



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW

Commitment in an improvement process

- A case study of Jotun West Europe region

Bachelor thesis Industrial and Financial management

University of Gothenburg; School of Business, Economics and Law

Autumn semester 2015

Date of seminar: 2016-01-14

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Abstract

The field of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems and implementation processes has been widely researched. Few have; however, in a bachelor thesis gained access to a comprehensive pre-study about implementing an ERP system in an organization and followed the same organization's way to an improvement project. The purpose of the thesis is to map out and evaluate the actions taken by the project leaders of this improvement project in order to create commitment to the improvement process.

We investigate our research question from a lean production theory perspective and have identified a set of key factors that are critical when creating commitment in an improvement process according to theory. Thenceforth we have used these key factors in our empirical data gathering and in our analysis as well. Our empirical data consists of five interviews; three of the interview objects are working as Customer Service Departments Managers (anonymous) and two are project leaders (Carol & Angel).

Our findings show that it is problematic to analyze actions in isolation, since they are all related to and dependent on one another. Still, some factors are found to be more frequently highlighted and more clearly correlated than others in the certain case of Jotun Group. Those factors are; perceived influence, cross-country information sharing and concrete goal settings.

We believe this thesis to bring understanding about the practical case of Jotun and how managers' actions influence the employees' commitment.

Keywords: Improvement process, lean production, commitment, management actions

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1. Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the thesis. It starts out to describe the background along with the problem identification, which is followed by the research question and a declaration of the objects of the thesis.

1.1 Background

The use of a business system is becoming increasingly important for any company. For example, an Enterprise Resource Planning system (ERP)¹ is required in order to transform large amounts of data into information and to thoroughly follow and support the organization's different departments. The purpose of using an ERP system in an organization is usually to gain leaner and more efficient processes, minimized costs and positive customer service quality (Dunaway & Bristow, 2011).

With increased need and usage of ERP systems, complexity increases. Even though the aim of implementing an ERP system is to gain more efficient processes, minimized costs and greater customer services, this is not always the sole outcome. Exceeded budgets and cancelled projects are other examples of possible outcomes for IT software projects. IT software development is costly and estimated \$250 billion of 175,000 projects each year in the United States (The Standish Group, 2014). The Standish Group argues that the average success rate for software projects is only 16,2%. With this low success rate in combination with costly projects emerges a natural willingness in organizations to avoid total failure and non-achieved desired benefits of the project. Therefore the implementation process of an ERP system has been widely research. Critical success factors in the implementation stage, have been identified by H. Akkermans and K. van Helden (2002), by Kyung-Kwon Hong and Young-Gul Kim (2001) among others. A model for how to be successful with your ERP implementation was introduced by DeLone and McLean (2003) as early as in the beginning of 1990s.

In 2009 the Norwegian manufacturing company Jotun decided to make a huge investment in a new ERP system from the software supplier IFS. Jotun Group is a leading supplier of paints and powder coatings with production facilities and companies on all continents and the group had a revenue of NOK 1.3 billion in 2014 (Jotun, 2015). Up until today, the software system has still not been implemented in all Jotun companies due to locally required adjustments and

¹ An enterprise-wide information system, which controls and integrates all the different business

complexity. In the West Europe Region, covering UK, Germany, Netherlands, France, Poland, Czech Republic, Italy, Spain, Cyprus and Greece, 7 out of those 10 have had the ERP system implemented since 2009.

Last year the West Europe (WE) management team discovered great discrepancy in terms of efficiency among the 10 customer service departments around Europe. Jotun's customer service departments primary task is to handle incoming orders and make sure the goods are delivered at customers' premises, on time and in full. The most efficient office handled over 11 000 order lines per full time employee, while the least efficient office handled about 2 500 order lines per full time employee, despite that they had the same ERP system implemented in 2009. A complete declaration of activity levels for each country can be found in appendix 1.

In order to understand why this efficiency discrepancy had occurred and what it looked like, Jotun launched an evaluation project in terms of a process mapping project in June 2014. Together with the project leaders, the process mapping project was carried out by one of the authors to this thesis, during an internship at Jotun Group. The material gained during the project will constitute the base of this thesis and be considered as pre-study material. The aim of the project was to map out each of the offices order handling process² and see how much each country deviated from the standard order handling process implemented while launching the ERP system in 2009.

The outcome of the process mapping project confirmed that all of their 10 customer service offices deviated more or less from the standard process. Additionally, several common reasons for those deviations were identified such as difference in commitment to the procedures. The findings made it clear for Jotun WE that a post-implementation improvement project was necessary.

The post-implementation improvement project was introduced in February 2015. The aim of the project was to streamline and standardize the order handling process in accordance with the lean philosophy. The purpose was to ensure WE customer service departments are aligned and share best practices within the organization. According to the lean production³ pioneer

² The order handling process pertains to the process of handling an incoming customer order in the customer service department. This means the number of actions carried out from A) Receiving the order to B) Prepare to invoice.

³ An assembly-line methodology developed originally for Toyota, which consists of several tools and practices on how to for example reduce waste (Womack et.al, 1990).

James P. Womack et.al (1990), committed workers is the key factor in order to succeed with such a project. In Jotun's case, lack of commitment was early identified as a barrier within the improvement project, but additionally as something essential to overcome.

1.2 Problem identification

Commitment amongst employees has been widely researched and one of the most cited theories is the "Three-component framework" by Meyer and Allen (1997). Meyer and Allen have defined three different approaches of commitment; affective, continuance and normative commitment. According to Angelis et al. (2011) the three approaches can be characterized as follows; "I want to stay", "I need to stay" and "I ought to stay". The common view of these three approaches states that commitment is a psychological state that features the employer's relationship with the organization and has a role whether or not the employer choose to continue to contribute to the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). According to Angelis et al. (2011) the affective version of commitment, i.e. "I want to stay" is most adequate for a successful lean implementation.

The relationship between lean production and commitment has been in focus ever since the early practitioners of lean production started to highlight the need for self-directed and cross-functional workers (Angelis et al. 2011). Womack et al. (1990) sees the work team as the heart of lean production and committed workers as the key factor. This view is shared by Jadhav et. al. (2014) who claim that the major problems when implementing lean are related to humans. To turn workers resistance into commitment was found to one of the most important barriers to overcome in their study on barriers to implement lean in organizations (Jadhav et al. 2014).

Jotun faced the dilemma of launching an improvement project with great discrepancy in both activity levels, local goal settings and in the willingness to change. Some Customer Service Department (CSD) Managers communicated resistance towards the project already in phase one, the process mapping, whilst some local branch offices openly welcomed the project. In order to get CSD Managers on board, Jotun had to construct an improvement project designed to create commitment among everyone. This practical complexity to handle commitment in an implementation process is what this thesis will illuminate.

1.3 Research questions

What management actions have been seen as critical for the development of commitment among Jotun's employees in the company's lean improvement process?

Jotun's corporate structure is far from unique and this difficulty is potentially shared by other international companies. Therefore it is of great interest to explore the area in order to provide the field further understanding regarding the difference in commitment among the departments. This thesis can be helpful for practitioners who are striving to create commitment to a lean implementation process in the service sector.

1.4 Objective of the study

We investigate our research question from a lean production perspective. The aim of the study is to map out and evaluate the actions that the project leaders took in order to create commitment to the improvement process.

2. Method

This section is set to declare how this thesis has been performed. Initially, a definition of "commitment" is given and thereafter the chosen research design is reviewed and motivated. This is followed by a description of the internship carried out by one of the authors. The internship material is used as pre-study material in this thesis. Further the research strategy is presented, then the data collection methodology is described and the interview objects are motivated. At last, the reliability is discussed and delimitations are given.

2.1 Definition of commitment

There is one word constituting the very base for this thesis; *commitment*. Since commitment is the guiding concept throughout the report, we consider it of great importance to declare the applied definition. The definition concerns the first part of Meyer and Allen's (1997) approach to commitment; the features that affect the employer's relationship with the organization in accordance to the lean philosophy in combination to improvement work. This definition can be further simplified into an employee's position of "I want to stay" in the organization (Angelis et. al, 2011). Since we are investigating commitment linked to an improvement project and not towards the organization itself, the definition is transformed to

the employee's position of "I want to make a change" within the frames of the investigated project.

2.2 Research Design - Case study

The methodology of case studies has been widely questioned to be an appropriate and efficient research methodology. It has been argued that one cannot provide a broader perspective and generalize from single cases, that case studies gives too much space for the author's personal biases and therefore fails in validity, among other things (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In the article of Bent Flyvbjerg (2006) he does not fully reject, neither agrees with any of these biases against case studies. Instead he offers another perspective on how case studies can contribute to, and be very valuable for, the research field.

Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that non-contextual theoretical knowledge is good for a beginner to gain understanding within a field, but it is only possible to reach true expertise through context dependent knowledge. Therefore he argues that the best way for teachers to help their students, is to offer them real practical experience via summer jobs, internships, etc. Flyvbjerg (2006) writes - *"More simple forms of understanding must yield to more complex ones as one move from beginner to expert"*.

In the discussion of the problematic to generalize from single cases, Flyvbjerg (2006) states the contrary and argues that generalization can be made without difficulties, depending on the case formation. At the same time Flyvbjerg (2006) asks whether or not it is desirable to generalize from an in-depth case. He writes - *"it is often more important to clarify the deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences than to describe the symptoms of the problem and how frequently they occur"*.

Bryman & Bell (2011) are among those who argue that generalizations cannot easily be made from single cases. But in line with Flyvbjerg (2006), Bryman & Bell (2011) argues that the practical and contextual anchor, that in-depth case studies offers, constitutes its greatest strength and the main target should therefore be to develop a profound understanding of the complexity in that certain case.

In the light of Mr. Flyvbjerg's article (2006) and Bryman & Bell (2011) we have chosen a case study methodology for our bachelor's thesis, starting out with an in-depth case study carried out during an internship made for the Norwegian manufacturing company Jotun Group. The internship took place between 2014 June 20 and 2015 February 12 and covered the West Europe Region⁴.

2.3 The internship

The purpose of the internship was to carry out a process mapping project, which is a lean production tool, among 10 European customer service offices within the Jotun Group. First thing to do is to determine the scope of the process to be mapped (Jacka & Keller, 2009). In the case of Jotun, order handling process from A) Receive order to B) Prepare to invoice, was set to be the scope. Then the process was observed and each step within the process was mapped out and later on placed in order on a brown paper on the wall with arrows between the notes, this in order to show the flow of the process. The processes were then reviewed together with the operational team in order to confirm that the flow was correctly visualized.

The observations took place during 4-5 days locally at each of the 10 offices and the data was mainly collected by qualitative semi-structured interviews⁵. The observations and interviews resulted in two or more process maps, depending on the number of customer segments for each local branch office.

Great variations in terms of work procedures were identified in this phase of the project. This was partly because of local adjustments in the ERP system or local regulations, but mainly due to lack of trust in the ERP system or lack of knowledge. Deviations from the once implemented standard processes occurred due to various reasons where some common reasons and bottlenecks were identified. For example; there was lack of trust in the co-workers, several support system were used beside the main ERP system and the majority of the steps were carried out outside the ERP system. Pricing, communication and documentation were additionally found as common bottlenecks in all local branch offices' order handling processes.

⁴ West Europe Region; Germany, France, Spain, UK, Netherlands, Poland, Czech Republic, Italy, Greece and Cyprus.

⁵ Provides a framework for the interview through structured questions but also allows both the interviewer and the person being interviewed to ask other questions and comment.

With this information the Jotun WE management team decided to take the next step in the process and to launch an improvement project in February 2015. The aim of the improvement project was to standardize and streamline the order handling processes, reduce waste and to make sure best practices were shared among the customer service departments.

The improvement project phase with start in February 2015 is what this thesis will focus on. The material gained during the internship is considered as a kind of pre-study material. It has been used in order to identify the problem and to increase understanding for current situation of Jotun. The material has been important for us to create an in-depth case with a strong contextual anchor as Flyvbjerg (2006) and Bryman & Bell (2011) stress.

2.4 Qualitative Research Strategy

According to Bryman and Bell (2006) a quantitative and qualitative research strategy differs more than only in terms of data collection. For example, the qualitative research focus on words, rather than numbers, the qualitative method has an inductive approach to theory rather than deductive, etc. Additionally the authors mentioned above argue that there should be no strict separation between the two strategies, because in some cases those two poles are more than compatible.

Below we will report and discuss our research strategy based upon Bryman and Bell (2011) recommendations for business research methods. The following steps have been taken within the scope of this thesis:

1. Data collection via internship project (pre-study 2014/06/20 - 2015/02/15) - Ca 50 semi structured interviews and observations
2. Problem identification based on the pre-study material
3. Theoretical research regarding identified problem
4. Revising of research question
5. New data collection - 5 semi structured qualitative interviews
6. Analysis

The data collection has been overall qualitative, but has a kind of longitudinal approach since interviews were carried out in two rounds (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The first round of interviews was carried out during the pre-study (internship) and then a second round was performed for the purpose of this thesis. Since this thesis has another objective than the pre-study, this scenario of longitudinal data collection was necessary.

As mentioned above, an inductive approach to the relationship between theory and practice is most common in qualitative case studies (Bryman & Bell, 2011). An inductive approach starts out in the practical data and generates theories out of this and is usually referred to as the theory generating approach. In our case, the theory identification is based on practical data, the pre-study, i.e. an inductive approach. However, the next step is yet a deductive way of working, where we start out in theory and want to see how this coincides with the practical case of Jotun via qualitative interviews. Therefore we cannot distinguish fully between those two. Bryman and Bell (2011) call a method when you move back and forth between theory and practice an iterative method, which might be the most appropriate one to describe our case.

2.5 Interpretive approach

According to Bryman and Bell (2011) a qualitative research strategy also requires an interpretive approach. The interpretive approach is a set of theories which sees human behavior as the outcome of the biased interpretation of the environment. It further claims that it is necessary to separate between human and science that focus should be on the meaning of a social act (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The benefits of IT software projects are often more qualitative and intangible which means that evaluation must search beyond the traditional mindset of costs and benefits (Symons, 1991). The need for interpretive approaches to the post-implementation evaluation work has increased according to Hirschheim & Smithson (1988). It is important for the social researcher to capture the subjective meaning of a social action (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

2.6 Data collection

Qualitative semi structured interviews with five research objects have been carried out. The first and the last interviews were carried out with the improvement project leaders. The project leaders were important in order to understand what actions that were taken to create

commitment among the Customer Service Department Managers (CSD Managers). By separating the two project leaders to be first and last, we could initially gain an overall understanding for the taken actions and at last to gain deeper understanding on the motivation behind the actions. An email with a short description of our purpose with the interview and some preparatory questions was sent at least 20h before the interviews took place. The email can be found in appendix 2 and the semi-structured question table used in the interviews can be found appendix 3. The interviews were carried out via Skype with a live camera. The two projects leaders are the following;

1. Carol Marshall - West Europe HR Director. Project leader.
2. Angel Caja - West Europe Supply Chain Manager. Project leader.

Next step was to evaluate the actions taken by the project leaders and estimate how well the actions have worked in order to create commitment to the improvement process. Therefore three CSD Managers were chosen with different resistance level identified during the pre-study. The CSD Managers and their departments will be held anonymous in order to provide honest answers and to increase reliability in this thesis. All CSD Managers received an email at least 20h before the interview took place with some preparatory questions and the email can be found in appendix 4. The semi-structured question table used during the interviews with the CSD Managers can be found in appendix 5. All the interviews were carried out via Skype with a live camera. By the following motivation, the three CSD Managers were chosen;

1. Manager A - No resistance identified during the pre-study
2. Manager B - High level of resistance identified during the pre-study
3. Manager C - Great development potential identified during the pre-study

Bryman and Bell (2011) discuss the complexity to handle different levels of data, e.g. data at an individual level versus at an organizational. We face this complexity to distinguish between levels of data in our case. The research objects are individuals, but they interface with the departments and the organization as a whole. Additionally, two of our research objects are regional managers, i.e. they act above the level of the departments. Our aim is to capture two different levels of management, i.e. the regional project management team and the manager of the departments, and to see how those consociate, leaving out the department and the organization as a level of information and analyzation.

2.7 Method for literature review

In this thesis we have delimited our literature to the lean production theory in order to search for literature regarding commitment. This is because our research case, Jotun West Europe region, is working with the improvement project with the aim to become a “leaner” organization and is inspired by the lean production theory themselves.

We have chosen Womack (1990) as a starting point in our theoretical perspective since his work has played a very important role in the lean theory. Thereafter, focus on later research with a combination of lean theory and the sense of commitment. We have primarily used the library archive and its access to databases and searched with following keywords; “commitment”, “lean”, “implementation”. We have mainly used secondary sources, which mean that we gathered information from authors that we then interpreted. Based on our chosen literature framework we identified and emphasized some key factors that will work as a foundation in our theoretic study, empirical study and analysis. These factors are further elaborated in chapter 3 and summarized at page 16.

2.8 Validity and Reliability

In order to have a reliable research, the research methodology should be one hundred per cent replicable (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In order to be replicable, the methodology should be very detailed and explicitly described.

This report faces some strenuousness in terms of replicability when it comes to the pre-study (the internship) of this thesis. At first due to a semi structured methodology as a whole, but also because a detailed description of the pre-study would be a report in itself. Additionally, the pre-study was carried out by one of the authors to this thesis, and one cannot exclude that her personal biases and assumptions might have influenced the results. The second data collection on the other hand, which is the main data collection for this thesis, can be replicated since the research objects are given and the interview questions can be found in the appendices.

2.9 Scope and Delimitations

In order to delimit the thesis we have chosen to focus on three departments in different local branch offices. This gives us the opportunity to study these three departments differences in terms of commitment to the implementation process. To expand the scope and include all 10 departments would be more comprehensive and we do not consider this kind of study necessary in order to answer our research question.

Note that this thesis concerns only one function in Jotun's ERP system, namely the one for customer service. Furthermore we have delimited our theoretic perspective regarding lean and its sub-theories such as JIT, Kanban, Kaizen etcetera into one area; lean production.

3. Literature review

This section consists of relevant theory in order to understand the problem of this thesis. The chapter starts out to discuss lean production in general to increase understanding of the research field. Thereafter, factors contributing to create commitment within the lean production theory are examined. The factors found to be most frequently discussed in lean production theory is concluded in a summarizing table at the end of this chapter.

3.1 The Lean philosophy

Looking at the research field of production management one can see a paradigm shift. From the traditional labour and capital intense Taylorism, onto the lean production theory (Skorstad, 1994). The flexibility and cost saving structure that lean production is providing, has been desirable for the whole western manufacturing world the last decades (Jadhav et al. 2014). Even though lean production has been in the spotlight for quite some time, there is no consensual definition. Quality management, just-in-time, production maintenance, human recourse management, etc. are only to mention some parts within the lean production field. It is questioned whether lean simply is a practical tool-box with different techniques, or rather a strategic and social philosophy (Angelis et al. 2011). Whatever the general definition, lean production is based on some key principles; reduce waste, streamline processes and a flexible workforce. Where reducing waste is the driving force (Skorstad, 1994). Even though lean production has been the desirable structure for a long time in the manufacturing world, relatively few companies outside Japan have

successfully implemented lean. For example, less than 10% of the UK organizations have accomplished successful lean implementation (Jadhav et al. 2014).

The lean production pioneer James P. Womack (1990) sees committed workers as one of the most crucial factors in order to succeed with a transformation into a lean organization. This view is shared by Jadhav et al. (2014) who claim that the major problems on implementing lean are related to humans. To create commitment among the workers, the change needs to be to the better, but there is an on-going debate if lean production offers an increase or decrease of labour standards. According to Womack (1990), the shift from Taylorism to lean production is an upgrading of the blue-collar worker. It goes from repetitive work, to problem-solving individuals with increased autonomy where talent and potential come to use. This puts the workers in the front seat. Skorstad (1994) among others, questions this position. The findings in his research are not convincing that lean production implementation is for the better for the blue-collar workers. According to Skorstad (1994), it is not about increased autonomy for the workers, it is about a perfect fit with no room for personal creativity, since this would be considered a waste. Additionally, implementing lean might lead to an intensified workload (Angelis et al. 2011).

Womack (1990) further argues that by an upgrade of the workforce and with the top management team acting as role models, commitment can be spread among the workers and a transformation can be possible. Yet, a part of the lean implementation is for the management team to reduce workforce, at least according to Skorstad (1994) who summarizes lean production theory as follows; “The basic purpose of the Toyota system is to increase profit by reducing costs - that is, by completely eliminating waste such as excessive stock or workforce”.

When reducing workforce is up for discussion, resistance is a natural human response. Accordingly resistance is much more likely than a meaningful commitment in the beginning of an implementation process (Angelis et al. 2011). Resistance takes place in all parts of a company. Top management can respond with resistance due to lack of clarity, pressure, interference with personal interests etc. On a workforce level, a fear-factor of losing jobs or similar, can create resistance. A change in mindset is absolutely necessary according to Angelis et al. (2011). Womack (1990), is therefore highlighting

the importance of ensuring job security for the employees in order to solve this barrier of resistance and create sustainable commitment.

Skorstad (1994) discuss commitment as an ability to go beyond given instructions and solve problem only in order to get back to a “normal” state. He argues that workers need to have a never-ending will to reduce waste and that management control and workers creativity is contradictory. The definition of commitment given by Skorstad (1994), and the affective commitment definition given by Meyer & Allen (1997), i.e. “I want to stay” is the ones used in thesis. Further we will discuss factors and actions contributing to create this kind of commitment within a lean implementation process.

3.2 Responsibility

Responsibility, in terms of pushing down the responsibility of the processes, from the management team, down the “organization’s ladder” is one of the key factors in lean philosophy (Boyer, 1996). When flattening the hierarchy the decision is being made closer to the problem itself, which allows the management team to avoid large scale problems that require huge resources to solve. But in order to be able to delegate the managers need to fully understand the situation through self-gained facts, this can only be taught on the “shop floor” where the actual work is done. Dombrowski and Mielke (2014) argue that the decision-making should be removed from the conference room back to the shop floor. This “delegation-way of thinking” is a way for the management team to show trust in the workers skills and knowledge, which is a key solution to increased worker empowerment and commitment (Urban, 2009).

According to Angelis et al. (2011) the single most important factor in order to favour commitment in lean implementation was to let the workers have influence on the improvement project. In accordance with Urban (2009), Angelis et al. (2011) argues that this is an indicator of trust in the worker's competence from the management team and fairness in equal participation opportunities. Managers should let the decision making flow downwards to the employees and then fully support their decisions. According to Dombrowski & Mielke (2014) the role of the employees must be changed and make them into a valuable resource.

In order for employees to handle increased responsibility, training and education by internal or external experts is usually required (Cudney & Elrod, 2010). Boyer (1996) goes one step further and argues that in order to develop multi skilled workers, who cope with increased responsibility, training is absolutely vital. An important way for organizations to be self-educational is via internal information sharing. Information sharing allows employees to exchange skills, experiences and knowledge. Through well evolved communication channels in the organization the opportunity to share information exists. To share information and best practices is an important part of the lean production management (Womack, 1990). Information sharing makes employees more competent in their role, which contributes to their personal empowerment (Peccei, 2007).

3.3 The team

Womack and AI (1990) see a work team, the tightly knitted team, as the heart of lean production. This view is shared by Angelis et al. (2011) who claims that lean is a set of tools, but its heart is its people. The difference in who succeed to create committed workers and who does not, lies in how the company treats its people. Focus should be on the people and the team, not the results. Through teamwork the employees share their individual skills, knowledge, ideas and experiences towards the organization's common goals (Peccei 2007).

A crucial part of teamwork and lean production is group-problem solving. This means that the management team permits the problem solving to be decentralized (K, Boyer 1996). This way to solve problems increases the flow of information through the company. Fox (2014) claims that group problem solving increases understanding and commitment and also contributes to a successful implementation. Fox further argues that this way to solve problems enhances team spirit, increase respect for the team leader and the individual's self-respect which are all contributing to a positive commitment. Participating in-group problem solving is one of the most effective ways to gain commitment (Fox, 2014).

To create problem solving and improvement focused employees, constant improvements needs to take place every day, not only in workshops once a month. Improvements should become a natural part of the everyday work. It should be motivated by a sense of achievement and personal development. The management team needs to give room for the employees to

experiment with their processes and come up with the solutions themselves (Dombrowski & Mielke, 2014).

3.4 Communication

The importance of communication is highlighted in most organizational theories (Burke & Litwin, 1992), thus also in the field of lean implementation. Jadhav et al. (2014) have identified lack of communication between managers and workers as a barrier of implementing lean in organizations. They claim that if neither the change, nor the progress of the change is communicated well enough, commitment will suffer among the workers. This goes hand in hand with having reachable targets and goal settings which Dombrowski & Mielke (2014) stress in their report. They argue that in order for workers to feel commitment to a process the targets and goals needs to be broken down to an individual level and translated into precise requirements for the process. Additionally the incentive system in the organization needs to be designed in order to encourage workers to work in line with those goals. The incentive system should be set to boost participation and continuous improvements (Jadhav et al. 2014).

In order to increase communication and workers influence an “employee suggestion system” where employees can participate and suggest improvements, is a popular tool within lean production (Dombrowski & Mielke, 2014). But developing problem solving skills and understanding is not done overnight and requires more than just an employee suggestion system. It needs time, coaching and support for the individual worker. It is important to remember that managers should not provide the solutions; they should come from the workers themselves, supported by the leaders (Dombrowski & Mielke, 2014).

The importance of support related to committed workers and successful lean implementations is highlighted by both Jadhav et al. (2014) and Womack (1996) among others. It is crucial for an organization to have strong and dedicated leaders with 100% support from top management, including the CEO (Jadhav et al. 2014). According to Womack (1996) the CEO must lead the improvement activities himself. This is where many fail right away; the CEO wants to delegate the improvement activities partly because it means to go out on the shop floor. Full commitment from the CEO and top management is the only way to gain commitment from the workers (Womack, 1996).

3.5 Theoretical summary

In order for the management team to create committed employees several actions are crucial according to lean production theory. The most crucial key factors contributing to commitment in a lean implementation process are discussed above and further summarized in the table below.

Table 1. Theoretical summary of key factors

Resistance	The management team needs to overcome resistance among the employees by securing jobs (Womack, 1990).
Responsibility	To let the employees have influence on the implementation and to give them responsibility for the process is one of the most crucial factors to create commitment according to Angelis et al. (2011). Decentralizing decision-making and delegation management are additional factors linked to how responsibility favours commitment (Urban, 2009, et al).
Training	Boyer (1996) et al. argues that in order to develop multi skilled and committed employees, who cope with increased responsibility in a lean implementation process, training is absolutely vital.
Information sharing	To share information and best practices is an important part of the lean production management (Womack, 1990). Via information sharing, employees become more competent in their role, which contributes to their personal empowerment and commitment (Peccei, 2007).
Problem solving	The management team should permit the problem solving to be decentralized (Boyer, 1996). Group problem solving increases understanding and commitment and also contributes to a successful implementation (Fox, 2014).
Incentive system	The management team should design an incentive system to encourage workers to work in line with the goals of the implementation process. The incentive system should be set to

	boost participation and continuous improvements in order to create commitment (Jadhav et al. 2014).
Goal settings	In order for workers to feel commitment to a process the targets and goals needs to be broken down to an individual level and translated into precise requirements for the process (Dombrowski & Mielke, 2014)
Support	To create commitment among workers in an organization, it is critical to have strong and dedicated leaders with 100% support from top management, including the CEO (Womack, 1996 & Angelis et al. 2011)

4. Empirical Results

The actions taken by the project's management team to create commitment among their Customer Service Department (CSD) Managers are reviewed in this section.

Additionally, both the management team and the CSD Managers perception on the very same actions are presented. Therefore the results are divided in two parts, first a description of the actions and the management team's view on the situation, secondly the CSD Managers experiences. Further the empirical result is structured in the categories most frequently discussed in theory. In order to give an overview and better understanding of the project, a short summary is initiating the chapter.

4.1 The overall structure of the project

After the process mapping phase was finished in February 2015 the 10 CSD Managers was asked to nominate a local project leader. This could be the CSD Manager himself, or someone in the local CSD team. The local project leader was supposed to be in charge for the local improvement progress and for the continuous reporting. In the majority of the local branch offices a project leader was chosen to be someone else than the CSD Manager.

As a starting point of the implementation phase of the Customer Service Improvement project, a three day workshop was held in Barcelona in Mars 2015. All CSD Managers and local project leaders were present. Common challenges and a common vision for the West Europe region were identified. The common challenges were found to be; pricing, paper handling, stock-outs and lack of information. Actions in order to improve those challenging areas were jointly identified in the workshops. Additionally one common visionary order handling process was mapped out. The visionary process map was set to be the place where the local branch offices wanted to be in 5 years' time.

After the days in Barcelona, each CSD Manager and local project leader had the mission to come up with a local action plan on how to tackle the identified challenges. Additionally, to set up an action plan and sub targets on how to reach the visionary process map in 5 years' time. The progress in each country was to be communicated back to the project's' management team on a monthly basis. Therefore a monthly report system via excel sheets was developed by the management team. A copy of the monthly report table is presented in appendix 6.

4.2 Resistance

Actions management team

Ever since launching the first phase of the project, the management team consisting of Carol & Angel, clearly communicated that “no heads would be cut”. The project was about increasing sales without having to increase Customer Service Department (CSD) head costs. This strategy has been maintained by Carol & Angel and is considered to be successful and fully understood. Carol's overall view regarding resistance towards the project is that some CSD Managers see this project as a future way to ease their workload, while some sees it as something that interferes with their day to day work.

The fundamental purpose of the improvement project in general and the Barcelona workshops in particular, is to put the CSD department in a better position in the company, according to Angel. The CSD department is the least appreciated and prioritized department in the organization, even though they could be seen as the very heart. Other departments don't recognize the work CSD is doing. Angel believes that more acknowledgement of their work is motivating people.

Response CSD managers

Manager A

Manager A never felt any fear of losing his/her job, neither anyone of the employees in the department since they are overloaded with work. This project is about to ease their daily work and make the life of the department's employees a bit better, explains the manager. Ever since the manager started to work for Jotun some years ago, he/she has been waiting for such a project to be launched. There had been no structure in the CSD department and they have had no idea what was going on in the other WE local branch offices.

Manager B

Manager B was initially open minded towards the project and had a positive view all until the phase of the process mapping was finished. When their order handling processes were mapped out, the complexity of their work were visualized and then a feeling of hopelessness completely took over, explains manager B. There were too many external actors and internal departments involved in order for manager B to be ever able to make a change. "To be honest with you, I believe this project will go on for another 5 years and then nothing will have changed".

Manager C

Manager C is very happy about the project, they have more strict procedures and it makes it easier for everyone in order to know how to work. The manager never felt any fear of losing jobs and everyone in the local Customer Service Department is positive about the project. Additionally it is good to know that the local branch offices we collaborate the most with, is using the same way of working. "Now everything is clearer, we can all be on one ship together".

4.3 Responsibility

Actions management team

Carol explains that by asking the CSD Managers to make their own action plan and their own targets for how to solve their challenges and reach the visionary map, this was a way of giving them responsibility for the project. Also, by nominating local project leaders, Angel and Carol were hoping for those individuals to be more motivated than the CSD Managers and therefore take greater responsibility.

Both Carol and Angel trust their CSD Managers with increased responsibility, but the response varies. Some CSD Managers embraced the responsibility one hundred per cent, some embraced it halfway, while some does not even send their monthly reports according to Carol. Angel believes those differences in responsibility to be a matter of attitude, cultural differences and about his and Carol's ability to create engagement and a sense of urgency.

Response CSD Managers

Manager A

Manager A explains how the responsibility is theirs to take and they can't wait for anyone else to do it for them. The biggest challenge is to find time in their day-to-day work. Therefore the manager doesn't want to set unrealistic goals, but rather take small steps and slowly head in the right direction. The monthly report is helping in order to keep the project going and it is beneficial for them to do it every month, says the manager.

Manager B

The second CSD Manager feels a lack of possibility to influence the project. "I feel fallen between the chairs, with Carol & Angel on one side and the CSD employees on the other side". The employees are already overwhelmed with work and the project with the monthly reports is just an additional task upon everything else, explains the manager. Further the manager's view is that decisions are already made when the information reaches him/her and no one ask for the manager's opinion. The manager would prefer to have the information first hand.

Manager C

The second CSD Manager feels trusted by the project leaders and works on a weekly basis to improve the processes together with the local Customer Service Department. They are working with their process maps and try to remove steps and challenges in the processes. The manager believes he/she has satisfying influence over the project.

4.4 Training

Actions management team

As a part of the project, Carol and Angel have offered training in the ERP system to all local branch offices where the ERP system was implemented in 2009. There had been no training since the implementation. Carol further informs that focus for next year will be on training and increasing competence, the aim is to develop a “lean-academy” in their global training department and send all CSD Managers to participate.

According to Angel this lack of training in problems solving and lean production tools is really a mistake; “We have given the CSD Managers the possibility to identify improvement potential, but not the tools to know what to do or how to solve it”.

Response CSD Managers

Manager A

The CSD Manager A expresses a wish for more training. Not only in the ERP system, also in the other systems that they are using in Jotun, e.g. the CRM system. “It would also be very helpful to have some training in the lean tools for example A3, not only for the CSD but for the whole organization”, says the manager.

Manager B

Manager B was very satisfied with the super user training in their ERP system that Carol and Angel had organized. The manager also mentions the internal education system in Jotun, where there is several courses for the CSD employees on the intranet. On the question if anyone are doing the courses? The answers was no and the reason was; “If someone sits alone in a room with a headset, people will start to wonder what the person is doing”, among others.

Manager C

Manager C wants even more training in the ERP system and believes it is necessary in order to reach the next level of professionalism and to better utilize the system's capacity. Training in communication skills would also be beneficial for the Customer Service Department according to the manager.

4.5 Information sharing

Actions management team

According to Carol and Angel the Barcelona meeting was a way to make sure that the departments share their experience, skills and knowledge among each other. It was the first time for all the ten CSD Managers to meet. Another similar three-day workshop is planned to take place during 2016. Further Carol and Angel are gathering the monthly reports and are trying to quantify the department's progress and improvements. An update of the overall progress in the WE region is summarized, compiled and shared among the local branch offices quarterly. Angel explains that the summation shows the local branch offices' progresses and is a way of visualizing and enhances the offices that are working hard, but also to embarrass the ones that don't put in any effort.

On the agenda for next year is to try to have a common internal platform where the CSD Managers may get access to the results and knowledge from the other departments.

According to Angel, information sharing today does not happen to the extension he would like see. Additionally, Carol informs that they are currently planning on creating a cluster between local branch offices in order to share their challenges and information, e.g. Germany, UK and Netherlands / Spain, Italy and Greece.

Response CSD Managers

Manager A

According to manager A the three days in Barcelona was a great opportunity to get know the other CSD Managers and to share common challenges and solutions. Except from operational email communication, this was the first and last time the managers met or

spoke with each other. There has been some small email correspondence after the meeting but nothing more. The manager has tried to contact the local branch offices where he/she saw good practices via email and asked for recommendations, but it's been a one way communication and no one has asked for managers A's advises in return.

Additionally the manager is missing information on what is happening in the other local branch offices and would like more regularly updates on their progresses.

Manager B

Manager B thinks it was very good to meet everyone in the Barcelona meeting. He/she has already been involved in one cluster meeting which the manager found to be beneficial in order to improve communication, but the understanding from the other CSD Managers were somehow weak in some areas. The manager is also missing information on what is going on "the other side", i.e. what is the progress with common the ERP bottlenecks, will there be any investment made in the system to solve this or not, etcetera.

Manager B wishes more constructive feedback on the monthly reports. The feedback given by Carol or Angel is a bit poor according to the manager; "They gives their comments on what to do, but I want to know how to do it".

Manager C

Manager C highlights the absence of continuous information sharing as the area with room for greatest improvement in this project. There is a lack of international overview, explains the manager. He/she would like to have monthly meetings with the other local branch offices and an internal CSD platform. Regarding the monthly reports, the manager is missing out on recommendations on what to do better.

4.6 Problem solving

Actions management team

Angel explains that without any training, the CSD Managers don't know how to tackle the problems. But Jotun as a whole aims to be leaner and all CSD Managers are at least

familiar with the concept. Overall Carol & Angel consider some of the CSD Managers to be more solutions oriented, some less.

Response CSD Managers

Manager A

Since there is no information sharing over the borders, the CSD Managers as a group do not solve any problems according to manager A. When operational problem arises in their local departments, the teams have sufficient experience to solve the problems internally and immediately.

Manager B

The lack of possibilities for the CSD Managers to work as a group, except from the cluster, and solve problems together is prominent, according to manager B. This includes the lack of information sharing among the group, sharing of ideas etc.

Manager C

When a problem occurs in the department of Manager C, they arrange a meeting, discuss the problem and make an organization map where they map out the challenge they are facing. Then they have an update 2-3 times per day to check the status of the problem. Usually they solve it internally in the department, but if the manager needs more help, he/she can always go and ask her local management team for help. But manager C would prefer a way of asking the other CSD Managers for help, “Off course it can be done over email, but an internal platform would be much better”.

4.7 Incentive systems

Actions management team

Carol & Angel inform that they don't have an overall incentive system for the CSD Managers today. They believe that this might be a good idea for the future. One of the focuses for the next CSD workshop in 2016 will be on how to measure improvements, find good KPIs and link those to possible rewards.

Since they don't currently have an overall incentive system, they are working in some other ways to motivate the CSD Managers in order to work in accordance with the project's desired direction. An example of such actions is the work with quantifying the progresses from the monthly reports and shares those quarterly in order to encourage. Further the aim is to create some kind of competition between the local branch offices, according to Carol. Angel mentions once again how important it is for the other departments, especially the sales- and marketing department, to recognize the work CSD is doing. This makes CSD feel important and can motivate them further. Carol informs about another motivating action that's been developed, which is a career path for the Customer Service Department, in order to provide the CSD people with a clear view of their future possibilities.

Response CSD Managers

Manager A

Manager A has a local incentive system with some targets linked to the improvement project, but to develop an incentive system for the whole Customer Service Department would be even better, according to manager A. As it is now, the focus is to help the other departments in the organization, rather than the customers. Manager A argues this is not right and the focus needs to change. What is actually motivating manager A to push the project forward is to see how he/she can help to ease the everyday workload of the co-workers.

Manager B

Manager B informs about their local bonus system, where CSD employees could get bonuses based on their performance, but none of the criteria to receive a bonus is linked to the CSD improvement project. Manager B is motivated by the fact that communication can be improved so that end customers value can be increased.

Manager C

“To see how small changes can make big differences and to ease the everyday work for my people of the department is really what is motivating me” says manager C.

Additionally the manager once again mentions how good it would be to see how the other

Customer Service Departments are working, maybe by visiting another office for some days.

4.8 Goal settings

Actions management team

Both Carol and Angel are highlighting the problem to find good Key Performance Indicators (KPI) which could be linked to the project. This improvement project was launched without clear measurements in status quo, which makes it hard to measure the improvements. According to Angel this was a big mistake. They have for example tried to measure how much time the CSD workers have saved in minutes when processing an order thanks to the reduced bottlenecks. But this is difficult because the processes was not time-measured from the beginning, the time saved is therefore impossible to estimate, explains Angel. The only accurate KPI they have at the moment is order lines per full time employee, which could be compared to prior years. Carol explains how this will be an important topic in the next CSD workshop meeting 2016, since it's crucial for the project's legitimacy to find good KPIs.

In the Barcelona workshop the long term goals were set as a framework for the local CSD Managers and project leaders to develop the short term goals within. Carol and Angel believe it is more motivating to reach the targets set up by yourself rather than the ones dictated from above.

Response CSD Managers

Manager A

Manager A finds the KPIs to be troublesome. To measure the time saved in minutes is very difficult since many orders can be done parallel, or there are interruptions as phone calls in the middle of the process etc. Additionally it depends on the size and complexity of the orders according to manager A.

Manager A also talks about the Barcelona workshop as a bit rushed and too little time for a too large agenda. The manager explains that the visionary goals felt too far away, too massive and too unrealistic. “It takes plenty, plenty of time to implement goals that involves humans and different departments”. It was off course good to know the long term goals but the vision was simply too optimistic, according to manager A.

Manager B

Manager B explains how the goals are anyhow Carols and Angel’s goals, not the managers’. The visionary goals feels more like a dream than actual goals and the visionary map consisted amazingly few steps which simply makes it unrealistic, according to manager B. The manager also asks the following question “If the process would be as simple as that, where will the challenge in our daily work be?”

The Barcelona workshop was very good in many ways according to manager B, but they didn’t got a chance to truly understand what was going on, instead new topics was brought up immediately. Manager B thinks the meeting was too short, unrealistic and a bit unclear on how to reach the targets.

Manager C

The CSD manager C argues that the ERP system offers a lot of possibilities for KPIs and that those should be used more extensively. The manager takes small steps together with the team of the department and it feels overall manageable.

4.9 Support

Actions management team

According to Carol and Angel they see an obvious correlation between a positive progress of the project and the local General Managers (GM) involvement. Carol gives one country as an example where the GM is very involved in the project and where everyone in the Customer Service Department are proud of their progresses and want to share this among the other local branch offices. Angel informs that they have almost demanded the support of the local GMs, and that the GMs must ask the local CSD Manager for monthly updates on the project. This has been successful in the majority of the local branch offices

but not in all. This year there have been new people on the GM position in five out of ten branch offices, and Carol and Angel are hoping for even greater involvement once the GMs are in place.

Carol and Angel also believe that more local presence from their own side would be beneficial for the project.

Response CSD managers

Manager A

The support from Carol and Angel is very good according to Manager A, but support from the local management and GM is poor. The manager A would have liked to give monthly updates to his/her General Manager, but the GM is not asking for it.

Manager B

Manager B would like to see more local presence from Carol and Angel and more information in general, especially; “Information on what is happening on the other side so that the work feels more meaningful”. The manager believes he/she will have better support from the local GM in the future, but the support has been absent historically.

Manager C

Manager C has good support from both her supervisor and from the local management team and GM. The manager feels confident in asking his/her GM for help if the situation requires.

5. Analysis

This study set out to explore the relationship between managers actions and workers commitment in a lean implementation process. The relationship will be discussed and analysed in this section. Further the chapter is based on both the theoretical and empirical findings.

Structurally it will not be in accordance with prior chapters, since the key factors are found to be related to one another, a different structure is used. From the empirical findings one can identify a discrepancy in commitment among the three interviewed CSD Managers. In this section we will try to examine the factors contributing to this divergence and what factors that have been favourable versus unfavourable for all CSD Managers commitment.

5.1 An interpretive approach

According to Bryman and Bell (2011) it is important for the social researcher to have an interpretive approach and to capture the subjective meaning of a social action. Our intention of the following analysis is to apply this approach. We aim to give an understanding of each CSD Managers' perception of the actions and put light on the contextual factor. The Managers' answers will always make sense considering the preconditions of their own reality. It implies that the managers believe themselves to be rational and correctly performing in the scope of the project. Therefore, miscommunication, local culture and different realities affect the actions and cause the CSD Managers to justify their own behaviour.

5.2 Resistance and influence

The management team of Jotun's improvement project have from the very start communicated that no one have to fear their jobs, since no notices to quit would be sent out. This goes very well in line with Womack's (1990) argument about the necessity to secure jobs in order to overcome resistance. All three CSD Managers confirm this strategy to be successful. No one has been worried about losing their jobs or the jobs of the employees in the Customer Service Department.

Even though Carol and Angel have secured the jobs, one manager (manager B) still communicated some resistance. The manager explained the feeling as overwhelming. Started when he/she understood the complexity of their work during the process mapping. Angelis et al. (2011) argues that due lack of clarity, pressure and uncertainty etc. resistance is much more likely than a meaningful commitment in the beginning of an implementation process. The manager described a feeling of lack of power and lack of influence over their processes in general and over the project in particular. This is something that Angelis et al. (2011) stresses as one of the most crucial factors in order to create commitment, i.e. to let the employees have influence over the project. In summation, the manager believed that the project will go on for another 5 years and nothing will have changed, which might be a good indication of the manager's resistance.

Influence is also linked to decision-making. According to Dombrowski and Mielke (2014) decision-making should be removed from the conference room back to the shop floor. In order for the managers to be able to delegate the decisions back to the shop floor, they need to fully understand the situation in the departments by self-gained facts. Carol and Angel were very present during the phase of process mapping and gained an overall understanding of the local situations in each Customer Service Department. Further Carol and Angel delegated the responsibility to develop local short term goals to the local CSD Managers and project leaders, which is very well in line with what Dombrowski and Mielke (2014) stresses as critical factors. Nevertheless, the resistant manager explains that decisions are already being made when the information reaches him/her and no one is asking for the manager's opinion. Therefore the delegating strategy from Carol and Angel's side in order to create commitment seems to be successful only to a limited extent.

For some reason, this unsatisfying feeling is not completely shared by the other two CSD managers who happily welcomed the project. Especially in the case of manager C, who felt trusted, influential and responsible. Urban (2009) argues that to give the employees responsibility and influence, is an indicator of trust in the worker's competence and fairness in equal participation opportunities. The discrepancy in resistance towards the project therefore seems to be partly linked with the feeling of influential power.

5.3 Local support and motivational incentives

Lack of commitment clearly correlates with the level of support from the local top management according to the project leader, Carol. Womack (1996) is also highlighting this correlation and argues that full commitment can only be gained through hundred per cent support from top management and CEO. Womack (1996) goes as far as arguing that the CEO must lead the improvement activities himself. Carol and Angel have understood the importance of local support and have almost demanded the support from the local General Managers (GM). Even though the GMs are not asked to lead the improvement process as Womack (1996) is proposing, this strategy has been successful in the case of one of the interviewed managers (manager C). The manager has a perceived support from the local GM and is also the one who feels most influential. The correlation of top management support and commitment as both Carol and Womack (1996) highlights, seems to be the case for two of the managers, but not for manager A who felt committed even though the local support is insufficient.

Two factors contributing to Manager's A commitment even though the local support is deficient, might be a greater perceived support from Carol and Angel than in comparison to the other two managers, and also the local incentive system. Manager A has a yearly bonus system with targets linked to the improvement project. Jadhav et al. (2014) argues that this is the right way to succeed; they explain that the management team should design an incentive system to encourage workers to work in line with the goals of the implementation process. Further Jadhav et al. (2014) explains that in order to create commitment, the incentive system should boost participation and continuous improvements. The other two managers have a bonus system as well, but none of the goals are linked to the project. This seems to be out of Carols and Angels control and based on local policies, but Carol and Angel believes an incentive system linked to the project would be beneficial.

On the other hand, none of the managers mentioned bonus as a motivating factor. All three of them are motivated by visible improvements for example to increase the service quality, or to ease the everyday work of the employees in the department. It can therefore be questioned if an incentive system should be seen as a critical factor in order to create commitment. Although the answers from the managers whether or not a bonus system

motivates or would motivate them might not be truly trustworthy due to the sensitivity of the question.

Further the aim of Carol and Angel is to put the CSD department in a better position in the company. This goes well in line with Womack's (1990) argumentation about lean implementation to be an upgrade of the blue-collar worker. Also Dombrowski and Mielke (2014) believe the role of the employees must be changed and make them into a valuable resource if one wants to create commitment. The managers all expressed a thankfulness regarding the Barcelona meeting where the Customer Service Department for the first time was in the spotlight. This Barcelona meeting initiative could be considered as a key action from Carol and Angel's side in order to create commitment since all the managers were highly satisfied with the attention.

Still it seems like Carol and Angel have a long way to go in order to change the organization's view of the CSD. At least if one should believe Manager A who explains how he/she feels that CSD is rather working for the other departments as a support function, than for their customers as they are supposed to.

5.4 Process measurements and reachable goals

When measuring the progress of a project the right measurements are needed. Carol and Angel are well aware of the dilemma of finding the right measurements and are working to develop these in several ways. Dombrowski and Mielke (2014) stress the importance of the change and progress to be well communicated, if not commitment will suffer. This includes having reachable targets and break down the goals to individual levels (in this case department levels). This seemed to be well in hand with the practical case of Jotun, since the departments were able to set their own short-term goals after the Barcelona meeting. This made it possible for the CSD Managers to set their own frame for their work pace. The local setting of the goals seems to be appreciated by the majority of the CSD Managers even though Carol and Angel might lack the insight and participation of the local goals set.

The management has set up these preconditions for the CSD Managers to feel in charge which is in accordance with the lean theory and the creating of commitment. Even though these preconditions are given to the CSD Managers, they consider the main and visionary

goals to be heavy, too big and overwhelming. The sense of not having realistic and deeply rooted goals seems to be affecting the CSD Managers commitment in a negative way. All the managers find it hard to relate to the goals since they were simply too unrealistic. Therefore these goal settings and measurements seem to have been a factor impacting the practical case of Jotun. A possible reason for this disliking may be miscommunication and not understanding the vision good enough as Jadhav et al. (2014) discusses the importance of.

5.5 The team and the information flow

The lean production pioneer James P. Womack (1990) stresses sharing of information and best practices as an important part of the lean philosophy. Accordingly Peccei (2007) who argues that via information sharing, employees become more competent in their role, which contributes to their personal empowerment and commitment. The single time the CSD Managers have met was in the Barcelona meeting. The meeting was a way for Carol and Angel to make sure that the CSD Managers share their skills and knowledge, perfectly in line with what Womack (1990) and Peccei (2007) stresses. The gathering was appreciated by all of the interviewed managers. They claimed it to be great opportunity to actually see and physically meet your colleagues in order to know the people you are in a team with. Two of the managers also described how they picked up on some best practices.

However the managers declare their disappointment and wish for more contact with the other managers such as sharing of practices, challenges, dialogues etcetera. There seems to be an absence of possibilities for the CSD Managers to work as a team on a daily basis. For example through different channels were they could share experiences, skills and knowledge, solving arising problems together with each other's expertise and help. There was an explicit wish from the CSD Managers for a common platform where this could take place, which is a topic that Dombrowski and Mielke (2014) discusses the use and effects of.

Even though lean theory consists of a set of tools and its measurements, its heart is its people (Angelis et al. 2011). Peccei (2007) argues that the difference on how to succeed with creating committed workers lie upon how the managers treat their personal and create conditions for them. By focusing on the team and its members, the managers may

find it natural to make it easier for them to work in teams and creating a sense of teamwork. As a result of the absence of information sharing among the CSD Managers, Carol and Angel could see this as a signal that the managers know too little about each other's progress and challenges. Angel agrees with the thoughts that information sharing between the CSD Managers do not happen to the extension he would like to see.

Carol and Angel are also gathering monthly reports from respective country to secure progress quality and to send back feedback with suggestions on what the offices should focus on the following time period. The monthly reports are then quantified and summarized in an overall progress update and shared among the local branch offices on a quarterly basis. These monthly reports are appreciated by two of the CSD managers and are thought of being helpful and beneficial in their cases. All of the interviewed managers ask for information of challenges and progress in the other offices, an international overview. This is linked to the discussion above and the quarterly report does not seem to be satisfying enough. Additionally the managers ask for more constructive feedback on the monthly reports, that is, not only what to do, but also how to do it. This is highlighted by Dombrowski and Mielke (2014) who discusses how important it is for the change and progress in the project to be carefully and well communicated by the management in order to create commitment and avoid resistance. Although the monthly reports and quarterly send outs seem to be well in line with the lean theory, there is great room for further development.

One area linked to the field of information sharing is group-problem solving. Boyer (1996) stresses the importance for the management to decentralize the problem solving process. Fox (2014) stretches this further by claiming that participating in group problem solving is one of the most effective ways to create commitment. Yet, the CSD Managers thought of this group problem solving among the rest of the CSD Managers to be impossible, mainly due to lack of an internal platform as previously discussed. One of the managers explicitly mentions that asking the other CSD Managers for help would be preferable rather than asking the local management team for help.

The problem seems to be of structural character and not just dependent on the CSD Manager themselves. This is a possible area to be prioritized in the future by the

management team since it is in accordance with the lean theory and the demand is high amongst the CSD Managers.

5.6 Coping with employee empowerment

The ERP system was implemented in 2009 in the majority of the West Europe region local branch offices. No training had been offered since the implementation 2009 up until last year when Carol and Angel offered training as a part of the Customer Service Improvement project. The training took place in the majority of the offices and was very appreciated by the receiving managers. It was offered once during a few days, but there is no continuous training going on. Neither is there any training in the sense of lean production tools nor solution orientation. Angel sees this as a major mistake; “- We have given the CSD managers the possibility to identify improvement potential, but not the tools to know what to do or how to solve it”.

Boyer (1996) talks about the importance to train employees in order for them to turn into multi-skilled workers who can cope with the increased complexity and responsibility. Accordingly, Carol informs that training and increasing competence will be on the agenda next year where the aim is to develop a lean “academy”. The critical factor of training seems to be well identified by the management team and future training is already in focus and up for discussion.

6. Conclusion and further research

In this last section we return to the research question of this thesis. The conclusions made from the thesis are introduced. Further we end this section with suggestions for further research.

6.1 Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to map out actions taken by the project leaders and evaluate the actions that the project leaders took in order to create commitment to the improvement project. The findings show that some of the key factors originated from our theoretic perspective critically influenced the commitment according to our empirical data. These factors are found to be; perceived influence, cross-country information sharing and concrete goal settings. The management actions resulting in such factors and the correlations with theory are further discussed below.

The first finding that goes in accordance with the theory is the faulty structuring of the information chart in the project. The participants demand more dialogues and contact with each other as well as conditions to be able to commit through information sharing and participating in-group problem solving. Fox (2014) argues that solving problems in groups increase commitment and understandings. This information-sharing factor is seen as the one with room for greatest improvement according to the CSD Managers themselves where they describe lack of conditions for them to have dialogues and contact as dependent on their contribution to the project. It can be contemplated as a critical factor since the correlation is described both by the empirical data and the theoretic perspective in this thesis.

Another correlation, although not as clear as the previous one, is the support from local top management team and commitment. In the case of two of the CSD Managers the correlation is clear; high support - high commitment and vice versa. Interesting though is the case of manager A who was committed to the project even though the manager had deficient support from local management. Instead the manager had perceived sufficient support from Carol and Angel, which seems to have outweighed the need of local top management support. The conclusion is therefore that extensive support from Carol and Angel can be equally critical as gaining support from the local management team and General Managers.

Influence seems to be another important critical factor given by both the empirical and theoretical results. According to Angelis et al. (2011) one of the most crucial factor in order to create commitment is to let the employees have influence over the project. This is confirmed by the empirical results where the one manager who felt un-influential and powerless also was lacking in commitment.

There is also a possible linkage between local management support and influence. The CSD Manager who felt a lack of support also felt lack of possibilities to make any changes, due to involvement of too many internal parties. With support from local top management this feeling might have been different, as in the case with one of the colleagues (manager C) where changes could possibly go through easier. The actions to increase local management support and to increase the CSD Manager's perceived influence could therefore be viewed as interrelated.

Carol & Angels awareness regarding the goal settings seems to be well in line with what Dombrowski & Mielke (2014) declares as critical; it is important that the targets and goals is broken down into smaller parts in order for the personal to commit. Although, they do not seem to have successfully translated the targets and visionary goal settings. This is visible in the empirical data where all of the CSD managers feel the visionary goals of the project to be almost impossible, too unrealistic and big which is doing all but contributing to their commitment. If one does not concretize the goals to individual levels and explains them well enough, the personal cannot quite comprehend and target them. Once again the empirical and theoretical findings coincide and the management action to concrete the visionary goals should be seen as critical.

The strategy taken by the management team to secure jobs and to improve the Customer Service Department position in the company seems to have been of importance, and it goes well in line with the lean production theory (Womack, 1990). Still, it is hard to determine how critical the actions have been in order to create commitment, since the research objects do not frequently discuss them. The conclusions are though, that the absence of discussions among the CSD Managers is somehow a verification of a successful action when it comes to commitment. The actions should therefore be considered as successful, but cannot be confirmed as critical.

If we now return to our research question; “*What management actions have been seen as critical for the development of commitment among Jotun’s employees in the firm’s lean improvement process?*” the answer is bilateral. On the one hand, the management actions are problematic to analyze in isolation since they are all dependent on one another. On the other hand, the factors of perceived influence, cross-country information sharing and concrete goal settings are shown to be clearly highlighted and correlated with commitment. Therefore those key factors should be considered as critical in the certain case of Jotun West Europe region.

6.2 Further research

From our findings in this thesis we notice several interesting areas for further research. As this thesis is aiming towards mapping out the management actions taken in the improvement project in the case of Jotun and how these have affected the CSD Managers, it would be of interest to do a similar thesis in another organization. This is due to organization’s different human capital structure and procedures, where no improvement project is equivalent to another. If such a study is being done it would be of great interest to compare the findings with each other.

Secondly, one of our findings were that “influential power” is of great importance and influence in terms of creating commitment. Further on, the influential power is significant in terms of support from local management team as well, where if the manager lacks of local management support he/she will not feel influential. Thus, it would be interesting for future authors to investigate these interrelationships and/or focus on the significance of influential power in projects and how to increase it.

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Appendix 1 – Activity levels West Europe Region (2013)

Country (2013)	Order line/ FTE	Hi to Low
Spain	15 656	1
NL	11 130	2
France	9 200	3
Italy	8 271	4
UK	6 842	5
Cyprus	6 186	6
Germany	5 326	7
Poland	4 209	8
Greece	4 174	9
Czech	2 585	10

Country (2013)	Cost per FTE	Hi to Low
Germany	67 991	1
France	59 879	2
Italy	57 052	3
NL	42 211	4
Greece	37 621	5
Spain	36 910	6
Poland	32 324	7
UK	31 282	8
Czech	17 238	9
Cyprus	-	-

Appendix 2 - Preparatory email to the project leaders

Dear,

Here comes some information in order for you to understand what we are aiming for during tomorrow's interview.

Our aim is to try to understand how there could be such a difference in commitment to the improvement process among the offices. We will try to identify factors that worked well in order to increase commitment, versus factors that did not work as well.

According to theory regarding commitment when implementing lean, there are some key factors that we aim to investigate further. Those are the following:

1. Resistance; how to turn resistance into commitment.
2. Employee empowerment; in terms of increased responsibility over the processes and training in order to cope with it.
3. Teamwork; in terms of problem solving ability on group level and information sharing.
4. Communication; in terms of communicating goals, support and incentives.

Examples of questions:

- First of all, how have you structured the improvement process?
- What actions have been taken in order to try to overcome the resistance?
- What kind of actions have you taken in order to give more responsibility to the CSD Managers and for them to feel responsible for the process?
- Have you offer any training for the CSD Managers in order to cope with their increased responsibility?
- Have each office as a group had the possibility to create their own new standard processes, or have you given them standard processes to follow?
- How do you make sure that the employees and also between the local branch offices share their experiences, skills and knowledge to others? Through which channels do this happen? Such as weekly meetings, group discussions sessions? Any supporting system where these discussions and information sharing may take place?
- What are the goals set up for the different departments and the individuals for this improvement project?
- How do you motivate the employees and the CSD managers to work towards the desired direction?

I hope this makes sense to you, please let me know if there are any question marks!

Best Regards,

Appendix 3 - Question table for the project leaders

1. Resistance questions:

- In the process mapping stage you said that no one have to fear their jobs, you will only grow without having to increase manpower - have there been any changes?
- Have this kind of strategy to overcome resistance been successful? Or have you done anything else to try to overcome the resistance?

2. Empowerment questions (responsibility and training):

- How have you worked with empowering in terms of increased responsibility for the CSD Managers at the departments?

- How do you secure the quality of the increased responsibility of the processes for example in terms of monthly meetings, reports etcetera?
- Do you trust the CSD Managers to take responsibility?
- Do you offer any training/education for the CSD Managers in order to cope with their increased responsibility? Such as training in the new system, support, external experts, leadership training etcetera?
- Why do think the responsibility varies?
- What do you think you could have done in order to increase the feeling of responsibility for the CSD Managers?

3. Teamwork questions (group problem-solving and information sharing):

- Do you consider the CSD Managers to be solutions oriented?
- What preconditions have you given them to become solutions oriented?
- Have each office as a group had the possibility to create their own standard processes or have you given them a standard process to follow?
- How do you make sure that the local branch offices share their experiences, skills and knowledge among each other?
- Through which channels do this happen?
- Any supporting system where these discussions and information sharing may take place?
- What do you think could have been done to improve these results further?

4. Communication questions (Support, goals and incentive system)

- What does your incentive system towards CSD Managers look like?
- If no system, how do you motivate your CSD Managers to work towards the desired direction?
- What are the goals set up for the different departments and the CSD Managers for this improvement project?
- How do you work with making sure that the CSD Managers know their individual goals and the department's goals?
- Do you feel that they understand their goals?
- Do you think anything could have been done differently regarding communication, incitement systems or goals settings?

- What have you done in order to create support from the local management team and CEO?
- Have you succeeded to create support?

Appendix 4 - Preparatory email to the CSD Managers

Dear,

In order for you to understand what we are aiming for in tomorrow's interview, we wanted to give you some examples of questions. Additionally to explain, that we aim to evaluate the Customer Service Improvement project with the Barcelona meeting and workshop as a starting point.

- What have been the actions since the Barcelona meetings?
- What are your overall thoughts about the project?
- What have worked well, versus not so well?
- What do you feel is motivating you in order to push the project further?
- Do you see any benefits from it?
- How do you feel the dialogue and sharing of knowledge with the other CSD managers is working out?
- Have the preconditions given by Angel and Carol, in order to be successful with the project been satisfying?
- What could have been done differently?

Speak soon!

Best Regards,

Appendix 5 - Question table for the CSD Managers

1. Resistance questions:

- What did you think when you first heard about the project? A good thing or another hopeless project?
- Any changes in terms of feelings now compared to in the beginning?
- Do you feel any fear of losing your jobs linked to this improvement project?

2. Empowerment questions (responsibility and training)

- Do you feel that Carol and Angel give you responsibility for the improvement project?
- In what way? Do you feel in charge?
- Do you feel they trust you with this?
- Have you got any training linked to the improvement project? Are you happy with the outcome?
- Are you satisfied with the way Carol and Angel have given you responsibility?
- Would you have liked to have more influence over the improvement project?

3. Teamwork questions (group problem-solving and information sharing):

- When you are facing a problem linked to the process, how do you solve it?
- Do you consider yourself as a part of team with the other CSD managers to be solutions oriented?
- What preconditions have you gotten in order to become solutions oriented?
- Have you had the possibility to create the new local standard order handling processes?
- How do you share your experiences, skills and knowledge to the other local branch offices?
- Through which channels do this happen?
- Any supporting system where these discussions and information sharing may take place?
- Have this information sharing created any value?
- What do you think could have been done to improve these results further?

4. Communication questions (Support, goals and incentive system)

- What does your incentive system look like?
- If no system, how do get motivated to work towards the desired direction?
- What are the goals set up for your department and yourself linked to this project?
- Do you consider your goals to be well motivated and understandable, reachable?

- Do you have anything that could have been done differently by Carol and Angel regarding communication, incentive systems or goals settings?
- Do you feel any support from the local management team and CEO?

Appendix 6 - Monthly report table

SERVICE COMPLAINTS	Current Status Y/N	Target Date to achieve standard	Date Achieved
100% of service complaints recorded?			
CSD are responsible for administering complaints?			
Service Complaints are recorded in the Service Complaints Database			
All Complaints are closed within 14 days of being raised			
Monthly Reports are produced and shared with Management Team			

ACTUAL SERVICE COMPLAINTS VS TARGET	Baseline Monthly Avg	Target Monthly Avg	No of complaints XX/2015
Main reasons for service complaints			
1. TRANSPORT RELATED- wrong shipment address, missing boxes/cans, delivery delays			
2. ORDER ENTRY-CREDIT INVOICES - wrong price/ product/address- mistakes are made by CSD officer (incorrect price because of wrong currency converter, human error)			
3 INFORMATION- CREDIT INVOICES - wrong price - mistakes are made by Area Sales Manager (not inform CSD about changing prices, special offers; not add new			

price to CRM; change prices after create invoices by CSD officer)			
4 Bad quality of products- RETURNS/ RMA			
5 local warehouse (wrong shipment, packaging)			
6 stock out/ production/ resupply			
Total No of Service Complaints for month			
No of order lines last month			
Complaints as % of Order Lines last month			

SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN		
Last Month - Actions Undertaken	Actual Effect / Impact	Who was Involved?
Next Month - Actions Planned	Anticipated Effect / Impact	Who was Involved?

REDUCE TIME TAKEN FOR EACH PROCESS	Avg time	Target Avg time	Target Date
Process Type			
Local Orders			
Local Marine Orders			
Marine Overseas Orders			
Intercompany Orders			

MAIN BARRIERS & CONSTRAINTS	By Whom	By When
Barriers / Constraints		
Actions Required		