Google

The World's Best Employer?

Bachelor Thesis
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We take, naturally, full responsibility for any inadequacies or errors that may remain in this work.

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Sara Holmkvist   Sofia Wikström

Abstract

PLEASE READ THIS CAREFULLY. IT'S NOT THE USUAL YADA YADA.[1]

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Title Google – The World's Best Employer?

Problem As the world becomes more and more dependent on the Internet, Google, with its array of Internet-based services, has come to play an increasingly large role in this new era. The company won first place in FORTUNE Magazine's annual list of "100 Best Companies to Work For", after having placed in the top 5 for some years now. For this reason, Google caught our interest and our curiosity about the company led us to these questions:

Why are prospective employees attracted to Google as an employer, and how can the reason behind this attraction be elucidated through an organizational storytelling perspective?

From a storytelling viewpoint - What external image does Google communicate through branding, and is there a gap between the branded corporate culture and the employees' perceptions of said branded corporate culture?

Aim The aim of this study is to analyze and explore the reasons why Google is widely considered one of the world's best employers, and through interviews and other empirical data try to determine if the external image supports the internal corporate culture as it is perceived by outsiders and employees at the company. Our discussion will be made through a storytelling perspective.

Limitations This study does not include any information or analysis concerning integrity policies, monopoly tendencies, technical matters and does also to a large extent exclude business strategy. Also worth acknowledging is that we have to the utmost possible extent tried to focus on the viewpoint of the employees rather than the viewpoint of the company.

Method This is a qualitative, single-case study with primary empirical data in the form of four conducted interviews and secondary empirical data we have collected through the works of a management consultant, an innovation management researcher and a journalist, all of whom have studied Google with the help of firsthand interviews. Furthermore, one of the books we have used and cited in this study has been compiled by a former employee at the company.

Findings Google attracts young and entrepreneur-spirited individuals; the reason being different factors such as high autonomy levels, work environment of intelligent and creative individuals, influential brand value, exclusiveness, focus on teamwork and flexibility. The branded corporate culture does not fully correspond to the employees' perception of said branded corporate culture due to differences between different international offices and flexibility. Neither high work demands nor peer reviews/surveillance are branded, but found to be central areas of the corporate culture in the empirical study.

Keywords Organizational Storytelling, Employer Branding, Organizational Culture, Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, Work Environment, Work-Life Balance, Curiosity, Autonomy, Flexibility, Google

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[1] "PLEASE READ THIS CAREFULLY. IT'S NOT THE USUAL YADA YADA. By using the Advanced Features version of the Google toolbar, you may be sending information about the sites you visit to Google." Famous phrase coined by Douglas Edwards in 2000 (Edwards, 2011, p. 195).

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1. Introduction

In this chapter we will present the reason behind our decision to write this thesis, the purpose of our study, our problem statement and try to guide the reader through the structure and disposition of the content. Lastly, we will acknowledge the parts of our research that have been excluded.

1.1 Birth of Thesis

> "Google is definitely a strong brand name. It's very attractive; you clearly notice this when you're applying for other jobs, that 'Google' stands out. It's so extraordinarily strong that it's almost like, when having it on your resume, you see the colorful logo. That's what people see, even if you don't actually have it."
>
> *Elias, 2012*

In a world where individual dependence on the internet has become an undeniable fact, the Internet giant Google has rapidly expanded its influence in our modern society with a diverse array of technological services. Google is, however, not merely a lucrative Internet company, but also widely considered to be one of the world's best employers. The work environment at Google is frequently described as creative, innovative, fun and playful with many employee benefits – in short, a company that truly cares for its workers. This notion is now widespread, and left us wondering how Google manages to provide its employees with such benefits, when many companies its size are plagued by bureaucratic red tape and notorious corporate inflexibility? Also, are the perks truly the reason why many apply to work at Google, and are the employee benefits in fact too good to be true?

Our curiosity led to long hours of research, and after conducting interviews and analyzing several published works and journal articles on factors that were relevant to the aforementioned questions, this thesis was born.

1.2 Background – Google

> "Google's mission is to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful."
>
> *Google About, 2012*

It would not be too hyperbolic a statement to suggest that everyday life is getting more inconvenient without using Google and its associated products and services. This seems to apply to at least the vast majority of the general public that is familiar with the brand, as an increasing amount of people in Western society is virtually becoming dependent on its services (Ekström, 2010). The success derives from their very first service, the search engine, which peaked at eighty-six percent of the global market share for desktops in April 2010. In Sweden, the Google search engine has currently an even higher market share of ninety-five percent (NetMarketShare, 2012). Gmail, Google's email service, is also expanding rapidly and today used not only at home, but by universities and corporations buying and integrating the service into their own businesses (Ekström, 2010).

Google has been highly involved, if not a pioneer, in the extremely rapid development of information and communication technology. At present, we believe that it is possible to draw the conclusion that Google is the one of the most important companies of this Internet era, as the site was the most visited site on the web in 2011 for US users, obtaining 153,441,000 unique American visitors a month (BBC, 2011). To *"google"* has in fact become an official verb in many languages around the world, commonly with the definition *"to search the Internet for information"* (CNET News, 2006: Oxford Dictionaries, 2012) despite the fact that the company was created as late as in 1998 (Girard, 2009; Edwards, 2011).

1.3 Purpose of Study

This study focuses on determining what it is about Google that attracts so many of the young and well-educated segments of the modern workforce. Our ambition is to explore the external image of the company, as we believe that this is a major underlying factor behind the company's popularity. To answer our problem statement, we have to find out what employees define as a good work place and a good work environment, and what is crucial in defining a good employer.

After determining what factors are viewed by employees as the hallmarks of a great employer, we will try to learn if the external image of the company's work environment communicated

by Google through both marketing and employer branding, truly correlates with the perception of its employees. Our aim is therefore to better understand the internal culture of Google.

In this thesis, we will specifically focus on the organizational culture of the company, and we have accordingly tried to explore it from both an internal and external viewpoint. Furthermore, we have to the utmost possible extent tried to focus on the viewpoint of the employees rather than the viewpoint of the company.

1.4 Problem Statement

Our inquisitive nature and predilection for Organizational Storytelling led us to these questions:

Why are prospective employees attracted to Google as an employer, and how can the reason behind this attraction be elucidated through an organizational storytelling perspective?

From a storytelling viewpoint - What external image does Google communicate through branding, and is there a gap between the branded corporate culture and the employees' perceptions of said branded corporate culture?

1.5 Disposition

Our second chapter is called Methodology, and here we present how we have conducted our research, introduce our interviewees and acknowledge the validity and reliability of our thesis.

In our third chapter called Theoretical Framework, we present the theories we use later on to analyze our empirical results in the chapter entitled Analysis. Organizational Storytelling is presented first as our main theoretical frame, since our discussion will be based on this. Employer branding is presented shortly thereafter as a minor part of Organizational Storytelling, as we believe this to be of less importance in our study. The reason for this is because employer branding normally aims to look at company strategies and is from the viewpoint of the employer. Later, we present other theories on for instance intrinsic motivation and psychological well-being.

In our fourth chapter, Empirical Studies, we briefly touch upon the history of the corporate culture, since we believe that the history has shaped a large part of the "Googely Culture" we

see today. Secondly, we present the external image of Google, both branding with a marketing perspective (to end-consumers) and also the employer branding Google uses to attract potential employees. Lastly we examine the internal culture of Google, "The Google Culture", where we dig deeper into the actual culture of the company. Through interviews and secondary empirical data, we explore further how working at the company is perceived by former interns and individuals with insight into the company. We will then be able to determine whether the external image of Google actually corresponds with the perceived internal Google culture.

In the chapter Analysis, we combine our empirical findings with the theoretical framework in order to better understand our results. In our second to last chapter we present our Discussion where we discuss our problem statement with the help of Organizational Storytelling. This way, we can gain a deeper understanding of the corporate culture. We will let the theories on Organizational Storytelling consistently guide our way throughout the study.

Lastly, our Conclusions are presented to shortly summarize our findings and the results of our discussion, followed by alternative ways the study could have been conducted and suggestions for further research.

1.6 Limitations

Important areas we have chosen exclude are questions of integrity policies, monopoly tendencies, technical matters and to a large extent also business strategy. These areas are typically related to Google when analyzing the company and therefore we would like to clearly draw attention to the fact that this thesis will exclude these areas. Another area that could have been discussed since it is related to the content of our thesis, but that we chose to exclude to a large extent, is leadership within the company.

2 Methodology

In this chapter we will present the methods we have used in order to conduct our research. We will introduce our interviewees and the secondary data we have used and acknowledge the validity and reliability of our thesis.

2.1 Method of Data Collection and Selection of Respondents

The thesis is a single-case study focused on the company Google Inc., since our study aims to gain deeper insights into the unique corporate culture of this company. We have decided to make a qualitative study, using both secondary and primary empirical data. The choice to include secondary data is due to difficulties we experienced when trying to get in contact with the company. The problem was further corroborated by one of our interviewees, Ekström (2012), who claimed that it is almost impossible to contact the company since Google does not prioritize talking with journalists let alone students, which is not something the company does out of spite but due to the unmanageable amount of interview requests they receive. Another one of our interviewees, Steiber (int, 2012) claims it took her one and a half years to get approval on her proposal to investigate the innovation management within Google, Inc.

For these reasons we have decided to conduct our empirical research through both secondary and primary data. This is also a reason to why the choice of respondents was done using a non-probability selection as a strategic choice on our part, where we chose accessible and interesting individuals we believed could contribute to our study in different ways.

2.2 Research Conducted

2.2.1 Interviews

We have conducted four semi-structured interviews, based on questions designed prior to the meeting, which gave us the opportunity to also ask new questions during the interview (Blumberg, et al., 2011). The interviews lasted between thirty and sixty minutes each. Due to localization, two of the interviews were made over the phone, and the other two were conducted face-to-face. Three of the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Our interviewees are listed below. The interns we interviewed are both majoring in Economics at the University of Gothenburg and have been made anonymous; they will throughout the thesis be referred to as Elias (2012) and Tosh (2012). All interviewees are of the same nationality[2].

Steiber (2012), Ph.D. in Technology, Department of Technology Management and Economics at Chalmers University of Technology, has conducted research at Google Inc. over the course of nearly a year. For her Ph.D. thesis on organizational innovation, she interviewed twenty-eight individuals from different departments at Google HQ in Mountain View, California, but also at Google sites in Europe and Asia (Steiber (int), 2012).

Ekström (2012), journalist at Sydsvenska Dagbladet. Ekström has visited Google and conducted interviews with several individuals at the company at multiple offices, such as Google HQ in Mountain View, and offices in Stockholm, Washington, D.C and Reston, Virginia.

Elias (2012), a former intern at Google Oslo, worked as an associate product marketing manager during the time period of August 2011 until February 2012.

Tosh (2012), a former intern at Google Dublin, worked as part of the team global operations processes and systems during the time period of June 2011 until September 2011.

All of the respondents will be further presented in the chapter Empirical Studies.

2.2.2 Literature

In order to analyze and interpret our empirical research we used theoretical models found in literature focused on Organizational Culture, Motivation (including intrinsic motivation, curiosity and job enrichment), Work Environment (including stress, teamwork and work-life balance), Organizational Storytelling and Employer Branding. Our main theoretical frame is Organizational Storytelling.

In our empirical study we used literature written by individuals with insight into the company, for instance a researcher, a journalist, a management consultant and a former employee. Secondary data is defined by Blumberg et al (2011) as *"information or data that has already been collected and recorded by someone else, usually for other purposes"*. A

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[2] Sweden

main advantage of using secondary data is that it is time-saving (Blumberg, et al., 2011), but in our situation we chose to include secondary data to a large extent due to continuous problems when trying to obtain information directly from company employees through interviews.

2.3 Validity and Reliability

A methodological approach when defining *validity* could be explained as whether the information measured is the information that was in fact intended to be measured (Adams, et al., 2007). *Reliability* is defined by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) as pertaining how consistent and trustworthy the research findings are, often treated in relation to whether the data has been produced earlier and by other researchers. The latter may impact the result if the interviewee could have given different answers to other interviewers. Kvale and Brinkmann discuss in particular interviewer reliability in relation to leading questions, where a slight rewording of a question may influence the answer.

Validity is typically thought of as more important than reliability since an instrument that does not accurately measure what it is intended to, is useless regardless of a high reliability (Adams, et al., 2007).

2.3.1 Reliability of the Study

Blumberg et al (2011) state that a main disadvantage regarding the usage of secondary data is that the data presented may not cover all the information needed to resolve the problem statement. We have not experienced this due to two reasons. First, we believe that our secondary empirical data has worked as a tool for further understanding of the company when conducting our interviews[3]. Second, the secondary empirical data did cover large extents of our problem statement, and since we also used primary empirical research, we learned the information we needed by simply "filling the gaps" of the secondary data through the interviews.

Another disadvantage Blumberg mentions on secondary data is that it may not be accurate enough. Since part of our secondary data is composed by a former employee, we regard this data to be reliable in the sense that the many examples of the organizational culture he

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[3] E.g. our insight into the OKR system before the interviews made our questions more precise regarding this area, since we could mainly focus on parts of the system we did not yet fully understand. The OKR system will be further described in chapter Empirical Studies.

mentions let the reader analyze the data him- or herself, instead of the author personally defining the culture. This leaves room for interpretation. Another part of our secondary data is collected by a management consultant who has, taking into account his profession and the fact that he is externally related to the company, a possibly more objective outlook on the company. Other empirical data we have conducted are mainly numbers and research done by quantitative studies, which come from highly reliable sources in the sense that they have already typically been referred to by a large number of prominent and respected business publications.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) state that leading questions may influence the response of the interviewee, and early in our research we were somewhat focused on *whether in fact the organizational culture could lead to social sanctions. F*or instance, Google has free food, but an employee that eats dinner at the company may also be expected to stay and work, or that the playgrounds and playrooms the company offers are not in fact used – in case one's reputation could be adversely affected. Despite continuous attempts on our behalf to find social sanctions within the company and possibly asking leading questions regarding this, we failed to learn that any of the interviewees in fact experienced social sanctions of any kind. However, we did find out that the company is much focused on high performance which could be linked to peer pressure and peer surveillance since employees are allowed insight into each other's projects and goals and also review the twenty percent projects[4]. These are the only leading questions we consider ourselves to have asked, and since we did not find our hypothesis on social sanctions to be correct, the reliability of these interview questions has, in our opinion, not been compromised through the leading questions.

All respondents were given the opportunity to read and amend their statements after the chapter Empirical Studies was completed in order to enhance the reliability of the thesis and avoid misunderstandings. As a result of this, some minor changes were made.

2.3.2 Validity of the Study

In qualitative research both *internal validity* and *external validity*[5] are typically taken into account; the internal validity refers to whether the data in fact is correctly portrayed by the investigator's conclusions without external factors possible affecting the data, and the external

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[4] The twenty percent projects will be further described in chapter Empirical Studies
[5] Also referred to as *generalizability*

validity refers to whether the conclusions are applicable to the rest of the population outside of the study (Bloor & Wood, 2006).

Bloor and Wood (2006) explain that it is desirable to use samples that are as representative for as much of the entire population as possible. In our case, we conducted interviews with individuals of the same nationality, something that could interfere with the validity of the thesis. Four interviews could be seen as a low number in order to acquire high validity results even in a qualitative study, and seeing that the interviewees all are of the same nationality this naturally affects the interview answers, with regards to the fact that Google is an international company. Moreover, half our secondary empirical data is of Swedish origin[6] and this could lower our validity due to the same reason.

The interviewees did, however, have experience from different international offices which we believe enhances the validity of their answers. Furthermore, the fact that the interviewees had different professions[7] we believe increases the level of validity. Nevertheless, both interns attended the same university prior to their internship, which could have shaped their perceptions of the company, given that they have received the same education. This could therefore affect the validity, seeing that we cannot conclude whether or not their answers were externally affected by this.

Since our study is qualitative, we do not aim to generalize in order to draw a conclusion regarding the entire company. Therefore we do not believe that our results are representative for all of Google.

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[6] The rest of our secondary empirical data is of French and American origin
[7] One external researcher, one external journalist, one internal associate product marketing manager and one internal global operations, processes and systems team member

3 Theoretical Framework

In our Theoretical Framework we aim to present the different theories we have chosen in order to analyze the empirical study. Our overall theoretical frame is Organizational Storytelling, as we will try to discuss our problem statement by looking at a broader perspective through the importance of the organizational narratives. Furthermore, we will also present a number of different theories related to organizational well-being regarding individuals, how companies shape their reputation as employers and overall theories on organizational culture.

3.1 Work Environment

Campbell Quick et al. (2009) present some key dimensions of workplace health according to the American Psychological Association. Some of them include: Involvement for the employees in decision making and higher rate of job autonomy, successful work-life balance, and employee recognition through monetary awards and non-monetary benefits (which, as previously stated, is highly connected to the value perceptions of the individuals). A couple of the key dimensions will be discussed below.

3.1.1 Stress and Challenging Goals

Making sure the workforce is not exposed to stress levels that could result in lower work performance and impact health, is playing an increasingly more important part within organizations today. Working unsociable hours is seen as typically interfering with the personal life of the individual, and attempts to balance home life with the demands of work have become one of the main causes of stress in our society. Another major cause of stress is unrealistic amounts of work and constantly working under time pressure with unmanageable deadlines (Johnson, 2009).

How the individuals perceive the organizational measures of control, i.e. how work is organized and whether the individual is involved in the procedures affecting his or her job is also strongly related to stress. The more control the individual has over his or her environment, the less likely he or she is to experience high levels of stress (Johnson, 2009). Also, by measuring the extent to which people experience satisfaction with their jobs and

positive sense of purpose regarding the work they are doing, it is possible to estimate psychological well-being (Flint-Taylor & Robertson, 2009).

Lately, new technology has resulted in an impression that life is moving more rapidly, and this has in turn forced an increasing amount of work activities to be squeezed into shorter time frames. This may result in higher levels of pressure on the individuals to work faster, for longer hours and to perform better (Behman, et al., 2009).

Sociologist Robert Karasek introduced in 1979 a model called *the Demand-Control Model*, which was further developed in 1990 by Karasek and Theorell. The model includes two main factors; *demand* and *control*. Jobs where demands are high on the individual, yet where he or she has low control over his or her workload, limit the individual's autonomy and causes stress. Low levels of control also cause low skill utilization as a consequence of monotone, repetitive tasks (Siegrist, 2009).

> "An individual's perception of his power will affect the goals he sets, the strategies he chooses and nature of the coalitions he joins."
>
> Original quote by Robert Lee and Peter Lawrence in 1985
>
> *Thomas & McHugh, 2002, p. 299*

If individuals feel empowered by opportunity to participate and have influence over their work load and work schedules, if they experience continuous learning opportunities and feel as if they are fairly rewarded for their innovation and creativity, the overall organizational health will be improved (Campbell Quick, et al., 2009).

Goals, *striving* and *achievement* are crucial for human well-being. Flint-Taylor and Robertson (2009) state that humans do not experience psychological well-being when there is an absence of these factors mentioned above, and claim that individuals report strongly heightened feelings of well-being after completing a major challenge. The feelings are stronger the harder the path leading to success was. Though, if the goals are impossible or unclear, the feelings are not altered in a similar manner and the reaction is very different. Control and autonomy over work is essential for motivational purposes and psychological well-being, and Flint-Taylor and Robertson claim that this in fact works best when the organization offers the individuals high levels of control and autonomy in combination with high (*not low*) demands. Flint-Taylor and Robertson emphasize that the experience of

challenging goals are critical in experiencing optimal psychological well-being, and that there is an important difference between challenging goals and stress.

Siegrist (2009) refers to these jobs mentioned by Flint-Taylor and Robertson as *active jobs* in the Demand-Control Model where demands are high and challenging, but where also the degree of decision authority is high together with intensified learning opportunities. Active jobs are health promoting and enable individuals to experience feelings of success and perceived ability to succeed.

Competition and competitive behavior can lead to destructive stress when the challenges are too difficult. However, up to a certain point while still not being over-the-top, some amount of well-managed competition boosts motivation and effort (Campbell Quick, et al., 2009).

3.1.2 Work-Life Balance

Behman et al. (2009) address the importance of a changed mindset when it comes to hiring full-time employed males with no responsibilities outside of work, underlining that these are typically characteristics of an ideal employee. The more central objective in life in a growing number of countries today seems to be having a successful job while being able to maintain a personal life. Work-life balance can therefore be defined as a balance or management of work demands and non-work responsibilities (e.g. social life, family). To successfully balance work and non-work generally results in higher levels of psychological well-being. Imbalance, on the contrary, increases stress levels and as a consequence, the quality of life appears to be lower (Behman, et al., 2009).

Some studies however, Behman et al. (2009) point out, indicate that a perfect balance between work and non-work is not necessary to experience the highest quality of life. Instead, individuals spending substantially more time with family (while categorized imbalanced), experience much higher levels of psychological well-being than individuals who successfully balance work and non-work. The studies also show that individuals reporting the lowest quality of life are those that typically spend significantly more time at work than with family and other non-work related responsibilities/interests.

Studies have also been conducted on personal characteristics of individuals, resulting in the conclusion that employees high on personal traits such as being approachable, open to

experience and extroverted maintain an easier balance in their multiple life roles. Moreover, when employees believe they have more autonomy and control in their work, they experience higher levels of satisfaction regarding their own work and non-work balance (Behman, et al., 2009).

Some researchers claim that support in the work place, in forms of formal policies and benefits in order to aid work-life balance offered to employees, lead to positive effects on psychological well-being. However, others have had difficulties finding a relationship with flexi-time, child care and parental leave as an effect on work-family enhancement. Behman et al. (2009) explain that a reason for this contradiction may be that, although policies are available, not all employees will make full use of these benefits.

Flexibility can be defined differently depending on whether the definition is made by an employer or an employee. Employers typically see flexibility as the employees' willingness to work beyond the standard "nine to five" in order to always stay accessible to the company. This might, however, be translated into long hours with large amounts of overtime and weekend work for the employees. Employees' perception of flexibility is, on the contrary to the employer's viewpoint; availability to the family, opportunity to work closer to home and the possibility to disturb work with non-work related needs (Behman, et al., 2009).

Flexibility as seen by the employees includes flexible working hours, allowing for private responsibilities[8]. Flexible work hours often tend to influence the overall perception of the workload, and the employee may evaluate his or her job in a more positive regard when work hours are not fixed. Moreover, a consequence of increased flexibility may, in fact, increase time put into the company when individuals are allowed to work from home or schedule their time according to their own preference (Behman, et al., 2009).

3.1.3 Team Work

Social loafing, sometimes referred to as *free-riding*, becomes neutralized with higher pressure of objectives; therefore, efficiency loss can be avoided (Behman, et al., 2009). Groups are social tools in the organization in which we achieve beyond our personal power. As with any social construct, however, there are both positive and negative aspects. Personal and social

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[8] E.g. picking up the children from school

identities can be transformed in a positive way, whereas not adopting to the leadership of the group may result in social sanctions and higher levels of stress (Thompson & McHugh, 2002).

Groups are social tools in the organization, in which we achieve targets and objectives beyond our personal power. There are both positive and negative aspects of this, however. Personal and social identities can be transformed in a positive way, whereas not adopting to the leadership of the group may result in social sanctions and higher levels of stress (Thompson & McHugh, 2002).

Cordery (2003) presents a theory made by Staw and Epstein in 2000, who states "there are no direct economic or productivity benefits by team work in corporations, but rather that focus on team work has a reputational effect". Organizations focusing on teams and empowerment are, according to Staw and Epstein, seen as more innovative and more admired, with a higher-quality management.

Another theory Cordery notes is one of Pfeffer in 1998, where introducing teams shifts the idea of a centralized organization to a more decentralized one with peer-based control. The power of peer pressure regulates employee behavior more directly and rapidly, since the control is closer to the individuals. Peer-based control does, this way, stimulate more initiative and effort for every individual involved, and the level of motivation is higher.

There are important intrinsic rewards to be obtained through team work, such as task autonomy and skill variety. When teams are given responsibility to manage internal operations, for example, the experienced individual autonomy increases, or when individuals are able to rotate between different tasks they may increase their range of skills (Cordery, 2003).

3.2 Motivation

3.2.1 Value Perception of the Individuals

Purcell et al. (2009) have in their study on knowledge-intensive organizations found a significant positive link between satisfaction on amount of pay and commitment to the organization. Pay is viewed as the first of second main aspect of working. A reason to why pay is so crucial to knowledge workers is that in many newer professions (e.g. related to software), status is less hierarchy-based. Knowledge-workers' skills have a tendency to be priced on a perceptual basis, since the perceived know-how is hard to replace or replicate. In the research of Purcell et al., an example is given of an interviewee claiming that *"My clients cannot do what I do (they may not even know how I do this) and because they think I'm invaluable, they'll pay a lot more for my services."* (p. 141). Especially within knowledge intensive organizations, this places the individuals in a strong bargaining position where they can demand higher salaries due to the fact that their services cannot be sold by the company without them (Purcell, et al., 2009).

Incitements such as pay and benefits are perceived as important measures for individuals when estimating their own value placed on them by the company. When identifying colleagues with higher benefits doing the same amount of work as the individual, he or she may feel as if the company is not treating them justly. This influences their perception of how much value they have in the organization (Johnson, 2009)

3.2.2 Leadership and motivation

Building engagement is vital in order to keep employees, seen from an organization's perspective. An engaged employee will report higher levels of job satisfaction, in turn improving his or her performance and therefore also the productivity of the organization. Moreover, this increases the chance of employees choosing to stay in the company (Callan & Lawrence, 2009).

To inspire and develop engagement, leaders have to uplift the motivation of their employees. Callan and Lawrence (2009) show on a model created by Bernard M. Bass in 1990, where he divides this transformational leadership into different categories. One of them is *Intellectual Stimulation,* where focus lies on stimulating intelligence, rationality and problem solving in

order to help the employees become more innovative and creative. It is important to teach the employees that difficulties are merely solvable glitches (Callan & Lawrence, 2009).

3.2.3 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

There are two types of motivation; Intrinsic and Extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation comes from within the employee through goals and satisfaction of working. Extrinsic motivation comes from outside, e.g. bonuses (Girard, 2009). Individuals are naturally intrinsically motivated, and if the organization does not respect this and instead treat its employees as simple tools for increased production, the individuals become dehumanized. It is important to respect the individual's autonomy to motivate a work environment where he or she feels valued and appreciated by the organization. Support and challenge from the firm are also key factors for higher levels of intrinsic motivation. (Campbell Quick, et al., 2009)

Thompson and McHugh (2002) address Boam Shamir's *Self-Concept Theory*, which is a theory created due to apparent lack of symbolic aspects of human beings in already made research on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The theory includes assumptions that, for instance, individuals will choose to spend their time in situations which allow them to express their attitudes and self-conceptions. Further, Shamir states that individuals may be motivated by not only fixed and instant goals, but also the imagined potentials and possibilities of themselves.

3.2.3.1 Job Enrichment

Herzberg (2008) states that motivation derives from counter-intuitive factors, which makes most traditional performance incentives ineffective since people in the long-term are not motivated by extrinsic incentives. Of course some extrinsic rewards are necessary since few would work without a salary, but the key to motivate employees is still their internal motivators. Herzberg describes traditional ways to motivate, both physical and psychological punishments and rewards and claims that this is effective since it accomplishes a movement, but it does not however create motivation. This can be such things as rewards, promotions and status. The main critique Herzberg has towards traditional ways to motivate is their lack of long-term effects. He explains the difference between these traditionally used ways to motivate and the way he is promoting by using a metaphor about a battery. The traditional way of motivating can be compared to a manager that is constantly charging and recharging the battery of the employee. Herzberg proposes another way, where you motivate by giving

the employee a generator of their own. *"It is only when one has a generator of one's own that we can talk about motivation. One needs no outside stimulation. One wants to do it"* (Herzberg, 2008, p. 9).

Herzberg continues to explain how to truly motivate a person, and states that there are two human needs that have to be taken into consideration. The first one is the "*drive to avoid pain from the environment"*, and along with it also the educated drive that has been conditioned to the fundamental biological need. For example money is a learned drive, which stems from the need to eat i.e. the hunger drive. The second need is unique to humans, i.e. the *"ability to accomplish"* and experience psychological growth from this. In order to stimulate this need one can be given work tasks that fuel growth and also job content (Herzberg, 2008).

Herzberg makes a separation between motivators and hygiene factors. *Intrinsic Motivators* and growth factors include achievement, responsibility and advancement, while extrinsic *hygiene factors* can be things such as administration, supervision, work conditions, relationships with peers and subordinates, security, salary and status. Motivators are stated to be the primary cause of job satisfaction, and hygiene factors the primary cause of job dissatisfaction when absent (Herzberg, 2008).

The motivation hygiene theory suggests that in order to obtain and effectively use employees, the nature of the work would have to be enriched. This try for motivation starts with a manipulation of the motivator factors. Job enrichment would supply the employee with a chance for psychological growth (Herzberg, 2008).

The principles of *job enrichment* are to increase responsibility of the individual by removing some control. This can be responsibility for an entire process or a unit of work. By giving an employee responsibility for a unit of work, or additional authority and job freedom, you trigger the motivator's *personal achievement* and *recognition*. Instead of sending information through managers, it should be made available directly for employees. When making information available directly for the worker this triggers the *internal recognition. Job enrichment* also focuses on permitting employees to undertake tasks they have not previously handled, and ascribing specialized tasks to them, inducing them in turn with the opportunity to become experts. The new tasks stimulate the motivator's *growth and learning* while the chance for expertise triggers *responsibility, growth* and *advancement* (Herzberg, 2008).

Consequently, intrinsic motivators are achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement and growth. Herzberg conducted a successful experiment on two groups where the one with a change in motivators became more positive to their work after the changes were made. Job enrichment has been called an employee-centered style of supervision and is seen as a continuous management function. In contrast to hygiene factors, motivators have by nature a much longer-term effect when affecting the attitudes of employees. It can be demanded to enrich the work for a second time, but it will not arise as often as in the case for hygiene factors (Herzberg, 2008).

3.2.4 Curiosity

Loewenstein (2007) says that curiosity has recently been seen used in advertising. *"Advertisers have begun to harness the power of curiosity in "mystery" ads that reveal the identity of the product only at the end of the advertisement"* (p.124.) Curiosity has been seen as an intrinsic motivation, as a passion, and an appetitive. There are three theoretical perspectives on the cause of curiosity. The first one is that it is *drive-based,* as to say a motivational force. Here, it has been discussed whether curiosity is a primary or a secondary drive. Primary drives are intrinsically motivated and intensify over time when not satisfied[9]. Curiosity however, does not completely fulfill the requirements of being a primary drive since it to a large extent is externally stimulated and passing to its nature. One example mentioned is the strong urge people sometimes feel to learn about celebrities when exposed to gossip magazines when standing in line at the grocery store. This urge disappears shortly after leaving the store. It has also been discussed whether curiosity is a personality trait or a state. The second perspective claims curiosity to be *incongruity-based,* e.g. a trait, meaning it derives from a tendency to make sense of the environment. It is natural that people do not like uncertainty, chaos and randomness and have a need for sense making. This need of cognition has been thought of as a personality trait closely linked with ambiguity aversion. A third perspective is to see curiosity as *competence-based,* e.g. a state, and not a drive, since it can easily be overwhelmed by other drives and is by nature transient (Loewenstein, 2007).

No matter the cause for curiosity, people tend to prefer stimuli with a moderate level of curiosity, in contrast to high or low levels. People voluntarily expose themselves to curiosity, partly because of the pleasure of satisfying it. The transportation from perplexity to comprehension creates a relief and a feeling of satisfaction. Another motivation to seek

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[9] For instance hunger, thirst, air

information can be to fulfill the need to avoid uncertainty. Curiosity can also be seen as a result from an information gap, or more so the awareness of this gap. With it comes a feeling of deprivation which could motivate the curiosity to fill it (Loewenstein, 2007).

3.3 Organizational Culture

The culture of an organization enables individuals to find logic in their experience; it fills their actions with feelings of sense and importance, and provides them with a sense of belonging. Effective management understands this and acts vigorously to shape, guide and stimulate the culture, rather than simply disregarding it as superfluous. Like all culture, organizational culture does not only communicate meaning and value but also holds a supportive function to counterbalance the different frustrations often withheld in organizations. However, a large numbers of authors have alerted the potential risks of conceptualizing culture as an intensely unitary force, and looked into whether in fact culture is internalized by the individuals within the organization or in fact something constant with physical features of the business (Gabriel, 2000).

Clampitt (2005) claims that organizations develop "styles", or ways of behaving and acting, which creates a code of how you do things in that specific organization. "*Corporate culture, then, is the underlying belief and value structure of an organizational collectively shared by the employees and symbolically expressed in a variety of overt and subtle ways.*" (p. 47) Organizational culture encourages certain types of communication and certain types of growth, just as it discourage some other behaviors (Clampitt, 2005).

Creating an appropriate culture is said to be a necessity, and something that contributes to create excellent performance and model behavior. Clampitt (2005) brings up an example where he explains how the company Amazon manages change. Not a lot of companies would take risks the same way as they have done, but this is what their culture requests of their employees. Sometimes the culture and traditions of a company can affect an organization negatively and in fact limit it, when there is a clear want for change. This can be exemplified by universities, whose traditions can sometimes cause inertia (Clampitt, 2005).

You can discover culture in *physical designs*, *symbols*, *conversations* and *policies and activities*. Examples of physical designs are buildings, parking lots and office designs. Symbols can be logos, dress codes, slogans, taboos, philosophy statements and heroes or

villains. Symbolic signs in the conversations can be jokes or repeated stories. Policies and activities include financial rewards, rituals and ceremonies (Clampitt, 2005).

It is important that employees find themselves in an environment that is surrounded by symbolic reminders of the core values of the organization. The symbols help emphasize values and beliefs, and remind the employee what the organization represents. One should not underestimate symbolic acts and slogans, and reject them to be simple or trivial. The simple, in fact, contains elegance and power and its acts can offer meaning and purpose as well a feeling of solidarity for the individuals inside the organization (Clampitt, 2005).

The people in the organization can be seen as creators, carriers and consequences of the organization's culture all at once. At first they help shape the culture, to later carry it on in their daily activities. An employee can be seen as a consequence of the culture since he or she becomes shaped by it. A question worth asking is why certain people are hired by a company. Both the hiring and the interviewing can be important indicators of the corporate culture. It is proven that the crucial time for a manager to exercise influence is the first weeks of employment. As time passes, managers somewhat lose their power to shape the values and behavior of new recruits, and to instill not only specific skills but also the corporate beliefs (Clampitt, 2005).

Another important thing concerning the employees is a proper socialization within the organization. Once entering the organization, individuals begin to create an image of the organizational values by the language used, the design of the offices, which often already starts during the recruitment process, since this can all be seen as part of the organizational culture (Clampitt, 2005).

3.4 Organizational Storytelling

> "Viewed from a certain perspective, life and business are just exercises in collecting and editing stories, in building personal and commercial mythologies."
>
> *Mathews & Wacker, 2007, p. 83*

Hatch et al. (2005) state that *"Storytelling is one of the most important elements for building organizational culture"*. Storytelling helps make culture tangible and strengthens values and above all, it sustains organizational identity and individuality. Czarniawska (1998) refers to

organizational stories as the main method of knowing and communicating in organizations, which therefore make them important for organizational researchers. Organizational stories have been viewed as artifacts firmly rooted in organizations waiting to be collected, and Czarniawska exemplifies this by stating that Boje and Gabriel among others helped broaden the perspective during the 1990s. This was done by looking at storytelling as a continuous process of construction of meaning within organizations (Czarniawska, 1998).

Storytelling, Gabriel (2000) claims, is a favored currency of human relationships within organizations, and goes on non-stop among both internal and external stakeholders. Gabriel has during a ten-year study of organizational storytelling conducted research leading him to two noteworthy findings: First, he recognized on numerous occasions that different workers and managers told him identical organizational stories, as if they had agreed to do so beforehand. These stories functioned as symbolic landmarks in the very culture of the organization. Secondly Gabriel encountered, various years later, that only the stories and their plots remained in his memory when the names and faces of the people he had conversed with were faded. Czarniawska (2004) critiques the perspective Gabriel brings up by claiming that it cannot be enough only to explore the presence of stories, but it is also important to focus on the consequences of storytelling. Gabriel (2000) presents the idea of storytelling as part of the organizational culture, and states that it was not until 1982 that storytelling became a central part of analyzing the organizational life. The process of mapping the functions of storytelling began after the study of culture became a major topic in organizational theory, and has subsequently been explored by numerous authors. Stories are now viewed as a sign of strong corporate culture (Gabriel, 2000).

3.4.1 Sense-Making Device

According to Gabriel (2000), a large number of scholars have developed the cognitive and sense-making part of stories in the organizational culture. Stories also help people to make sense of unexpected situations they have never been in before (Gabriel, 2000; Czarniawska 1998) and help make these situations manageable by linking them to familiar ones they are already acquainted with (Gabriel, 2000). Nowadays, it is widely agreed upon that storytelling is part of the human process of sense-making without the onerous need to find facts behind the tales (Gabriel, 2000; Czarniawska, 2004).

To negotiate or sustain the meaning behind the story, narrative strategies are commonly used in combination with the story. Storytelling therefore also includes other sense-seeking devices such as slogans, logos and images, stereotypes, metaphors and symbols of all kinds, fragments of information, puns, daydreams, body language, gestures and other ways to display emotion (Gabriel, 2000).

3.4.2 Provider of Meaning

Stories allow us to study the organizational culture in exclusively revealing ways, exposing how broader organizational matters are looked and worked upon by their members. The stories play a part where their aim is to transform ordinary practices into meaningful stories. *Reality*, this way, is neither rejected nor accepted. Organizational stories do not, unlike the original definition of storytelling, develop from proverbial "shadowy forests and enchanted mountains", but from the subjective experience of each individual in the organization (Gabriel, 2000). Gabriel argues that organizational stories, contrasting to folk tales, move the audience beyond simple entertainment. The purpose is not merely to amuse but also to fulfill an educational purpose, encourage and influence the audience, warn, justify and clarify (Gabriel, 2000).

A key activity in the organizational life, Czarniawska (1998) states, is to take part of already concocted stories and to ascribe meaning to daily activities. Organizational storytelling involves multiple individuals and has therefore the ability to engage, motivate and inspire. Moreover, Gabriel (2000) states that if people believe a story, it becomes irrelevant whether or not the events spoken of indeed took place. The truth of the story lies in the meaning behind it, and not in the actual facts. Czarniawska (2004) confirms this by saying that it is not the plot of the story but how the story is presented, that carries the message. Furthermore Mathews and Wacker (2007) state that the way you convey your story and who you choose as your messenger may be crucial for the image of your company, and has the power to both create and destroy industries. The focus when choosing a story should be whether or not it is appropriate - and not if it is right or wrong.

Organizational stories continuously develop, merge and fade, sometimes only to reappear out of nowhere at a later time. Many stories coexist in different versions, rarely standing in direct conflict to each other. Their task is to - along with jokes, gossip, and the family photo or bouquet of flowers on the office desk - attempt to make the impersonal space of a

bureaucratic organization less harsh and more human. The individuals strive to bring together a symbolically stimulating narrative to their ordinary 'nine-to-five' days in the organization, since the majority of organizations generally are not pleasant zones to live or work in (Gabriel, 2000).

3.4.3 Guidance

When in crisis or in time of change, stories can be of great aid. They help simplify the world by providing models for interpretation that can be compared to frames constituted by existing rules. These frames can act like maps to help guide action and strategy. (Gabriel, 2000; Czarniawska 1998) In critical moments, as decision-making, the stories are used to provide guidance in order not to repeat mistake (Czarniawska, 2004).

Czarniawska (2004) refers to a theory by Burton R Clark, where he elucidates the difference between a saga and a story, and claims that it is the element of belief and the existence of believers that make a saga, different from a story which can easily be forgotten. By repeating to others the stories we have heard, we help shape and preserve collective memories in the form of cultural myths and sagas. By using re-creation, one can perpetuate life through stories with the possibility to shape it precisely according to the circumstance (Hatch, et al., 2005).

By controlling the stories that are spread, it is possible to control the culture. If managers do not succeed in communicating a good story, the employees will not be able to properly understand the values and find it difficult to stand by them. By sharing the same stories, we feel a sense of belonging with others in the same group. A good story is characterized by moral; something the employees can remember and receive guidance from in their behavior. Successful storytelling is simply a very effective way to manage (Clampitt, 2005).

3.4.4 Business Stories

According to Mathews and Wacker (2007), there are some typical characteristics to be found in business stories. Commonly, there are stories of methods to find a perfect solution, often something new and revolutionizing, to fulfill the customers' needs. Furthermore, a common phenomenon is also to tell stories about a new CEO and prospects of him or her changing the entire company, stories about exceptional pricing or how fantastic business is (Mathews & Wacker, 2007).

Mathews and Wacker (2007) claim that storytelling is a tool that is useful for everyone who aims to improve business. The reason for this is that stories are said to be *"the universal human common denominator"*. Stories inherent our everyday language and we use them when talking to each other. Gossip and conversations about current and previous happenings are important features in our day-to-day life. We have a tendency to talk about ourselves and what we and others have done, and the authors compare business with all other social institutions. Hence, the most important technique in storytelling is to tell the story in a way that makes it possible for the individual to find him- or herself not just within the story, but also as part of the audience. As Hummel states, the stories are not meaningful until we have been able to read ourselves into them (Hatch, et al., 2005).

3.4.5 Connection and Engagement

Mathews and Wacker (2007) claim that the concept of storytelling is all about *connection* and *engagement*. When the storyteller has succeeded in connecting with the audience, he or she can start to build engagement from an emotional and sustainable relationship. In relation to this, Mathews and Wacker distinguish ten functions of storytelling, two of them being:

- *Explain Origins:* Much like individuals, companies have a need to know where they "descend" from. This results in every culture having at least one origin story, with the purpose to answer basic questions about the history, purpose and future of the organization. The origin story is a critical foundation of the organizational culture, and helps the employees identify with the company.
- *Simplify to Provide Perspectives:* This function aims to reduce complex problems into simple, accessible stories. In the corporate version of stories, this usually refers to short-line messages or sentences communicated in companies about their values.

Additionally, Mathews and Wacker (2007) discuss the *Abolition of Context*. All functions of storytelling come down to this principle. To create a successful story, the audience must have common reference points with the storyteller, in order to for the storyteller to properly be able to communicate a set of images, moral principles or a specific point of view. Stories are a way for us to relate to everything we know and have experienced, and therefore build on context. It is vital that the audience agrees upon a common framework, or else it is not possible to tell a story that makes sense since the story is highly dependent on the context being collectively recognized by the audience. Hence, the abolition of context is the inability

of different people, businesses and societies to find a commonly agreed-upon reference point. Due to the Abolition of Context, convincing marketing becomes difficult. The Abolition of Context has sprung out of the diminished meaning of traditional social institutions such as family, schools and churches. In our new society we have a harder time finding common reference points and the parts of stories open to interpretation will be understood differently depending on our background. Stories lose power when they are taken out of their context, and without a common context, it is hard to tell a convincing story (Mathews & Wacker, 2007).

3.4.6 Individuals

Storytelling is not merely limited to stories about the organization as a whole, but often also more specifically focused on particular individuals. A temporary connection between an individual and a sudden event may have the impact on the individual in a manner where labeling and generalization form an important part within the storyline. Gabriel (2000) refers to this as *The Attribution of Blame and Credit*, in which the individual becomes cast in the role of a victim, a villain or possibly even a hero. This attribution is closely related to several other attributions that Gabriel presents, one of them being *The Attribution of Fixed Qualitie*s. Playing the role of a hero at one specific, perhaps unintentional time, typically labels the individual as incapable of being weak or fearful on another occasion. Labels such as 'liar' or 'hero' may therefore act as fixed characteristics and as if they symbolize the full nature of the individual – despite the fact that the individual only lied once or performed the heroic deed at one particular time. Connecting individuals in organizations with super-human powers echoes the attribution of powers that are similar to those in magicians, witches and magic wands (Gabriel, 2000).

3.4.7 The Classic Story

Mathews and Wacker (2007) refer to the American folklorist John Greenway who claims that stories and myths become more important while society is developing. Internet is said to help accelerate and contribute to the Abolition of Context, but also works as a tool in order to boost stories. This is both an advantage as well as a disadvantage to corporations. It has become very easy to spread anti-company myths, which because of the nature of the internet, never fully disappears but remains findable. Therefore, Mathews and Wacker argue, it can be viewed as if we have lost some control of our environment compared to before the arrival of the Internet era. Furthermore, it is not only the society that is changing, but also the

corporation which goes through different life stages that could be compared to the ones of individuals and societies.

Storytelling can be an aid for the company to reach an understanding of itself in each of the stages of the life cycle, both internally and externally. Stories for an internal audience help reinforce core values, promote ethical positions and emphasize future goals of the company. These stories are usually instructive and inspirational, in contrast to stories that are supposed to communicate to an external audience, e.g. anything from brand identity to corporate mission (Mathews & Wacker, 2007).

In spite of contextual differences, a number of classic stories can be found in most companies, with seemingly few variations. By adding a unique 'touch' to the story the company easily adjusts the story to fit their chosen context (Mathews & Wacker, 2007). Czarniawska (2004) states that even though the stories vary, the central character tends to look the same. Gabriel (2000) presents a similar statement made by Joanne Martin and her colleagues, where they argue that all cultures assume uniqueness as a personal trait and form their organizational stories through this claim of being inimitable. However, by doing so, the incidents and themes of the stories are neither unique in structure nor content. This becomes, as they put it, a "uniqueness paradox". The proclamation of uniqueness through cultural expressions results in the organization being in fact, not unique at all (Gabriel, 2000).

3.4.8 Employer Branding

Employer branding can be seen as a psychological contract between the employer and the employee (Moroko & Uncles, 2008) and Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) define employer branding *"as the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity, and the employer brand as a concept of the firm that differentiates it from its competitors."* (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

Why certain people are attracted to a company through employer branding has not yet been fully understood, but one explanation is person-organization fit. The individuals compare their values and needs to the employer brand image of the organization, and if the individuals find these values to be similar to his or her own, they are more attracted to the particular firm (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004) (Purcell, et al., 2009). The person-organization fit is a way to ensure a strong culture. Purcell et al. (2009) highlight, however, the need to take a few things into account when it comes to the person-organization theory. First, it is difficult for

individuals to know what organizations fit them best, and therefore it is essential that employer branding does not form unrealistic job expectations and job previews. Second, the hiring process needs to be based on attitudinal and behavioral profiling in order to screen the applicants appropriately, to find a resemblance between the values of the individual and the organization. Consequently, careful training of new workers and helpful team members is crucial in value reproduction (Purcell, et al., 2009).

Here, integrated stories and rituals in the organizational culture help overlay formal control with social control, when values and culture become linked to commitment. The individuals accept appropriate and expected role behavior and identify themselves with the organization or an ideology. Storytelling is therefore closely related to Employer Branding (Purcell, et al., 2009).

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) present employer branding as a three-step process. The first step is for the firm to *develop an idea* of what *particular value* they would like employees to perceive as a central message of the brand. This value becomes embodied within the brand by using information on the corporate culture of the firm, how the company is managed and qualities of current employees and the current image of employment.

The second step is to use external marketing to *market this value proposition to recruiting agencies and potential employees,* in hope of attracting the target population (the best possible future employees). To fulfill the "promise" of the brand made to the employees and incorporate it into the corporate culture, the company has *to internally market (or internally brand) the employer brand*, which is the last step of the process. The company therefore does this in order to establish that the workers are committed to organizational goals and internal values of the firm (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Foster, et al., (2010) claim that internal branding helps educating the employees on the firm's values, and boosts their engagement with the brand.

When a company decides to publish a slogan, employees and customers are pressured by both external and internal measures to act in unison with the values communicated through it (Clampitt, 2005). Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) argue that it is therefore necessary for the firm to communicate truthful information. If there is a gap between the philosophy the company promotes and the one it practices, the employees can experience this as hypocrisy on the firm's behalf (Clampitt, 2005). If the choice of employment is based on unbalanced

information, the post-entry performance will be lowered and the employee may be dissatisfied and is not unlikely to quit (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

4 Empirical Studies on Google

In this part of the thesis we will first present our respondents and later provide you with a short summary of the Google culture as it has developed over the years. It will be followed by a description of the external image of the company in order to be able to compare it with the actual internal organizational culture. This way, we hope to be able to answer our research questions described earlier in our thesis.

4.1 Presentation of Respondents

Our empirical data consists of primary and secondary data. The primary data was conducted in form of interviews with four respondents, all of which are listed below. The interns we interviewed are both Economics majors at the University of Gothenburg and have been made anonymous; for this reason they will throughout the thesis be referred to as Elias and Tosh instead of their real names. All interviewees are of the same nationality[10]. All other references found in this section are secondary data, and are listed in our bibliography. Worth noting is, however, that two of our interviewees have published work we also refer to. To avoid confusion, the thesis of Steiber will be referred to as (Steiber (th), 2012)[11] and the book written by Ekström as (Ekström, 2010).

Steiber (int, 2012), Ph.D. in Technology, Department of Technology Management and Economics at Chalmers University of Technology, has conducted research at Google Inc. over the course of nearly a year. For her Ph.D. thesis on organizational innovation, she interviewed twenty-eight individuals from different departments at Google HQ in Mountain View, California, but also at Google sites in Europe and Asia (Steiber (int), 2012), to learn whether the corporation could in fact be considered a MOI[12], and furthermore to determine if it is different from other organizational innovations such as TQM and Lean production, (Steiber (th), 2012). An organizational innovation, Steiber defines as *"new organizational methods in a firm's business practices, work place organization or external relations"* (Steiber (th), 2012, p. 1). Our interview lasted approximately thirty-five minutes and was done over Skype, since Steiber currently resides in Silicon Valley, California. The interview

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[10] Sweden

[11] "Int" referring to the interview in contrast to "th", referring to the thesis, this due to the thesis being published the same year as our interview was held.

[12] Major Organizational Innovation

with Steiber was conducted during the sixth week of the thesis-process, which could be seen as a later stage in our research. Steiber received our interview questions beforehand on her request, in order to prepare her answers.

Ekström (2012), journalist at Sydsvenska Dagbladet. Ekström has visited Google and conducted interviews with several individuals at the company (including the culture chief officer, Stacey Sullivan) at multiple offices, such as Google HQ in Mountain View, and offices in Stockholm, Washington, D.C and Reston, Virginia. He has also visited a Google charity project in Cameroon, where Google is doing research on viruses and diseases. His findings culminated in a book, *"Google-koden",* in which he investigates the company with a very general approach. The interview with Ekström was the first of our four interviews, and we decided to have it at a very early stage in our process. The interview was conducted during our second week of research and lasted approximately thirty minutes.

Elias (2012), a former intern at Google Oslo, worked as an associate product marketing manager during the time period of August 2011 until February 2012. This interview was our first interview with someone from within the system, and by confirming a lot of the things we had heard from external parts, we truly understood for the first time that this very unusual organizational culture actually does exist. Elias inquired about the purpose of our thesis, and also asked for some sample interview questions beforehand, which he requested in order to prepare his answers. The interview lasted about forty-five minutes, and took place during our sixth week of research.

Tosh (2012), a former intern at Google Dublin, worked as part of the team global operations processes and systems during the time period of June 2011 until September 2011. This interview was our second interview with someone who had actually worked at the company. Tosh confirmed a lot of the information we previously learned from Elias but also provided us with complementary insight into the corporate culture of the company, due to his different working title at another international office, and his personal experience. Our problem statement and some questions were sent to him in advance, and the interview lasted about sixty minutes. The interview with Tosh was held during our seventh week of research.

4.2 The Corporate Culture through a Historical Perspective

When Google was founded in 1998 at Stanford University, it had no clear strategy, no obvious plan, and an unquestionably uncertain future. The idea was roughly to collect smart people and *"make it happen"* (Edwards, 2011, p. 16).

The company exploded seemingly out of nowhere - from anonymity and, quite literally, *"two guys in a garage"* - to dictionary definition in only five short years. The few managers Google had during the first years were inexperienced and unable to provide desirable leadership (Edwards, 2011). The founders and other members of the board strongly influenced the culture of the company (Ekström, 2010; Steiber (int), 2012; Elias, 2012), building a foundation and organizational design that were as innovation-oriented as its creators (Steiber (th), 2012).

Since Google acted on a completely new market that was previously non-existent, there were no real guidelines upon which to structure their new business. Out of necessity and accessibility, the inspiration in the startup phase came from the nearby environment in Silicon Valley. As such, intrapersonal diffusion channels were very important; therefore, the founders, early board members and employees, and later Eric Schmidt had a big influence in the early development of shaping the organization (Steiber (th), 2012).

Initially, the founders already had a clear view of what they wanted the organization to look like. In order to promote innovation, they would have to invest in an innovation-oriented culture, be strict when recruiting, and build a flat, open structure that held strong communication between employees (Steiber (th), 2012).

4.3 The External Image of Google

> "But will the company's founders wake up one day, and realize their employees are having too much fun? Like these two, clowning around in their silver capes. Oh, wait. Those are Google's founders. Billionaires Larry Page and Sergey Brin."
>
> *NBC Today Show, 2007*

4.3.1 Most Valuable Brand and Best Employer

Millward Brown Optimor has, together with The Financial Times, Bloomberg and Datamonitor, developed the "BrandZ Top 100 Most Powerful Brands" (BrandZ, 2012). In order to determine the financial value of a brand, they have taken into account both financial

measures and consumer measures of brand equity. In 2010, Google positioned itself as number one on the list "BrandZ Top 100 Most Valuable Global Brands 2011". At the time, Google had a brand value of 114.36 billion USD (BrandZ, 2012).[13]

The Great Place to Work Institute has conducted research worldwide for over twenty-five years. They strive to follow employees and study businesses in order to create a model for performance improvement by employee motivation and trust building. By conducting surveys in over 45 countries, representing the opinions of over ten million employees, the Great Place to Work Institute has internationally formed the largest employee survey in the world. In corporate America, they have chosen to partner with FORTUNE Magazine annually in order to conduct the most extensive employee survey within the United States, searching for the "100 Best Companies to Work For" (Great Place to Work Institute, 2012). Google first appeared on the list in 2007, and shot up to the top of the list, beating all other competition. They held the title for two years and, since then, the company has never failed to be in the Top 5. This year, Google made a strong comeback, once again reaching the very top position of this prestigious list (CNN Money, 2012; Google, 2012).

In a survey conducted by PayScale, results show that, on the *job satisfaction level* at Google Inc., employees have rated the company *extremely flexible* and claim they are *extremely satisfied* with their workplace. The work stress environment is viewed by employees as *not highly stressful*, which is compared to the stress level of Facebook Inc., where a significant majority finds their job to be *extremely stressful* (PayScale, 2011).

4.3.2 The Status of Being Recruited

> "'I'm going to give you five minutes,' he announced. 'When I come back, I
> want you to explain something complicated that I don't already know.'"
> *Co-founder Sergey Brin interviewing Edwards for a job position in 1999.*
> *(Edwards, 2011, p. 10)*

Upon the question as to why he applied for Google, Elias (2012) immediately responds that this decision was because of its strong branding. He describes the brand as very attractive and considers the ability that the brand name has to work as an eye-catcher to be an advantage when applying for other jobs. Furthermore, Elias mentions that he has been asked several

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[13] Equals 769.43 billion SEK at the end of 2010. This can be compared to the government revenues of the Swedish state which, during the same year, was 779.50 billion SEK (Ekonomifakta, 2012).

questions about his internships after his time with the company, and describes the company as "mythical".

Tosh (2012) states that part of the reason he applied for an internship at Google was because of the rumor he had heard about how hard it is to get recruited at Google – information that is mainly spread by newspapers and magazines. *"Externally, Google is in some media presented as a kind of exclusive club,"* he says. He continues *"They have created an external image of themselves where they brand how difficult it is to get a job at Google, which creates exclusivity. I think this is a reason to why many apply to work at Google. At least, this was the case for me."* Tosh also believes that once recruited to the company, employees have a tendency to add to this effect, creating a loop as they start viewing themselves as exclusive. He adds, however, that another reason for his application was that he already knew someone who had previously worked at the company and had recommended him to work there.

During the first years of Google's existence, the founders preferred to hire employees that did not have a lot of experience in the business sector since they wanted to build an organization based upon their own ideas and, therefore, free from the *"bad behavior"* they claimed existed in the business sector at the time (Steiber (th), 2012). Edwards (2011) gives an example of this when mentioning that one of Google's first employees, Hölzle, proclaimed that the secret to succeeding as an engineer was basically to hire someone as good as you or, if possible, better. A group of very intelligent people gives you a safety net, and when things go wrong they fix it before you even find out it was broken in the first place; in other words, they self-correct. Google was an expanding business, and, just like most other expanding businesses, they tended to promote employees multiple times during their employment with the company. This is another reason in favor of hiring overqualified people rather than simply hiring individuals with an adequate knowledge (Girard, 2009).

Today, the company seems to have tried to achieve a balance between keeping part of their old hiring process, while simultaneously attempting to improve the efficiency. As the official web site states: *"At Google, every candidate goes through both manager and peer interviews. While conventional interviews normally have a single hiring manager make or break a hiring decision, Google values both peer and manager feedback. In fact, candidates also interview with at least one Googler who works in a completely different department to ensure that we're hiring someone who is a great fit for the company overall."* (Google Jobs (join), 2012).

4.3.2.1 Salary

PayScale announced in June 2011 that Google, Inc. pays a mid-career median salary of $141,000[14], which is twenty-three percent above market average for the IT industry (PayScale, 2011). The survey has been referred to by a number of sources (Geek, 2011) (NBC Bay Area, 2011) (Guardian, 2011) (Computer World, 2011) and included companies such as Amazon.com, Inc., Apple Computer, Inc., Dell, Inc., Facebook, Inc., Hewlett-Packard Company, International Business Machines (IBM) Corp., Intel Corp. and Microsoft Corp.

4.3.3 TV Shows and Online Branding

> Want to buy a hybrid? This company will give you $ 5,000 to do it. Want to wear your jammies to work? No problem. Do your laundry? Free. Got a cold? There are five doctors on site, and they are all free.
>
> *NBC Today Show, 2007*

There are several videos to be found online that are presenting the Google offices. This information is easily accessible for everyone, and, therefore, an easy method to brand the company. Google has several videos specifically aimed to attract potential employees, but there are many other ways Google has managed to incorporate the image of the distinct offices into the public's mind. When Google first won the title Best Employer, NBC *Today Show* decided to explore the reasons that made Google so special. This inquiry resulted in a TV clip that is now spread all over the Internet (NBC Today Show, 2007). Moreover, when Travel Channel aired the program *Extreme Workplaces*, Google was undoubtedly on the list – and when typing in *"Google"* in the search window on YouTube, this is typically one of the first videos that show up (Travel Channel, 2009).

On October 9, 2006**,** Google acquired the online video sharing site YouTube for $1.65 billion in a stock-for-stock transaction. The aim with the acquisition was to enable Google to grow in an area it previously had not been overly successful. According to the site Hitwise, Google Video only had a ten percent share of the online video traffic at the time while YouTube had forty-five percent (Sorkin & Peters, 2006).

The image of Google is seen as playful, colorful and creative, and the company is typically branded for its incredibly intelligent staff, outstanding innovation management, seemingly eternal supply of free food, snacks and beverages, multiple massage chairs, helter-skelter

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[14] Converted to 1.01 million SEK a year or an average monthly pay of 84,240 SEK on May 23ʹ 2012

slides, Ping-Pong, video games and etcetera (Google 2012; Ekström, 2010; Edwards 2011). At NBC *Today Show* (2007) the primary reason for why people vote for Google as the Best Employer is because the employees *"are having so much fun there"*. The TV show then continues to show free gourmet foods, free fitness centers, barbershops, car washes while you work and company massages. An employee states *"It is definitely not a vacation, but it's a pretty great place to work"*. The reporter then adds *"This is the most engaging, insanely great working environment in corporate America. I mean, it blows your mind."* (NBC Today Show, 2007).

Despite the fact that the employees try to mention that the workplace is not a vacation, this is quickly hushed by dazzling images of free food, free fitness, colorful playrooms in every corner, people smiling and laughing and announcing that they can even bring pets to work if they want to. The main concern of the company is pointed out as being *too successful*. The show ends with the reporter saying *"For the lucky ones that do get jobs at Google, they tell us it is easy to love this company."* and continues to show a few clips of Googlers with comments such as *"I have more fun here than I do sometimes with my own family." "I love my job." "This is a phenomenal upgrade from my last employer."*

The program *Extreme Workplaces* on Travel Channel (2009) displays many similar perks of the Google culture, and the Googleplex is described as *"a giant funhouse"*, showing eighteen different cafes, including the area where Google grows their own food right on campus to be healthy and organic. There are places with *"free unlimited munchies within a few feet from everyone's desks"* and sleeping pods for relaxing and sleeping. Google also provides on-site laundry facilities. One of the employees states in an interview *"You can show up for your day with a bag of laundry over your shoulders, throw your laundry in our wash room area, go to work, and go home with your laundry done."*

Travel Channel (2009) continues to state that the Googleplex is only one out of sixty-eight extreme workplaces around the world, displaying clips of people sleeping in hammocks in Brazil and playing Ping-Pong in China. The Google office in Zürich, Switzerland, Travel Channel claims, has to be one of the most extreme international offices, with sleeping pods shaped as Igloo satellites, fire poles instead of stairs and, for efficiency purposes, a slide to the cafeteria. The reporter adds *"At Google, the perks are out of this world. Around the world."*

Google has, as mentioned previously, their own videos branding the company. In one of these videos, they state that Google allows you to be innovative and develop your own product very quickly. In fact, one of the employees says *"On Google, if you come in on your first week, and you have a good idea on how things could be done, and people agree with you, in that first week you can start making those changes."* Other comments are *"One thing that's great about Google is that you have a lot of autonomy over your product and its direction"* and *"We're encouraged to work on whatever we think is important. Often the best ideas come from employees"* (Google Jobs (vid), 2012).

Despite the video claiming that Google goes after entrepreneurial go-getters, and that *"the concentration of talent is really quite amazing",* the video shows very happy employees, smiling and laughing while having meetings on bean bags, playing games and eating gourmet food in a very colorful environment – similar to the clips of NBC *Today Show* and Travel Channel's *Extreme Workplaces* (Google Jobs (vid), 2012).

4.3.4 Humor at Work

As a strategy to humanize the organization and its home page interface, Google thought of several, often humorous ways, to make the site appear as if there were real human beings behind it (Edwards, 2011). An example of this is this infamous error message, which due to constant technical problems continuously reappeared: *"Bad, bad server. No donut for you. We're sorry, the orkut.com server has acted out in an unexpected way. We apologize for the inconvenience and our server's lack of consideration for others."* (Edwards, 2011, p. 191).

The Google Doodle is defined by Edwards (2011) as *"originally referred to a multipart logo that changed each day to tell a story"* (p. 122). In May 2000, illustrator Ian Marsden created the first official Google Doodle, the company logo featuring aliens. One of the founders was convinced that by changing the logo every day into a comic strip that people would come back to read, was a good idea. In an attempt to exude creativity, a bouncing heart applet was created for Valentine's Day and a bunny game for Easter. The response from users proved to be incredibly positive and the company received dozens of emails appreciating the cartoons. On Mother's Day in 2000, the company collected photos of mothers from the employees, and arranged them around the old poem "What Mother Means to Me". Once

again, the response was tremendous; one user even wrote the company *"Your mothers must be so proud. I want my son to work at Google."* (Edwards, 2011, p. 125).

When Google eventually decided to invest in marketing, the ad campaigns used at the time paved way for the "fun" and "Googely" ad campaigns we still see today (Edwards, 2011). Back in 2002, Google had a billboard stating only a mathematical equation followed by ".com" without any kind of logo or way to identify the company. Whoever solved the equation ended up entering the Google recruiting page (Edwards, 2011; Ekström, 2010).

4.3.5 "Don't Be Evil"

The engineers have always been and still are "The Gods" at Google (Edwards, 2011; Ekström, 2010; Elias, 2012). The fact that Google even agreed to form a department of marketing was solely because someone from Stanford had insisted it would eventually be inevitable to have someone else do all the things that were not related to engineering. One of the founders however, Larry Page, was not excited about the idea and for a long time Page refused to use the b-word, *branding*. According to him, *branding* implied that technology single-handedly was not enough to achieve success – a theory he found to be ridiculous (Edwards, 2011).

Initially, the founders at Google fundamentally rejected any kind of marketing - particularly textbook approaches on marketing such as advertising through mass media channels. The notion was that gaining customers through advertising instead of the quality of the product, was an impure approach – even an "evil" one. In fact, the very notion of marketing seemed so unimportant during the initial phase of Google, that co-founder Sergey Brin in fact hired a chef and dual massage therapists before even creating a marketing budget. Instead, Brin had a better idea: *"Why don't we take the marketing budget and use it to inoculate Chechen refugees against cholera. It will help our brand awareness and we'll get more people to use Google."* (Edwards, 2011, p. 49). Running ads merely annoyed people and in that case, saving lives was better (Edwards, 2011). Being against "evil" has become so incorporated in the company's employer branding, that the official motto of Google over time grew into the short slogan "d*on't be evil*" (Edwards 2011, Ekström, 2010).

The start page of Google and its famous simplicity is by the company itself explained as necessary because of their focus on search functionality. Google has previously stated that making profit by luring users to click on advertisement and other services the site provided

went against their wish to be a worldwide technology leader. Moreover, it went against the aim to be the most efficient Search Engine in the world (Edwards, 2011).

Marissa Mayer[15] stated in a 2002 interview conducted by Girard (2009) that Google should be designed the same way a Swiss Army knife is; clean and simple and something you want to bring everywhere. Instead of giving away everything at once, Google wants to encourage you to find the information yourself. This way, you can open up the knife, function by function, on your own. Google, Mayer states, should be just as complex as a Swiss Army Knife, but yet just as simple and functional when closed (Girard, 2009).

4.4 The Google Culture

4.4.1 The Different Google Offices

The different international offices of Google, Inc. are not always as alike as one might expect from a major company. *The Google culture*, the way it has been branded as innovative and playful, is according to Elias (2012), generally more related to the larger offices, especially offices specifically focused on engineering and innovation management, such as HQ Mountain View and the European Engineering HQ Zürich. Offices in smaller countries and/or smaller offices are typically more focused on marketing and sales, working with external partners to a larger extent. Due to this fact, the widely known "informality" of the Google culture is in fact not applicable throughout all its global offices (Elias, 2012).

Tosh (2012) also believes that some offices have higher levels of playfulness than for instance business-based offices in London and the Nordic countries, and exemplifies this by mentioning the fact that the engineer-based Dublin office has areas used for non-work related activities, such as TV-rooms and rooms to relax in. Tosh believes this is due to the average age being comparably younger in Dublin, and the domination of engineers in both Dublin and the Zürich office, which he perceives to have an equal level of playfulness. He believes that this higher average age in other more business-related offices results in lower levels of social engagement within the company, something he assumes to be because of family life.

Elias (2012) describes the business-based offices as more formal, which he indicates shows on what people wear. In the engineer-based Dublin office it is more typical to wear sweatpants to work, something rarely seen in the Nordic countries, and Tosh (2012) believes

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[15] Former Google Product Manager, now Vice President of Product Management (CBS News, 2012)

this informality to be due to the average age being lower. Elias (2012) further states that the different tasks are overall more stimulating for engineers than business- and marketing people.

An important component of the Google Culture at all offices is the Friday meetings called Thank Google its Friday, abbreviated TGIF (Elias, 2012; Tosh, 2012) The TGIFs were originally intended to bind the company together; a tool of reinforcing the socialization between the employees. Separations arose, and the company had trouble to persuade people to participate which is why Larry and Sergey started to hand out bonuses at the TGIFs (Edwards, 2011). Former intern Elias (2012) describes these meetings in Zürich as *"insanely cool"* with a massive attendance. *"They[16] had a barbeque in the backyard. Lots of people were playing with inventions they had created. It had a really special feeling to it."* Tosh (2012) explains that mostly young people attended the TGIFs at his office in Dublin, and that among his team of seven, usually only two attended.

Ekström (2012) states the most striking thing about the organizational culture at Google is the appointment and presence of Stacy Sullivan, Google's chief culture officer. The mere fact that the company has a 'chief culture officer' shows that the company takes questions concerning company culture seriously, Ekström claims. Her mission is to foster and retain the traditional Google-culture which evidently becomes harder as the company grows (Ekström, 2012). Today Google has *"more than 70 offices in more than 40 countries around the globe."* (Google Facts, 2012).

4.4.2 The Love for Science

> "After Google, I find myself impatient with the way the world works. Why is it so hard to schedule a recording on my DVR? Why aren't all the signal lights synched to keep traffic flowing at an optimum speed? Why, if I punch in my account number when I call customer service, do I have to give it to them again when I get a live person? These are all solvable problems."
>
> *(Edwards, 2011, p. 390).*

The engineers at Google typically view all the world's problems as solvable. Edwards (2011) brings up an example of this when he describes a scenario including Larry Page and his love for efficiency and solutions. When being wrong, the details of the mistake had to be factored into the next iteration of the problem if it would reemerge, and the specifics of the error fed

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[16] The office

into his model of the universe, to avoid a repetition of the mistake. As Edwards puts it *"...every problem was viewed as solvable and every situation as reducible to a set of data points; where knowing you were right meant nothing should, could, or would stand in your way."* (Edwards, 2011, p. xi).

Math permeates every part of Google; price policies, decision making, recruiting etcetera. To use mathematics in the management of corporations is nothing new. At Google, all employees have access to MOMA, a house intranet where information, statistics and numbers regarding everything in the company is kept. There is also the possibility for employees to use statistical tools in order to analyze data. At Google metrics are viewed as highly important (Girard, 2009). As Girard puts it: *"This reliance on mathematics is one of Google's hallmarks."* (Girard, 2009, p. 100).

This mathematical culture makes the employees search for patterns in customer usage. Mathematics also encourages precision in Google's management methods and data or proof is demanded to back up management practices, something that complicates holding meetings (Girard, 2009). For every organizational change Google demands supportive data, which can be seen as a sort of 'calculation model' (Steiber (th), 2012). The scientific reasoning affects the environment at the office since mathematics is said to bring truth; a theory which sometimes could breed arrogance (Girard, 2009).

4.4.3 Recruiting

Girard (2009) claims that there are some major differences between the recruiting at Google and other companies. First, recruitment at Google is seen as a crucial function of the company. The recruitment staff and resources dedicated to recruitment are flexible to meet the company's demand for workforce. Degrees are used not to evaluate technical knowledge, but also personality by looking at an applicant's career path, etcetera. To examine an applicant's technical knowledge, interviews are typically utilized. In the end of 2005, Google had 1 in 14 employees working in recruitment, which is an unusually high ratio (Girard, 2009).

Google attracts, and aims to attract, certain types of personalities. The individuals are typically driven initiators, often entrepreneurs without an actual need for close direction and micromanagement. The employees do not generally need any kind of real supervision, and need the self-confidence to be able to handle the responsibility that comes with this unusually high level of autonomy (Steiber (int), 2012). Edwards (2011) states that to be successful, it is

necessary to embrace uncertainty. Google often attracts young people, or older people with a *"young mind"*; the company focuses on their employees not being overly conservative and rather wants them to think less rationally in order to be more risk-prone. The individuals need to be open to taking risks and trusting new ideas (Edwards, 2011).

Ekström (2010) exemplifies this when describing his meeting with a former employee, David Hart, who quit Google after only ten months. He was forty-four years old at the time and had gone through the recruitment process as everyone else but he did not feel comfortable at Google. Hart described the experience as something like being back in school, with a manager twenty years his junior, people throwing darts around, and employees receiving gold star stickers for every intermediate goal they met.

Hart was not impressed with the benefits at Google, and expresses that the advantage of free laundry offered by the company is not as valuable to someone with a family at home as for the young, single person. Even though people at Google show a high level of intelligence, the maturity level of twenty year-olds is not the same as for someone in their forties, Hart says. He also claims that he did not get the opportunity to work at home, and that he could not take advantage of their policy for flexible time (Ekström, 2010).

Steiber (th, 2012) discovered in her research that at Google, employees are viewed as the organization's most important assets. It is also important to recruit a certain type of employee - one with an entrepreneurial mind, good social skills and values that are similar to the company. The organization of the company is adjusted to the needs of the employees, with small teams and increased flexibility. Employees are expected to be able to organize themselves and be innovative. This way, the HR-department at Google plays a more strategic role and the primary drivers at Google are seen to be individuals together with the culture. When aiming to shape organizational culture and building a system for social control, a possible way to do this is by designing a system for recruitment that is based on hiring committees instead of hiring managers, and intensive socialization of people (Steiber (th), 2012).

4.4.4 Means of Control

The incentive system at Google rewards innovative behavior both by financial means and by recognition. However, the individuals also highlight the significance of intrinsic motivation.

Such motivation is triggered by e.g. smart colleagues and challenging objectives (Steiber (th), 2012).

4.4.4.1 The Twenty Percent Rule

Google has to manage both innovations and operational excellence, and it is the responsibility of the top management to balance the two (Steiber (th), 2012). One example of how this is integrated in the culture is the twenty percent rule, when employees can devote twenty percent of their time to work on personal projects (Girard, 2009).

Girard (2009) states that Google uses the conventional method with extrinsic motivation while simultaneously focusing a lot on intrinsic motivation. Google imitated a system used in the company 3M, where research center employees could spend fifteen percent of the time on their own projects. Google adopted the practice but increased personal project time to twenty percent. One thing of note is that the company expects the projects to be aligned with the company goals. This twenty percent rule makes Google attractive to college graduates and to those who are active in the open source community[17]. It also enhances productivity, and the rule has led to many new Google innovations (Girard, 2009). However, Elias (2012) emphasizes that this rule mostly is applicable to engineers, and that other areas do not take part in this twenty percent rule to the same extent.

The twenty percent rule demands a certain type of management according to Girard (2009). First, the employees have to give reports on their projects that will be viewed by their co-workers, thus creating a kind of peer review. Secondly, if a project is regarded as promising by other employees, the company will adopt and finance it. This also creates a will to come up with good ideas in order to boost their own professional reputation and gain the respect of others. Lastly, if someone does not perform well enough on their free project, it is because they are unable to allocate enough time, due to their normal workload being too excessive, resulting in their performance being below standard Google quality (Girard, 2009).

When evaluating projects, it is not top-management but a committee of co-workers that meet to evaluate the proposals of their colleagues. This method is assumed to have taken inspiration from the peer review process used in the editorial board for scientific journals. Google knows the power of reputation and the importance of non-financial rewards (Girard, 2009).

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[17] Informal term referring to the users, developers and supporters of free software

There are both positive and negative aspects to the peer review method. Peer review forces programmers to document their code while they are writing it – this way they are able to show their colleagues what they are creating. In this manner, peer review is used as quality control. Consequently, the peer reviews contribute to the individual's reputation within the company. Another benefit of peer reviews is that it simplifies the management. Large projects have to be divided into smaller parts since peers do not want to take the risk of reading a long program they might later dismiss. This brings out one of the disadvantages with the model of peer surveillance - it needs considerable investment of time. Also, since the reviews are not anonymous, everyone knows who is evaluating who, and they often work together (Girard, 2009). Girard also explains that when part of the work staff is not invited to peer review meetings, rumors are often heard about these employees potentially being on the verge of becoming discharged. This could lead to company intrigues between staff members.

Former intern Elias (2012) opposes the statement of the twenty percent rule being accessible for everyone by saying that the rule does not apply to business people. He admits that it is possible, but continues to say that it is more suitable for engineers due to the nature of their work. He has a hard time picturing himself working on such a project but admits that everyone with a great idea has the possibility to do so, and he even knew a business person who developed his own twenty percent project.

Tosh (2012) claims that the twenty percent rule was designed specifically for engineers in order for them to be able to work on something that interested them. He explains that there is a structure for the projects and that the employee has to send a proposal to his or her manager for project approval. There are no requirements on performance but it has to be viewed as a real attempt to create a new product or an improvement. Tosh mentions a friend whose project ended up as an application for a patent, whereas he did not apply for a project due to time restrictions as a summer intern.

4.4.4.2 The OKR System

The OKR system was implemented at Google by John Doerr[18], in the early 2000. Today, the system is frequently used at many other companies. OKR stands for Objectives and Key Results, and Doerr defines them as follows: *"Objectives should be significant and communicate action. They state what you want to accomplish while Key Results detail how*

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[18] Venture capitalist and current board member at Google Inc.

you will accomplish these goals." (Edwards, 2011, p. 54). OKRs force the employees to reevaluate priorities on a quarterly basis to ensure that the internal goals change when the industry changes. If projects are not successful enough to produce immediate results, they are stopped based on this data, ensuring that the projects are never able to live solely on sentiment; a problem sometimes seen in other organizations less prone to change. This way, the ideal success rate is not, as presumable, a hundred percent, but in fact merely seventy percent. Top-management has, in fact, agreed to not count missing OKRs into performance reviews, the reason being fear of employees not taking a sufficient amount of risks (Edwards, 2011). Elias (2012) confirms this by saying the goals are never completely met, and completing above eighty percent is seen as excellent. The OKRs turn green around seventy or seventy-five percent, but the aim is nevertheless to always complete a full hundred percent.

By accessing the Google Intranet, MOMA, before Google went public in 2004, it was possible to access every staff member's priorities and see what they were falling behind on, in regard to their work load (Edwards, 2011; Girard 2009). Today, the system is more confidential, but Google still publishes certain information available to everyone. MOMA provides information regarding each employee at the company and a description of their area of expertise, projects and employment status, something that encourages employees to maintain and improve skills and projects. This information is normally kept confidential in other companies (Girard, 2009).

When asking about his personal OKRs, Elias (2012) says these were set together with his manager and never made him feel any pressure at all. However, he admits that he felt some peer pressure to perform when comparing his office to the other offices in Europe, as they could see exactly how well all of them were doing. He does not know if he could describe this as peer surveillance but describes the Google culture as one of high performance, which constantly urges the employees to give their best as they always learn the results from other offices. Elias speaks of best practice learning, where they could be given a campaign already carried out in other countries, knowing these countries' results. He remarks that this is one of the biggest challenges he has experienced in his work life.

Tosh (2012) does not agree upon feeling pressure when comparing results to other offices. Even if he could see another's results, he believes his lack of pressure was due to the difficulty to compare the different activities. The only thing he admitted could be compared was the productivity, but it did not directly affect him. The only peer pressure he admits

feeling was when Google safety rules were involved; for instance, when accessing classified material. He further explained, however, that he never felt peer pressure from managers or colleagues. He felt that the culture was very good-humored, as an afternoon could be spent helping a colleague instead of competing (Tosh, 2012).

4.4.5 Management and Structure

Girard (2009) says that Google can be viewed as something new because of its innovations in management, but primary because of the people in control of production operations. Steiber (th, 2012) on the other hand claims that Google can be seen as a combination of already existing organizational ideas, since many of the organizational characteristics in the company have been identified in other successful companies in Internet Service-related industries (Steiber (th), 2012).

The institutional foundation of Google seems to be influenced by its surrounding area, Silicon Valley, and the access to a knowledgeable VC industry and local universities such as Stanford and UC Berkeley. Google strongly underlines the significance of having a semi-structured, non-bureaucratic company with the mentality of a minor organization (Steiber (th), 2012). One of Larry Page's initial Rules of Order at Google as described by Edwards (2011), was to, by no means, disregard someone else's ideas immediately. Page emphasizes the importance of not simply saying "No. Period." Instead, it is important to find a way to assist them in accomplishing their suggestion, finding an alternative and, perhaps, better solution. This way, several of the services Google provides today have come to existence. The rule can be explained by the notion that the founders previously never worked in a company where they had been taught otherwise (Edwards, 2011, p. 124).

Top management is described as not just the main creators of the organization, but also the company's primary drivers of change (Steiber (th), 2012). Together with the board they played a major role in selecting what ideas to implement within the organization, like the OKR system and the twenty percent rule (Steiber (th), 2012; Edwards, 2011).

Steiber (th, 2012) explains that Google values high flexibility and minimized number of formal processes where empowerment and self-organization are promoted. This way, innovative ideas are able to come from anyone at the company, through a *bottom-up process*, simultaneously as objectives and priorities come through a *top-down process* from top management. The leadership at Google is described as a *bottom-up leadership*, where leaders

are carefully selected both internally and from external sources and decision-making is pushed down to managers with updated information. The aim of the leaders in the company is to be facilitators for innovations (Steiber (th), 2012).

Paul Bucheit, creator of Gmail, enlightens the importance of being smart enough not to strictly follow direct orders from top-management. Instead, he strongly pushes others to trust their instincts (Edwards, 2011). This behavior is also encouraged by the company, which is evident in the implementation of their twenty percent system to stimulate innovation and motivation (Girard, 2009).

The openness towards subcultures such as allowing different time-horizons within the firm also supports innovation (Steiber (th), 2012). Steiber further claims that *"the drive towards continuous innovation at Google can be explained by the culture being strong and innovation-oriented in conjunction with intelligent and creative individuals"* (p.48). A strong peer effect among employees at the company further increased this drive. Google's corporate culture is very change-prone, emphasizing constant renewal demanding the employees to always be prepared for possible change (Steiber (th), 2012).

Edwards (2011) says that the top-management has always had a strong will to optimize the efficiency of the organization. If something slowed down the process by increased costs or reduced productivity, it should be removed. The company views their greatest expense not to be salaries or health insurance, but *opportunity cost.* At one point, Edwards even gives an example of a situation where Sergey Brin refers to a person that is, because of disorganization and an inability to keep up with his workload, *"not a good person"* (Edwards, 2011, p. 108).

4.4.5.1 Teamwork

In 2005, a study showed that in the United States the ratio was 1 manager per 10 employees. At Google, however, the ratio was 1 manager per 20 employees by the end of 2005. The reason for this light structure lies in a wish to create an innovative, fast and responsive company. This infrastructure also reduces costs and helps avoid bureaucracy. While removing techno-structure, Google has chosen to replace it with technology and small teams (Girard, 2009).

One goal of the Google founders was to reduce time-consuming coordination and administration that could be spent on innovating. Measures taken included the building of

small, autonomous teams – something that is not uncommon in management structures – but Google has succeeded in preventing them from growing too large, the maximum limit being six people. The advantage of small teams is that they improve productivity and efficiency, and to achieve this Google sets short deadlines for projects, usually no longer than six weeks. The short-term goals increase the daily pressure while the small teams increase peer pressure, minimizing the risk of freeloading (Girard, 2009).

Small teams are successful at Google because the internal communication and possibility of comparison helps speed up the process and increase productivity (Girard, 2009). By giving employees autonomy, the need for control and management is thus reduced, which gives a flat organization (Girard, 2009).

4.4.6 Flexibility

Tosh (2012) describes his work hours as very flexible. The standard at his office was to work from nine to six, but he admitted that he rarely started his days before ten. He usually had dinner at the office around half past seven and then went back to work for a couple of hours. After long nights, he would call in sick and be advised to stay home. He felt as if as if nobody cared how long his breaks or lunches were and admitted taking power-naps during the afternoon. Tosh further says that he very much appreciated this flexibility, mostly because it showed that the company places value on results and performance and not necessarily the hours in which you accomplish these tasks.

Elias (2012) shares the impression that the working hours are very flexible. *"This suited me very well since I don't like mornings. You don't have working hours. You could just as well work during the night if you do what you are supposed to do."* One difficulty according to Elias is that, regardless of the flexible working hours, there are sometimes scheduled meetings with clients that forced him to be present at the office at certain times. Nevertheless, his usual work day started at half past nine in the morning and lasted to ten in the evening, and he has the impression that he worked more than the majority of his colleagues. He describes this as a personal choice due to his limited time at the company. He also says the company was very flexible when he needed to take certain days off to go home and write exams. He concludes by saying that, overall, he thinks that Google employees in general work more hours than others, with an exception for certain types of jobs as banking and consultancy.

Tosh (2012) experienced a fast-paced work environment at Google and admits that he surely worked more than sixty hours a week. He also remembers working at unpleasant hours, such as early morning meetings with India or late nights communicating with someone in the United States. Elias (2012) could not decide whether or not he experienced the culture as pressuring, but stated that there are definitely high demands which could be described as stressful. He personally did not feel this way and thinks that Google does not hire employees who only desire to work an eight-hour day and leave work behind when leaving the office.

4.4.7 Internal Perceptions of the Organizational Culture

Tosh (2012) explains that he is well aware that the perks Google offer, such as the free food and flexible working hours, is well thought-out by the company and something from which they actually gain. He says employees take a shorter break for lunch when they do not have to leave the building, which make them spend more time on work. Instead of having a lunch break for an hour and a half, he only had to have a thirty minute break. This also means employees are constantly available to the company and only a few minutes away from their desk. However, he explains that Google is generous, and mentions a time when the kitchen department had too much money left and Google decided to spend it on its employees and bought them a lobster buffet. The thing he perceives as most special about Google, however, is the way they work, referring to the flat structure. He recounts that his desk was on the same floor as one of the top executives and that he used to spend his breaks playing pool with a friend. He even recalls their managers chatting with them as they played. No one thought it to be strange that they played pool at work, and such activity was encouraged rather than abhorred.

Steiber (int, 2012) gives two possible reasons in regard to what she believes people find attractive about Google. First, she says, the brand is attractive on its own. It represents *innovation*. People believe they will have a possibility to change the world when they start at Google, something she found motivated people. Her second reason is that Google takes care of its employees, and spends money on the recruitment process and care for individuality. Steiber concludes this by saying that the first reason is why people apply for a position at Google, but the second reason makes them stay (Steiber (int), 2012). Tosh (2012) confirms this theory when he explains that is was the external image of the company that attracted him, but says that the internal culture would be the reason for him to go back to Google.

4.4.7.1 "Don't Be Evil"

When asked about the company motto *"don't be evil"*, Tosh (2012) did not believe it to be incorporated at the Dublin Office where he worked, but rather that employees used to say other things such as *"You can't do that, it's not 'googely'."* He quickly adds that this was typically used in humoristic ways. Elias (2012) does not agree, and claims that the slogan to some extent is incorporated in the culture. He does, however, emphasize that the saying *"don't be evil"* is somewhat vague, stating *"The motto leaves room for interpretation. What does being 'evil' actually mean? They're doing their best to help, looking at the big picture, like projects in Africa and so on. But do they want to put Facebook out of business as a social platform? Yes, I think they do."* Elias (2012) counters by saying that more frequently used phrases are *"connect the users with the magic"*, and that he has never heard of anyone refusing to do something simply because *"it is evil"*.

4.4.7.2 Salary

Elias (2012) states that the salary at Google is fixed and depends on seniority, and that an additional performance-based salary is included, depending on how well one has carried out his or her OKRs. Tosh (2012) describes the salary at Google to be a "reasonable" market-level salary. He explains that he was not only given a basic salary, but also a re-location bonus in order to help the move from a different country; something he says *"helped a lot"* since it was given in advance. Elias (2012) does not fully agree, claiming the salary to be above average level *"compared to other companies similar to Google"*, adding *"if companies like that exist…"*. Both interns were very pleased with their salaries and the additional benefits the company gave them including gym membership, computers, food, etcetera, which they state added to the value of the salary. The salary was not a reason as to why either of them applied, however, and both claim that it would not be a reason for them to return to the company, either (Elias, 2012; Tosh, 2012). Elias (2012) adds that he actually did not know the salary offered when he accepted the internship.

4.4.7.3 Returning to Google

Tosh (2012) states that he, without a doubt, would return to Google; however, he would prefer to have some more work experience outside of Google before doing so. This way, he believes he could contribute more to the company. Tosh also mentions that some reasons as to why he would work at Google again are because the company has an environment of intelligent

workers at the same time as the company truly does take care of its employees, where space is left for the individuals to shape their own ideas and have autonomy over their work.

Elias (2012) confirms this, stating that he also would like to work for Google after obtaining some more experience. He does, however, add that a reason not to work for Google again would be if Google were to lose their leading position on the market or if he were to obtain an unsatisfactory job position. Such a job position could, for instance, be if the engineer-driven Google were to offer a business position where he would feel as if he did not obtain autonomy and responsibility in his work tasks.

4.4.7.4 Openness and Trust

In her thesis, Steiber (th) (2012) discusses whether or not Google could be viewed as an open system. She concludes that the corporate system for innovation could be seen as open since Google uses innovations originating both from within the company and from external sources. She also states that this, however, does not automatically mean that the entire corporation is open. Elias (2012) further emphasizes that the company cannot be seen as externally open, and that it is nearly impossible for an outsider to get an accurate idea of what is going on behind closed doors. He elaborates by mentioning that several people have been sued for giving away confidential information.

Google is open to external innovations by cooperating with universities and investing in other companies; in this way, there is a knowledge exchange between external and internal experts. In its early years the company also adopted many externally developed organizational ideas (Steiber (th), 2012). Tosh (2012) does not see Google as an open organization; on the contrary, he believes it to be very closed. On an internal level, however, he finds the company to be open, bringing up examples of classified information on new products etcetera, but admits that the company does have thick walls protecting from the outside.

4.4.8 The Internal Narratives of Google

Steiber (int, 2012) believes organizational storytelling within Google to be very strong, and explains this by referring to her conducted interviews with current employees at Google, where all twenty-eight participants differing in nationality and departments confessed that co-founder Larry Page personally studies the evaluation folder of each and every employee at Google. This happens to all employees regardless of department or standing, since Page wants to be part of every individual and approve their employment at the company.

When Tosh (2012) tells about his recruitment process, he talks about the "pack" that could be compared to a folder of personal information on potential employees. Tosh says that until 2010, co-founder Larry Page had to approve all packs for the employees of Google. He does not know if this rumor was true but cannot deny its popularity around the office. Due to massive recruitment of people during 2011 investigation was made impossible and Page discontinued the practice, Tosh believes. Elias (2012) has also heard the story but is sure that Page has stopped. He says it would be implausible just by the sheer amount of folders Page would have to read stating that *"it would be impossible if you make a calculation of the number of folders Page would have to read"*. Elias is, however, convinced that Page or someone close to him did do it at an earlier point in time.

Replying to the question as to how she thought the employees perceive their culture, Steiber (int, 2012) described it as "*extremely strong*" and important for the innovation in the company. She also believes that Google does its best to protect the corporate culture, since the company finds it incredibly important. She also explored what affected the company's innovativeness, and found that culture was one of the top answers (Steiber (int), 2012). When asking Ekström (2012) the same question, he answered that the employees felt a strong belonging and pride, together with an increased awareness of the core values of the company.

Elias (2012) describes the culture as *"awesome"* and cannot really see any improvements to the company's culture. However, he is also well aware that Google is a company, and that a company exists to fulfill its mission. He perceives Google as extremely good at maximizing the use of its employees.

5 Analysis

In this chapter we will try to analyze our findings from the empirical data through the theoretical framework presented earlier, in different sections we believe to be main areas of the corporate culture.

5.1 Work-Life Balance

Clampitt (2005) talks about the importance of the *people* in the organization, and ascribe them three functions – as creators, carriers and consequences of the organizational culture. This naturally makes recruiting an integral part of creating an organizational culture. Behman et al., (2009) claim that maintaining a work and non-work balance is easier for individuals with personal characteristics such as *approachability* and *extroversion*. A possibility is that Google prefers to hire people who possess these qualities and are therefore more easily able to balance a high workload with a personal life. The heavy workload at Google was confirmed by both Tosh (2012) and Elias (2012).

The Google employees typically have an entrepreneurial spirit and no strong need for supervision (Steiber (int), 2012). Among the people Google attracts, a large proportion includes younger individuals or individuals with a *"young mind"* (Edwards, 2011). Further, it can be presumed that both entrepreneurs and young or young-minded people have less need for time away from work, and therefore have an easier time managing a high workload and work-life balance.

The empirical study suggests Google to be surprisingly open internally (Tosh 2012), and this might have to do with the fact that the company supposedly only hires "Googely" people. Google attracts and aims to attract certain types of personalities (Girard, 2009). Clampitt (2005) asserts that individuals are carriers of the culture and in this manner helps shape it, which makes adequate recruiting highly important. Clampitt (2005) further emphasizes the importance of proper socialization of new employees into the culture due, to the crucial time during the initial stage of employment when they create a perceived image of the corporate culture. One example of socialization within the company is the weekly Friday meetings – the TGIFs. The TGIFs were intended to bind the company together (Edwards, 2011), but

Tosh states (2012) that among his team only two out of seven team members participated, and typically only other younger employees as well.

Tosh (2012) perceives the average age at Google to be much lower than average, especially at the engineer-dominated offices Dublin and Zurich; offices he perceives to have a high level of playfulness. These offices are the ones usually associated with the Google culture (NBC Today Show, 2007). He also believes that the average age is higher at the business operations-related offices which also have lower levels of social engagement; something he assumes correlates with the need for family life. An example of this is Ekström's (2010) meeting with David Hart, a former employee at Google who was forty-four years old when working for Google, but kept feeling as if he was back at school. He explained that he as a family man could not enjoy the advantages of Google to the same extent as a younger or single person, and most importantly, in spite of the high intelligence of his co-workers, the maturity level of twenty year olds was markedly lower than individuals in their forties.

Elias (2012) states that there are definitely high demands placed on employees at Google, which might place a high degree of stress on individuals at the company. Newer, and particularly faster technology, creates the impression of higher average productivity, which results in pressure to perform and produce at an ever increasing level (Behman, et al., 2009). Elias (2012) does, however, believe that Google does not hire individuals who merely desire to work eight hours a day and then leave work behind when their officially allotted workday ends.

The manner of how work is organized and the extent to which the individual can affect his or her work is strongly related to stress (Johnson, 2009). In our empirical studies we found out that both Tosh (2012) and Elias (2012) very much appreciated the flexibility that Google offered, mostly because it showed that the company only values the result of your performance, and not that you are present at the office certain hours. To be given this level of autonomy can be seen as increased authority of one's work, and is a sign of trust from the employer. Johnson (2009) claims that high autonomy lowers stress, whereas overly high demands increase it. The high demands that are typically placed on employees in a high-performance company like Google are, however, probably counterbalanced by the flexibility and increased autonomy.

5.2 Means of Control

Campbell Quick et al. (2009) state that individuals are naturally intrinsically motivated, and that it is important to give the individual autonomy in order to sustain a work environment where he or she feels valued and appreciated by the organization. Herzberg considers that in order to obtain an effective use of employees their work has to be enriched, since humans have a drive and intrinsic motivator called *"ability to accomplish"* (Herzberg, 2008). In contrast to outside factors, intrinsic motivators have a long-term effect and this *job enrichment* supplies the employee with an opportunity for psychological growth. Girard (2009) believes that Google knows the power of reputation and the importance of non-financial rewards.

In our research we found out that a major reason that individuals applied to work at Google was the company's reputation for innovation, and the possibility to change the world through such groundbreaking work is seen as strongly motivating (Steiber (int), 2012). Except for their "ordinary" work tasks at Google, the employees have the opportunity to spend twenty percent of their work time on a project of their own preference. This way, the workers are given a certain amount of *authority* and *job freedom*, which Herzberg (2008) refers to in his Motive Hygiene Theory as triggers of the intrinsic motivator's *personal achievement* and *recognition*. The twenty percent rule can also be viewed as giving the employees the opportunity to become experts in their chosen area of interest, which according to Herzberg stimulates *responsibility*, *growth* and *advancement*.

In our empirical study it is stated that Google uses intrinsic motivators, and that this primarily attracts college graduates and those who are active in the open source community (Girard, 2009). It was also stated that this enhances productivity, a claim which is supported by the findings of Herzberg (2008), where he stated that in order to obtain effective use of employees work has to be enriched. Herzberg could see that employees working at a company where intrinsic motivators were used developed a more positive attitude toward their work.

When the time comes to evaluate the outcomes of the personal projects pursued under the twenty percent rule, a committee of co-workers undertakes the evaluation instead of upper management (Girard, 2009). Girard highlights a difference between Google and most other companies, which is that the information regarding each employee is made available by the

house intranet MOMA (Girard, 2009; Edwards, 2011). Here you can find information about other employees' expertise projects and employment status. The interns claim having a certain level of access to information about the OKRs of employees and managers (Tosh, 2012; Elias, 2012).

Herzberg's (2008) model claims that if employees are given responsibility for an entire process and additional authority it triggers motivators such as *personal achievement* and *recognition.* Reviewing colleagues could be seen as a way of gaining additional authority. In addition, if this would mean that they undertook tasks they had not handled before, it would trigger the motivators of *growth* and *learning*. By making important information available directly to the workers without going through a manager the open internal system at Google may trigger *internal recognition.*

In the empirical study we can see that Google employees earn twenty-three percent above market pay in the IT industry (PayScale, 2011). Our theory supports the correlation between pay and commitment to the company claimed by Purcell et al., (2009). Purcell et al. further claims that specific knowledge skills are hard to replace, which puts knowledge-workers in stronger bargaining positions where they can demand a high salary. Pay is, as stated by Johnson (2009), one of the most important tools for the individual when estimating their value within the company. Herzberg (2008), however, defines salary as an extrinsic motivation, that is only effective in the short-term – but he also admits that extrinsic motivators are needed in addition to intrinsic ones.

Tosh (2012) rates the pay at Google as fair and did not perceive it as above average but admitted that the company spends further amounts on employees on top of the salary in the form of free food and a re-location bonus. He does not acknowledge pay as a contributing cause when applying for a job at Google, and does not think it will become one in the future, either. Elias (2012) does not agree to the salary being at market level and rather claims it to be above. Both interns were very pleased with their salaries and the additional benefits the company gave them, but at the same time they claimed it would not be a reason for them to return to the company.

5.3 The Organizational Culture

Gabriel (2000) states that the organizational culture provides the members of a company with a feeling of belonging and that it brings logic and meaning to their actions. Clampitt (2005) suggests that culture is a set of values shared by employees within an organization, which is expressed in a number of different ways but commonly with symbols. Other communication is also affected since the culture naturally dictates the manner of interaction as well. When developing certain ways of communicating, a company also creates a code of *"how to do things"* within that specific corporation (Clampitt, 2005). One could talk about *"the Google way"* of doing things (Girard, 2009).

The Google brand is associated with innovation (Steiber 2012). This drive towards innovation can be explained by the culture being strong and innovation-oriented, in conjunction with intelligent and creative individuals. The organizational culture is branded as playful, colorful and creative (Ekström, 2010). Overall it would be easy to draw the conclusion that people who are appealed by this would be attracted by Google and are likely to apply for a job at the company.

Clampitt (2005) further discusses the correlation between culture and performance, and the importance of having an appropriate culture that enhances performance. Culture can be both supporting and restraining in an organization. Tools used to reinforce the culture can be *physical designs*, *symbols* and *policies*.

5.3.1 Culture: The Google Offices

Physical designs can be used to reinforce culture, and include buildings, parking lots and office designs (Clampitt 2005). The Google offices have a high level of playfulness, at least the engineer offices, in order to promote creativity (Elias, 2012). For example, the offices are equipped with areas used for non-work related activities, such as TV-rooms and rooms to relax in – and this is something that has been branded through extensive exposure in the media. The offices are also branded by intelligent staff, innovation management, free food, snacks and beverages, massage chairs and free laundry. Tosh (2012) believes that some engineer-dominated offices have higher levels of playfulness than for instance business-based offices in London and the Nordic countries.

Herzberg (2008) says that extrinsic motivators, i.e. hygiene factors are effective in the short-term because they create a movement but not a real motivation. Steiber (th, 2012) claims that

it is the innovation-oriented culture that attracts people to Google, and make them apply for a job there. However, she believes the reason for them to stay is the perks, something that is further confirmed by Tosh (2012) when he explains that he was first attracted by the external image of the company but would stay because of the internal culture.

The Google HQ in Mountain View, called the Googleplex, is typically shown first when the company is externally branded. Travel Channel (2009) does, however, announce that there an additional sixty-eight extreme Google offices similar to the Googleplex. This is not supported by the empirical study, however, as both Elias (2012) and Tosh (2012) have underlined the differences between the international offices. Offices such as Oslo and London are more business- and marketing-oriented, and very different from engineer-based offices such as the Mountain View HQ, Dublin office and the office in Zürich.

Gabriel (2000) describes the organizational culture as something that enables individuals to find logic and a sense of belonging in their experiences, which could be related to the differences in offices. For instance, at engineer-based offices people are allowed to wear whatever they want[19], to reflect their sense of creativity. As Elias (2012) puts it, business and marketing people are dressed more formally than engineers, presumably because they have more external contact with other offices and companies. This could therefore result in better sense of logic and belonging for people in business-related areas. Gabriel (2000) continues to state that effective management does not regard culture as merely superfluous, but rather acts in order to shape and stimulate this culture. In this case, Google may have chosen to build their offices this way in order to embrace the different cultures.

As Gabriel (2000) points out, there are dangers with conceptualizing culture as an intensely unitary force, and that other authors have looked into whether the organization is something constant with physical features of the company or internalized by individuals. The Google culture is, according to our empirical data, directly influenced by its founders. This is indicated by several sources, with many stories about the company's culture revolving around them. The culture could also have been shaped by Stanford University, which could be a reason to why they still have gold star stickers for intermediate goals, something that is not equally appreciated among employees. As we have seen in our empirical data, Google typically aims to hire certain types of personalities. It is very important to recruit the "right"

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[19] E.g. pajamas

people, as Clampitt (2005) pronounces when he states that the individuals of the organization are the creators and carriers of the organizational culture.

One of the main things branded regarding the Google offices is the seemingly unlimited amount of free food and snacks. This is, according to all empirical data, completely accurate - Google does offer this at, to our knowledge, all offices. However, Tosh (2012) considers this to be done by the company for strategic reasons. To eat at the office indirectly means to always be available and within a few minutes from the work station. By providing food, the company saves valuable time that can be spent more efficiently. As Tosh (2012) states, instead of eating for an hour and a half, you merely need to spend thirty minutes on lunch. The employees do not have to leave the office at all, which in the long run benefits the company. This is not mentioned in the Google employer branding video, NBC *Today Show,* or Travel Channel's *Extreme Workplaces*, where free food is basically presented as a positive bonus the company graciously gives their employees while seemingly not asking for anything extraordinary in return.

5.3.2 Culture: Humor and Repeated Stories

Culture can be promoted by *symbolic signs* in conversations, for instance jokes or repeated stories (Clampitt, 2005). Google uses jokes in their error messages, and constantly change their logo, *"the Google doodle"*. Edwards (2010) states that this was a strategy to humanize the organization, by making the site appear as if it were made by real humans.

Clampitt (2005) states that by managing the stories that are spread within the organization, you are in control of its internal culture. Google also uses repeated stories to reinforce their culture. In our research we found a story that both Steiber (2012) and the interns Tosh and Elias (2012) had heard about, which describes co-founder Larry Page personally studying the evaluation folder of each and every employee at Google. This, regardless of whether the employee is an assistant or engineer, in order to approve the employment of every individual at the company. According to Clampitt (2005) a good story has a moral indicator, that employees can receive guidance from in their behavior. This story is most likely to communicate the flat structure at the company. By sharing the same stories, we feel a sense of belonging with others in the same group.

5.3.3 Culture: "Don't Be Evil"

Culture can be discovered in symbols, as claimed by Clampitt (2005). One example of symbols he mentions are slogans. The most famous slogan of Google is the company motto *"don't be evil",* which was originally an unofficial motto that, due to the company's aversion toward traditional marketing, eventually became so ingrained in the company's culture that it was adopted as the official motto (Edwards, 2011; Ekström, 2010). As Clampitt (2005) states, organizations develop manners of corporate behavior which becomes a future guide of how to do things within that company. When asking former intern Tosh (2012) if he thinks the slogan is well incorporated in the culture he answers that it is much more common to talk about whether or not actions can be considered "Googely". He adds that this is used more in humorous ways. When intern Elias (2012) was given the same question he agrees but considers the slogan to be quite vague with room for interpretation. He does, however, believe that the company makes an effort, and mentions charity projects.

5.4 Valuable Brand and the Status of Being Recruited

In our empirical studies we found out that Google has an enormous brand value (BrandZ, 2012). The company has also been voted best employer, and is in this manner frequently branded and promoted by the media. When conducting our research, we also learned that the brand was a key factor when Tosh and Elias (2012) applied for internships at the company. Elias (2012) believed his internship would benefit him, and thought of it as a future merit to put on his resume. Likewise Steiber (int, 2012) expresses that she thought that the Google brand was a crucial factor for her interviewees when they had applied for work at the company. She mentioned this as the primary factor when replying to the question what she believed attracts people to Google. This was confirmed by Elias (2012) and Tosh (2012).

The reason for which certain individuals find themselves attracted to a particular brand has not yet been clarified. A possible explanation is the person-organization fit (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004) which occurs when the individuals find the values of the company to be similar to his or her own, and makes them more attracted to the particular enterprise (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Purcell, et al., 2009).

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) present employer branding as a three-step process where the company in the first step decide what values to brand. Creativity (Steiber (int), 2012), playfulness (Tosh), flexibility and love for science (Girard, 2009) are examples of qualities that earlier have been associated with the brand name *"Google"*. The second step is to attract

the target population, possibly by using the right medias (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). The marketing Google uses is primarily directed towards engineers and focused on innovation, as seen earlier in this study. Tosh and Elias (2012) said they could not entirely benefit from the structure of work at Google, as in the case with the twenty percent rule.

The third step is to internally market and reinforce the values and goals, possibly by publishing a slogan which makes employees and customers pressured by both external and internal measures to act in unison with the values communicated through it (Clampitt, 2005). An example of this could be the *"don't be evil"* company motto, which can be presumed to interact in two ways, both as branding to customers and as a model to employees. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) argue that due to this, it is necessary for the firm to communicate truthful information. If there is a gap between the philosophy the company promotes and the one it practices, the employees can experience this as hypocrisy on the part of the firm (Clampitt, 2005). Tosh (2012) perceives the company to be exclusive since he had the perception that it was very hard to be accepted for employment at the company.

Clampitt (2005) discusses the importance of recruiting and mentions both hiring and interviewing as important indicators of the culture. People perceive these already during the recruitment process. Girard (2009) claims recruitment at Google to be a crucial function of the company, and due to the use of internal promotion Google tends to hire over-qualified employees.

5.5 The Love for Science

Loewenstein (2007) presents different theories on the cause of curiosity. Curiosity has been seen as both an intrinsic motivation and a passion. The three perspectives propose that curiosity is drive-based, incongruity-based and competence-based. Hence the first perspective suggests this is a drive we all are born with, the second views curiosity as a personality trait and the last theory presents curiosity as a state of mind. Loewenstein calls attention to recent use of curiosity in advertisement, as seen in mystery ads where the identity of the product is revealed only at the end.

People voluntary expose themselves to curiosity, partly because of the pleasure of satisfying it. Callan and Lawrence (2009) discusses *Intellectual Stimulation,* a transformational leadership category which focuses on stimulating intelligence, rationality and problem solving in order to encourage the employees to become more innovative and creative. Difficulties are

referred to as "solvable glitches". As former employee Edwards (2011) says, every problem was viewed as solvable. Here, we can make a connection to the uncertainty avoidance personality discussed by Loewenstein. Math is also said to permeate every part of Google (Girard, 2009). In addition to this, we can see a clear example of mystery ads, earlier discussed by Loewenstein (2008). This can be related to the mathematical equation Google had stated on a billboard back in 2002, without any information regarding the company (Edwards, 2011; Ekström, 2010).

5.6 Management: Flat Organization and Teamwork

Google is considered to be a flat organization that tries to avoid bureaucracy and a large-scale company mindset, something that has been confirmed by all our empirical data. Autonomy is encouraged by high levels of empowerment and self-organization. In addition to the absence of a hierarchical structure, there is also a strong presence of teamwork, with small teams and short deadlines.

Cordery (2003) presents a model that states that there is no real economic or productivity gain by using teamwork in firms, but rather that this has a reputational effect. Organizations that are involved in teamwork and empowerment are often admired and viewed as innovative. Girard (2009) however claims that small teams increase productivity at Google, primarily due to the chance of comparing office results and the internal communication. Moreover, he states that the autonomy given employees reduces the need for management. This has resulted in Google's unusually light management with few managers per employee.

Teams make the organization seem less centralized according to a theory brought up by Cordery (2003), and this also creates a different mean of control, i.e. peer-based control. This way initiative and effort is stimulating for the individuals in the organization, leading to a higher level of motivation. Moreover, teamwork triggers major intrinsic rewards, including higher perceived autonomy and increased skill variety due to task rotation within the team. (Cordery, 2003)

5.7 Intelligence and Problem Solving

Callan and Lawrence (2009) show a model presenting *Intellectual Stimulation* as part of transformational leadership in order to stimulate intelligence, rationality and problem solving. Teaching the individuals in the organization that difficulties simply are solvable problems helps the employees to be more innovative and creative. According to the empirical study,

Google is a company very focused on problem solving, and math infiltrates every aspect of the company's culture. The few marketing strategies previously implemented by the company were all very focused on solving mathematical equations or estimating numbers using logic and calculations, which help brand the company as highly focused on engineering.

This is supported by our empirical data, but Elias (2012) points out that math-based work tasks are merely stimulating for engineers. The engineers are, however, according to several sources, seen as "the Gods" at the company; this being a potential explanation to the infiltration of math in the company. Despite Elias (2012) dismissing the idea that a math-based culture is as stimulating for business people and marketers, he is guilty of making calculations a few minutes later when he referred to the rumors about Larry Page, stating *" it would be impossible if you make a calculation of the number of folders Page would have to read"*.

5.8 Flexibility

Google is often branded as a company with flexible time schedules, and our empirical findings support this conclusion. Both interns agree that Google is a flexible company where it is possible to disturb work with non-work related needs, something they both very much appreciated. On the other hand, they also mention that they did work more than a normal forty hour workweek. Behman et al. (2009) state that this is a typical consequence of increased flexibility in a company for the individuals and that when individuals are allowed to work from home or according to their own preference, they put in more hours. While the extra work would seem intolerable, individuals are, overall, positive about their workload. Seen from a branding perspective, these extra work hours are not mentioned in any of the marketing Google has used, although the videos do show engaged workers and present the staff members as entrepreneurial *"go-getters"*. One possible explanation to the company being so flexible could be due to the fact that the company was created at Stanford University by two students with very little previous work experience where, as Edwards (2011) says, they had never been taught otherwise.

Ekström (2010) gives an example of a former employee who did not participate in the company's policy for flexible time, seeing that he did not believe that he was given the opportunity by the company to do so. The external branding is therefore not supported by all our empirical data. Another example regarding the same employee Ekström mentions is that

he did not appreciate all formal policies of the company, e.g. doing laundry at work. Behman et al. (2009) gives an explanation to this stating that, although policies are available at the company, not everyone will make use of them.   Therefore, it can sometimes be difficult to create a general work-family enhancement and in turn, a positive psychological well-being. This is simply because it is difficult to take into account the different company benefits constructed to aid this balance without regards to who may or may not fully use them and for what reasons.

Behman et al. (2009) defines the term flexibility as different depending on whether it is seen from the perspective of an employer or an employee. To an employer, flexibility typically indicates that employees are always to be accessible to the firm. This can be seen as true for Google taking into account the statement of Tosh (2012) where he claims that by eating at the company, employees are constantly available to the company.   Many of the other, as described in the branded videos, "perks" at the company are related to this. By using the on-site gym facilities, the free cafeterias, the free laundry, and even the on-site free doctors, individuals are *always accessible* to Google.

5.9 High Demands and Autonomy

As Johnson (2009) states, working under time pressure with unrealistic workloads and unmanageable deadlines, causes stress. The empirical data we have found in our study shows two different points of view regarding this matter. In our secondary empirical data, it seems that the workloads often are unrealistic, with extraordinarily high demands on the work staff. A story Edwards (2009) mentions on the founders even includes co-founder Sergey Brin referring to a person unable to keep up with his workload as "*not a good person*". Despite the fact that our primary empirical data does not reveal any information on whether or not the workload demands are unrealistically high, all empirical data conclude that Google does have high demands on their workers. Both interns (Tosh, 2012; Elias, 2012) in our study claim that they did work much more than forty hours a week. An example of the high demands can be seen by looking at the OKR system, which has a hundred percent limit but as Elias (2012) mentions, it is impossible to complete a hundred percent – even if this is the goal. According to both Siegrist (2009) and Flint-Taylor and Robertson (2009) high levels of control together with high, realistic demands result in the employees feeling a higher ability to succeed. Also, Flint-Taylor and Robertson (2009) present a theory where individuals report strong feelings of well-being after completing a difficult challenge.

Looking at marketing videos of Google and NBC and the Travel Channel, Google does enunciate that they merely recruit intelligent staff and that it is *"not a vacation"*, but this message might fade with the hundreds of colorful playrooms shown, simultaneously counterbalancing the statement. Autonomy levels are indicated to be *very high* at Google as several of the employees in Google's own employer branding video states. As Behman et al. (2009) claim, individuals who experience more autonomy at work also experience higher levels of satisfaction regarding their work and non-work balance.

According to our empirical study, autonomy levels perceived by employees seem to be high *to a certain extent*. It is possible to plan your own work schedule and whether you want to work at home or from the office, but because of meetings at certain hours it is easier to work at the office. The twenty percent rule indicates high levels of autonomy, which is described both in the data we have on branding and our primary empirical data from interviews. However, the primary empirical data claims that the twenty percent projects are somewhat restricted, as the company demands that they are aligned with the company goals, "real" attempts to innovation or improvement, and approved by a manager. None of these demands are mentioned in the branding videos. Moreover, the twenty percent projects are almost entirely designed for engineers, leaving out other work groups. This information is not to be found anywhere in our empirical study on the external image of Google.

5.10 Peer Pressure/Peer Surveillance

The OKR system is, as previously mentioned, a system wherein certain information is available to everyone at the company, and these are used to motivate the employees. They can, however, also be seen as a reinforcement of peer pressure because of the openness and sharing of the OKRs between peers and offices through the internal database, MOMA. Competition can boost motivation and effort up to a certain point, according to Campbell Quick et al. (2009), and therefore this might be seen a strategic choice from Google's perspective. Furthermore, Cordery (2003) presents a theory where teams force more peer-based control, which is quicker and more direct since it is closer to the individuals. As we can see in the empirical data, Google uses small teams and employs few leaders into the organizational structure. This could emphasize the peer pressure in the company, and indirectly, boost the level of motivation.

The twenty percent rule with its peer review system may cause heightened levels of peer surveillance, seeing that the reviews come from coworkers and not top management. Girard (2009) suggests that this indirectly indicates that if someone does not perform well on their twenty percent project, they might not be good enough for the Google standard. This could therefore be a strategy from Google to boost motivation. Elias (2012) indicates, however, that he only felt peer pressure regarding competition with other offices, while intern Tosh (2012) indicates he never felt any peer surveillance or pressure concerning this. Whether Elias and Tosh could in fact access the same information, bearing in mind they had different internships in different international offices, is unclear.

The peer reviews and open OKR system are not mentioned in the branding videos and overall not overly easy to find information about outside our empirical data. This might possibly make finding this information problematic for potential employees.

5.11 "The B-word"

Branding has always been anathema to the Google cultural slogan *"don't be evil"*, because according to its founders, mass media and marketing lured users into using products not for its technical and practical merits, but through psychological trickery. Instead of using normal advertising techniques, Google instead wanted users to discover Google themselves by promoting a good cause. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) define employer branding as building a unique employer identity, where the brand differentiates itself from its competitors. Google can therefore be argued to have differentiated itself by not using employer branding in the typical sense of the word.

Backhaus and Tikoo (2009) present employer branding as a three-step process, where the first crucial thing for the company to do is to develop a particular value that employees should see as the central message of the firm. One value, in Google's case, became *"don't be evil"*. The second step of the process is to market the value proposition to potential employees, which in the case of Google was done by letting people discover the advantages with the search engine themselves through good causes. Lastly, the company needs to internally promote the slogan into the culture to fulfill the promise they have made to the new employees in order to establish their commitment. The empirical study does not support the third step entirely, and Elias (2012) argues that despite the fact that Google is involved in charity projects, it is

important not to forget that Google is a company. The motto *"don't be evil"* can therefore be seen as not entirely internally incorporated.

6 Discussion

In order to understand our findings from the analysis we will in this chapter first describe how we perceive the work environment at Google to be, as a first level to interpret our results. Secondly, we explain our perception of how Google employees are motivated, as a second level of interpretation. Lastly, we take a closer look at the organizational culture in order to comprehend our previous discussion points. All levels are interpreted through a storytelling perspective and the two main questions in our problem statement will be presented separately.

6.1 Q1

Why are prospective employees attracted to Google as an employer, and how can the reason behind this attraction be elucidated through an organizational storytelling perspective?

6.1.1 Work Environment

Through our empirical studies we found that the workplace at Google is a high-performance environment. Creativity is a main factor attracting individuals to the company, advancing their desire for achievement and innovation. Google's strong brand name seems to further stimulate this effect. In short, people are attracted to Google because the company represents an imagined opportunity to *change the world*. As discussed earlier, Google employees are given a twenty percent personal project, which we believe aims to, except for leading to new innovations, give the employees an opportunity to be motivated by their own imagination. This method of daydreaming seems to be a highly efficient method of preserving an innovative work environment. Gabriel (2000) believes that daydreaming is a narrative strategy used in order to sustain a meaning behind a story. In this case, *working at Google could be an opportunity to change the world*. It is not whether you change the world or not that matters, what is important is whether or not *you believe that you can.*

Another reason why people are attracted to Google could be because the individuals drawn to the company naturally have a drive for curiosity, or a personality trait that drives them to seek ways to make sense of their environment, as stated by Loewenstein (2005). In addition, these individuals are rational and view all problems as solvable. We do not, however, draw the conclusion that all curious individuals, regardless of background and external stimulation, are

attracted to Google, since we believe that even if a person is born with a personality trait that encourages him or her to make sense of the environment, external stimulation at an early age combined with access to education is crucial in order to become attracted to this company. Google favors employing individuals with a high educational level, something the company seems to associate with the above mentioned qualities.

Mathews and Wacker (2007) discuss a theory called the *Abolition of Context,* where it is highly important that the audience, in this case the prospective employees, have common reference points with the storyteller – Google. The empirical studies support the theory that Google has a tendency to favor employing highly educated engineers that are young or *young-minded*. We believe this is a strategy to maintain common reference points and consequently, maintain the work environment. This way, an atmosphere full of intelligence and innovation possibly creates a *sense of belonging shaped by an intellectually and creatively stimulating work environment.*

6.1.2 Motivation

The individuals at Google seem to have high levels of autonomy over their workload, something that, as we already concluded in our analysis, motivates people to work harder. We also believe this to be a reason why potential employees are attracted to the company. When examining means of control, such as the twenty percent rule, we can see that Google does not exercise control in the traditional sense but rather seems to stimulate important intrinsic motivators mentioned by Herzberg (2008). Consequently, people are attracted to Google because they feel appreciated when given a high level of autonomy, due to their desire to be encouraged by intrinsic motivators, i.e. motivated in the long term with a chance to experience psychological growth at work.

Both Gabriel (2000) and Czarniawska (2004) state that the truth of the story lies in meaning behind it, and not in the actual facts. When looking at Google this way we believe that the actual facts are the *needs* of the company, i.e. its desire for efficiency and economic gain, while the employees experience the truth of the story to be what they perceive as *meaningful*; the *management*, *how* they are allowed to work, how much *autonomy* and *flexibility* they are given and so forth. Prospective employees do not seem to care that the actual facts could be that the company desires to be lucrative and efficient. Contrariwise, employees might believe that the meaning behind the free food is that they are meant to be content with their work

environment, and whether the actual fact is that the company wants them to perform, be effective and not leave the office, is less important. However, these two factors are typically correlated and satisfied employees often result in an increased level of production.

The answer to our question why people are attracted to Google, with regards to the work life-balance, seems to be because they have no trouble managing a high workload or the work-life balance that succeeds it. These people are, as we discussed earlier, typically young and have an entrepreneurial spirit. We believe that young or *young-minded* individuals do not resent a work day that exceeds eight hours, perhaps due to a personal life which does not include family. These are also individuals that are spurred by a high level of autonomy and control over their work as well as flexibility, which can counterbalance the level of stress descending from the high demands for performance.

In spite of the company having undeniably high demands on its employees, potential employees may overlook this and other attempts the company may have to control the performance of the workers. We also believe a major reason people are attracted to Google, viewed from a management analysis perspective, to be the increased well-being caused by working in small teams. This since, employees at Google are able to develop their skills by increased rotation and more autonomy over their own work. Another reason could be the popularity effect created when a company incorporates teamwork – employees perceive the organization as more innovative and with a higher quality-management. The potential employees therefore might interpret *meaning* into their work when given, what they perceive to be, a *high level of teamwork, autonomy and flexibility.*

An additional reason we found attracts people to Google is the company's enormously influential and attractive brand name. Individuals share and feel aligned with the company values, and employment at the company is associated with *exclusiveness* and *status* due to the belief of an elitist recruiting system. Google seems to only hire highly competent and educated employees, something we believe further contributes to the general perception that it is *hard* to get recruited by Google. This might add to the perception of exclusiveness and high status of employment, since it is associated with great knowledge and competency. Consequently, we feel confident making the conclusion that the brand works as an eye-catcher and could be an advantage when applying for other jobs.

As Mathews and Wacker (2007) explain, individuals by nature tend to talk about what they and others have done. A crucial component of a business story is that people can identify with it and read themselves into it, both as an actor and as part of the audience. Mathews and Wacker view businesses as any other social institution, and this way we believe that people are attracted to Google because of the stories circling the company. A theory Gabriel (2000) presents, the *Attribution of Fixed Qualities*, states that an individual being associated with certain qualities on a specific occasion, might lead to the individual being thought of as having the same qualities on other occasions. Individuals might be attracted to the prosperous business story of Google, identify with the company's achievements and project the image of success onto themselves if they manage to become recruited. For this reason we believe that potential employees are attracted to Google because of *the status associated with a position at the company.*

6.1.3 Organizational Culture

Google tries to achieve the image of being a friendly organization instead of an *"evil",* lucrative enterprise. As Czarniawska (2004) and Mathews and Wacker (2007) state in their theories on storytelling, what is important is how the message is presented and not the actual content. By looking at the tools Google uses to reinforce the culture, such as playful offices, humor at work and the slogan *"don't be evil",* we believe ourselves able to draw the conclusion that Google has strived to communicate values such as being a non-commercial company with an informal organizational culture – something that seems to appeal to certain types of personalities.

As described by Gabriel (2000) and Czarniawska (1998), the message communicated by a company can be compared to a story. In a similar manner the message Google proclaims as being non-commercial we believe can be of great aid in crucial situations, such as decision-making, where the message can guide action and strategy. Clampitt (2005) states that a good story is a story characterized by a moral, and that through these stories employees can be guided in their behavior. We believe that this is of importance especially in regard to the company motto *"don't be evil"*, which is supposed to guide Google employees in their work and may also, according to our belief, attract potential employees against *"evil"* corporations.

Stories of playful offices, humor and the company motto *"don't be evil"* can be immortalized as a saga and consequently the corporate culture is preserved through recreation. Recreation

refers to the process of repeating stories to others, which also gives the company an opportunity to adjust the stories in accordance to the circumstance. Seen from this perspective, controlling the stories is, as stated by Clampitt (2005), an efficient way to control the culture. Stories, along with a strong corporate culture can also act as a provider of meaning, as the employees by sharing and repeating the same stories filled with non-commercial value, can feel a sense of belonging. Through this mechanism we believe that Google has effectively kept the mindset of a small organization despite its enormous size.

In order to sustain the specific culture at Google, and to facilitate the sense of unity within the organization, the company invests heavily in social activities such as the weekly TGIF meetings, common free gym facilities, free restaurants and so forth. Google's employees usually have an entrepreneurial spirit and enjoy spending time with likeminded people that are creative and intelligent. In this way, *the sense of unity* can be nourished by the culture which in itself may be a provider of meaning.

Consequently, Google turns into a seemingly more humanized organization since it is branded as being against branding, pro-charity, having a culture filled with jokes and humor, an informal dress code, playful offices, and the company motto *'don't be evil'*. We believe this to be a major contributing factor to why individuals are attracted to the company. In short, prospective employees seem to be attracted to the company since *Google communicates values of non-commercial nature and prioritizes an intense socialization of its work staff, consequently making the culture itself a provider of meaning.*

6.2 Q2

From a storytelling viewpoint - What external image does Google communicate through branding, and is there a gap between the branded corporate culture and the employees' perceptions of said branded corporate culture?

6.2.1 Work Environment

Gabriel (2000) suggests that stories enable us to study the culture of an organization and how organizational matters are viewed by its members. According to this, the story about co-founder Larry Page personally signing off every hire is probably intended to communicate non-hierarchical values of the company. When Elias (2012) opposes the story, by making a calculation and questioning the possibility that it could be true, it still provides us with the

possibility to interpret and explore how organizational matters are looked upon by the members of the organization. Instead of interpreting the organizational culture firsthand through the story itself, we can study the organizational values secondhand through the interpretation of Elias. This way, we believe we can conclude that math and logic seems to be a crucial part of the Google culture throughout the organization.

Google is generally branded as having a high-performance, intellectually stimulating work environment focused on problem-solving, efficiency gain, and uses enticing mystery ads in order to recruit its highly intelligent staff. This part of the culture is however well branded, and also confirmed by the respondents. We *do not find any significant gap between the branded image of the intellectually stimulating work environment and the, by employees, perceived image.*

6.2.2 Motivation

Something unique about Google, which is only branded to a very small extent, are the means of control the company uses. This is for instance the house intranet MOMA, where otherwise normally classified information is visible to each individual at the company. By allowing workers to access large amounts of information regarding their colleagues we believe employee behavior may change, since the individual's concern about his or her reputation at the company rises. Gabriel (2000) explains that organizations are not always the primary target of storytelling, sometimes the individuals that are a part of it can play a lead role. He expresses the association that can be sprung out of a certain event involving a random individual, which can form this person's storyline to a large extent. The consequence of this is that the individual becomes cast in a role, as in the theory of the *Attribution of Blame and Credit*. The other closely linked theory is the *Attribution of Fixed Qualities*. If an individual lies once, he or she can forever be ascribed the fixed characteristics of a liar. Hence, we believe that *the peer reviews and peer surveillance ascertains that no individual could ever escape the demands of performing* when given an entirely personal project.

Demands are high at Google, and high demands are said to motivate employees to succeed at meeting high goals. Here we would like to make a comparison to the hundred percent OKRs that seem impossible to meet but, as we believe, are merely set to motivate. Gabriel (2000) states that the main task of storytelling is to make the impersonal space of the organization seem less harsh and more human. The culture helps the individuals bring together

encouraging narratives to embellish their ordinary work life, since organizations typically are not pleasant places to be in. Both Czarniawska (1998) and Gabriel (2000) state that part of the task of storytelling is to provide meaning for the organization's members. Czarnaiwska expresses it as ascribing meaning to daily activities, with the characteristics of engaging, motivating and inspiring employees. In situations where unreachable goals are set, we do not believe that it is enough to provide the employees with a high level of autonomy but the company should also empower them and encourage their self-belief. This can be done by inspiring stories that provide the individuals with a meaning of what they do, even if it is obvious that a hundred percent is out of reach.

As Gabriel (2000) found in his study, there are stories that function as symbolic landmarks, and remain longer in one's memory than the narrator of the story itself. Edwards (2011) mentions a story told by co-founder Sergey Brin, where Brin refers to a disorganized person unable to keep up with his workload as "*not a good person"*, and this can be seen as a way to internally brand the high demands set by the company. The stories of efficiency may work as symbolic landmarks within the Google, but the stories are not known externally to the same extent. This enables us to draw the conclusion that there exists a gap *where high demands are not branded as highly as the internal perceptions of the culture reveal.*

Google is branded as a flexible company with a high level of autonomy, but the term flexibility is different depending on whether it is seen from the perspective of an employer or an employee. Google could for instance be considered a flexible company from their own viewpoint, since employees are *always accessible to the company*. We have decided to interpret this through the theoretical model the *Abolition of Context*, provided by Mathews and Wacker (2007). As stated above, the *Abolition of Context* refers to the inability of different people to find common reference points, and therefore we believe that Google is flexible with a high level of autonomy, but not to everyone. Some employees can make full use of the benefits while this is not as suitable for others. Also, regarding the autonomy levels at Google, it seems like employees working in more business-related offices cannot entirely benefit from the twenty percent rule – something that is not branded by the company. Moreover, the twenty percent projects have to, as we found through the empirical study, be aligned with the company goals and approved beforehand. These conditions are also not branded.

It is of great importance, we think, to have similar reference points when communicating company values. In cases where there is a gap between the communicated and internally perceived values, employees may experience this as hypocrisy (Clampitt, 2005). Most employees, however, seem to be more positive about their workload when they have flexible hours, even if they have a larger than average total quantity of workload. Others, however, are not overwhelmed by this definition of flexibility at all, as the example mentioned by Ekström (2010) with the individual David Hart. Regarding both flexibility and autonomy, we can therefore *distinguish a gap that differs in size*. Some individuals perceive this gap to be larger than others; this we believe could be due to different reference points caused by different definitions of flexibility or different offices and business sectors.

6.2.3 Organizational Culture

Even though the company proclaims being unique in the sense that subcultures are allowed with regards to clothing, pets and so on, Google does seem to recruit the same kind of individuals with similar reference points – contradicting the branded image. The story Google has chosen to brand seems to have been adjusted in order to fit the company's need depending on the context, a theory Mathews and Wacker (2007) present as classic and found in most companies. Gabriel (2000) discusses a theory previously made by Joanne Martin, where she claims that this proclamation of uniqueness is found in all cultures and therefore in fact, not unique at all. The story of *the Google employees*, we believe, is not unique in either structure or content. Only recruiting highly intelligent individuals with informal clothing regardless of their individual peculiarities could result in *a uniqueness paradox where the individuals in fact are not unique*.

The organizational culture of Google can be understood by looking at it through an employer branding perspective. The definition of employer branding, according to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), is to build a unique employer identity and differentiate the company from its competitors. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) present employer branding as a three step process. The first step is to choose a value to brand, which we perceive for Google to be, the communicated non-commercial message. We believe this to be visible in the office design, informal dress code of employees, humor and non-seriousness. Also, the company motto *"don't be evil"* is linked to not using traditional branding.

Mathews and Wacker (2007) state that the concept of storytelling is about connection and engagement and explains that one function of stories is *to simplify in order to provide perspectives*. This aims to reduce complex problems into simple accessible stories, for instance short-line messages such as *"don't be evil"*. Elias (2012) points out, however, that it is important not to forget that Google also is a lucrative company. To communicate this would be too complex, so the company chooses to simplify this message in order to communicate its values. In our opinion, the company brands itself as non-commercial by using unconventional forms of branding such as charity and the absence of a cluttered front page linking to all the company's services. We believe that Google does not want to be seen as a lucrative company, but rather as part of society's infrastructure. As pointed out, *Google is a lucrative company and by branding itself as an infrastructure, we can see a gap between the branded image and the corporate culture perceived by employees.*

The emphasis put on the founders in the external image of Google could be understood by the theoretical model provided by Mathews and Wacker (2007) where they say storytelling is all about *connection and engagement*. For this reason, we assume *the origin story* of Google with Stanford and the founders to fulfill a need and heritage for the employees, so that they can identify with the company. Moreover, since the culture seems to be shaped by the founders and Stanford University, we believe that we can draw the conclusion that the company culture at Google is not an intensely unitary force. Further, the culture does not seem to be internalized by the individuals to a large extent, but rather something constant with physical features directly acquired from the Stanford culture. We also think this is a reason why Google only hires *"Googely"* people – in order to sustain their unique culture. *The branded image of a company with a university culture seems to respond well to the internally perceived image of a 'young' and 'fun' environment*, something that is confirmed by individuals claiming that it feels like being back in school (Ekström, 2010) and that the TGIFs are crowded with people playing with inventions (Elias, 2012). The definition of *"fun"* is naturally different though, depending on who is asked. A twenty-five year old recent graduate may respond differently from a forty-five year old father of two.

Like Czarniawska (2004) says, the plot of the story is not as important as the presentation. Looking at the seemingly endless supply of free food and snacks, the actual plot is a strategic one concerned with efficiency gain, but presented to the world in a package of charity and goodness in order to persuade and charm. Gabriel (2000) further confirms this by stating that

the truth of the story lies in the meaning behind it and not in the actual facts. As long as there is life in the stories of the Google offices, and an existence of believers in the saga of Google's playfulness, we believe the external image of the company will be preserved – this regardless of internal perceptions that might disagree. The branded image of the Google offices does not completely correlate with the corporate culture at every international Google office. We can therefore conclude that *the image of the offices is one-sided and in some cases misleading.* The external image does not reflect free food or other "perks" as strategic decisions on the company's behalf.

Mathews and Wacker (2007) refer to a theory made by John Greenway where he explains that Internet can work as a tool to boost stories, and therefore works as both an advantage and disadvantage to companies. Anti-company myths are more easily spread due to the nature of Internet, and stories remains findable without ever disappearing. Looking at the Internet giant Google and the company's enormous market share in web search, we believe it is easier for such a company to control the stories spread about the own brand. Whether or not Google abuses the system by making negative stories regarding the own brand *disappear*, or if the company, by owning YouTube, uses this video platform to brand itself and consequently not show opinions that do not support the brand name, is unclear. We can, however, conclude that *Google is successful in supporting the own brand*.

7 Conclusions

By analyzing our findings from the empirical data through the theoretical framework and looking at them through a storytelling perspective we believed ourselves able to draw a few conclusions on what might attract prospective employees to apply for work at Google, how the company has tried to present itself and how this branded image correlates with the, by employees, perceived culture.

7.1 Q1

Why are prospective employees attracted to Google as an employer, and how can the reason behind this attraction be elucidated through an organizational storytelling perspective?

- *Working at Google could be an opportunity to change the world.* The twenty percent personal project seems to be a strategy in order to motivate the employees by their own imagination. We believe Google uses daydreaming as a narrative strategy in order to sustain this belief in each individual.

- *Sense of belonging shaped by an intellectually and creatively stimulating work environment.* Math seems to permeate the entire organization and creativity and innovation are two of Google's hallmarks and words that are associated with the brand. The environment at Google is one of like-minded, intellectual and creative colleagues. Google hires the same kind of people, which we believe is in order to maintain common reference points according to the storytelling theory on the Abolition of Context and consequently, Google is able to maintain its work environment.

- *High level of teamwork, autonomy and flexibility.* We noticed that a certain type of personality usually is attracted by the possibilities of flexibility both in work schedule and location that Google offers. These personalities typically had an easy time managing a high workload while simultaneously coping with the work-life balance that accompanies it. We found these often

to be young-spirited individuals or those who had not yet started a family life. They are stimulated by high demands to a certain extent, and the flexibility seems to increase the amount of stress and demands they could withstand. The company's intention with providing high levels of teamwork, autonomy and flexibility we believe is in fact a strategy the company uses to increase efficiency. The employees, however, only experience the truth of the story to be what they find *meaningful*, and the *actual facts* – in this case the strategy reason on behalf of the company – is of less importance.

- *The status associated with a position at the company.* Most of our interviewees claimed that a significant factor that attracted them to Google was the enormously influential brand value. The company was also perceived to communicate exclusiveness partly due to an elitist recruiting system that added to the perception of the rareness of achieving a position at the company. Individuals perceive Google as successful and for this reason we believe that they tend to read themselves into this business story and view themselves as successful as well, if recruited. Once associated with certain qualities, this image of the individuals seems to be preserved, according to the Attribution of Fixed Qualities.

- *Google communicates values of non-commercial nature and prioritizes an intense socialization of its work staff, consequently making the culture itself a provider of meaning.* We found that the culture were actually in many cases viewed as provider of meaning, since employees both by narrow recruiting and intense socialization tended to share the company values. We believe that by communicating stories of non-commercial nature Google can efficiently control the corporate culture.

7.2 Q2

From a storytelling viewpoint - What external image does Google communicate through branding, and is there a gap between the branded corporate culture and the employees' perceptions of said branded corporate culture?

- *No significant gap between the branded image of the intellectually stimulating work environment and the, by employees, perceived image.* Organizational stories are an effective mean to study the culture of a company and by listening to one of the intern's interpretation of a story, we can see an example of love for science and math and how it seems to permeate the overall corporate culture – even in business-based offices.

- *The peer reviews and peer surveillance ascertains that no individual could ever escape the demands of performing.* The open OKR system and the peer reviews let everyone in the company access otherwise classified information, an unusual system since management is typically in control of this. This may lead to increased peer pressure and peer surveillance since the ones controlling you, are in fact your work colleagues. This is not something we have found to be branded. We believe this could lead to a change in employee behavior, since individuals within organizations could be the target of stories and associated with certain fixed qualities – something that makes performance important due to the possible judgments of work colleagues.

- *High demands are not branded as highly as the internal perception of the culture reveals.* Two of the interviewees confirm that the demands required them to work sixty hour workweeks. With regards to this aspect, we would like to say that there is certainly a gap between the branded image and the perceived one, since the communicated message of high demands easily is submerged in the praises. Stories function as symbolic landmarks and therefore we believe the story of co-founder Sergey Brin referring to a person as *"not a good person"* is a strategy the company uses in order to internally brand the high demands at Google. Externally, the high demands are not branded to the same extent.

- *A gap that differs in size regarding both flexibility and autonomy.* The opinions of whether or not the company is as flexible and has as high of a level of autonomy as branded differ, and the branded image only supports the empirical data to a certain extent. Not all employees experience that the promise of flexibility or autonomy is fulfilled. This can be understood by looking at the Abolition of Context which states that individuals have different reference points. Therefore we can conclude that despite a common belief that the overall flexibility and autonomy is high at the company, it will never truly be perceived this way by all employees.

- *There is a uniqueness paradox since the company claims to be unique by embracing subcultures, but only recruits a certain type of personality.* Google brands itself as a company allowing its employees to be unique and informal in order to increase their creativity and innovativeness, but we see a similarity pattern in the type of employees recruited, contradicting the statement of uniqueness. Proclamation of uniqueness is typically found in the stories of all cultures, leading to the stories in fact not being unique at all.

- *Google is a lucrative company but brands itself as being an infrastructure, and therefore we can see a gap.* Storytelling is about connection and engagement and therefore, we believe that Google uses short line message in order to simplify to provide perspective when communicating the company values. This simplification could incorrectly lead to the company being viewed as a non-lucrative infrastructure.

- *The branded image of a company with a university culture seems to respond well to the internally perceived image of a 'young' and 'fun' environment.* Google seems to have been able to preserve this culture by internally branding an origin story embracing the Stanford culture and influence of the founders.

- *The image of the offices is one-sided and in some cases misleading.* Different offices have different "cultures" despite being branded as alike, for instance we found out that some offices are more "business" and less engineer-based, with fewer playrooms and less branded "perks". This way, we can perceive a small gap between the branded image and the perceived culture of our interviewees, especially in regard to the Nordic Google offices. A story can be perpetuated and turn into a saga if there is an existence of believers. As long as there is belief in the saga of Google playfulness, we believe the external image of the company will be preserved.

- *Google is successful in supporting the own brand.* We believe that the anti-company myths typically spread through the Internet as explained by John Greenway, may not be spread to the same extent regarding Google. This, due to the company's enormous market share in web search.

7.3 Alternative Ways to Conduct the Study

Our natural choice, if given the possibility, would have been to only conduct primary empirical data through interviews with employees of different nationalities within the company at different international offices. Unfortunately we were not given this opportunity.

7.4 Suggestions for Further Research

Since our main focus was to primarily learn the culture of Google, a multiple case study would have in our case led to a very extensive or alternatively less thorough report due to time limitations. Conducting a multiple case study would allow us to draw parallels and learn differences with companies that have distinct organizational cultures. Targeting other companies on the list of FORTUNE Magazines's "100 Best Companies to Work For" might be a good approach. By doing so, the answer to the subtitle of our thesis *"The World's Best Employer?"* could be further explored.

An area we find especially interesting for further research, and which we believe has great potential to be explored, is the management within the company and how it affects the corporate culture – for instance with further emphasis on leadership and empowerment. We would especially have liked to further explore teamwork and peer surveillance by looking at Bentham's model of the Panopticon.

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