respondents thought that much remains to be done before Mölnlycke Health Care is "one" company - most of them still perceive it to be a united organization. The intranet was told to be a tool for this, or as two respondents put it:

"On the new intranet, the corporate news and information we receive shows us a global view of the company. So I think that Mölnlycke Health Care is a united company for me now."

"Our divisions are very different but more and more co-working is happening. Before we were very separated, but now the company is more united than ever."

In other words, the respondents are enthusiastic about having colleagues all over the world and

recognize the opportunity to learn about other divisions of the company and *"about your neighboring country"* through for instance articles about different projects and markets. When asked what could make respondents contribute more, the comments often concerned ways to facilitate or increase the interaction amongst the employees, for instance by enabling personal status updates, a personal announcement board or a forum where the employees can trade various items with each other. Some of the suggestions to increase the interaction were:

"A Twitter-type of thing with personal status updates could make me interact more with others, because then I would have an excuse to write them something. Like if their children are sick or something."

"At my former workplace, we had a marketplace for personal stuff, where we could swap clothes or sell furniture. It was a really nice and non-formal way to get to know somebody. If you have been swapping your kids' skates with someone, it's much easier to contact this person for job-related tasks."

5.3.3 Summary for research question 3

Most of the respondents had not contributed to the intranet by posting comments or contacting other employees. The reasons for not contributing through commenting were both fear of making a fool of oneself and that they did not see the purpose of commenting on an area that was not related to themselves. Correspondingly, the respondents who had contributed through commenting did so because they had some sort of connection with the subject in the articles. The reasons for not contacting other employees were partly that they were hard to find and that the lack of time therefore made the respondents use faster shortcuts. However, the main reason for not interacting was that the respondents did not perceive that they have had a reason for contact.

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6. Analysis

Going back to the introduction to this case study, we observed that the business sphere has become aware of the economic potential within the area of social media, due to the outstanding success of this segment of the market. Social media features are now found not only on social networking sites, but also within corporate intranets. Mölnlycke Health Care's new intranet was launched with the intention of creating social interaction amongst the employees. The company wants the employees to engage in the intranet, as this is perceived to increase commitment to Mölnlycke Health Care as well as to colleagues around the world – thus creating a more united company. We formed a theoretical base after reviewing relevant literature, and mapped out the employees' behavior in the intranet by collecting empirical data through semi-structured interviews. In this section we will reflect on how the empirical data answers to our research questions. We will analyze these answers and make an effort to place them in a wider theoretical context.

6.1 Research question 1: *What characterizes the employees' behavior on Mölnlycke Health Care's new intranet?*

In analyzing the answers to the first research question, we map out the characteristics of the intranet behavior in a theoretical context and reflect on the deeper implications of it.

6.1.1 The work-related behavior

As presented in the empirical data, the respondents' behavior on Mölnlycke Health Care's intranet is characterized by a steady daily usage. The respondents' intranet usage was also observed to be primarily work-related, which made their intranet behavior rather purpose-oriented. Even though the intranet was redesigned and new features were incorporated, the employees still have the same need for information and therefore mainly use the intranet as a tool in their day-to-day work. A deeper implication of this is that regardless of the efforts to make the intranet more attractive and effective, we presume that it will not give much of an effect unless the employees learn how to use the intranet for their own purposes. The reoccurring theme of lack of time showed that the respondents did not make efforts to explore the intranet since they would rather spend that time on their ordinary work tasks. As pointed out in the reviewed literature, employees are prone to use shortcuts (Pellegrino, 2003). This means that if the employees do not learn how to use the intranet they will always use the fastest way - which in this context means old, well-tried routines, for example e-mail or phone calls - to get what they need. The concept of connected practice (Spante, 2009) also implies that users must be given time to develop social structures on the intranet by

using it over time. Thus, one way that Mölnlycke Health Care could stimulate the employees to use the intranet more frequently is to make an effort to incorporate the employees' shortcuts, for example through creating fast links to pages they often use or people they often need to contact.

Another aspect of the usage is that the respondents seem to be frustrated since they *want* to use the intranet, but their insufficient understanding of how it works creates an obstacle - thus forcing them to use shortcuts. This is supported by Spante (2009) who claims that if users are having difficulties in figuring out how to use the technology, the technology becomes less accepted as a tool for connecting people and interaction. Findings in the Knowledge Management-literature also made it clear that the mere existence of a collaborative technology is not sufficient to make employees use it (Clark and Cooper, 2000; Wong, 2005). Therefore, from our point of view, if the employees got to know the intranet better, for example if they were given time to "learn by doing" or attended user courses, this could prove to result in higher usage rates. Because of the respondents' inclination towards needing to have a purpose or goal for what they do, we find it likely that the employees will become motivated to use the intranet as they understand how to use it for their own purposes.

6.1.2 The roles of management

The reviewed literature from the Knowledge Management-area highlighted the importance of top management support (Alazmi and Zairi, 2003; Wong, 2005). This was supported by the empirical data we collected as it showed that the locations where the local management had pushed for all information to be exclusively put on the intranet showed higher usage rates than other locations. Our interpretation is that commitment towards the intranet to a high extent can be affected by the management's attitude towards it. In other words, if local management is positive towards the intranet and encourages the employees to use it, this is likely to result in a higher commitment towards the intranet amongst the employees. Another crucial role of local management is to give the employees *time*, and to communicate the different ways in which the intranet is an important aspect of their work, because of the employees' work-focused behavior. Since our findings in the empirical data implied that the lack of time was one of the main reasons for not exploring the intranet to the fullest, more time given by the management could compensate for the employees' perception that time is taken from their actual work. Thus, the support of local management could be manifested by allowing the employees to take time to explore the intranet, for example by organizing the previously mentioned user courses.

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Another aspect of time, also mentioned in the Literature review, is that the employees have not yet had sufficient time to develop the social structure that will form the framework for their online behavior. According to Pellegrino (2003), implementing new technology is a slow process, and it takes time for it to become part of the employees' routines. Also, Spante's (2009) concept of connected practice implies that the users must be given time to develop a common practice, and this could only be done by using the intranet over a longer period of time. The aspect of developing a common practice is discussed further below, in our analysis of the answers to the second research question.

6.2 Research question 2: *Which aspects of the intranet are the most/least appreciated?*

Our analysis of the answers to the second research question examines the importance of how the employees' likes and dislikes contribute to the development of the intranet's social atmosphere.

6.2.1 The current situation

In answering our second research question we established that besides the respondents' requests for improvements of the search function, they altogether had a positive attitude towards the intranet. More specifically, they pointed out their appreciation for the friendly tone of communication. In analyzing the respondents' likes and dislikes, we got an idea of how they currently perceive the atmosphere on the intranet. We draw the conclusion that the intranet generally seems to be associated with an amicable atmosphere. However, another part of the intranet environment is the cautious behavior of the users, signifying that they mostly are active only within areas that they are already familiar with. We believe that the fact that the users prefer to stay within their comfort zone fosters an atmosphere of passiveness. The cautious behavior raises the question of whether the atmosphere really is as open and friendly as the respondents claim, or if there in fact are other – less amicable - aspects of the social interaction that were not unveiled in this study.

6.2.2 Designing the "right" atmosphere

As mentioned in the literature review, the employees have not yet had sufficient time to fully develop the social structure that will form the framework for their online behavior, since the intranet is newly launched. Spante's (2009) concept of connected practice implies that the users must be given time to develop a common practice, i.e. socially constructed rules for behavior, and this could only be done by using the intranet over a longer period of time. Since these social structures are in the process of evolving they can still be influenced. Even if the current social structure on the intranet shows an inclination towards passiveness, the structure is not yet cemented and Mölnlycke

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Health Care therefore still has the possibility to push the users towards becoming more active. In helping the employees become more and more comfortable in using the intranet, the company will encourage the development of a common practice that favors commitment towards the intranet. Furthermore, in creating an atmosphere of intranet commitment appreciated by the employees the intranet is likely to get loyal users, as Spante (2009) also stated that a valued social environment motivates long-term loyalty amongst users.

6.2.3 The aspect of trust

According to Wong (2005) and Chiu et al. (2006), creating mutual trust between individual employees as well as groups was found to be crucial in order to enable social interaction. Therefore, we find it likely that an atmosphere of trust would make the employees more comfortable with interacting with each other and contributing to the intranet. As stated by the respondents, the fear of making a fool of oneself – i.e. the lack of trust - restrains not only the contributions through comments and such, but also the social interaction. The risk implied for the employees is that demonstrating uncertainty or a lack of knowledge in public on the intranet could have negative consequences for their reputation – or even affect their career. However, in our empirical data we found that the respondents seem to be curious about other divisions of the company, and interested in establishing contact with other employees. This provides a beneficial breeding ground for developing an atmosphere that encourages both social interaction and contribution. We believe that if Mölnlycke Health Care can help increase the level of trust, this would have a positive effect on the employees' commitment to the intranet.

This leads us to the question of whether the feature of rating the articles serves its purpose. If Mölnlycke Health Care aims to create an open and friendly environment similar to that on Facebook, if the articles that contain personal stories get a low rating, how would this affect the concerned employees' perception of the "friendly" atmosphere? Although sites like YouTube and many online newspapers have the feature of rating posted videos and articles, there is a clear distinction in comparison to social networking-sites like Facebook, where the only possibility for rating the uploaded information is to "like" it - in other words: the only feedback one can give is positive. To sum up, the atmosphere on the intranet is currently perceived as friendly and demonstrates an inclination for passiveness, but the social structures are not yet cemented and can still be influenced since the intranet is quite new. If the company wishes to encourage commitment on the intranet, it needs to be considered to what extent the users should be able to make judgments

about one another. As long as the given judgments are positive the atmosphere will naturally be friendly, but what happens if the atmosphere is instead permeated by negative judgments, and maybe even bullying. The question is: is this risk worth taking?

6.3 Research question 3: *What affects the employees' decision to either actively contribute or passively follow what happens on the intranet?*

In our analysis of the third research question, we dig deeper into the respondents' level of commitment towards the intranet and how this commitment is linked to the social intranet design. We also explain what affects the decision to contribute or not, and what the company can do if they wish to encourage commitment.

6.3.1 The observed level of commitment

In our attempt to get an overview of the employees' behavior on the intranet, we used the scale of intranet commitment (as visualized in 2.2.4. Image 1) to map out the characteristics of their behavior. In clarifying whether the employees actively contribute to or passively follow what happens on the intranet, we also hoped to discover what affected their decision to do so. Our findings in the collected empirical data made it clear that none of the respondents were resisting usage, and thereby we did not find any respondent that could be placed on the minimum end of the scale. As an employee at Mölnlycke Health Care, one is not only expected to use the intranet, but also actually needs it to search for information in the daily work. All employees have an intranet-account, and whenever an employee opens the web browser, the first page is the start page of the intranet. Thereby, according to our observations, the employees are to be found between the middle and the maximum of the scale of intranet commitment. However, the range of behavior between passively following and actively contributing is wide, with large individual differences between the respondents regarding the degree of contribution. Even though all of the respondents use the intranet as a tool to search for information, there are those who only skim over the content on the first page without looking deeper into its contents. A majority however, are passively following the news on the intranet by for example reading an article or the executive updates. Although only a few are actively contributing to the intranet, the current situation could be viewed as a good starting point for increasing commitment towards the intranet, as pointed out above in the analysis of the second research question. Since each employee already has got an account and the overall attitudes towards the intranet are positive, we believe this to provide a beneficial breeding ground for developing further commitment.

One of the main points from the Knowledge Management-area was that defining the intranet-strategy of the company is crucial (Hansen et al., 1999). Considering the outstanding success of social media (Eurostat, 2010; The Nielsen Group, 2010; Universal McCann, 2010) we believe that it is undoubtedly tempting for companies to attempt creating an intranet similar to the social network websites. But although incorporating social features is currently the "hottest" trend in the area of intranet design (McConnell, 2011), the question is whether the functions of a social network similar to Facebook and those of a corporate information hub can really be united in one intranet. In the reviewed literature there was no consensus regarding the advantages and disadvantages of incorporating social features into intranets. Payne (2008) and Williams (2011) were optimistic about the opportunities of social software, claiming the implementation of it could lead to business success due to the boosted collaboration capability. Skepticism concerned the conceptual conflict between the centralized nature of intranets and the decentralized structure of social media, with the bottom-up features found on the - privately used - Internet contradicting the top-down structure of organizations (Stenmark 2008; Thiry-Cherques, 2010).

We consider it to be important to keep in mind that Facebook and intranets operate in different contexts. Intranets are used in a professional context, and for many people Facebook is a private space where thoughts and pictures are shared amongst friends and family. Furthermore, there are different driving forces behind these different contexts. There is obviously another way of interacting in a corporate intranet, a social network like Facebook or a professional network such as LinkedIn. As mentioned earlier, showing uncertainty and inexperience in the intranet could possibly be a career killer, whilst it will not be evaluated in the same way on informal networking sites. Additionally, sites like Facebook are exclusively linked to one's private life, and a common understanding is that people prefer to keep their private life separate from their professional life. Therefore, trying to incorporate the private aspects that are found on social networking sites into a professional context can prove to be difficult.

Another question is whether it is even desirable to create such a strong commitment to the intranet amongst the employees. If the corporate intranet was indeed as important to an employee as the private networking sites, how would this affect the private life of this person? We presume that it is possible that the blurred lines between work and leisure time could create stress and/or personal conflicts, which would indeed make this excessive type of commitment a undesirable objective for

Mölnlycke Health Care. Furthermore, as stated in the frame of reference, full commitment from all users is likely to be counterproductive since it creates an information overload (Edenius and Borgersson, 2003). This being said, naturally we do not perceive *all* intranet commitment to be bad for the company. Quite the contrary, we believe that a certain amount of commitment from the employees can create a dynamic and inspirational intranet, and in the prolongation affect the organizational performance. We merely wish to point out that even though the success of Facebook is attractive - it might not be ideal for a company to strive for the intranet to receive the same extreme amount of commitment.

6.3.3 Affecting the level of contribution

So, what is it that lies behind the employees' decision to actively contribute to the intranet or not? Our findings in the empirical data implicated that the main reason for not contributing was that the respondents did not see the purpose of commenting on an area that was not related to them and accordingly did not interact with others if they did not have a reason for it. The respondents who had contributed through commenting did so because they had some sort of connection with the topic, location or person in the articles.

But how can Mölnlycke Health Care encourage the employees to take the step to actually initiate contact and become more active contributors to what happens on the intranet? The answer lies in the respondents' suggestions for improvements of the intranet. Most of the suggested improvements contained functions such as forums for trading various items or personal status updates. We interpret this as the respondents expressing an interest in contacting each other, but needing an excuse to do so. To write an e-mail or make a phone call to an unknown colleague is too far a distance to bridge for most of the respondents. But on the other hand, if they already have had some kind of contact, through for example swapping things or commenting on each other's' status, we believe that this would make the distance shorter and much more manageable. Shortening the social distance is also likely to affect the contributions to the articles' comment boxes. Almost all of the interviewed employees' would not mind contributing by commenting, but are restrained by their perceived lack of affinity with the articles. Again, the employees are willing to contribute but need an excuse to do so.

In conclusion, we found that the respondents had a fundamental willingness to interact with each other and actively contribute to the intranet. Mölnlycke Health Care could make use of this positive

attitude to increase commitment. The company just needs to help the employees take the first step in the desired direction by – as mentioned above – shortening the perceived social distance for them. This could be done by providing some kind of forum on the intranet where the employees can get their much needed *excuse* to contact each other under more informal circumstances.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of our case study was: *to analyze the employee's behavior in Mölnlycke Health Care's intranet by mapping out what characterizes their behavior and how committed they are to the intranet, as Mölnlycke Health Care has previously been a divided company and believes that the employees' commitment to the intranet may influence the overall dedication to the company.*

Our findings in this case study made it clear that the employees' intranet behavior was characterized by the fact that the employees first and foremost visit the intranet in work-related purposes and use it as a tool in their daily work. Many of the respondents were rather unfamiliar with using the intranet, and therefore used other means – that they perceived to be faster – to obtain the information they needed. Regarding the employees' level of intranet commitment, we found that none of our respondents was resisting usage. However, even though all respondents demonstrated some sort of commitment towards the intranet, there were large individual differences in the level of contribution – with a general inclination towards passively following what happens on the intranet. The passive behavior was predominantly explained by the respondents not experiencing a connection to the areas described in the articles, or lacking a reason for contacting other employees.

7.1 Recommendations

The final part of our case study contains our recommendations for Mölnlycke Health Care's future development of the intranet. We start by presenting our recommendations for encouraging the employees to use the intranet more:

- ⚐ *Ensure that local management is "on board" with the project*. More specifically, this means that local management should themselves be active users of the intranet, push for all information to be put on the intranet and give the employees time to explore the intranet, for example through user courses.

- ⚐ *Give the employees time to "learn by doing"*. Because of the employees' purpose-oriented intranet behavior, we believe that they will become motivated to use the intranet as they

understand how to use it for their own purposes.

⚔ *Technically incorporate the employees' shortcuts.* This would make the intranet become the fastest way for the employees to obtain information, and could be done by for example creating fast links to people or pages they often need.

According to the company, one of the main purposes of the new intranet is to drive commitment not only towards the company but also towards colleagues. We found that the current level of commitment, although it shows an inclination towards passiveness, provides a beneficial breeding ground for developing further intranet commitment. If Mölnlycke Health Care wishes to increase the employees' commitment to the intranet, we encourage the company to:

⚔ *Promote an atmosphere of trust.* This could increase both contributions and interaction, and requires the company to examine the intranet's design - for instance the aspect of the possibilities for users to make negative judgments about each other.

⚔ *Shorten the social distance between the employees*. The employees are positive towards interacting with each other, but the company needs to help them take the first step. This could be done by providing an excuse for the employees to contact each other under informal circumstances, for example by creating some kind of forum on the intranet.

Finally, we would also like to point out two remaining recommendations for the company, conceived from our case study:

⚔ *Anchoring the intranet in the organizational context.* In other words: not to be seduced by the success of social network websites, but instead using the company's reality as a starting point for further development of the intranet.

⚔ *Do a follow-up study*. We have adopted a process-based view on intranet behavior, but since our case study inevitably is a snap shot of the current situation we recommend Mölnlycke Health Care to follow up this study within 3-9 months to identify possible changes in intranet behavior.

7.2 Suggestions for further research

Through this case study we have scraped the surface of employee behavior on a corporate intranet. We have formed an idea of both how the company wants the employees to use the intranet and how the employees actually use the intranet. From this viewpoint one could proceed with our research by

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breaking down the components of our empirical findings and further analyzing these parts. For example we would find it interesting to examine the intranet visits during the weekend, as observed in the statistical tool Google Analytics. This approach could aim to find out which employees work during the weekend and why the weekend visits are of greater depth than the average visits during the week. Furthermore, we would like to point out that although we take a stab at investigating the motivational factors in our case study – that is, what affects the employees' decision to actively contribute or to passively follow what happens on the intranet. We encourage future research to focus on the motivational aspect, as it may provide a deeper understanding for how to stimulate employee participation.

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Appendix 1: Template for interviews

General usage

Q1: What information have you received about the new intranet? Have you read the folder?

Q2: Have you filled out your profile?

Q3: How often do you use the intranet to search for information?

Q4: What was the purpose of your last three visits?

Q5: Did you observe other information than the information you were primarily searching for? If yes, what additional information did you become aware of?

Publications

Q6: How would you describe the publications in general?

Q7: What do you think about the quality of the publications?

Q8: Have you been using the comment box in the articles? Why/why not?

Q9: How do you perceive the tone of the communication (formal/informal, language use, variating or homogenous)?

Functions

Q10: Which functions on the intranet do you appreciate?

Q11: Which functions do you perceive as non-functional?

Q12: What do you percieve as better/worse with the new intranet?

Q13: Is there any difference how you use the new intranet in comparison to the old one?

Interaction

Q14: Have you established contact with other employees at Mölnlycke Health Care through the intranet? How come? Which colleagues? Are they working in other locations? What was the purpose of your contacting them? How often do you search for other employees?

Q15: Is there any difference in how you interact on the new intranet compared to the old one?

Q16: What could make you interact more with other employees?

Content

Q17: What division of Mölnlycke Health Care do you perceive publishes the information on the intranet?

Q18: Bearing in mind all the past acquisitions and fusions, do you perceive that Mölnlycke Health Care now has become a united company? How is this reflected on the intranet?

Q19: How do you receive information regarding activities and events that concern your work?

In conclusion: Do you have any suggestions for improvements of the intranet?

Background questions:

What year were you born?

How long have you been an employee at Mölnlycke Health Care?

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