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The Road to Transformation

The Implementation of a Transformational Sales Programme in a Global Sales Organisation

Fredrik Fürst and Erwin Hun

Supervisor: Cheryl Cordeiro

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ABSTRACT

As the external business environment changes, organisations need to change with them. Increasingly dynamic and complex markets, developments in technology, and paradigm shifts in best practices are examples of factors that constitute a pressure for change and underlines the importance of organisational adaptability as a competitive advantage. Change management within the complex environment of a world-wide MNC is difficult, and change management aiming to achieve a cultural transformation within such an environment, replacing a broad range of old practices with new ways, is nothing but a Herkules' task. Nevertheless, broad-scale change management research in complex MNC environments is scarce, which is why this study sets out to investigate the implementation of a global transformational sales programme within the diverse sales organisation of SKF, a leading bearings and seals manufacturer. Through collecting and analysing 101 qualitative interviews, the paramount importance of the training institution's role and the organisational structure is highlighted and detailed, leaving the reader with well-founded theoretical and practical insights.

Keywords: international business (IB), change management (CM), organisational transformation, sales development, sales manager, multinational corporations (MNCs)

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List Of Abbreviations

CM	Change Management
MNC	Multinational Corporation
SLM	Second-Level Managers
FLM	First-Level Managers
SR	Sales Representative
SME	Sales Manager Excellence
SE	Sales Excellence

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1 INTRODUCTION

This overture begins by presenting a background of the topic chosen for this research, initially underlining the importance of change management, then narrows the chapter down to transformation through sales training and the pivotal role of the sales manager in a changing international business environment. It does so in order to highlight the importance of further studies within this area. Reflecting the established research gap, the purpose of the study is elaborated on and a research question is constructed. Further fine-tuning its mission, delimitations of this research is described, followed by a final outline of the steps taken in the research process.

1.1 Background

Today's organisations operate within an ever increasingly dynamic, complex, and global business world where change and transformation are antecedents to their survival and prosperity in the world of tomorrow. Operating with yesterday's logic is no longer feasible as competition is increasing and less adaptable organisations run the risk of falling hopelessly behind in the evolutionary race that ultimately regards survival. As Charles Darwin highlighted through his epochal book 'On the Origin of Species';

> It is not the most intellectual of the species that survives; it is not the strongest that survives; but the species that survives is the one that is able best to adapt and adjust to the changing environment in which it finds itself (Megginson, 1963).

Put differently, organisations must master the skill of change management. They must be able to create an environment where individuals, groups, and the overall organisation purposefully moves from one state to a new state, better equipped to face the challenges within the emerging business environment.

The sales division within an organisation is not sheltered from these changes in the global business world, on the contrary, such divisions are often the first to be affected by the changes. During the last few decades, the global sales environment has undergone significant transformation as the convergence of developed and emerging markets has led to an increased competition, more informed buyers supported by advancements in technology, and a general shift in customers' behaviours and needs. This transformation has significantly altered the

basics of the selling process and function (Jones et al., 2005). As senior management within organisations become aware of the changes in the sales environment, they often initiate measures aimed at developing its sales force so as to adapt to the new or emerging changes (Rao, 2010). However, there is a growing emphasis on the benefits of sales managers taking an even more integral part in advancing the sales force (Pousa and Mathieu, 2014; Chakrabarty et al., 2008). Given their position as the link between senior management and the profit-producing sales representatives the sales managers are not only directly responsible for the future success of the sales organisation but also in a unique position to lead the development of their people. With regards to this and the continuously changing landscape, it is of paramount importance that the sales organisation becomes superior to its competitors in continuously reshaping and improving its sales managers' ability to lead and develop their sales representatives. The extent an organisation is successful in this endeavour is directly linked to the sales representatives' performance, in-turn the foundation on which an organisation's revenues and long-term survival rests on (Pousa and Mathieu, 2014; Gordon et al., 2012; Laforge et al., 2009).

1.2 Problem Discussion

Given the increasing pressure on sales organisations today, where market commoditisation is pushing organisations into more customer-centric sales focus, scholars argue that the sales manager should have a more central role in advancing the sales people towards adopting the new complex sales skills that the business environment requires (Singh et al., 2015; Das et al., 2014; Pousa and Mathieu, 2014). In order to shoulder that role, the intended transformation requires the sales manager to acquire new skills and adopt new behaviours, making sales training the cornerstone of any such process. However, the adoption of new behaviours and other forms of practical implementation is perhaps the greatest challenge in the strive for transformation. Research suggests that organisations often experience a significant inefficiency in transferring knowledge and skills acquired from training into every-day practice, limiting the return from investment in training (Saks and Belcourt, 2006). In spite of this and the paramount importance of sales management training highlighted in the previous subchapter, research into the phenomenon of sales management training and subsequent implementation continues to be one of the most overlooked fields within the personal selling and sales management literature (Singh et al., 2015). Adding insult to injury, Baldauf and Lee (2011) further point out the relative absence of internationally relevant sales research,

notwithstanding the increasing internationalisation of many organisations' business activities and the sales managers' pivotal role in developing the sales representatives, closely linked to the success of the firm. The relative absence of sales manager training research can partly be explained by the fact that it is a practice many organisations have yet to engage in. According to a study by Stein (2008), only 43 per cent of organisations have formalised sales training programmes, and it is safe to assume that most of these programmes are not targeting sales managers as their main focal group. A possible explanation behind the relative neglect in sales manager training may be found in the fact that senior management often incorrectly assumes that common sales skills are sufficient in order for a manager to proficiently lead its sales force. As a consequence, the sales managers often have the least amount of role-specific training in the entire organisation (Kurzrock, 2008; Kahle, 2005).

In summary, notwithstanding changing markets and the increasingly important role of the sales manager, there is to date an inadequate understanding of factors influencing the performance of sales manager training programmes and their subsequent implementation into the sales managers day-to-day activities, as well as internationally relevant sales research. Researchers such as Singh et al. (2015) and Baldauf and Lee (2011) stress the importance of continued research in sales management training, especially internationally relevant studies conducted outside the United States, emphasising a research gap that needs to be closed in order to advance the field.

1.3 Purpose and Research Question

With regards to the above established research gap, this research sets out to explore and contribute to the field of change management in international business (IB). It will do so by conducting a broad study that has its focal point on the implementation of a global transformational sales manager training programme carried out within the complex environment of a worldwide Swedish MNC. This company's sales network spans across all of the world's non-polar continents and is embedded in a vast majority of the world's countries, hence addressing both the request for sales manager training research and the need for international relevance. The study aims to gain a holistic understanding of the factors that either impede or benefit the implementation of this programme, as well as its success in transforming the sales manager tier within the global sales organisation. The focal phenomenon is examined in a new setting and thus provides novel perspectives and insights

to the development of existing theory. In light of this, the following research question is constructed:

What factors influence the success of a global change programme within the complex environment of a worldwide MNC?

1.4 Delimitation

The research is conducted on a single Swedish MNC and its global sales organisation, and is thus delimited only to that. It does not study the situation of other MNCs, for instance from emerging markets or featuring less complex organisations, nor does it look at other divisions within the chosen MNC. Outside the scope of this study is also the material upon which the change is based and any in-depth analysis of the theories and methods that the programme puts forward. The aim of this research is to explore what factors influence the success of its focal phenomenon, and will not look for, nor address, factors that are of little or no significance to it. Finally, it will familiarise the reader with the research field in order to give an understanding where, in relation to other research, this study is positioned, nevertheless, it is not within its scope to elaborately investigate whether its findings confirm or contradicts the findings of other research.

1.5 Research Outline

This research is performed in six clearly defined steps, five of them outlined below, each step advancing towards the conclusion and the answer to the research question.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will familiarise the reader with the research field and provide an understanding of where, in relation to other research, this study is positioned. It presents the previous research within change management in international business, and elaborates on organisational transformation as well as sales development.

METHODOLOGY

The chapter describes the methodological approach employed within this case study. It presents the specific techniques and processes applied in the preparation, collection, and analysis of the amassed empirical findings.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The chapter presents the empirical results gathered during the data collection. It includes the various interview subjects' own views regarding implementation of the focal transformational programme conducted within the organisation.

ANALYSIS

This chapter discusses the empirical findings from various perspectives and analyses them in order to illuminate common themes and possible links, providing a deeper understanding of the empirical data.

CONCLUSION

The chapter presents a clear answer to the research question and highlights the main findings of this research, as well as discusses managerial implications and suggests topics for future research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter familiarises the reader with the research field and provides an understanding of where, in relation to other research, this study is positioned. It presents the previous research within, or related to, change management in international business, and elaborates on organisational transformation as well as sales development.

To examine what factors influence the success of a global change programme within the complex environment of a worldwide MNC, this research positions itself at the crossroads of two important literature streams, one relating to organisational change and the other to sales development. This is due to the fact that the intended transformation of the sales manager tier to a large extent goes beyond simply learning new skills, and is at its heart a matter of truly transforming the roles and behaviours sales managers within the sales organisation.

2.1 Organisational Transformation

Ever since Kurt Lewin (1947) first developed his now path breaking conceptualisation of organisational change in the 1940s, it has been the foundation for a majority of the change management theories and models (Cummings et al., 2016; Hiatt, 2006; Kotter, 1996; Havelock, 1973; Rogers, 1962; Lippitt et al., 1958). In light of this, the model can be regarded as the backbone of the modern change management activities that can be found inside most organisations today. According to Lewin's (1947) three stage-model, commonly referred to as the Unfreeze-moving-refreeze model, the first stage in successful change processes centers around the importance of getting ready for change by building awareness around the necessity of the intended change. The more people feel the necessity of the change, the more urgent they will feel it is, and the more motivated they be. First when people have been 'unfrozen' from their current state and become prepared for the change the difficult process of making the actual transition to the new way of being can start. Lewin (1947) argue that with the complexities of change processes it is not possible to predict the outcome of planned changes, however, change emerge out of trial and error. As such, in order to transitioning successfully to the new stage of being it is essential to create the right environment for allowing it to happen. Lewin (1947) further recognised that change without reinforcement is likely to be short-lived as people tend to otherwise regress back into old behaviours. The third and final phase in this three-stage model, involve stabilising people's

behaviour in the new quasi-stationary equilibrium. It stressed the importance of group change as essential in successful transformation since in the absence of changes in group norms and routines individual behavioural changes is likely to be short-lived.

Despite the three-stage model being the foundation in many of the proposed models that researchers and management consultants have put forward in order to understand and manage change more successfully since then, Lewin never wrote that the idea behind the model was to be an instrument in managing change, it was simply a conceptual model based on observed factors antecedent to successful change in (Cummings et al., 2016). A few years later after Lewin's model was first published, Everett Rogers (1962) came out with his highly popularised theory originally created to explain how new ideas and technology spread, however, it has become a widely adopted model for managing change in organisations since then. The adoption model expands on Lewin's basic premises of awareness (unfreezing), trial (moving), and adoption (refreezing) adding two additional stages focusing in his model on the interest for innovation and the evaluation of it (Roger, 1962). The first additional stage revolves around people gaining an interest for the innovation after they have initially becoming aware of it and in the second subsequent stage people consider the value of the innovation before deciding whether to apply it or not (Rogers, 1962). Applied to the change management context the stages underlines the importance of communication, not only build awareness but also interest for the change and its advantages, so as to increase the likelihood of achieving successful change. It was however, Schein and Bennis (1965) that were the first ones to replace 'moving' with 'changing', in Lewin's original model, thus moving the model away from being merely an observation of the phenomenon of change, towards being an instrument to be used by change agents. In the subsequent decades, new research has continued to generate new models and frameworks on how to successfully manage change (Golden, 2006; Becker et al., 2001; Higgs & Rowland, 2000; Kotter, 1995; Waterman et al., 1980), one of the most recognised and utilised being Kotter's (1995) 8-step model. The model, which is an expansion on the original model developed by Lewin, focus firstly on creating a climate for change, secondly, engage and enable the organisation so that make sure that the intended change takes place and, finally, on continuous improvement and making sure to anchor the changes and make them stick. Like Lewin, Kotter argue that before change can take its first steps, the organisation first need to create a sense of urgency with regard to the change. If the people intended to change do not see the need for it and the importance of speed it is likely that change will not even leave the starting blocks. Also without

management buy-in, change will have a tough time gaining ground. Hence, in order to build the right climate, it is important getting management commitment and forming a power coalition that can lead the change so as to not only maintain the sense of urgency, but also creating a vision for the change by bringing forth the values that are central to the change. When the organisation has established the right environment in which change can take those first initial steps the importance lies in engaging and enabling the organisation so that the intended change can go the entire distance, reaching the destination of successful transformation. According to Kotter (1995), this is done by continuously communicating the vision of the change to all stakeholders and by focusing on the power coalition as role models for the expected behaviour, so as to engages and assists the employees in their own transformation. However, since the pathway to successful change if often littered with obstacles, it is key to ensure the removal of obstacles that lie in the way. In addition to this, the organisation should also according to Kotter make sure to not only align systems with the intended change effort but also recognising and reward improvements made. These are according to Kotter the building blocks and stages that one needs to pass through and satisfy in order to be able to achieve organisational change. However, he also further argue that in order to make the changes sustainable the organisation must focus on continuous improvement and anchoring the change in order to make it stick (Kotter, 1995)

Since Lewin's first inception of the change management model in 1947, a range of models and frameworks have been developed focusing more on the softer side of the change process i.e. on the individual level (Hiatt, 2006; Bridges, 2003). Two of the more prominent models, the Bridge's Transitional model (Bridges, 2003) and ADKAR model (Hiatt, 2006), expand on the model constructed by Lewin, and emphasise individual change as the predecessor to organisational change. Considering that the core of organisational transformation is changing individual behaviour, the effective management of the individual's emotions and abilities are key. The Bridge model focuses on the physiological effects of change and on emotional barriers to successful change, such as resistance, doubts about the change initiative, and anxiety about their role in relation to the changes as well as the need to manage these in order to succeed with the change efforts (Bridges, 2003). Carlopio (2003) emphasise that resistance to change often can arise due to initiative overload due to continuous large-scale change efforts. Considering the increasing need for continuous change in the modern organisation (Dunphy and Stace, 1988) it can have a significant negative impact on change efforts brought forward by the organisation. Due to the Bridge model being an individual change

management model it can, however, not be used independently but need to be applied in combination with other independent change management models. The ADKAR model, which is based on the research of over 300 companies undergoing significant change initiatives, builds on the same framework as Bridges but emphasise more on enabling the change by first building awareness, desire, and knowledge for the change, and then subsequently engage the people through actions such as training and then reinforcement of those learning and behaviours so as to achieve sustainable change (Hiatt, 2006).

There is an array of models and frameworks that have emerged since Lewin' (1947) original groundbreaking theory was published. A common characteristic amongst a majority of models and frameworks is the emphasis on the appropriate commitment, leadership, and engagement, as well as management of and communication with stakeholders, as vital parts in the successful and efficient change management. The field has developed from simple characteristics associated with successful change, through proactively trying to use these characteristics to create successful change, to digging deeper into the core of change management, namely the individual. The following subchapters will look closer on the field of change management today, further familiarising the reader with relevant research and concepts.

2.1.1 Management Commitment and Accommodation to Change

When organisations rollout change programmes, a strong commitment and support from senior and upper management makes up a vital cornerstone with regard to change efforts as they sit on extensive authorial power, broad amount of resources and a wide internal and external network (Jacobsen, 2013; Kotter, 1995). As such, without the strong commitment by management, the desired change will have a much tougher time taking root and staying alive. Given management's central role in the organisation, they are in a good position to display towards their employees that their commitment to the change goes beyond verbal engagement by themselves making the difficult undertaking of changing. Through changing and adopting the new behaviour, management signals that the change is worthwhile (Jacobsen, 2013). In addition, it allows managers in the management sub-tier structure to imitate and replicate their manager's role-model behaviour (Jacobsen, 2013; Shamir et al., 1993). Even though low perceived commitment might not lead to a rejection of the changes, it will at least cause the implementation and subsequent transformation to be noticeably slowed down. As such, senior management is a critical link in the change chain. Gaining their commitment is thus

paramount to actualising a successful implementation of planned changes in relation to large-scale change programmes (Goksoy, 2016; Jacobsen, 2013). Härtel and Fujimoto (2014) focused on the middle managers as a significant link with regard to any change effort brought by the organisation. They argue that the middle managers can be conduits of change by utilising their experience and that they should not be disregarded as a nonconsequential layer of the organisation with regard to change efforts aimed at the organisation (Härtel & Fujimoto, 2014). Other research has concentrated their efforts on first-level managers' role in change efforts and stress the importance of engaging the them in order to achieve changes inside the organisation and the workforce (Creasey et al., 2016; Ulaga & Loveland, 2014).

Change management models have continuously stressed the importance of creating the conditions for change as a key stage to be able to implement changes successfully (Cummings et al., 2015; Becker et al., 2001; Kotter; 1995; Waterman et al., 1980; Rogers, 1962; Lewis, 1947). As research has shown, changes in human behaviour does not take place in a vacuum but are in fact influenced and constrained by the organisation's own structure, processes, procedures, and systems (Gill, 2002; Whittington et al., 1999). In their research on change programmes in Europe, Whittington et al. (1999) find that the organisations that have been the most successful in their transformation efforts are those that have made changes in strategies, governance structure, and roles, so as to accommodate for the intended changes. Policies and procedures that remain unchanged can thus become inconsistent with the overall change ambitions (Hodges & Gill, 2015; Gill, 2002). For example, one common inconsistency occurs when the alignment of performance criteria with the intended changes is neglected. The failure to align assessment and compensation policies with the desired new behaviour may create a lack of incentive to realise the intended behavioural changes, or even disincentive it (Uhl & Gollenia, 2016). Furthermore, there is a need for sufficient resources and time to be allocated to the change effort (Kotter, 1995). As such, the pitfall to the successful implementation of change programmes is often a failure in organisational alignment. There is thus a significant need for organisational adjustment so as to accommodate for the new changes intended by organisation if they are to be successful (Gill, 2002; Whittington et al., 1999). Gill (2002) also point out that implementation of the intended changes often do not materialise due to poor planning and scarcity of resources. Furthermore, a lack of control and an absence of sufficient monitoring of progress, which would allow corrective measures to be taken, is also a major reason why change efforts fail to materialise (Hodges & Gill, 2015; Gill, 2002).

2.1.2 Communication and Networking

Change management rests heavily on the pillar activity of communication. Researchers such as Barrett (2002), Elving (2005), and Johansson and Heide (2008) have all found close links between the success or failure of change management initiatives and internal communication. Clear and satisfactory communication decreases the level of uncertainty that always comes with changes by instilling trust in the change processes, reducing the resistance to change, and also increases commitment and participation amongst stakeholders impacted by the change. In light of this, good communication is thus also linked to increased motivation for change (Allen et al., 2007). Furthermore, through clear internal communication channels management is able to more clearly hear the attitudes, feelings, and issues from organisational stakeholders (Johansson & Heide, 2008).

Networking is similar to communication, yet distinctly different in nature. As change initiatives involve learning new behaviours and skills, it involves significant efforts from the individual and the organisation to achieve the intended changes, and that is increasingly true the more complex the new behaviours are. Beyond managerial support, knowledge sharing can be a significant facilitator in reaching the change objective. Knowledge sharing inside the organisation not only allows individuals expected to change to share best practices, but its benefits also lies in its ability to change and develop the receivers' concepts and beliefs, which could generate new behaviours and novel ideas (Fleming et al., 2007). As such, it can provide a helping hand for the people being asked to change, paving the way to efficient and quick transition. In light of this, multinational corporations have been widely recognised for their ability to develop knowledge in one part of the global organisation and transfer as well as utilise that knowledge in other parts of the global organisation. It is a significant competitive advantage, dependent on the organisation's capacity to expedite and control the flow of knowledge among inter-subsidiary units (Tran et al., 2010). While there are significant benefits of utilising the knowledge resources within an organisation though transferring them inside the organisational network, these flows are not always easy to achieve. According to Minbaeve et al. (2014), however, both training and creating internal communication channels foster inter-subsidiary knowledge sharing by both contributing to the employees' ability as well as motivation to share. Gupta and Govindarajan (2000) has also found that the richest in transmission channels have a positive effect on the knowledge inflows into a subsidiary. As such, there are several ways an organisation can facilitate and

promote extended inter-organisational communication, nurturing and capitalising on internal knowledge. Nevertheless, there is often a low participation amongst employees when it comes to knowledge sharing behaviour since it is often seen as something that is not as productive as other things (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005). According to Cabrera and Cabrera (2005), however, training is a mitigating factor of this phenomenon as it increases the relational capital which encourages people to foster knowledge-sharing behaviour as it allows participants to develop trustful relationships between one another in an atmosphere they perceive as safe and secure. The training thus becomes a base on which participants can build relations and widen their networks beyond the training context. Minbaeve et al. (2014) has found that also other forms of human resource management practices such as performance appraisal and performance-based compensation increases the motivation and ability of individuals to contribute to intra-organisational knowledge sharing.

2.1.3 Organisational Transformation In Summary

A large amount of change management research have been conducted since Lewis (1947) first published his work on change now 70 years ago, and many extensions and advancements have been made with regards to understanding the basic variables that are key in facilitating change in an organisational setting. It is now well-established that commitment, leadership engagement, and communication all play crucial roles in achieving successful change (Hodges & Gill, 2015; Johansson & Heide, 2008; Gill, 2002; Becker et al., 2001; Waterman et al., 1980). Nevertheless, despite the progression in the field of change management and the increased importance of successful organisational change in today's business environment, research have showed that a vast majority of large-scale change initiatives fail to realise their intended benefits (Higgs & Rowland, 2000). This means that large amounts of financial resources are invested into change initiatives which fail to recoup the invested resources. Adding insult to injury, Carlopio (2003) highlights that unrealised change efforts can have significant negative impacts on future change efforts as employees run the risk of getting exhausted from continuous large-scale efforts.

Statistician George Box perfectly captured the essence of change management and the application of models to effectuate intended change when he famously proclaimed that "Essentially, all models are wrong, but some are useful" (Box & Draper, 1987). Models are merely simplified guidelines to the complex task of managing change. They are developed to address the issue within "generic organisations" and hence tend to understate the difficulty of

the endeavour that arises due to a large amount of interdependent variables and processes affecting change, such as related to the necessity of managing scarce resources, external environment, risks, and employee emotions (Golden, 2006). As such, considering the complexity of organisations operating on a global scale and of human behaviour, there will always be a need for the generation of new insights and models to address the need for change in organisations. In the past decades, change has all the more become the law of life and adaptation a necessity in order to maintain competitive advantages and, ultimately, survive in this new reality. As Dunphy and Stace (1988) note, the era of relatively stable business environments and incremental changes is long gone and constant change is the new normal. In light of this, there has been an increasing need for organisations to be able to transition their organisations from one current state to a future desired state, in order to continuously adjust to emerging market changes.

2.2 Sales Development and Transformation

All over the world, conventional sales organisations are under increasing pressure as the external business environment is rapidly changing and sales approaches that have worked in the past are now seen as ineffective relics of a time now gone (Lane & Piercy, 2009). This while sales organisations are also under rising internal pressure from management to increase their productivity (Ingram et al., 2015). According to Lane and Piercy (2009), the challenge facing managers within the organisation is how to transform and re-position the sales division to constitute a core of the organisation's competitiveness. As business becomes more global, the organisational development and transformation plays an increasingly more central role in the long-term success and survival of organisations. Considering that human resources and organisational knowledge are recognised to be the core in achieving and sustaining competitive advantages relative to competing market forces, sales development and transformation has found itself at top of the agenda of organisations (Narasimha, 2000). In light of this, organisations are pouring millions of dollars into the development of the competencies of their sales representatives (Cuevas et al., 2016). Considering the sales manager role as the nexus between the organisation's senior management and the sales force, the success of the sales organisation rests on the sales manager's ability to develop the sales representatives. However, despite increasing sales training investments, many organisations still have no formal development programmes aimed at developing the skills necessary for their sales managers to shoulder the role of developing their teams (Gordon et al., 2012).

According to Kurzrock (2008), sales managers are often not trained and thus ill equipped to manage and lead their team due to the flawed assumption that it is a job that is largely intuitive and something one learns by doing. Instead, sales managers tend to be reactionary and busy and thus often not able to see the whole picture. A sufficient overview is an essential part in developing the sales team. Furthermore, due to the fact that the pressure for growing sales productivity is likely to increase in the future (Ingram et al., 2015) and that the business environment is increasingly becoming more turbulent and dynamic (Lane & Piercy, 2009), the role of the sales manager and the need for greater understanding of change management in the global sales organisation is ever as pressing.

Something which makes transformation of the sales organisation and its sales force particularly difficult is that sales representatives are today increasingly autonomous, 90 percent of their time is usually spent out of sight of their sales manager, and they are experiencing a greater geographical remoteness than ever before (Lassk et al., 2012; Kurzrock, 2008). This creates an out of sight-out of mind environment in which changes becomes more difficult to implement and also monitor. Furthermore, as described above, sales organisations are under a particularly high internal and external pressure. According to Senge (1990), people and organisations under pressure are often fueled by a motivation and drive for change as long as the situation is critical enough to necessitate the change. As such, as soon as the underlying issues propelling the change becomes less of an urgent problem, the change tend to lose its momentum. The difficulty is thus sustaining change as the perceived urgency of it might fade in relation to other issues facing the people and the organisation (Senge, 1990). Those factors together with the increasing external and internal pressures themselves make change inside the sales organisation an especially complex endeavour. Nevertheless, due to the pressures mentioned, it is at becoming increasingly important for management and human resource departments to invest in sales development. As such, it is paramount to provide compelling justification for investment into training and development of people inside the sales organisation, especially in economically difficult times when it is often one of the first things rolled back.

2.3 Global Transformational Programmes

According to Sarin et al. (2010) general sales training programmes differ between one another due to a number of key elements constituting an underlying nature of the

programmes, such as the level of standardisation, top-down or bottom-up approach, and deliverer of programme. Put differently, it is relevant how adapted the programme is with regard to all sales representatives's contexts, who the decision-maker is with regard to the content, and if the programme is delivered by in-house or outside experts (Sarin et al., 2010). According to Chaudron (1996) one of the problems that can trap the change is what has been referred to as the 'not-invented-here disease'. That means that the people subject to change may perceive, correctly or incorrectly, that the proposed ideas and methods does not fit with their particular context. The phenomenon can, for instance, arise when buying standardised one-size-fits-all programmes 'off the shelf' that are not modified and adapted to fit the organisation or parts of the organisation that it is intended to be applied to, or when large change programmes are rolled out in organisations with a multitude of idiosyncratic context where such perceptions easily take root (Chaudron, 1996). According to Keupers (2011) change strategies often overlooking the differences amongst individual organisations, presuming that organisational transformation is a uniform process to be implemented. As such, the foundation of successful sales development programmes lies in the right and accurate analysis of the underlying training needs, in the development of a suitable training plan and subsequent post-training implementation, and evaluation of the results with concern to the intended changes (Aragón-Sanchez et al., 2003). In light of the fact that a majority of the intended benefits of training programmes never materialises (Saks & Belcourt, 2006), there is a need to familiarise oneself with all relevant aspects in the rollout of a programme in order to increase the likelihood for reaping the returns on the investment spent into the training in the form of accrued benefits in relation to sales representatives increased performance and efficiency.

Multinational corporations show a growing interest in expanding their sales representatives development investments across national border, so as to improve their efficiency and general performance, allowing them and the organisation to compete better on the market (Hall, 2005). In light of this, there is also an increased importance to understand and account for differences in national and cultural contexts which might influence the transferability and effectiveness of the methods and ideas aimed to develop the sales force (Attia et al., 2008). According to Attia et al. (2008) organisations must be careful when modifying and transferring training content and methods to organisational units located abroad. Furthermore, Geber (1989) advised that multinational organisations to make use of local employees when transferring the training programme abroad so as to be able to detect disparities and error that

might hinder a successful transferring into the local setting. These considerations comes in the backdrop of the fact that all sales managers are borned and raised as well as operate in environments and contexts that impact both one's perception and behaviour (Bond & Smith, 1996).

Furthermore, post-programme evaluation of implementation is critical for assessing if the intended benefits were actualised. For instance, decision-makers commonly make the incorrect assumptions that sales representatives will instantly after the training replicate the newly learned behaviours or skills, while research in fact indicates that sales representatives many times will abandon and disregard new learnings due to, amongst other things, lack of motivation (Saks & Belcourt, 2006; Noe & Schmitt, 1986). As such, to be able to implement change successfully, a post-programme evaluation of the extent to which such obstacles has hindered the implementation must be conducted. Such evaluation is not only key in assessing the change but also in the diagnostication of any challenges that might be impeding the successful implementation, so as to be able to effectively remove those obstacles.

2.4 The Literature Review in Summary

In order to explore and understand what factors influence the success of a global transformational sales programme in a complex multinational environment, the researchers as well as the readers need to be familiarised with previous literature on the subject. This literature review, as described in greater detail under *3.1 Research Approach*, was created iteratively where an initial foundation was expanded and reshaped throughout the research process as new patterns and information prompted different understandings from the chapter. The purpose of this approach is to create an understanding of the basic concepts and contexts relevant to the research, as well as where it is positioned vis-á-vis other research in the field.

The literature review started in the 1940's, introducing the reader to the historical background of change management by describing how change management had gone from merely observing factors associated with successful change, through proactively trying to create models that would guide the change management using the previously observed factors, to investigating the individual as the very core of change management.

The chapter continued by highlighted the importance of management commitment and accommodating for change in order to establish an understanding of what the role of management was in transformation efforts, as well as of what and how organisational factors affect change management. It underlines pitfalls as well as elaborate on the importance of inter-organisational communication and networking as much of change management revolves around the diffusion of knowledge.

The subsequential subchapter looked deeper into transformation in the form of sales development. It provided a depiction of various characteristics of the phenomenon, such as the pressure caused by internal and external factors, the relative inefficiency of many training programmes within it, the role of managers specifically within this area, and the relative difficulty of transforming it. Finally, this chapter provided a subchapter that familiarises the reader with factors affecting large-scale transformational programmes. It highlights various aspects relating to the planning, performance, composition, and aftermath of such programmes, as well as aspects relating to their international nature. With regards to the subject and the unit of research, these subchapters establishes a further understanding of the study.

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the method and structure used to collect empirical data, as well as the analytical techniques applied and measures taken to ensure reliability and validity of findings made.

3.1 Research Approach

The focus of this study is the implementation of a global transformational sales programme, with the purpose to gain a greater understanding of the phenomenon itself as well as specific facilitators and challenges faced, and the role they play in sales organisation's journey towards transformational change. As previously mentioned, despite advancement in the area of change management during the last couple of decades research still demonstrates that many of the intended benefits of change programmes often fail to materialise (Higgs & Rowland, 2000). A part of it lies in that the transfer of learnings from the training contexts into the day-to-day work is often very poor (Saks and Belcourt, 2006). However, the models and frameworks for change are also often developed for 'generic organisation' and thus often fall short when it comes to consider the interdependent variables and processes of specific industries and organisations (Golden, 2006) while managing change within a global sales organisation could be argued to be far from generic. With regards to the relatively scarce research available within its research area, this thesis sets out to gain a deeper understanding through an exploratory approach. In order to achieve this, a qualitative research method has been adopted allowing a deep and wide investigation of the topic chosen. The method enables the research to capture a richness in information which lays the foundation for a more intricate analysis leading to stronger theoretical and practical contributions regarding global organisational transformation. A qualitative research method is advantageous in research seeking to understand the meaning and beliefs of an underlying action or inaction in depth, i.e. address questions regarding 'how' and 'why', ultimately aiming towards understanding core factor interconnectedness and build theory (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Marschan-Piekkari & Welch, 2005). The implementation of a transformational programme in a global setting is a complex issue involving a large number of factors and individuals as key to its success, and qualitative research methods are better suited to deal with this complexity as they allow the researchers to identify and describe significant but potentially subtle details of the issue (Marschan-Piekkari & Welch, 2005). It is efficient in capturing the intricate details and layers

of otherwise elusive complex processes, and benefits research in a setting where the effect of contextual factors are unknown or difficult to estimate (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Yin, 2014). Implementing an elaborative training programme containing both new theoretical components as well as new ways of doing things, in a multinational and multicultural environment, is subject to a wide variety of contextual factors difficult to assess. Before its sortie, this thesis will add new empirical insights to existing academia, resulting in enrichment and development of existing theory, an achievement also best attained through a qualitative study (Vissak, 2010). However, qualitative research comes with its drawbacks. The relatively limited number of observations means that the outcome of this study has a limited generalisability, i.e. conclusions drawn and findings made may only speak for the particular case investigated (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Finally, this research applies an abductive reasoning approach, i.e. both an inductive and a deductive approach where the theoretical chapter was created prior to data collection in order to gain an understanding of the basic concepts and contexts relevant to the area of interest, but was revisited and revised throughout the data collection as new patterns and information prompted different content and understandings from the chapter. This reasoning allows the researchers to critically reflect upon the collected data and remain unbiased, as well as ensure validity of the thesis (Ghauri, 2004).

3.2 Research Design

The research design provides a general framework for the data collection and analysis tools adopted in this study, supporting its strive to answer the research question. The importance of the design stems from the fact that it constitutes the very foundation on which the study's reliability and validity rests upon, which in its turn is the measurement of the study's accuracy and quality (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.2.1 Unit of Research

The empirical data was gathered from SKF's global sales organisation. SKF is one of the world's leading bearings and seals manufacturers with its headquarter in Gothenburg, Sweden, and through its 45 000 employees, it has a presence in over 130 countries across the globe (SKF, 2017a; SKF, 2017b). Conducting the study within one company allows for better comparability of the data by taking factors related to different change programmes and company-specific effects out of the equation. The decision to go with SKF as the focal

company of this study is based on several factors. One of the most decisive factors was the fact that SKF operates within a business-to-business market which has seen significant changes during the last decade as the access to information and tougher competition has tilted the power relationship between buyers and sellers towards the buyer, and there is an increased need for selling organisations to adapt to these changes. This means that there is an urgency and importance in succeeding, characteristics this research subsequently inherits. Another decisive factor was that roughly one year prior to this study, SKF set up a training institution and sales development unit called 'the Sales Academy' and with that, also rolled out a global transformational sales programme aimed at developing its global sales organisation so as to make it better equipped to sell in the changing market described above. This means that this research can study change management in international business as it happens. Furthermore, it was an important aspect that SKF has a global presence through its wide sales network, spanning across six continents and 130 countries. This adds to the complexities of transformational change as sales units are organised in a multitude of idiosyncratic ways and are also embedded in widely different contexts with distinct characteristics coloured by economical, cultural and national factors. This complexity is arguably at the heart of international business research, and something that many organisations struggle with as well as something often challenging to capture in qualitative research. Finally, SKF operates as a seller towards several different market segments. Aside from the general industry segment, SKF is also operating towards the automotive industry, the aerospace industry, and it has specific sales units for bearings lubrication and seals. Each industry features its own characteristics in terms of, for instance, unit sizes, purchase processes, and customer relationships. These market segments in conjunction with the organisational idiosyncrasies and the contextual embeddedness composes an extensive matrix of environmental complexity. Taking these factors into consideration, studying the implementation of a global transformational sales programme within the SKF sales organisation is important and urgent research at the heart of international business.

3.2.2 Data Collection Method

With regards to the aim of this research, to study the implementation of a transformational change programme across a company's global sales manager tier, and the exploring of questions pertaining to 'how' and 'why' necessitated by that endeavour, the adopted data collection method chosen is interviewing. While this approach tend to limit the number of respondents, constituting its main weakness, it is able to a greater extent capture people's
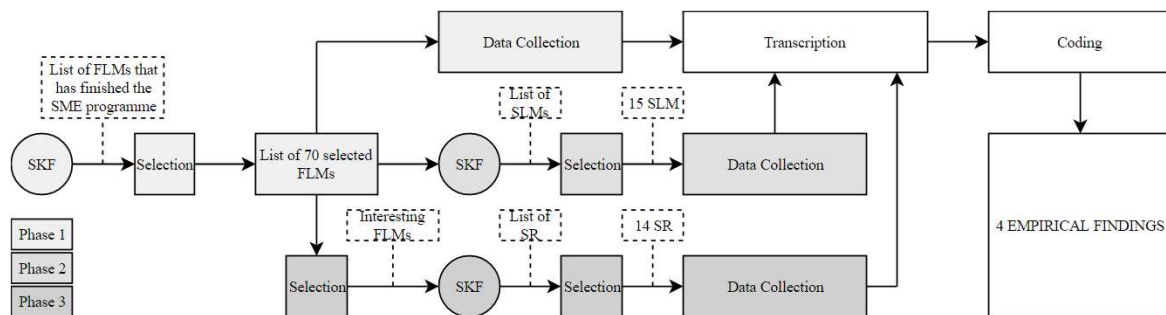
feelings, experiences, and inner-thoughts regarding the phenomenon studied, as well as explore the study participants' own views in order to add new findings and gain a deeper understanding of the subject. Put differently, it allows investigating reality through the interpretative prerogative of the study's participants (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Wilson, 2013). This thesis furthermore utilises a semi-structured interview process since it is more flexible, compared to a fully structured process, in that it allows for adjustments from the interviewer in response to the interviewee. For instance, semi-structured interviews allows for straying away from the pre-constructed interview schedule, revise the order of the questions, or add new questions that may originate from a respondent's answers. The respondent is allowed a great deal of flexibility in how to reply. This means that the data collection process is able capture important nuances and other richness in details regarding the respondents' views, otherwise easily missed by more rigid types of interviews. Less rigid types of interviews, however, are deemed too similar to a conversation in character and as such, too loosely structured to efficiently address the research topic. Even though semi-structured interviews are considered the most suitable method for the exploration of the subject, there are notable drawbacks of the method that have to be considered as it relates to the study's validity and reliability. The inherent risks associated with this interview approach is that the interview subject might have an incomplete or erroneous memory regarding a certain phenomenon, or that they are biased in their interpretation of it. This might lead to misinterpretations, exaggerations, or understatements of the specific situation under the loupe. Furthermore, there is a risk of errors that arise due to bias, miscommunication or misinterpretation from the interviewer's side. Although follow-up questions can be seen as a step away from standardisation, i.e. comparability, they are useful in mitigating and limit the negative influences and disturbances these potential drawbacks might have on the data and thus also results. As such, they are employed in this thesis to confine the risk just outlined. To further limit the potential risks and negative influences discussed above, careful consideration have been made so as to make sure that several questions explores the same phenomenon. The questions are also structured in such a way so as to lead the the interview subject within the topic examined (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The interviews are conducted via telephone which allows for a more efficient and practical data collection considering the large number of respondents dispersed over the entire global sales organisation (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Telephone interviewing is a method that generally have been depicted as a less appealing alternative to face-to-face interviewing. Some of the main shortcoming brought up of the telephone as the medium for data collection is that nonverbal and contextual data is left out of

realm of data collection. According to Novick (2008), however, telephones is more than a convenient medium of data collection, it also allows the interview subject to feel relaxed and more prone to disclose sensitive information, and the assumption that it would generate lower quality data is an unsupported misconception. It also stands to reason that a significantly larger number of respondents in an otherwise impossible richness in locations around the world has a decisively positive effect on the impact of this study on the research field of international business, especially considering the relatively lengthy interviews, safeguarding the quality of the collected data.

The empirical data is collected through 101 telephone interviews with respondents based in 34 countries, spread out across 6 continents. It is composed by interviews from 2 top managers involved in the rollout of the Sales Manager Excellence programme, 70 first-level sales managers, 15 second-level sales managers, and 14 sales representatives, all within SKF's global sales organisation. Most of them are located in the regional sales organisations targeting customers within the general industry segment, however, there are also some working towards customers in the automotive and aerospace industry as well as those selling speciality products such as lubrication and seals. In most parts of the research these respondents working towards customers outside the general industry will be referred to as working in Industry Specific industries so as to better ensure their anonymity. An overview of the interview subjects can be found in at the end of this subchapter as well as in Appendix 1.

The data collection was conducted in three phases (see Figure 1), where the first-level sales managers were interviewed first, the interviews with second-level managers were initiated second, and the interviews with sales representatives were initiated in the third and final phase.

Figure 1: The Data Collection Process

For the first phase, one of the two contacts at SKF compiled a list of first-level sales managers that had completed the Sales Manager Excellence programme. In order to get a holistic and comprehensive picture of the implementation, 70 first-level managers were then chosen from the list based on their country of operation and target industry in a manner that ensured a rich geographical and contextual coverage, while not spreading the sample too thin. Too few respondents in any context would expose the study to sources of error and potentially limit the accuracy in depicting that context. The emphasis on this category of respondents is due to the fact that they are the ones closest to the area in which the change programme is intended to have a transformational effect. The selected first-level managers are based throughout 34 different countries across Europe, Asia, Oceania, South- and North America, and Africa (see Figure 2 and Appendix 1). These first-level managers are each responsible for sales representatives in up to six countries, but more commonly in one or a few countries. In the second phase, the contact at SKF compiled a list of second-level managers based on the interviewed first-level managers from the first phase, out of which 15 were selected. The criteria for this selection was that the second-level manager either had an interviewed first-level manager directly reporting to it, or that they were responsible for a unit in which at least one first-level manager was active. This selection allowed a more complete and nuanced picture of the statements made by the subordinate first-level managers and the transformation they described. The selected second-level managers are based in 14 countries across Europe, Asia, Oceania, South- and North America, and Africa, normally leading first-level managers or units in one or two countries but in one extreme case (Africa) as many as 50 countries. In the third and final phase of the interview process, which ran partly overlapping the second, a number of first-level managers which had described interesting accounts were sent to the contact person at SKF which subsequently compiled a list of 14 sales representatives based on that selection.

Figure 2: Interview Subjects' Locations

North America	Denmark (1)	Romania (2)	Asia	Oceania
Canada (3)	England (2)	Slovenia (3)	India (6)	Australia (2)
Mexico (1)	Finland (2)	Spain (4)	Indonesia (3)	
USA (13)	France (4)	Sweden (2)	Japan (2)	
	Italy (4)	Ukraine (3)	Malaysia (1)	
South America	Germany (9)		Philippines (1)	
Brasil (1)	Greece (3)	Africa	Russia (1)	
Columbia (4)	Hungary (1)	Marocco (2)	South Korea (3)	
	Kazakstan (1)	South Africa (1)	Taiwan (1)	
Europe	Polan (3)	Tunisia (1)	Thailand (3)	
Czech Republic (1)	Portugal (1)	Zambia (1)	Vietnam (3)	

Source: Figure compiled by the authors.

The sales representatives are operating in 8 different countries across Europe, Asia, North America (see Figure 3 and Appendix 1). By interviewing sales representatives it is possible to gain an even more comprehensive picture of the focal phenomenon and further fine-tune the accuracy in the empirical findings made (Yin, 2014). The first-level managers in this study are characterised by having one or more sales representatives under their management, second-level managers by having at least one first-level manager under their management, and sales representatives by mainly having direct sales responsibilities. These characteristics are non-exclusive, meaning that a manager or representative can have other directly reporting employees or tasks than what is described above. The selection of interview subjects is thus made consciously and systematically which is a common approach for qualitative studies since it allows a breadth and richness in information otherwise difficult to obtain. This approach puts the research in a better position to answer the research question (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Figure 3: Respondent Relationship Overview Map
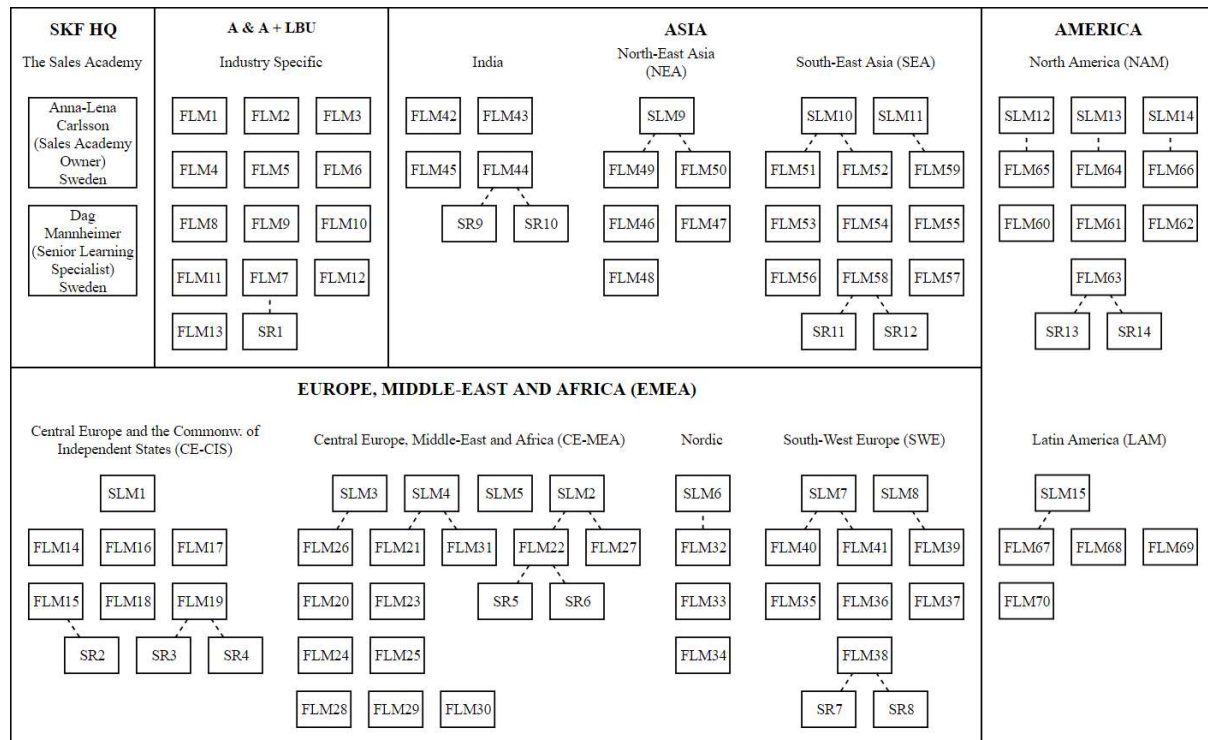
Source: Figure compiled by the authors.

3.2.3 Interview Protocol And Interview Process

Prior to the compilation of the questions that make up the interview guides employed in the exploration of the subject at hand, a conceptual and theoretical review was developed so as to logically linking the questions to a theoretical reference point. This allows for an initial but well-developed understanding of the area of study before questions are formulated, which grants for more sharp and relevant interviewing. The interview guides together with the review established in the literature were then utilised when steering the conversations and the research into the desired area of study in order to establish comparability (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This study investigates the implementation of the change programme in the focal sales organisation through interviewing four groups within the organisation; (i) the sales representatives, (ii) the first-level managers, (iii) the second-level managers, and (iv) two interview subjects from the training institution involved in the creation and roll-out of the focal programme. For each of these groups, an interview guide was tailored (see Appendix 2) to their specific role in order to allow an accurate multi-perspective insight into the focal organisation, illuminating the progress and factors affecting the implementation. The interview guides were constructed in a funnel-like structure where the guide goes from more

general questions to more specific questions. The three interview guides tailored for the first-level managers, the second-level managers, and the sales representatives were all following a similar structure, outlined below:

1. Background questions exploring the setting in which the interview subject is active.

2. General questions where the interview subject can spontaneously provide information which is not directly asked for, go off a tangent, or independently highlight areas of special interest. These questions constitutes a first indication of how far the progression has gone, how much the respondent remember of the programme, and how motivated the respondent is. They are is consciously placed before the specific questions, reminding the respondent and causing specific reflection that might distort the answers, so that the research more accurately can capture what is in their minds and limit pollution caused by the exploration itself. It stands to reason that an interview subject that, for instance, is less motivated to implement and has forgotten most of the programme's content provides very different answers than an enthusiastic respondent who is happy to elaborately list everything they have done.

3. Specific implementation-centered questions that investigates the tools and ideas themselves, measuring things such as progression and understanding, and work to further illuminate what factors affect the implementation of the programme. These questions explores the transformation on a deeper level.

4. Manager-specific questions concerning the subject's motivation and support, creating an understanding of the larger context and how it affects the individual.

The interview guide for the two interview subjects within the Sales Academy follow a similar funnel-like structure but features very different questions. They were constituted in the following way:

1. Background questions pertaining to the role of the person in relation to the programme.

2. General questions concerning the development and background of the programme.

3. Specific questions regarding the rollout, post-training support, communication, and the financing of the programme.

The complete list of the interview questions can be found in Appendix 2.

With only a few exceptions, the questions in the interview guides are open-ended. That allows the interview subject to provide the researchers with new insights and information that they would not otherwise attain. For the same reason, a level of flexibility is maintained during the interviews with regard to the interview guides so as to elevate and elaborate interesting themes brought up by the interview subjects during the interviews.

The interviews took place in three different stages, the first stage where the first-level managers were interviewed took place between the 7th and 30th of March. The second and third stage of the interviews were conducted roughly in parallel and took place between the 3rd and 17th of April and including the second-level managers and the sales representatives respectively. Each interview lasted between 30 and 105 minutes with an average length of 57 minutes, and were in all cases conducted by one interviewer over telephone.

Due to the interview subjects' numerous native languages and limitations in the researchers' language skills, the interviews were held in either English or Swedish. All interviews were held in English, save for interviews with natively Swedish-speaking interview subjects. The choice of language used in conjunction with the respective language proficiency of the interviewer and the interview subject has an impact the dynamics of the interview. Due to the dominance of English as the corporate language in SKF, it was chosen as the primary language for conducting the interviews. Marschan-Piekkari and Reis (2004) found that the fluency of English inside organisations can be related to the organisational level the respondent belongs to and that the lower in the organisational hierarchy an employee is positioned, the lower its level of fluency tends to be. The potential impact of the respondents language skills were considered but did not impact the selection of the interview subjects within the second-level manager and first-level manager tier due to the wide use of English as the corporate language inside the management tier of the organisation. Given the purpose of the research and its scale and scope language considerations were however taken into account

when deciding upon which sales representatives to interview so as to assure that the interview would be able to speak comfortably and easily.

Although a semi-structured interview process is regarded the most apt method for the purpose of this study, it is important to keep in mind that the approach has some shortcomings. The results from utilising a semi-structured approach run the risk of being biased due to poor recall of the interviewer or the interviewers inadequate or incorrect articulation (Yin, 2014) These drawback can however be surmount if managed correctly. To to mitigate these sources of error, the interviews were recorded after permission to do so from the interview subjects had been granted, and then transcribed. There is also the risk of social desirability bias in which the interviewees only responds what they think the interviewer wants to hear. To overcome this issue all questions were formulated and asked in an as open as possible fashion (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Morris, 2015). Another potential source of error is the sensitivity of the topic, and in order to mitigate its effect on the results, the interviewees were assure anonymity before the start of the interviews (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.2.4 Data Analysis Process

All the interviews were transcribed shortly after the interviews had been conducted. The analysis of the data took place in conjunction with the collection of it which strengthened both the collection and analysis of the data as it permits for the development and formulation of theories as the data is still in the process of being collected (Ghauri, 2004). The recordings of the interviews were transcribed in order to be able to perform a thematic and comprehensive analysis of the data (Bryman & Bell, 2015). For the interviews that had been conducted in Swedish they were translated into English and this was done keeping in mind the translator's own knowledge, personal experience and social background so limit those effects being transferred on to the data (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Marschan-Piekkari & Reis, 2004).

The data from the transcribed interviews were recorded in the data analytical tool NVivo for the purpose of codifying and categorising the various findings. This process allows for a more systematic analysis and cross-linking of the collected data to the research question and the literature review (Ghauri, 2004). Each section of the transcribed interviews were categorised which allowed for the uncovering of common or emerging trends or themes in the datasets. The data is as such categorised in accordance with the interview subject's own words, for

example, the category 'novelty' is used for each case the respondent addressed the newness of the transformational programme. To present two distinct examples:

> Not that much different at all, but what I like a lot is the kind of overall framework and systematic approach, and it's like a very good way of combining the best practices that probably exists. And maybe perhaps some things that are a bit different to what we have been doing in practice (FLM32, Nordic).

> Sales Excellence for me in the biggest cultural change I believe we can have, I just hope we will keep on it for a couple of months and not to change too many thing or invest too many new things (SLM8, SWE).

Empirical data would be classified into a specific category if the interviewee addresses a certain topic covered by that category, even without mentioning any specific keyword. For instance, the interview subject does not necessarily need to mention the word 'time' for the section to be categorised as related to time, if the interviewee is addressing or conveying a message that is related to both time and the implementation. The following section was, for instance, codified as 'time' without the word being mentioned:

> To be honest I could do much much more and I would appreciate doing it much much more, but the problem is of course we have a lot of work to do. It's always hot stones on the way and to solve it quickly with the individual customers (FLM5, Industry Specific).

In this quote, the interview subject explains that it would like to do more of what the programme taught them but that due day-to-day business activities it becomes a question of prioritisation. The aspect of time is thus embedded in its account.

All the codified categories were then, as second step in the analytical process, organised into larger and overarching categories. A situation such as the one portrayed by the aforementioned quote, where someone address the aspect of time in relation to the transformational programme, was first categorised into the specific category 'time' and subsequently sub-categorised into the more encompassing theme 'challenges' since the interview subject expressed things that could be tied to challenges regarding the implementation of the transformational programme. In order to understand and present the empirical data in a structured way, it was subsequently categorised into one of three groups according to the level that the phenomenon was mainly active within. These groups or main

categories were labeled 'individual factors', 'organisational factors', and 'regional factors'. These main categories are not mutually exclusive, time-related issues for instance, are related to the individual who makes the prioritisation, to the close organisation which determines the workload and participates in the prioritisation, and to the region which can apply external pressure. After careful consideration, the exemplifying matter was categorised as mainly organisational since that is where, according to the collected data, the main aspects of the issue are found, such as relatively few co-workers sharing the tasks. See Figure 4 under *4 Empirical Findings* for more details.

3.2.5 Quality Assessment

There is a series of ways in which the methodological and general quality of a study can be assessed (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Guba and Lincoln (1994) have proposed alternatives to the measurements often adopted by researchers in the quantitative field that are better equipped to take into account the inherent natural characteristic of a qualitative study, where e.g. internal reliability pose a problem due to the a study not being able to be replicated twice with the same exact results. One of the central concepts of their framework is *trustworthiness* which involves establishing that the findings have credibility and that there is certainty in that the findings convey a true and accurate picture; that the findings have an applicability to other contexts; that they have a high degree of neutrality which means that the findings are not shaped by the researcher's own interests, biases, are motivations; and also that the findings are dependable and can be repeated. One of the focal points of trustworthiness is the level of transferability and the extent to which the findings of a study can be seen as generalisable to other contexts than the one actually studied. The level of transferability of findings are frequently referred to as their *generalisability* (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Yin, 2014; Tsang, 2013). Qualitative studies are often viewed as weak when it comes to generalisability. According to Tsang (2013), however, qualitative case studies can in many regards have a higher level of generalisability than their quantitative counterparts since the qualitative approach is superior in its ability to capture the mechanisms that produces a certain observed pattern.

In this research, several necessary steps have been taken to assure that the findings have a high level of trustworthiness. By giving anonymity to the interview subjects before the interviews, a higher level honesty in the informants answers is ensured than would otherwise be achieved. In addition, interactive questioning is utilised meaning that the interviewer

comes backs to certain questions in a rephrased version so as to uncover poor recall or even deliberate lies from the respondents. Furthermore, in this study, a broad set of people within different markets, regions, and position in the sales organisation are interviewed which allows for triangulation of the generated data (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The study also provides a rich description of the context in which the research is performed so that reader can judge the transferability of the findings to their own situation (Shenton, 2004). Finally, a complete list of interview questions and other material is provided, allowing future researchers to study it, or to reproduce this research using the same material in studies on the same topic in similar or other context than that of this study.

4 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This chapter assembles the primary data collected and aims to present its findings in a fair and complete manner. The chapter begins by providing a background in order to create a setting in which the succeeding description of the Sales Manager Excellence programme takes its point of departure. The subchapters following the programme description will highlight the most prominent themes during the interviews. The final subchapter depicts the current state of the implementation process, allowing a deeper understanding of the changes effectuated by the SKF change management.

As delineated in the subchapter *3.2.4 Data Analysis Process*, the categorisation of the empirical data originated from the respondents own words and accounts in addition to the authors' own categories with regards to what was expressed by the respondents. These categories were subsequently congregated into overarching themes based on the nature of the factor, the example given in the methodology chapter was how time-related issues would first be categorised as 'time', then 'time' would be categorised as 'challenges'. The data was subsequently categorised into one of three groups according to the level that the phenomenon was mainly active within. These groups or main categories were labeled 'individual factors', 'organisational factors', and 'regional factors'. See Figure 4 below for more details.

Figure 4: Thematic Findings at SKF

Source: Figure composed by the authors.

These main categories are not mutually exclusive, a phenomenon can interact across various levels. After careful consideration, the exemplifying matter was categorised as mainly organisational since that is where, according to the collected data, the main aspects of the issue are found, such as relatively few co-workers sharing the tasks.

The chapter will begin by presenting a background that creates a point of departure both for the events that takes place in the subsequent chapters as well as for the change programme itself. Put differently, it constitutes the 'before' picture in a before-and-after relationship with the *4.11 Transformation in Progress* chapter. After establishing the background, the chapter describes the change programme in *4.2 The Sales Manager Excellence Programme* and the training institution in *4.3 The Sales Academy*, after which the subchapters systematically follow the logic of the overreaching categorisation described above.

4.1 Background

Looking a few years back, the SKF sales organisation was decentralised and lacked an overarching coordination mechanism. According to Mannheimer (2017), other parts of SKF had their own ultimately responsible manager, and that manager would be surrounded by a team of experts who could give them advice about necessary changes and provide input regarding what training programmes were necessary. But the sales organisation did not have a single manager with an overall responsibility, instead it had many managers, each responsible for their own region or product segment.

> It has been pretty clear that if you go to another area, so… within finance, they obviously have their CFO, that has the top responsibility and who has experts who can say 'we need to train this', but in sales, the sales organisation has not had a top owner, but there has been one sales manager here, one sales manager there, one sales manager in automotive, one in service, and industrial, et cetera, and one in this and that country… so there has not been anyone main responsible. So it has been difficult to come to decisions (Mannheimer, 2017).

Without a coordinating force, joint decision-making was a slow process and there were no sense of direction where the sales organisation was going. Subsequently, it was up to each region or segment to identify what changes were necessary and what, if any, training programme was appropriate for their sales unit. Sales managers with more resources available would sometimes run training programmes, but they would most often have a relatively

narrow focus on only one or a few sales methods. According to Mannheimer (2017), the sales organisation did not have an overall institution responsible for training and development since many considered their context too idiosyncratic. This meant that the sales organisation did not go through many global training programmes, and certainly not ones aimed towards the sales managers. The sales organisation was partly suffering from a lack of training and coordination, and adding insult to injury, a common way to recruit sales managers was to promote the best seller in the sales team as a way to show recognition and provide a career path within SKF (Carlsson, 2017). As a result, the sales managers would be highly skilled sellers, but often lack both the competence and interest to be good leaders. Often they would keep their accounts after being recruited as managers, leaving little time for leading their team.

In the past, the sales managers' role within the sales organisation was, in practice, somewhat different than it is today. They would less often recognise leadership and role-modeling as their role, not the least because this was in line what their sales representatives and managers expected from them. While the sales managers would send directly reporting sub-managers and sales representatives on courses, they often lacked the proper tools to personally participate in the development of their employees. The following quotes illustrate the situation   further:

> [...] people are quite used [...] to having instructions and follow the instructions, okay, so this is how the work culture has been throughout the organisation (FLM44, India).

> Sometimes some of our leadership gets frustrated [...] in the way that they say 'no-no-no, do this, do it this way' again (FLM63, North America).

Communication between the sales representatives, the first-level managers, and the second-level managers revolved mainly around such things as sales figures, customer issues, and general instructions.

> They are used to 'okay what should I do now?' and we, in the role of manager, used to say 'let's do it like this then'. What I also now know through all of this seminar, or excellence seminar, is that I also know that I can now step back and ask about their proposal, 'what would you do'. So this is really a paradigm shift.

And to be honest, this is huge. I don't know if this was the focus of the people that established this seminar but this is really huge, yeah (FLM17, CE-CIS).

The sales representatives did not feel ownership of issues that arose, which meant that they would often come to the manager even with issues that they could have solved themselves. While the managers had more influence in terms of instructions, the limited communication between the managers and their sales representatives lead to an 'information monopoly' where the sales representatives did not share rich information about their respective market and customer accounts.

Well um… you know, I'd say one of the things that I find helpful is to more or less force myself to be more of a listener, as opposed to jumping to a conclusion or umm… you know immediately communicating what I feel the issue is. So again being more of a listener, getting more of an understanding as to what the employee is struggling with or dealing with… I think has been helpful in terms of my own management activities (FLM2, Industry Specific).

I need to force myself to continue with coaching that they come to the solution by themselves so they, you know, learn how to find the solution by themselves not just asking me to manage (FLM7, Industry Specific).

The sales representatives had a less structured customer approach. They would often do a basic preparation, and in the customer meeting they would often let the customer lead the meeting or take a large share of the meeting trying to convince the customer that their solution was right for them. There was a low amount of adaption, and the solutions presented would be relatively standardised. When choosing what customer to visit, many sales representatives would rather visit customers with whom they had good relations than customers who showed the best potential.

In January 2015, Alrik Danielson was appointed CEO of SKF (SKF, 2014), and a re-organisation was initiated. Almost all sales managers was placed under one manager, Ole Jordalen, who quickly realised the need for training among the managers (Mannheimer, 2017). Mannheimer (2017) believes there was an obvious potential for development within the sales organisation, not only that it was important but that there were a lot to gain from training the sales organisation as the division had seen few global training programmes such as the Sales Manager Excellence.

At the same time, there had been a growing realisation within the SKF headquarter that the market was changing fast. Previously the company had a very strong market position, its sellers were always welcomed with open arms at their customers and did not need to be very proactive. But with competition getting all the more fierce and customers becoming more driving and knowledgeable in the purchase process, the need for higher skills within the sales organisation became increasingly pressing.

4.2 The Sales Manager Excellence Programme

To address the changing and emerging new external business environment facing the global sales organisation, the newly reorganised and more centralised global sales organisation within SKF in 2015 set up a training institution called 'the Sales Academy', a unit within the global sales organisation with responsibility for the global education and development of the company's sales force. The biggest expressed interest and driver for the transformational programme was the industrial side within the sales organisation, which meant that it was championed slightly more from the that side than from the other parts in the development of the Sales Manager Excellence programme. However, the idea throughout the process was to get a balance so that the programme would fit the entire global sales organisation, allowing the transformation to take place in all corners of the division (Carlsson, 2017). As described in *4.1 Background*, there were few previous training programmes that took place on a global scale within the sales organisation, and this was especially true for the managerial community. While there were regional or national training initiatives, the sales organisation showed room for improvement, and this 'low hanging fruit' was one of the reasons behind the development of the focal programme.

> It has looked very different in different parts of the world, in different organisations, some have certainly been educated but others have received much less education. So that was also a reason, there was a potential for a positive development (Mannheimer, 2017).

In response to the new market environment, one of the main purposes of the Sales Manager Excellence programme was to transform the selling process into a more proactive and customer-centric process. In order to promote this, the transformation of the sales manager's

role from simply managing the sales force to actively participate in its development, initially with the additional support from trainers, lies at the heart of the programme.

> [...] the particular change we wanted to to see is that sales managers become more a leader and a coach to their sales team and a little less a super professional seller (Carlsson, 2017).

The Sales Manager Excellence programme thus places coaching at the core of the transformation of the sales manager role in relation to its sales representatives. In that new role, the manager is provided a new tool called 'observation meetings' which is a quarterly joint customer visit together with a sales representative where the purpose is to observe the representative's interaction with the customer in order to be able to coach and guide it to better performance. The concept is that the manager is passive during the meeting, save for common manners, and afterwards the two have a coaching session based on the manager's observations. More ways to conduct these meetings were later developed in order to improve adaptability, where the manager were less passive. Two other practices from the programme, related to their new role, is monthly coaching meetings and monthly results and activity evaluation along with development planning for the individual sales representative. The meetings covering activities, results and competencies of the individual sales representative is in the programme referred to as RAC-meetings. These tools are purposely combined in the programme so that the observation meetings contributes to the manager's awareness of the sales representative's skills and development needs, while the coaching and RAC-talks constitutes a continuous reflection upon these (SKF, 2016).

As previously mentioned, the change aimed with the programme is to make the sales organisation more customer-centric and proactive in its activities so as to better deal with the changing business environment (SKF, 2016). The Sales Manager Excellence programme thus lends its ideas from the concepts established by the most recent stream of literature on the subject of making the sales force more proactive and customer centric (Harris, 2014; Schulz & Doerr, 2014; Dixon & Adamson, 2013). The Sales Manager Excellence programme details that the step to become more customer-centric in the sales approach is done by going from simple product selling to becoming a trusted consultative advisor to the customer. This is done by selling with insights i.e. by developing short messages or stories aimed at contributing something new to the customer, such as helping the customer see new

opportunities or to avoid challenges. The approach is more consultative and supportive compared to simple product selling. The insight stories are also meant to inspire the customer to provide richer information about their needs. For instance, a sales representative could initially introduce a story on the theme 'here is what another similar company had problems with, and what it lead to' and get a response themed 'that is not really what we experience, our challenges are more this…' and a conversation about the customer's needs commences. The information provided this way is then ideally combined with the sales representative's knowledge about their own company's products, services, and internal resources in order to tailor a solution well adapted to the customer. The methodology is thus quite distinct from the simple product selling in that it requires another set of skills and knowledge in order to be able to practice the more customer-centric methodology (Harris, 2014; Schulz & Doerr, 2014). The more proactive approach is constituted by the concept of taking control of each step of the sales process, from planning, through execution, to initiating the next step. The programme puts forward a similar process where the sales representative focuses more on planning and preparation, diverge attention away from pricing during the meeting, and makes sure to suggest the next step at the end of the meeting (Dixon &Adamson, 2013).

In early 2016 SKF Sales Academy rolled out the Sales Manager Excellence programme to their entire global sales managers tier. By the rollout of the programme, pushing for a shift in the role of the sales manager as the center of the development of the sales force, a first step towards transforming the sales organisation was taken with the intended purpose that it will facilitate future global educational and developmental initiatives directed towards the sales force. It is thus intended to lay the foundation for a continuous development and transformation capability inside the sales organisations so as to be able to adjust to the changes in the turbulent external business environment more rapidly and efficiently.

4.3 The Sales Academy

This subchapter will go through the support that the sales managers receive from the Sales Academy in transforming their leadership role, and their motivation to change the way they lead.

Both Carlsson (2017) and Mannheimer (2017) highlight that it is the intention of the Sales Academy to support the managers throughout the sales organisation by training the entire

chain from the top layers of the sales organisation down to the sales representatives on the field. In his interview, Mannheimer describes how the idea was that if every sales manager was trained, it would cause a trickle-down effect where the top managers were acting as role-models and started performing RAC-talks, coaching meetings and observation meetings with managers one or two levels below them, those managers would through these tools be supported in their managerial role and in the support they in turn provide to the managers one or two levels below them. Thus, the intended effect was to create a multi-level inter-linked chain where every link received support from above and provided support downwards. The thought was also that if one manager did not use the mentioned tools, the next manager below would still have gotten the training and thus use them with their employees, so that the support still reached all the way down. According to both Carlsson (2017) and Mannheimer (2017), it was also a conscious strategy to gain support for the change among the managers. In order to emphasise their role, the top managers were given an extra half-a-day live training via an online interactive video tool before they participated in the regular programme sessions (Mannheimer, 2017). Their participation was appreciated by the other participating managers, who felt that it signalled their support and commitment to the programme and the change:

> I think the support was great even on the physical trainings there was on my session four or five people from top management present which has never happened on any training that I've had before. So I think it was great that they physically joint this point of view and support people. And of course on the other sessions there were at least one on the management team present on these sessions as well which gives more power to the training that people believe that… see that also management is following that or let's say pushing for that (FLM7, Industry Specific).

> I think I had luck I was in a seminar where also Kent Viitanen took part so my personal perception is that's definitely supported by the management. And then I also had the chance to by chance discuss somethings with the top management during the excellence award and yeah I see that they are fully supporting this. If you see from our [unintelligible] the accelerate initiative and the basic topics he's raising then they are fully inline with this programme so at least it seems that this is fully aligned. So this also gives you some kind of secureness that this is right yeah (FLM14, CE-CIS).

Most respondents feel that participating in the programme supported them in their role as leaders. A common view is that this programme is different from what they have seen previously, as described in *4.1 Background*, many previous programmes have been relatively

narrow focusing on specific sales methods. This programme is much broader and is aimed at the managerial collective which is something broadly appreciated within the managerial community. Many managers highlight that they are experiencing a changing market and that the company needs to change with it. This notion is a source of urgency for many managers, who have seen increasing competition and a more knowledgeable customer base. A respondent elaborates on the programme and the new role as leaders this way:

> I think top management was doing very good decision to have the sales organisations to become more focused on the on the market and on the sales process… and… er… with this programme in the past we had many sales trainings available, but those were purely sales training and not so many sales managers training and I think this was a big, let say, gap to fill and now it's filled up, because you cannot learn to be manager in sales training or, let say, value selling training or account manager training. This requires another set of skills and habits and that I think is the most valuable part of the Sales Manager Excellence training has been. Of course some parts of what it's like to be manager and what you need to do your learning trainings like managing and coach or people management or people leading, we have bit, small bits of those in the past but with sales management programme this is more focused on leading the sales teams and this is the only training on that subject that I had at SKF and I've been here for many years so, this was the first time and it was good (FLM24, CEE-MEA).

However, when it comes to the support once the participating managers finished the programme, almost all respondents say that the Sales Academy and the top management have been absent. There is a sense that they were given a highly supported and well-performed programme, but then they were left without anywhere to turn if they had questions or needed support with a tool that proved difficult to use. They often do have course material, notes, and other managers to turn to, but written material does not account for all situations and questions, and other managers are often just as inexperienced with the new approach as they are, hence they are left struggling alone the best they can. As two first-level managers express it:

> After we finished the programme, I felt that I was on my own. I don't know if we can turn to the trainer after the programme if something gets tough. I'd like some follow-up, or online tools we can use when we need to talk (FLM6, Industry Specific).

Umm… yeah I haven't had a lot of interaction there so umm...you know I don't know if I had any interaction with Sales Academy since the training and I think all I've really heard is that we will do more training throughout the course of the year but essentially that's it (FLM2, Industry Specific).

Looking at the data, it is apparent that many had expected or wished a larger post-programme presence from the Sales Academy. The data node collecting suggestions from the respondents is sprinkled with suggestions on how the academy could support them. Some of the most common suggestions are that the academy could be active in answering questions, providing guides, sharing stories of successful implementations around the world, or making a re-run or a follow-up of the programme in some form. Some of these voices:

[...] and in these moments that we are talking about with the sale people... [...] we need to have more presence of the Sales Academy itself, some mails, some phone calls like that or some WebEx or some meetings or some sharing experience from the others could be helpful (FLM69, Latin America).

From the Sales Academy it's follow-up meetings or seminars and in the same teams we had in the past (FLM14, CE-CIS).

I don't know if [the e-material and the webinars] are still available and can be reused sometimes or as many times as I would like (FLM24, CE-MEA).

The interviews with Carlsson (2017) and Mannheimer (2017) address the issue of post-programme support. They both agree that the support has not been very extensive but provide somewhat different explanations for this. Carlsson (2017) refers to the situation in the early phases of the programme. According to her, the academy had committed to a number of sessions already before the development of the programme was finished, and when the development took longer than expected, they found themselves in a tight situation. This delay in combination with the limited size of the Sales Academy caused all resources to be focused on rolling out the programme as fast as possible, leaving little room for post-participation support. Mannheimer (2017) gives two conjoining explanations in his interview. He thinks that the Sales Academy team might not have been communicating clearly enough to the trainers that they could offer their support, for instance that a local manager could hire a trainer for a few hours to conduct a local session. Mannheimer also refers to the choice of supplier, in order to make the training more adapted to SKF, they had to choose a supplier

with less global presence. The trainers were hence mainly Swedish, which he thinks made it more difficult for the participants to reach them after finishing the programme:

> There are drawbacks to having a lot of Swedish trainers, 'call me on monday' doesn't work. But at the same time, it is a lot to train 320 people and localise it, that is pretty tough (Mannheimer, 2017).

Some of the participants in the early physical training sessions describe how they had organisational flaws leading to some frustration and confusion to an extent that it made the implementation more difficult for the respondents putting this forward. The trainers were not always fully comfortable in their clothes and could not always answer well to the participants' questions, and at least one of them was replaced. Some of the early participants experienced a mixed or incomplete message from the physical training, mainly regarding to what extent using the tools was mandatory and if they could adapt the tools to their context, but also regarding the actual content. One manager from the CEE-MEA region explains:

> Cause I found when my other employee went after me, he came back with much more clear message and clear direction which I didn't have [...] there were lots of missing messages, management direction. [...] [Like] when you write the first version of a book and then someone makes a second version and it includes some extra parts and a third version [...] there is a lot of stuff that were added in [...] for me it looks like a mess (laughs). [...] Because our group had [...] some problems on the way with the instructor [...] there were a long delay [...] so our circle of learning was disrupted (FLM19, CEE-MEA).

There is also a noticeable lower enthusiasm among the ones stating that they were in the early sessions. According to Carlsson (2017), the pressured situation early in the rolling-out process did not allow the trainers enough time to become comfortable with the material before the first sessions, which might explain the early participants' experiences. The situation also caused a delay between the Sales Manager Excellence programme and its sibling, the Sales Excellence programme, which was aimed towards the sales representatives. The Sales Academy originally planned to roll them out with only a couple of weeks in between and on a team-by-team basis, so that the managers got a small head-start and then the sales representatives in its own team would soon follow. This ambition did not realise. Carlsson and Mannheimer elaborate on this in their interviews:

The initial thought from our side was to first train the managers and get them on the train and get them ready, and then train their team members after that so that they are on-board. Now in hindsight one may wonder if it was wise to train all the managers globally before you start training the sellers, because now we see that it's a lot of time between the managers getting trained and their team getting trained. That's not good really, the managers should have gotten their training first and then 1-2 months later the sellers do it and maybe it should've been rolled out geographically since you can't handle everything at once sort to say, but that maybe we should have waited with a few markets. But that is just a reflection I've had because I have seen that if there is a little bit too much time in between, some managers forget almost all of it and does not have the same opportunities to get started (Carlsson, 2017).

[...] six weeks or so, and that was how the initial plan was, which we decided upon and contracted, to train the sales managers mid-April and the sellers at the beginning of June [...] so that the managers could apply their knowledge of the new right away. [...] But it turned out that the suppliers did not have as much capacity as we thought, so developing the trainings took longer than we had expected (Mannheimer, 2017).

The manager's training started rolling out mid-April 2016 as planned but the sales representatives started their training in late 2016. Since many sales representatives have not gotten the training to date, the delay ranges from a couple of months to over a year. Adding insult to injury, the trainings are not rolling out according to team-by-team basis as intended but has a fragmented schedule, leaving many teams in a situation where some representatives have gotten the training and others have not. As a consequence, many managers are holding off much of their implementation in advent of having their team fully trained:

Oh that's a good question, you know the biggest challenge that I have just now is that, and I'll be brutally honest and I don't mind they hearing this and I talked about with my manager and also with his manager, the only big issue that I have is that we are talking about insight selling and insight messaging at our customers however most of [my country's] salespeople have not gone through the training. So it's very difficult for them to understand and wrap their arms around insight selling when they haven't been trained on insight selling yet (FLM62, North America).

Some of them are doing that, [...] some others are not very good and didn't improve yet. And why is that? We didn't yet roll out the Sales Excellence training to the level of the salesman (FLM24, CEE-MEA).

The problem is that we have had this training as managers on this sales approach but that the team is not trained yet and they have no idea about that, so they have to do things, and the first is to make the people understand what it is about and second is to implement it. Honestly I don't think this is the right way. The people should take the training at more or less the same time as us, and then when the salespeople know about all the things, then we can go ahead and implement it (FLM36, South-West Europe).

Many of the respondents expressing these challenges have taken measures to try to overcome them. The most common way is for the manager to train them in some way, formally or informally:

I have literally explained, explained, explained, and now the first guys are on the course and they are saying 'wow!' (FLM34, Nordic).

Some have also put together a local team which guides the rest of the unit or simply tried to implement the programme regardless of the sales representatives' status, with varying results.

According to the respondents, the Sales Academy has provided a well-performed and highly supported programme, but it has not lived up to the respondents' needs and expectations when it comes to post-programme support due to a delay in combination with the limited capacity of the academy. This situation also resulted in a delay in rolling out the Sales Excellence programme, which subsequently lead to many managers holding off much of their implementation.

4.4 Language and Culture

From the interview with Carlsson (2017) it becomes clear that one of the benefits sought by rolling out the Sales Manager Excellence programme in the entire global sales organisation was to establish a common language, as in terms and standardised processes, across the previously decentralised organisation. That is also one of the benefits many managers highlight when asked about the value of the programme. By having a common language throughout the entire global sales organisation, the organisation is not only able to ease the intended transformation through strengthened vertical managerial links when supervisors and subordinates uses the same terms and concepts, but also promote horizontal communication and networking between previously decentralised units. In addition, on the individual sales

team level there is solidification in the communicative and cooperative bonds as they are unified behind the same professional jargon. As highlighted by one first-level manager:

> What I am observing you know is that they are starting to talk to each other in the same language. They understand each other much better so it is cementing the team let's say. It is like a glow in the team you know (SLM3, CEE-MEA).

However, in a few cases where the sales representatives have not gone through the training, first-level managers express that the terms and concepts form the programme instead becomes a barrier to the intended implementation and thus subsequent transformation. Notably, it becomes a challenge for these first-level managers to fulfill their role in the development of the sales team when the sales representatives lack the vocabulary associated with the new tools and methods. This is exemplified by one of the first-level managers in its interview:

> Well, again, the guys have not been trained in the Sales Excellence training yet. It was a little bit tougher to introduce it because they don't use the same language as us, but people will be trained next week and the other half in June and that will help because we will use the same language when we talk about this Sales Excellence approach. Right now it is a bit complicated since they don't have the tools (FLM66, North America).

Being active on a global scale not only means that the language differs when it comes to terms and concepts, but also in terms of national language and English proficiency. Language is described as an obstacle to change by many respondents and especially by those active in mixed-language teams. the se obstacles affect the manager's ability to coach and develop their subordinates, for instance by making observation meetings more difficult when the sales representative and the customer are speaking a language which the manager does not understand which subsequently limits the manager's awareness of that sales representative's professional strengths and weaknesses. A first-level manager exemplifies this by the following statement:

> I have this problem, and I don't see how I can fix the observation meeting, when there are people that are not talking your language so you don't understand everything so if somebody would have some idea it would be more than welcome… I'm still not able to find a solution for that (FLM1, Industry Specific).

Another manager describes how parts of the training became very long and unstimulating due to the relatively low English proficiency of some other participants. Not only did these sometimes struggle with understanding the content, but the enthusiasm and learning process of the manager itself was limited. An extract from the second-level manager's account:

> One of the biggest criticisms I have of the programme is that it started well in the face-to-face meetings that we had, but once it dropped back into giving us by WebEx it became... or it lost its spark. It was a WebEx and it didn't have any light to it, so it became more of a pain in the ass to be honest. When it was the face-to-face interaction, it was quite dynamic the programme and it was well appreciated. However, when it went into WebEx stage, with three hour WebExes being run on a multinational basis, it became slow and tedious. For example, if you are running a WebEx across four or five different countries with different language skills, coming in from places such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia et cetera, and you conduct it in the common language of English, it tends to become slow and it becomes not very dynamic. So it lost its sparkle (SLM11, South-East Asia).

These findings depict various aspects from which challenges can arise when running a global transformational programme in a context featuring a wide variety of native languages and where English proficiency is far from homogenous. However, there are also challenges related to cultural distance stemming from running such a programme. The global reach of the organisation meant that some manager have global team made up by sales staff from very distinct cultures and ways of being, which adds to the complexity of leading and coaching the team as intended by the programme. One manager elaborates further on this:

> The only problem I have here is that I'm covering a region that is surreal almost, and honestly speaking, if I look at the behaviour of an Indian guy, a Chinese guy, a Korean guy or a Japanese one it's completely different. I have a funny story here I was talking to our application engineer in India and this guy was moving his head saying no, and then I discovered the way she was shaking her head was in fact to say yes. You know these are [inaudible], and you can learn it just by talking to the people, paying attention to that, so I think the best training is really to make an effort when I am in the region to look at the people. That is somethings we lack for sure but the area is so huge. That I'm… I mean I'm in charge of Russia, Ukraine… umm… South Africa, Indonesia, Australia, China… et cetera (FLM1, Industry Specific).

Naturally, cultural differences can become an obstacle to efficient implementation in non-global teams featuring various internal cultures as well. When customers expand abroad,

sometimes sales representatives from their home market follow suit so as to limit the customer's perceived foreignness of doing business in the new market. This can hamper the manager's ability to develop its sales representative, as exemplified by the following quote:

> The main challenge is to keep quiet for times, but also you know as I said I have four guys and [...] one of them a Japanese guy, you know, it is really really hard for me to feel [...] I mean it is hard in terms of energy. If the energy is good or not good. So one of my main targets are how to discover how to feel that guy you know, because we have some Japanese customers and we starting to have these Japanese guys in order to handle the Japanese customers. But it is really hard for me to his energy you know (FLM3, Industry Specific).

The findings presented above outline some of the contexts which a global organisation have and how they impact and influence the implementation of the Sales Manager Excellence programme, and thus also the subsequent intended transformation of the sales organisation. Another aspect influencing the implementation of the Sales Manager Excellence programme, salient in the data collected, is the differences in local contexts in which the programme is intended to be implemented in and adapted for. Before rolling out the programme, SKF had discussions regarding the local adaption of the programme, but when they looked at the research, they did not see any obstacles to adapting coaching from one culture to another in accordance with the local conditions in which it was intended to be performed. However, during one of the first two training sessions in Singapore they became aware that they needed to adapt the observation meetings tool slightly with regard to countries where the culture has a higher focus on hierarchical structures, and subsequently defined 3-4 different ways of performing observation meetings. The adaptations included splitting the various parts of the meeting between them, so that observing manager's role was less passive during the customer meeting. For instance, the manager could open the sales meeting with a presentation, after which the sales representative would take over. The findings collected however, depict that the many managers from the Asian regions struggle with the observation methods, as the following manager exemplifies and elaborates:

> Also, I'm not sure you can understand but in [my country] it is a bit hierarchy. You know, we have a different social culture it's not like western country we have many levels and top positions. This kind of… too many managers step by step, so during the meeting, the customer want you to discuss about some issue with higher level of... so for that reason, I have to talk a lot you know, because the

customer is thinking that higher position has authority to make some command (FLM47, North-East Asia).

Other accounts given by the respondents in the Asian region puts forward that the pro-active approach called 'taking control of the sales conversation' was a challenge when working within their national context. One manager expresses its struggles this way:

> I will start by myself to going back and reread what I have been trained before, because sometimes it is not easy to, for my people, to understand how to take control, because in [my country] anywhere that you talk to the senior guys, or talk to some senior manager, is not easy to take control because if they feel that we try to take control of the meeting sometimes they stop to talk. So I need to go back and read again the type of the people and the type of the and the title of the people and analyse that more and more (FLM53, South-East Asia).

Some of the distinct linguistic and cultural differences have, as outlined above, a clear influence on the implementation of the programme. A second-level manager from the region elaborates on issues related to implementing such a broad-scale training programme with such a low level of local adaptation:

> You know, when the material put to you that comes from the head office that is very much driven around the Anglo-Saxon approach to how you should develop the sales force, and how you should interact with customer, and how you should manage your sales force, it really becomes a bit clumsy when it got to then be translated into Filipino, or Japanese, or Chinese, or whatever. And you know the whole approach of one-size-fits-all tends to not just become an issue with languages but there is also cultural differences. You can talk about managing your sales force in Japan, but managing the sales force in [my country] and managing it in Brazil is slightly different, and that's where the internationalisation of a programme like this tends to lose its approach if you don't then, at some stage, localise it. Of course there are many things that apply to all sales people no matter what culture or nation they are embedded in but if one takes it to the next level it probably need to be localised (SLM11, South-East Asia).

In summary, the global nature of the programme, i.e. that everyone is given the same tools and taught the same concepts and ideas, gives rise to several factors that influence the implementation of the programme. A common language not only supports the implementation, but also eases further networking inside the sales organisation. Nevertheless, the findings makes it clear that organisational and national language, as well as cultural

differences are contextual factors that are not only inherent to the global organisation but also have a significant influence on the implementation of a global change programme. Whether it is in the awareness stage, the rollout of the training, or in the change stage, the actual implementation of it, national and cultural differences can be a hinder to achieving the intended transformation for first-level managers in culturally and linguistically different and diverse sales teams.

4.5 Geographics and Physical Distance

The findings show that geographical distance can have a real and significant influence on the implementation of a global transformational programme such as the Sales Manager Excellence onee, due to the geographical remoteness of many team members, often magnified by the fact that it is a global sales organisation. In several cases, first-level managers, particularly those working towards the aerospace and automotive industry, are in charge of teams spanning across national borders or even globally. This creates a unique situation for them where observation meetings and coaching becomes difficult to conduct. Two managers from the Industry Specific category shares their experiences:

> I can't fly to [another region] to do observation meetings that often, I might get there once a quarter so… normally my guy, my agent out there is gonna, he's gonna have me come in and do something you know while I'm there as opposed to figure out so, so it's somewhat more difficult to do (FLM8, Industry Specific).

> The sheer of geographical area, it's just really hard to, you know, travel across the country just to observe a meeting… um… it's tiring to. Regarding the RAC we try, we try… it does not always happen that way, sometimes it's just an individual right after the meeting but I like to get everybody on a WebEx if I can that's… with the geographical arial differences we have that's probably the best way (FLM7, Industry Specific).

However, the challenge of distance with regard to observation meetings was also expressed by several first-level managers working towards the general industrial segment. They were in all the cases managers for sales representatives placed in one or several countries which constituted a sizeable area. One first-level manager emphasise this during the interview:

Our team is not located in one office with me, so challenges for myself to implement this is for the time and the geographic distance, so it is very difficult for us to have a physical meeting (FLM49, South-East Asia).

The aspects of geographical distance also often poses a challenge for these first-level managers with regard to coaching their people effectively. This is highlighted by one of the first-level managers:

You know, I'm in charge of a region that is extremely big because I'm in charge of [region], okay. Yeah, unfortunately yes, but for sure, you know, face to face it change completely the results. Because you can imagine when you give feedback to one guy on phone you can not see their reaction. You are making the discussion on the results, and it's by WebEx, okay you can see the numbers but you don't see the face so you can not really well understand how the people are reacting honestly (FLM1, Industry Specific).

The geographical distances thus create obstacles to the interaction between the first-level manager and the sales representative, an interaction which constitutes a cornerstone of the programme and the intended organisational transformation. Nevertheless, in some cases physical proximity has also proven to have a negative impact on the intended implementation. In such cases, the aspect holding the implementation back is not a lack of but rather too much interaction, which leaves them feeling that the more structured interactions are perceived as redundant.

In our organisation is a very small team and we are located together, so I am not a sales manager with a team located in different area and so on, so we are all located together and spending time all day together, so this is why it doesn't have to be structured, because I am not working with remote team which is often the case when you work with sales representatives. So we are located all together and that is why there is no dedicated coaching session and so on, because my door is open and I have open discussions with my team all day when they are here at the office. So it depends on your organisation (FLM4, Industry Specific).

Since geographical distance is a common reality within the sales organisation and many sales managers operate on the global scene, that distance itself act as an influence on the efficiency in using tools which are based on relatively frequent interaction between the sales manager and its sales representative. Hence, geographical distance influences the implementation of the programme and the intended subsequent transformation.

4.6 Adapting to a Complex Organisation

From the data collected, a picture emerges showing the plethora of different environments in which the individual sales units are embedded, and the variety of other distinctive contextual factors that act as influential forces on the implementation of the programme and the intended change. The respondents' accounts portray a complex environmental matrix with a large array of contextual factors, such as the market in which the sales unit is active, the perceived novelty of the programme, the financial resources available, the nature of the customer relationships, and the various organisational structures.

4.6.1 The Industrial Context

All of the interview subjects depict distinct contextual factors, and often the first-level managers express that those factors are elements that make certain parts of the Sales Manager Excellence programme not applicable or a proper suit to their situation. One of those contextual factors are that SKF's global sales organisation is to a large extent structured and organised into units based on the specific customer segment they are active towards. The main part of the sales organisation target the industrial segment, however, there are also units that works towards the aerospace and automotive industry and special units that work with seals and lubrication in the industrial segment, all of which also makes up a large share of SKF's total market market portfolio. As expressed by Carlsson (2017), the Sales Manager Excellence programme was designed as a global initiative for the purpose of transforming the entire global sales organisation. As such, the ambition when constructing the programme was to find a good balance between the various industrial contexts which the sales organisation is embedded in (Carlsson, 2017).

The findings portray a consistent perception by most of the respondents within the automotive segment that some parts of the programme were more directed to the industrial side of the organisation. It was frequently highlighted that the context of their business environment meant that they very often have different customers, problems, and solutions than their colleagues working within the other industrial areas. In light of this, the respondents commonly emphasised that they felt that the training programme was not extensively taking into consideration their particular context. As one sales representative elaborates during one of the interviews:

In the past we had a lot of programmes and a lot of ideas which were actually copy-paste from the industry and it is wrong. [My specific industry division] is completely different area, different organisation, different customer, different attitudes [...] this programme shouldn't be put to the guys who only do [our specific industry]. We should have more examples from our lives and our life it is working, for example, with distributors and they have a completely different programme, completely different problems, ideas, solutions and that is why. I mean the idea and purpose was very good but if I take my people who have no knowledge regarding industry it could be quite difficult (SR1, Industry Specific).

In addition, many of the respondents also express that they believe that the programme and the tools need to be adjusted and adapted so as to fit within their context better. In some cases, the sales managers express that they found very few tools, methods and ideas from the programme applicable to their context, illustrated by one first-level manager:

Mm... I feel that this programme is more dedicated to industry. So for [my specific industry] I just picked up some part of that programme to work on it but I have not applied the programme… I took some parts such as the coaching or some activity but I have not followed the structure because this structure cannot be applied to our organisation (FLM4, Industry Specific).

Looking at the accounts in greater detail, the tools most commonly expressed as not applicable were the ones related to customer segmentation and the territory management. A common reason given was that the team and its members were working more towards specific customers rather than within a specific territory that can be mapped out and divided between the sales representatives in the team and that no segmentation was needed since they were relatively few and well-known. Furthermore, it was common for these respondents to emphasise that the taking control of the sales conversation method — i.e. being proactive in the sales process through things such as planning, diverting from price discussions, and suggest the next step — is often a major challenge due to the relatively large size of their customers. This was exemplified by a manager who explained the following:

The typical stuff is price negotiations, of course if they come asking for price reductions while they don't have something to give so as to get back control, is not that easy because they always come back to you and 'hey common, you have a contract, you need to, in order to go on with your business, you have to reduce

price' and you have to find of course alternatives in order to do the otherway around increase price or keep the price stable (FLM5, Industry Specific).

Carlsson (2017) and Mannheimer (2017) express that one reason behind the lower absorption of the programme within the automotive industry could be that the Sales Academy might not have made the trainers adequately aware of the various sales managers' different contexts, which subsequently could have led to an inability to clearly explain how the methods and ideas relate to everyone regardless of industry.

> We may have been a little bad at showing and understanding that the context look different, but then maybe these skills you do not need to soo really different. That's why we have also said here now, that if we can try to get as much as possible to have dedicated coaches driving automotive training, you'll learn a lot about industry, customers and examples, and then it will be better even if content is the same really (Carlsson, 2017).

However, even though a common perception among the respondents within the specific industries was that many tools did not fit their context, other tools were perceived as better suited. The tools deemed having the best fit were those that related to developing the sales representatives, such as the coaching meetings, the RAC-talks, and in some cases depending on the customer relation, the observation meetings. They commonly were seen as tools of great value, and as a way to increase their capability in developing and transforming the sales force and to become even more competitive in the long-run, and the new leadership approach itself was also widely appreciated.

4.6.2 The Degree of Novelty

As mentioned before, the global sales organisation inside SKF has in the past had very different levels of education and development training received due to those initiatives being made and run on a regional or even local level. One of the reasons behind the fragmented development is that some sales organisations which are larger than others, and hence financially stronger, have been in a better position to make more of these kinds of investments whereas smaller units often have not had the same capabilities. Even though coaching has been trained to various extents inside the organisation before, the Sales Manager Excellence programme was truly the first real concerted effort to globally transform the role of the sales manager and, subsequently, the entire global sales organisation in line with the new business environment.

The interviews with the respondents portray a mosaic of different perceptions germane to the novelty of the programme, both with regard to the new way of managing their sales representative and to how the sales representatives should manage the sales process with the customer, in relation to what they did in their sales organisations before. For most of the sales managers the programme put forward a relatively new way of working, both in terms of their new role where leading the development of their team is emphasised, but also of the tools and methods meant to facilitate that new role. One manager explains:

> Our sales reps were quite good at shoulder-to-shoulder challenge, but then they are used to 'okay what should I do now?' and we, in the role of manager, used to say 'let's do it like this then'. What I also now know through all of this seminar, or excellence seminar, is that I also know that I can now step back and ask about their proposal, 'what would you do'. So this is really a paradigm shift. And to be honest, this is huge. I don't know if this was the focus of the people that established this seminar but this is really huge, yeah (FLM17, CE-CIS).

The empirical data shows that for many of the sales managers in regions that have had more training, the novelty of the programme compared to what they did before was often lower than in other regions. Nevertheless, the concepts and tools that they had previously been exposed to were only similar to some of the ones put forward in the Sales Manager Excellence programme, not identical, and even though they had been more exposed to some of the elements in the programme, much of it had not been incorporated into their daily work. These managers still often expressed that there was not much difference between the programme and what they did previously, but that they appreciated the purposefulness and structure. One of the sales managers exemplifies this in the interview, emphasising on there still being a big difference in what role they should now have:

> Not that much different at all but what I like a lot is the kind of overall framework and systematic approach. There is also a high focus on joint visits and that we haven't really done before... I think it's probably the amount of personal coaching time compared to what I have had previously with each people that's is also a big difference (FLM33, Nordic).

The empirical data makes it apparent that some of the managers were, to some extent, already previously familiar with some of the concepts in the programme while others were not. For

most managers however, the programme means a quite large difference in how to manage their teams. The collected data thus clearly indicate various starting points and learning curves facing the various managers, related to filling the new leadership role. It is clear, nevertheless, that shouldering this role will take time and practice, as expressed by one first-level manager:

> I think practicing really to get it right… umm… coaching it's probably nothing that comes natural to people. And for that is what it is just practice, I just need to practice and practice and practice so… I'm sure in a period of time, in a year or so, it will be a lot easier from then it is now. I have to be honest with you. I haven't ever had a lot of coaching in SKF, me personally I haven't had much coaching (FLM34, South-West Europe).

As highlighted by the interview with another sales manager, the novelty of coaching as a means of leading the sales people is also sometimes proving to be a challenge since the sales representatives themselves are unaccustomed to this new way of being lead. This sometimes causes misunderstandings:

> It's not easy because the people, I don't know, here in our region, are so... let say conflictive in way of think, so it is not easy to give feed-back in the right way. Because I don't want to... that they think that I'm judging or something like that so, all this is quite difficult. I have been reading a part of this training and the other trainings in the past, like feedback and coaching and... but I have to practice more some techniques (FLM69, Latin America).

In some cases the second-level managers, particularly in regions which generally have had less training, express that the newness of this approach and the learning curve of their people, not only to start using this new approach but also as to be able to utilise it efficiently in order to bring about the intended changes in their sales team, might be pose a challenge to the successful implementation, as illustrated by the following quote:

> I think their attitude to coaching and how they do it is a challenge. I think many of these sales managers are manager so far that they know best and they instruct what needs to be done, and are perhaps not so good at actually listen and let those who they coach come to the solution themselves. I think that that is something that they really need to practice on and improve on. I think that sometimes we have so much else to do and bad habits so that we don't do right simply, and that is not because we don't know or that we don't want but perhaps that we don't have the

courage, time or support so… what might be required is people (SLM10, South-East Asia).

The findings thus indicate that there is a big transformation regarding many of the managers' and sales representatives' way of working and many express that this shift in culture will take time and will need a lot of practice to be implement successfully, since it is a matter of changing behaviours which people have had for a long time. The respondents that did not perceive the novelty of the methods as very significant depict a smoother transition. Looking closer at the proactive and customer-centric sales approach in the sales process, as it is described in the programme, that is also a relatively new concept for the respondents, and several of them mention challenges relating to the transformation of their sales representatives' behaviour in the sales process due to the novelty of the change. FLM20 explains:

> We have started to have some exercises where we are trying to create insights and I have to say that we struggle a bit with that. We have sometimes problem to find… we have found that we don't have enough industry knowledge often, or our salespeople don't have enough industry knowledge to create insights. It means that we have started to look at the training of salespeople how we do it, so how we can educate them in a better way how our technicians are training our sales guys we are looking at, because we know we are quite weak in it (FLM20, CEE-MEA).

Nevertheless, a few sales managers go against the trend and highlight that being proactive and customer-centric was something they were already doing, or most commonly 'have always done', in their organisation before the programme. Almost exclusively, these managers did not do what was taught through the programme, but methods perceived similar such as 'success stories' as opposed to the tool 'insight stories', or segmenting customers but using their own segmentation criterion in the process. However, many respondents from the North America and South-West Europe regions expressed that using an insights-approach similar to how it was described in the programme was something which they had already started to implement to some extent already before the programme. That is in line with details Carlsson (2017) provided, that some regions had already performed a programme with a few similarities previously, and were hence exposed to some of the material before the rest of the global sales organisation. Nevertheless, respondents in these areas still to various extents express that they also face challenges with regard to the transformation of the sales force due

to the methods and ideas novelty. One manager from the North America region exemplifies how they were previously exposed to the tools, but that they still can present a challenge:

> I was lucky that I had one of my best sales people going through Challenger selling so obviously he was already well informed about that methodology, the insight selling methodology. But some of my weaker guys didn't get that and as I said it's a little of a struggle to get them up to speed (FLM64, North America).

From the findings it is apparent that for the general global sales organisation the focal programme means a significant cultural shift, regarding both the role of managers as well as the methods and tools. The larger emphasis on coaching as means for developing their team as well as the more proactive and customer-centric role of their sales force was largely new to the sales organisations, even though some regions had gotten a head-start from being exposed to some of the tools shortly before the rollout of the Sales Manager Excellence. These factors have a clear impact on the speed of the transformation and brings learning challenges that must be overcome in order to bring about a successful change. On a direct question regarding the need for refreshment training with regard to the content of the Sales Manager Excellence programme, Carlsson (2017) expresses that it is something they need to consider and that the purpose of setting up the Sales Academy in the first place was to address those needs for continuous training and learning. This view is exemplified through the following quote:

> The idea of this Sales Academy is that it's not just a one-off we are driving now, but now it's the very big intensive effort to get this out and get it started, but of course, it will only fade away if you do not keep it alive (Carlsson, 2017).

4.6.3 The Financial Strength

From the interview with Carlsson (2017) it not only made clear that each sales organisation is solely responsible for funding the development and training of its people, they are also required to reduce expenses as part of a larger cost-cutting initiative directed towards the global sales organisation.

> It's really true that all regions have save requirements so we should hold on to SNA and so on, but CEE-MEA might be the ones that have been very focused because they are very small units so when it comes these sorts of cost then it's quite high in percentage to what they have for other costs so they have been very

careful and waited to see 'okay how many courses can be run now' (Carlsson, 2017).

Facing save requirements, the large region 'Central and East Europe, Middle East and Africa' have halted their participation in the Sales Excellence training programme aimed at the sales representatives, and consequently also much of the implementation within the region. The effort to rein in budget costs has left some first-level managers in a much tougher position to develop their team with regard to the new sales methodology as was intended by the Sales Manager Excellence programme. One first-level managers expressed its feelings in one of the interviews:

> [The interviewer asks what support the manager would like to have from SKF and SKF top management ideally] Yeah, I think that I mentioned it before because the Sales Excellence programme was cut because some financial issue. I think that two persons from my team have no occasion to take part in this training because it was stopped now so yeah, if our managers could start it again it should be good I think (FLM25, CEE-MEA).

The findings further show that regions that traditionally have had less training in the past, due to their relatively small size and more limited financial resources, have a steeper climb towards organisational transformation. Considering their financial capabilities being the same as before the programme, perhaps even more constrained due to save requirements, the motivation and ability of some sales managers to take on that financial burden they feel would be needed to deliver a successful change is sometimes constrained, as illustrated by one second-level manager:

> As soon as you say 'Okay Sales Academy' you can get one who does a training that costs 2 000 dollars a week, or what it is, and then it goes straight to our bottom line and to our result and then it stops as to run that implementation. So if you could have this corporate initiative, then you subsidise that cost and take it as a corporate cost, and run this program as well as country-by-country for a year or whatever it is required, and then you should be able to check in on the overall effect afterwards, and then it would really work but the problem is that we sometimes stick to these short-term targets and we do not do the improvement work we could (SLM10, South-East Asia).

The findings thus show that regions which have had less training in the past are experiencing that the novelty of the programme in conjunction with resource constraints is having an

impeding effect on the intended change. In the absence of further training in these regions, the intended sales transformation is put in jeopardy.

4.6.4 The Nature of Customer Relationships

Looking at the global sales organisation, customer relationships can look very differently from one another. One of the aspects commonly brought up by the respondents was the aspect of long-term and short-term relationships. Many of the them expressed that using 'insight stories' as means of becoming more customer-centric in the sales approach was a great tool in order to launch new products or so as to understand and solve the need of new customers. However, many of the respondents expressed that the utility of the tool was lost when dealing with customers they had for a long time. Knowing each other very well, they felt that there were nothing that could be added by applying the insights-approach with these customers. Considering that long-term relationships are common within most of the local sales organisations, and especially in automotive, aerospace, and the ones specialised on key account managing, there is a perceived gap in how the new sales methodology could help them advance sales with these customers. One first-level managers shares his experience:

> You can use [insight stories] but sometimes it appear to me that it is a procedure to handle [...] new customers which we need to get to know and ask a lot of questions. The thing is we got a quite well known customer base and the development of this customer base is quite static. Did I mention that I have sales reps that go to the same customer for 17 years? So what should they tell customer about insights? (laugh) (FLM17, CE-CIS).

In some cases sales managers also perceive that observation meetings, one of the pillars in the Sales Manager Excellence programme, is bit difficult to implement due to the longstanding relationships their sales representatives have with their customers. The concern is that it might impact the existing relationship adversely. This concern is exemplified by one of the first-level managers during its interview:

> The most difficult thing to do I would say is the observation meetings. And I mean I wouldn't say that it is not valuable, but a number of our customers and sales reps have really hugely strong relationships and I think that course might minimise the importance of relationship selling, and that is a part that I don't like about the course. We have a large number of people who buy from us just because they like our salespeople. We have some really good sales people that have built some very

strong relationships and to minimise that I think is a mistake (FLM12, North America).

As becomes clear, contextual factors such as the length of the relationship the sales managers and their teams have had with their customers impact the perceived suitability of some of the core concepts of the Sales Manager Excellence programme. The fact that 'insight stories' and 'observation meetings' are not widely utilised in connection with these customers subsequently means that they are left out of the sales transformation, which is intended to benefit the sales organisation as well as the customer as the sales force starts employing a more customer-centric selling approach.

4.6.5 The Organisational Structures

The organisational structure within SKF and its various sales organisations can look very different from one another. One of the defining aspects are the different roles and responsibilities that the sales managers have in the organisation. The findings show that these differences have a significant impact on the individual managers' ability to implement the programme and by so transform themselves and their team. One of the things that the programme sets out to do, according to Carlsson (2017), is changing the core culture of the sales organisation. Sales managers who previously had not been working so much with sales management but that had been very involved with customers themselves were now with the programme intended to spend more time coaching and developing their team. While discussing the reasons behind the creation of the programme, she expresses the following:

> All research and everything shows that the best way to achieve productivity and efficiency, but especially within sales, it is that sales manager spend a lot of time coaching and running the process... rather than for many to be the one who is the best and handles them the most important customers (Carlsson, 2017).

The findings show that this is one of the more difficult transitions for many of the first-level managers. It is common that they still manage the same important accounts that they had before the programme. The two main and equally common reasons for this is that the first-level managers are either unable to delegate due to constrained resource inside their organisational unit, or that they simply do not want to delegate those accounts away. Regardless of reason, it becomes apparent that still having their own customer accounts is

adversely impacting the manager's ability to coach and develop their sales team to the extent the programme defines. Two first-level managers share their experience:

> I mean… the day has 24 hours (laugh), yeah to get more time for that means we need to rearrange maybe some organisational stuff. I have a quite big strategic account besides my job. I know it's important and the danger is always that you're just struggling with this account, and that time is missing for the coaching, for the RAC-talk, for the follow-up and so on. Give this account away, give me some other accounts yeah, let's just call them medium priority, so that I'm still in the daily business, but perhaps not struggling yeah (FLM15, CE-CIS).

> No, I wouldn't want to delegate that I could... we just have to I think getting a good pattern going. There are a lot of things that... I think we just have to get a routine, find the right routine if possible, we just have to work through it (FLM60, North America).

The plethora of different roles and responsibilities within the sales organisation and amongst the first-level sales managers is also expressed in the form of a large variety in both the size of the team under the manager's supervision as well as the role and position of its members. While some first-level managers have very small teams in which they manage only one salesperson, others are responsible for up to eleven sales representatives, all directly reporting to them. It is common for a first-level managers' team to feature both sales representatives as well as sales managers, the latter with their own sales team. Furthermore, the managers' responsibilities commonly encompass more than just managing sales representatives, they sometimes take on the role of Managing Director of a country or region, or as manager of a head office within their region. The scope of a manager's responsibilities is, not counterintuitively, closely but not exclusively tied to the issue of time, further elaborated on in *4.7 Tempus Fugit*, which affects their ability to implement the programme and take on the leadership role promoted by the Sales Manager Excellence programme. One first-level manager put it this way:

> I have eleven regular account managers, I also have reporting to me seven product specialists [...] and also a solution development manager is reporting to me. Can you imagine, you take just one hour per month per people, it is too much time, and also you have to do the observation meetings, one per sales people per month, and so on. Being honest, I think that the model will probably require some changes in the daily habits of people, especially myself, that is the issue we have (FLM38, South-West Europe).

In some cases the first-level managers are responsible for sales teams that work directly with distributors and sometimes the managers only have external sales representatives reporting to them. According to Carlsson (2017), the intended role of the first-level managers managing distributors or sales agents that are non-employees of SKF is not any different from their other counterparts, they should also develop their team of people in accordance with was defined in the programme. The interview subject elaborates on the matter:

> I don't really know if it was even thought so much about, but I know now, after having gotten into it, that we think that we may have a continuation where we do programmes and maybe help to train some of our distributors, because they are those who have contact with the end customer. I don't know if it's an in-hindsight rationalisation, but the purpose is that the sales managers should do very much joint visits together with the distributor and customer, and then this kind of experience is important, and those who are working as sales managers for a number of people who work for distributors, there is not a distinct difference because they should also be able to coach and support their team and set goals for what to do and follow, etcetera. For the sales managers, the difference is not that great (Carlsson, 2017).

Many of the sales managers who are working with distributor sales representatives are in fact considering or are already actively cascading the learnings defined in the programme to the external sales representatives, so as to make them a part of the intended sales transformation. They commonly express that since they see the external sales staff as an extension of their internal sales organisation, it is important to include them in the transformation allowing also them to become more competitive in selling the organisation's products and services. However, since they are not SKF employees, the sales managers face unique challenges which other sales units in the organisation do not face when it comes to the development of their team. They need to solve issues regarding how to cascade the methods and ideas from the programme to these external parties, and how to make sure that those external parties are continuously developing. Furthermore, the fact that they are an external sales force also means that they subjectively will adopt the tools and methods that they find best suited for them, rather than a specific model promoted by the first-level manager. A manager elaborates on its views regarding this in the following way:

We do not have SKF employees, we have agents that we contract. Because we have agents that report to us but they also represent other lines so [the SME programme] is not 100 percent applicable but it is very useful in helping to train those people in our way of learning sales [...] You know, we have excellent sales people in our sales agents that are really good at what they do and they know their customers but they also got, you know, maybe they got Delphi or they got Denzo, so they got that company telling them a way of doing it. So we kind of don't got a unique, or perhaps I should say standardised, style that might fit everybody, so we do the best we can. I would love to send all my sales agents to the SKF… I think it would be very beneficial and very helpful but it would also be very expensive so I don't see that happening, but that would probably be the only way for them to really embrace it. Because I can't teach it (FLM8, Industry Specific).

The empirical data portrays a rich and complex sales organisation were the individual first-level manager's role and responsibilities can be very different, and those variances are impacting their ability to implement the programme and subsequently transform their sales force, internal or external.

4.7 Tempus Fugit

Time is a challenge brought up by a significant majority of the respondents with regard to the implementation of the Sales Manager Excellence programme. There is thus a need for prioritisation derived from the fact that resources are scarce and different goals are at constant odds with each other within a clear majority of the sales organisations. The findings show that there is a constant conflict between short-term profit goals and long-term developmental ambitions. The influence of time, and thus also of prioritisation, on the implementation of the Sales Manager Excellence programme and the subsequent transformation is exemplified by one of the first-level managers:

To be honest I could do much much more, and I would appreciate doing it much much more, but the problem is of course we have a lot of work to do, it's always hot stones on the way and to solve it quickly with the individual customers. So unfortunately there is not as much time left to do this, but if I could I would do much much more of course. We are the firewall between SKF and the customer, and this sometimes really falling back on our shoulders, so we don not have the so much freedom to sit together and to spend time even if it would be spent well. Because this pays back, I'm absolutely convinced that good coaching pays back through efficiency and quality of the work absolutely (FLM5, Industry Specific).

However, the lack of time is not only impacting the implementation due to prioritisation issues, it is also impacting the quality of coaching when it is prioritised. When time is limited, that puts a pressure on the coaching session participants which subsequently causes a low tolerance for things that ideally would require time and patience to work with, impacting the extent and quality of the coaching negatively. It is common for the first-level managers to express that under this pressure, they feel that managing the people, as opposed to leading them in terms of the programme content, is a much quicker process than trying to coach them. That means that coaching has a tendency to take the backseat during times when these managers perceive that they have a lack of time. This is illustrated by two of the first-level managers:

> Sometimes I'm is not making the right decision, in terms of that I will probably go back and do it in the old way and tell them what to do instead of coaching them to take the decision, because I feel that I don't have enough time. But I still think that it is a mistake, because if I keep doing that, I will never have enough time. So if I coach them, I realise that they will come and consult me for some of the stuff less and less. So the challenge for me is to find the time to coach them properly and by so avoid them coming to me always with the same question (FLM66, North America).

> You know, coaching is actually... sometimes it is easier to give them answer rather than let them come up with their own solution. That is my issue, that is I am more experienced than they are actually, and I'm just in a hurry to solve these issues rather than just let them have the time to think about it. That is not coaching, right, it is kind of management sometimes, so I would say is that I sometimes find myself trying to manage the people rather than coaching people and that is my issue, and I really need to take care of that actually (FLM50, North-East Asia).

In the collected data, respondents commonly highlight the need for prioritisation and organisation if the programme is to be implemented. If the activities are not planned or organised beforehand, they most likely will not be achieved due to the constant influx of new 'hot stones' that constantly need to be addressed in the daily work in the sales organisation.

> Oh the challenges I think is always to... [...] if you are not organised you will always postpone these things, um, and in reality it's quite difficult to fight that, so that is one of the biggest problems. Actually being disciplined and force you to that on a regular basis (FLM29, CEE-MEA).

Time management is a challenge. Sometimes we have planning for joint visit, but we have other agenda, other more important that we need to handle first. That is the challenge, but it's manageable. I have in the future for the programme… how we do the time management, I think is something I need to sit with me and my team in order to align with our schedule and align also with the customer as well (FLM52, South-East Asia).

It is also common for the first-level managers and second-level managers to stress that delegation in order to make time for coaching is many times impossible due to resource constraints like, for instance, lack of manpower within their organisational units. This is illustrated by one of the first-level managers:

Both me and my manager, both of us joint the same course so we know exactly what we are talking about. In practice some things just simply does not work, because we have a very tough constraint of resources, we don't get resources [...] ummm [...] we know what… we know how the ideal world would look like, but simply some things we can not implement because of actual constraints. And, and I can't hardly delegate more. I know I should, but given the current situation in SKF, and my area of responsibility, and of his area of responsibility, we know how the perfect world would look like but we can't simply do it (FLM14, CE-CIS).

Even though there is an expressed willingness to do more with regard to the implementation of the programme, time and prioritisation is an issue for them, which is closely linked to their various roles inside the sales organisation. Mannheimer (2017) says that they are well aware that time is a challenge within the sales organisation, but expresses that it is a matter of the sales managers organising their own time so as to be able to do what the programme asks of them. He elaborates on this issue:

We have seen great challenges when it comes to the sales manager training to really make sure that the sales managers take time, make sure to have time, and to give priority to really coaching once a month, to go to observation meetings and so on. It is clear that it may differ in different markets these challenges, but you really can consider if it really should. No, I do not really think so, but it's a matter of course, how do we organise it to do it (Mannheimer, 2017).

Mannheimer (2017) thus stress the importance of making sure to prioritise and organise one's work life in such a way that implementation takes place, so that it can facilitate the intended

transformation of the sales team. The respondents give very contrasting pictures of how they have handled the issue of time, with regard to the implementation of the Sales Manager Excellence programme, and a clear majority have not made any significant changes to their daily work life so as to accommodate for this change, but rather tried to simply fit it into their current situation.

> The issue has been around for quite some time, and the manager is aware of it. But they have limited resources and have to live with that, and try to squeeze the implementation into the existing schedule (FLM28, CEE-MEA)

From the data collected, it becomes apparent that one region have been better at accommodating for the change and are putting the change as a top priority. They have structured the organisation and their daily work so as to accommodate for that change, one of their managers elaborates on this further:

> I think the organisation is agile and adaptable, and you know we have made this change a priority. It has become a priority for us so, you know, it is probably the most important thing we gonna do this year and continue to do is really drive Sales Manager Excellence and Sales Excellence. The other thing we did too, you should be aware of this, last year I had 14 direct reports and now I have six, and we did that because of Sales Manager Excellence. You know having the right number of direct reports so you can, you know, spend the right amount of time with your people to coach, counsel, and develop, and we have done that through the organisation here, so we have made sure that none have more than nine direct reports (FLM61, North America).

In some cases, managers have been able to minimise or completely overcome the impeding effect of time constraints by their role and responsibilities allowing them to regularly travelling with their sales representatives. They are thus able to use those moments to perform observation and coaching meetings 'on the road' with each of their sales representatives. Two managers shed more light on this:

> I am all the time, let's say, living with the sales people there, sitting together in the car, having lunch together, sometimes we meet together, and we do this kind of things [i.e. coaching] in a different way, not very formal (FLM38, South-West Europe).

> Oh, well, basically I travel with one or two of my employees per month. And everytime I travel with them, I do a couple of observation meetings while I'm with them (FLM64, North America).

Looking at the respondents' accounts, time constraints act as a significant influence on the capability to implement the programme. It is a question of prioritisation where different goals are put against each other, and most of the respondents struggle to find a path forward towards full implementation of the programme, while a few have have had more success.

4.8 A Silo Mentality

About half-way through the data collection, a tendency to have very little or no contact between the sales units became apparent. In order to explore that in more depth, the authors began to regularly ask questions about inter-organisational interactions outside the first- and second-level manager interview guides, and it was included during the development of the sales representatives' interview guide as well as in the interviews with Carlsson and Mannheimer (see Appendix 2). The initial picture was confirmed, but it also became more nuanced.

The first indications were connected to certain tools in the programme. Often the respondent would have difficulties creating insight stories or setting up territory planning in accordance with the programme because they were lacking necessary information or inspiration that other units could provide. A first-level manager elaborates further on the issue:

> I must say that we don't use [insight stories] as much as we should. I mean one main obstacle or concern is that it's very difficult to find good insights for this for the area that we work with. Another issue is that we need to see broader picture, I mean if we look at Europe, Europe is very much becoming one market and if you wanna have insight we need to see how whole Europe works inside SKF. And also what is happening outside. [...] The main challenge is to get needs or to prepare good insights and we need to get a lot of materials or information from our colleagues. There's a lot of information that can be obtained via, you know, outside SKF so how other industries are solving the same issue. So it requires of course some time, it requires some network inside SKF to understand and prepare the insight which you can sell to the customer (FLM7, Industry Specific).

The respondents also often did not know how or what other units had done in regards to implementation of the programme, or what was going on in the SKF sales organisation in

general outside of their local unit. There is a nuance shift between respondents higher and lower in the organisation, where the higher ones tend to address the geographical organisational division more often. Three voices exemplifies this isolation:

> We don't know anything about the major challenges when it comes to what is happening in any of SKF's other global sales units inside other's countries outside of India. But by having more communication between units we could get more ideas about how to increase our business (SR10, India).

> The only people I have contact with are Polish in different business areas, but I think there has to be a silo mentality because every nationality is different, everybody works in different cultures (SR1, Industry Specific).

> I think that there are silos all over [...] I think all areas have been in isolation (SLM14, North America).

Some respondents also highlight the issue of internal price competition stemming from a lack of communication and coordination among the sales units. The following quote was a response to challenges related to the concept of taking control of the sales conversation:

> There are no obstacles to customers to purchase anywhere in Europe [...] now there is already some customers, especially those international ones, already use advantage of this open borders, they pick products where it is cheaper, they buy some products in some countries if they find that it is cheaper there, and some products in some other countries [...] maybe there should be more focus on harmonisation of prices in Europe [...] SKF sales organisation is still very strong country-by-country based. And not only Europe, the whole planet is globalising. We feel a lot of influence of internet sales nowadays it's no problem for any customer to order any products from Asia or USA or whatever. But SKF is still organised based on geographical aspects, so maybe we are one step behind the actual situation in the market (FLM28, CEE-MEA).

The interviews with Carlsson (2017) and Mannheimer (2017) also shed some light on this issue. The latter highlights that working closer together was one of the rationales behind the reorganisation of the previously fragmented sales organisations and that there are some general initiatives within the company to stimulate trans-divisional communication, but that new walls are always rising which constantly needs to be broken down. He also adds that perhaps the company has not been very modern when it comes to networking, so there are most likely room for improvement and that encouraging networking around the programme

as a goal of it could have been communicated more clearly to the participating managers (Mannheimer, 2017). The former of the two confirms that one purpose of creating the programme was to inspire a team spirit and community within the sales organisation (Carlsson, 2017).

Many respondents highlight networking as one of the significant advantages they have had from participating in the programme, especially from the physical sessions, and they are describing an organisation that is moving towards more networking. This is illustrated by two sales managers in their respective interviews:

> And especially our internal culture, that is another beast altogether. [...] We have come from a task-orientated, we sat in silos, we smashed the silos, and now we are starting... people are starting to find out how did other, other parts of the field but, the way we set up our training is still silo mentality, our HR is still set up for silo mentality which does not help our sales force that is very dynamic in regards to what it is trying to out in the field. [...] And I don't know what that's like in other parts of the world, but that is definitely from where I see my market, it's the way it is (FLM59, South-East Asia).

> It's true that we have in SKF been dealing in silos for long, but if you look at for example [my country's] organisation, the silo mentality is much smaller and there is a much better cooperation and talking between different departments, so the situation has certainly improved, but also in Europe different sales organisations are talking much more. But the silos are more on the global area between the larger regions, and there, there is big silos, and not very much has changed there. Where there can be a problem are when you are dealing with global accounts, and the silos can be a constraint, and in long-term it must be dealt with so it doesn't become a huge issue in the future (SLM7, South-West Europe).

The findings also highlight that various international and regional workshop groups have been formed, both centrally and regionally, in order to advance the knowledge and skills of the sales managers when it comes to the creation of 'insights stories' as well as to create a collection of stories for the commonwealth of the sales organisation. These groups do not include all first-level managers, but it is commonly highlighted also by first-level managers not participating in these workshops that they greatly value the initiative. Creating a centralised collection of these stories will allow them not only start working with them inside their team, but also learn more about how to develop them. To quote an illustrative example:

Right, well the insight stories in fact are being built as we talk in a larger sense and in an overall sense and, in fact I was just at an insight workshop this week. [...] It was an international group there were you know my counterparts from Germany, Italy, France, Croatia, certainly the US and Scotland. There were a number of us and we were trying to build some insights for a certain sale or insight sales type person at the customer side okay so generally I would say, and you probably know this, insights are being developed throughout the world so when we see those and have access to those we will try to use those yes (FLM60, North America).

The respondents are positive towards more interaction across the different parts of the organisation and highlight several benefits. It would allow them to discuss issues arising and best practices in the implementation process, for instance how to deal with customers who tend to turn to the manager during observation meetings, or what would be the best way to set up inspirational sales meetings. It would also allow them to exchange experiences from using the tools in practice and allow the managerial community to act as a source of inspiration allowing some individuals to take the lead and act as role-models for others, and as a source of knowledge when an individual needs to refresh something they learned during the training. One voice puts the value of receiving such network support this way:

If the sales guys feel confident that they get the support [of other units] behind them, we can expand on how we manage the territories. We can take on a lot more risk in chasing new business and also then making sure that we give a lot of the ownership of the existing business away from the sales guys (FLM57, South-East Asia).

Other voices highlight the knowledge-sharing benefits of networking, and especially one manager elaborated on its importance:

I mean insight selling is really a big part of doing business of OEMs and especially automotive. This is always a good entry point and I think we got a big… of course we have big challenge but also big chance because while we work with all these different OEMs and listening carefully to colleagues 'what is the topic at [inaudible], what is the topic at Volkswagen, what is the topic at Volvo' or stuff like that. If we have this exchange of information then it's much much more easier doing this insight selling while talking about… for example, having a technical meeting with BMW talking about friction reduction and stuff like that you can easily use good examples we had already had with other OEMs. And you often find the information part back if you 'hey have you seen the rapport of this

Daimler whatever and then they have achieved, they have managed better friction by using our product or solution' for example [...] But unfortunately we have to much work to do and we are lacking sometimes resources and you have to build up network in order to convince other SKF departments or other SKF employees to work together with me on my customer this is of course […] I'm spending a lot of time on that. (FLM5, Industry Specific).

Also units that are at the forefront of utilising the best practices within the programme see benefits of networking, and express a willingness to help others:

We were pretty much early adopters and I don't feel that it would help us as much as perhaps we could help other people, but I think we would be open to doing that. And maybe others could help us well because obviously we don't know everything. We could probably help others so there's probably a benefit in doing that (SLM12, North America).

While the respondents are positive towards more cross-organisational interaction, the most network-enthusiastic respondents are the sales representatives, often using a clear language in their responses:

I think that would be great because we all have similar issues. Very helpful. [...] It would be good to not only to meet Europeans, because we have had some meetings in our region, but from the whole area, or from different parts of the world (SR5, CEE-MEA).

I would consider it very valuable because I could get support and knowledge from others in SKF and develop. It would be a very valuable opportunity (SR11, South-East Asia).

When it comes to in what way the interactions and networking could best take place, the respondents are divided into two camps. The largest group suggests that face-to-face interaction would be the best way since you can actually see each other's body language, sit in groups, and interact in a more 'natural' way than online or phone interactions allow. They argue that this is more inclusive since everyone can participate, it is a more effective and rewarding way of communicating, even if it would cost more and take more time. One sales representative:

> Creating teams to perform a task would be the best way, or some kind of face-to-face meeting each year which would allow the sales representatives to share and develop. [...] I don't think it would take very much time, but it depends on the task (SR11, South-East Asia).

A smaller other group suggests interacting through online tools, such as WebEx or Microsoft Yammer and highlights that it would be a relatively low-cost way to interact and that it would take less time, while still being a more 'human' interaction than over the phone.

> Maybe a WebEx but I'm not sure. It's very expensive to fly people everywhere and we don't use Yammer that much. I know that a lot of people do, but we really don't. I think that WebEx is probably the best way. Maybe where we talk about Sales Excellence success stories and where we talk about what we have done, that might be how we could do it (SLM12, North America).

The ones suggesting a frequency most often reflect upon the amount of time that the various forms of interactions would take in comparison to the benefits, and arrives to the conclusion that larger events should be limited to a yearly frequency, while minor structured interactions could take place every few months:

> If you meet people face-to-face it is easier picking up the phone and calling them for support. The wider it is geographically and experience-wise, the better it would be. [...] Once or twice a year would be a good frequency, with different compositions every year (SR5, CEE-MEA).

The sales units within SKF are still relatively isolated due to a combination of the previous organisational fragmentation described more closely in the background subchapter, and a lack of a thought-through networking strategy. This isolation hampers the implementation of the programme in several ways; (i) reduced exchange of experiences and knowledge, (ii) lack of role-modelling and inspiration regarding how to develop and use tools in the programme, (iii) reduced access to relevant factual information, (iv) suboptimal coordination, and (v) limited discussion about what is the 'best practice' way to implement the various tools in the programme. There are some global and regional initiatives pushing for greater knowledge sharing and diffusion inside the sales organisation through the work with developing insight stories in various centrally and regionally organised workshops. However, the respondents would like more opportunities for networking, and suggest a yearly face-to-face meeting in some form, or interacting online through various softwares.

4.9 Leadership Under Change

This subchapter will go through the respondents' views on their own leadership role, investigate the leadership across various levels, and take a closer look at the respondents' motivation to change the way they lead.

The effect of the leadership within SKF on the implementation of the Sales Manager Excellence programme is a mixed garden of violets and roses, but also some neglected lilacs and wilted marguerites. An absolute majority of the interviewed managers has taken on the challenge of changing their leadership and express both appreciation of the new role, as well as the view that it is a crucial change. The programme has been relatively well-received and has gained a broad support within the managerial community. The sales managers almost in unison believe that the tools from the programme will generate better sales results and that the new leadership approach will improve the sales organisation. One manager shares its views on the new managerial role:

> I think a really important role, together with the management, that we give the platform to our people to really learn and to really implement such kind of strategies. I would say the sales manager has an extremely important role, because he is the one working very closely with the sales reps, the sales reps is the face to the customer. Our success in the company is the performance of the sales reps, so if I can influence the performance of the sales reps then my role, I would say, is a big one (FLM12, Industry Specific).

There is also a high appreciation and trust in the concept itself, the various parts of the programme are intended to support each other. The observation meetings, for instance, gives the manager an awareness of the sales representative's performance, which subsequently makes the coaching sessions more effective. As one sales manager highlight:

> Well the coaching role is number one of course and making sure that you get the message across and understood and implemented and to do that you have to have a good coach which is me and that is carrying me to success. [...] I think that we have to trust the process and if we trust the process it means that we implement the process which is to follow along and make sure we do the number of RAC-talks that we been asked to to and the number of observation meetings we been asked to to, keep the documentation current and just make sure we hit all the

marks that are expected and then in addition the coaching side… if we do all those things it should be successful (FLM58, North America).

There is a long row of 'violets and roses', managers who step up to their new role as sales leaders, and there are similar voices from all around the world. In all regions investigated in this research, those are the dominant messages. However, they are not only 'talking the talk' but also 'walking the walk' in terms of taking action and making behavioural changes practice:

> My role is to coordinate and synchronise the different levels in order to create a wholesome approach so that everyone uses the different tools to the same extent. [...] I plan to fulfil that role by discussions, communication is important. To get feedback from the sales reps about what works on the market, so that we know what is working and what is not. Then week-by-week, month-by-month, we can adjust our common strategy. My role is to communicate early and extract feedback (FLM25, CEE-MEA).

In the collected data, the node measuring implemented tools and practices contain almost five times as many references than the node measuring not implemented tools and practices. The former contains data from all 101 interviewees, while the latter has 72 sources. This means that even though the bar was set relatively high in terms of understanding and implementing the tools, 29 interviews did not have any of the tools yet to implement. For a specific tool to be coded as implemented, the interview subject needed to both show an understanding of the tool in question, as well as have taken concrete action in accordance with the programme content, and as a result from the programme. For instance, neither already using the RAC-talks tool prior to the programme, nor providing an enthusiastic description of insight stories but without actually using them, would qualify as an implementation. In addition, only making minor adjustments has not been counted as taking concrete actions. Looking at the 72 interviews that had non-implemented practices, the ratio between the number of references in 'implemented' and 'not implemented' suggests that on average, each manager has implemented about four-fifth of the programme. More details regarding the implementation can be found in *4.11 Transformation in Progress*. As the above quotes suggest, the general attitude in the managerial community is positive and determined, and the challenges they face are generally seen as natural obstacle to overcome on the road to a better situation. There are, however, also a small number of managers who send a less enthusiastic message:

I don't really see any responsibility, I will push for some topic but... but that's it, I... I don't have a, let's say a role I want to implement better because of the structure of our small organisation here (FLM4, Industry Specific).

They are often managers who experience significant challenges that they have difficulties overcoming, often in combination:

Yes, I have some problems in doing coaching, some personal issues I have to work on and I agreed with my manager and my human resources to make personal coaching [with the sales representatives] for me. That's why I'm going to train myself, my reactions and how I can change that (FLM15, CE-CIS).

Those challenges will be more closely described in other parts of this thesis, but they often include a combination of a wide variety of challenges ranging from severe lack of time, resistance from others, lack of support from the manager one level above, external factors, or context-specific factors such as industry or market. In the data, there is a tendency for the managerial support to become less strong as you look higher up in the hierarchy, in the sense that it is more likely that one of the second-level managers experiences low support than that a sales representative experiences the same. At higher levels, the challenges expressed are often time or geographical distance, and the kind of support that they express as lacking is practical support as opposed to, for instance, having a manager who is not standing behind the importance of the changes. Observation meetings are almost entirely lacking in higher levels, but coaching sessions, RAC-talks, and general following-up of the implementation are also relatively absent. It is common that the manager which is not receiving practical support from their manager expresses that they are satisfied with the level of support and that they do not need any additional support, and some also expresses that they do not expect it. A second-level manager elaborates:

My manager is not the least involved. [Interviewer: Doesn't he ask how the implementation is going at all?] No, they are mostly interested in what profits we make, what our total sales are, what is our [unintelligible] situation. It is those corporate KPIs that is included, and it is those that they follow-up on [...]. They are looking at a few KPIs that are very important which they use to follow-up. If they would have aligned them, that they were the right KPIs for the Sales Excellence, and that is basically the parts he should follow-up on, I think that would be great. My manager hasn't done anything, because he is only following-up but that is on the business side but he doesn't follow-up specifically how the

Sales Excellence is going. [Interviewer: How often do you have RAC-talks?] We never have any coaching talks. [Interviewer: So it is basically business as usual?] Yes, exactly (SLM10, South-East Asia).

The empirical data suggests a relatively high level of autonomy between the first- and second-level managers, as well as between second-level managers and their senior manager, as the following two managers illustrate:

> Not much actually, because I think somewhere my manager also feel that we are quite independent and we are quite mature to implement the learnings in our respective teams (FLM42, India).

> As needed. Me and my manager talk more about the financial and not so much on the implementation of the programme. I don't need my manager to go through the details that is my job (SLM11, South-East Asia).

The empirical data further highlight that there is a large difference in how different first-level managers report the implementation of the Sales Manager Excellence programme to their superior manager. While some have a systematic approach were they collect activities such as RAC-talks on a platform online, others makes no documentation at all. It can also been seen that there are significant differences in how second-level managers and their managers follow up and monitor the progress. Most often, the direct supervision of the implementation occurs during the few RAC-talks held between the managers, and their more formal and systematic supervision is often not utilised to monitor the progression of the programme implementation, nor to enforce it. The higher up the management tier ones looks, the lower levels of monitoring one finds, and following-up from the second-level managers' managers is often very limited. One first-level manager and one second-level manager share their experiences:

> We have, on a monthly basis, meetings with each sales guy, we are doing observation meetings and that we do. What we don't do, because I don't know and we are not explained but there are some RAC plug-in database I see, and we are not logged those things into the internal system, because we don't know how and we don't know if we should do it. It means we are doing the process but not supporting it into any system I would say (FLM20, CEE-MEA).

> I don't manage the results but I have emphasised to them that we need, to quite openly, to use this process. The number of activities I do is that (SLM9, North-East Asia).

Within the SKF sales organisation there is a broad support for the Sales Manager Excellence programme, both in terms of attitude as well as in practice. All across the world, there are voices of appreciation and commitment, and a clear determination to make necessary changes for what they perceive as the better. However, there are a few voices that are less enthusiastic, generally related to facing significant challenges, and there is a tendency for the practical support and follow-up to become less strong as you look higher up in the hierarchies.

4.10 Individual Factors of Acceptance

This subchapter will address what individual factors affect acceptance of the change programme. It is largely based on the respondents' view of what challenges they face in their implementation and will go through reasons for lower adaptability and resistance towards change.

The decisively most common implementation adverse individual factor is long experience. According to the collected data, it is among the most experienced respondents you find the greatest individual resistance to change, both in terms of attitude and capability. The picture is not one-sided, some of the most practically successful and attitudinal positive respondents can be found among the ones with more experience, but there is a clear pattern to be described. For instance, it is more common among the more experienced to express that the content within the programme is something which they have 'always done' and that there is nothing new, but when they are asked more detailed questions about the specific tools (see Appendix 2), it becomes apparent that they have not understood and are not using all the tools. It is also common that a manager expresses that the more experienced team members have difficulties adapting to the change or that they are rejecting the change altogether. When asked about challenges related to the proactive concept 'taking control of the sales conversation', one manager leading a partly experienced team gives the following testimony:

> Sometimes they might believe that it is being a little bit pushy and manipulative but that is absolutely not the case [...] it seems to be so that the people who have the most experience think so and I don't know if that is really ingrained in how they do it. It is like they can't do it any other way, they cannot simply make themselves do it (SLM12, North America).

Often the challenges are not related to adaptability but attitudinal. A manager shares its views on the matter, underlining a common attitude:

> I tend to have a fairly experienced group (laugh) errr… is working with me, and I think initially there's the impression that 'well I have been doing this for a long time, I know how to do this'... errm… and so maybe a little reluctant initially to consider, you know, a different approach, new ideas. [...] When you are dealing with a very experienced team, they walk into it with the idea that 'well I know how to do my job and I know what works for me' and… so initially a little bit of a reluctance to consider a different approach (FLM2, Industry Specific).

That attitudinal tendency subsequently makes the coaching-related parts of the programme the most difficult to put in practice with the most experienced team members:

> Yeah we, at the end of the day, we make the acceptance of the employee, I mean as I said they are aged 60 or older yeah, they are within their job 20 to 30 years and now we kind of want to coach them (laugh). But this is the biggest obstacles, definitely (FLM17, CE-CIS).

One of the most common ways to deal with that kind of resistance is to implement the changes in smaller steps, starting with the basics, and then gradually arrive at a full implementation:

> But I think that as they do get exposed to it they don't see it as confrontational but an opportunity to look at situations or a particular obstacle in a different way that they begin to see the value in the approach and in the discussions (FLM2, Industry Specific).

Another common way to deal with the resistance is to only implement the changes partly, giving the more experienced team members some permissible leeway, or to simply not implement them at all with that specific group:

> You want to just find a few success areas and kind of, use them to show how maybe things could have been done a little bit differently (FLM65, North America).

In the collected data, it was also commonly seen that team members with high levels of experience had an effect on less experienced members. For instance, in a manager-

subordinate relation where one was significantly more experienced than the other, that difference in experience in itself would often constitute an obstacle to change:

> The challenge is that they need to be honest with each other, and that might be difficult if there is a young salesperson that only worked for a couple of years and then there is alpha that is the boss or a person that has worked for many more years, and then it might be difficult for the young guy to give his reflections to the other person. [...] Some others unfortunately either doesn't show the drive [to change] or are not competent enough or a combination of both (SLM1, CE-CIS).

While experience is the most frequent factor affecting individual acceptance, there are other common factors as well that causes the respondents or their employees to feel reluctance towards accepting the changes brought by the Sales Manager Excellence programme. Often it can be related to an emotional resistance, such as lack of trust, insecurities, or feeling apprehension. Often these feelings would relate to the practice of a tool:

> I don't think all the people wants to be coached or have trust to, have trust to be coached. There are some people and maybe you met also, this kind of people that have the tendency to think that they already know the answers, there is no other way, and we better spend the time better than inquiring ourselves is it the only way we could think of the other and so on. So some of the people are, let's say, this kind of character that don't put too much trust and too much belief in the process (FLM27, CEE-MEA).

However, these feelings were also commonly related to change itself:

> Change is a difficult process, a transition, and it is uncomfortable. Some people will look at new things with apprehension whether it will work or not. Directly after the programme I went home and told my team what I had learned and intended to practice, but when I had RAC-sessions with them, they were uncomfortable (FLM44, India).

In addition to experience and emotional resistance of various kinds, attitudinal resistance where the respondents or their employees simply were not motivated to change was also a common obstacle to the implementation of the programme. The lack of motivation could stem from a variety of sources, such as perceiving the programme as just another 'flavour of the year', perceiving it as not suitable to one's context, or time constraints.

Part of it is the SKF culture like 'oh we have been through stuff like this before and it comes and goes' and they just feel like they are not gonna be accountable (FLM63, North America).

However, the most systematic motivational factor hampering the implementation was the incentives systems themselves. The empirical data shows that the efficiency of the Sales Manager Excellence program is impeded by the fact that many of the key performance indicators, by which the individual salesperson's job performance is measured thus subsequently related to things such as salary negotiations and bonuses, promote the status quo. Save for a few exceptions, none of the organisations' incentive systems have changed since the programme, nor do they reward change-beneficial activities. The systems still measure quantities such as the number of customer visits or new inquiries, as opposed to the quality of the customer visits in terms of preparation and customer-centrism, or time spent on individual development. The subsequent effect is that if an employee enthusiastically embraced the change programme and spent more time preparing the customer meetings, participating in coaching sessions, and familiarising itself with relevant insight stories, that employee would have less time to perform customer visits and other measured performance indicators, thus risk lowering its KPI-measured job performance. A second-level manager elaborates after being asked what the respondent considers necessary in order to succeed with the intended behavioural changes:

Coaching, clear management directive, and taking the pressure of immediate results and other sales KPI. With KPI I mean my sales manager will visit these customers i.e. x number of customers, he will bring in x number of new inquires, he will bring in this many new opportunities, you will send in your monthly report on such and such a day. If we gonna insist that they spend 10 percent of their time on these new things we got to allow that 10 percent will come out of the other sales performance indicators they are being judged on (SLM11, South-East Asia).

In addition, this means that there are conflicting messages from the organisation regarding what is important. A first-level manager exemplifies these conflicting messages in the following way when asked what the main challenge is in their every-day coaching:

Main challenge is probably getting the individuals to prepare for the sessions...or challenging them to do more customer visits at the same time when we ask them to prepare better for customer visits, to prepare for coaching meetings, to prepare

for monthly RAC-meetings with me so from their perspective allocating all this time for preparation (FLM36, South-West Europe).

And finally, it is common that the individual has not fully understood the tools and concepts from the transformational change programme. The novelty and scope of the programme's content sometimes causes misconceptions and confusion among the respondents, as illustrated by one of the respondents:

> Insight stories...? Like testimonial? We use testimonials all the time. We sell systems and when they are successful with one account we use them as a reference [...] We are very focused on building a library of testimonials and people who are willing to talk about how good SKF is. That is a primary focus of (FLM13, Industry Specific).

Needless to say, it is far from a clear cut between the various individual factors of acceptance, and between such a factor and other factors described in this chapter, which necessitates a certain amount of caution. It stands to reason that an attitudinal resistance could, for instance, simply be the result of an insufficient leadership. Likewise, it is not obvious where to draw the line between the individual and the environment. Not understanding a concept, for instance, could stem from a wide variety of underlying causes not related to the individual itself. What is clear, however, is that these aspects are systematically seen in the data and that they are affecting the implementation of the programme.

While not a one-sided picture, the most common individual factor of individual acceptance affecting the implementation is having a large amount of experience. Usually, such challenges are dealt with by implementing the changes gradually in smaller steps, or refrain from implementing them at all. Other common factors are related to emotions, such as lack of trust, insecurities, or apprehension, or they can be related to attitudinal aspects. Not understanding the content of the programme is also not an uncommon occurrence among the respondents in the collected data.

4.11 Transformation in Progress

This subchapter outlines the various respondents distinct accounts concerning the extent to which the implementation of the Sales Manager Excellence programme has gone so far inside their organisational units. The authors have focused on the progress with regard to five of the

main methods and tools that makes up the core of the transformational programme, this in order to facilitate a more holistic understanding with regard to the influence the factors, brought up in the antecedent subchapters, have had on the implementation and intended transformation. The programme outlines that the role and responsibility of the first-level managers after the programme was to lead the development of their sales people by having; (i) joint two hour (observation) meetings with an additional hour for coaching with each sales representative every quarter, (ii) RAC-talks one to two times a year, and (iii) having individual coaching meetings with each sales representative every month that last at last one hour with increased frequency when deemed needed.

4.11.1 Observation Meetings

The respondents gives very different accounts regarding their implementation of observation meetings creating a, to a certain degree, fragmented depiction of the implementation inside the sales organisation. From the data collected four main levels of implementation can be detected: monthly, quarterly, irregularly and ad hoc, and none. The interviews show that the respondents had not always understood the concepts in the programme which have lead to some sales managers confuse observation meetings with ordinary customer meetings they go together with the sales representatives. Due to these meetings to a large extents not being meetings for the purpose of observation they were grouped as sales managers that have none of these. Nevertheless, most of the respondents perform observation meetings with their sales representatives and express that it is something that they will try to continue having on a regular basis so also in the future. Out of these a clear majority have these meetings on a quarterly basis, however, there are also cases where the sales managers have implemented these type of meetings every month with their sales representatives, going well beyond what the SME programme asked of them.

However as stated, the implementation is somewhat disunited which emerges from the fact that even though most have started to have these observation meeting there is still a large share of respondents that so far only have had a limited amount of observation meetings. These respondents most of the time have only had these meetings on an ad hoc basis where they do them more based on when a good opportunity comes rather than having them scheduled regularly. A dozen of the respondents even state that they haven't even yet had one of these observational meeting together with their sales representatives at the customers. From the collected empiricals a picture emerge outlining what lie at the heart of the contrastic

implementation within the global organisation. The main reasons for implementation below the frequency defined in the programme was found to be: they feel that what they already do is enough, time and resource constraints, and some are waiting for their people to be trained first. Three first-level managers share their experiences:

> Thinking about practically I could probably try to do it on a bi-monthly I can try every two months to be… but I don't think they need… I don't know if they need that much more increased frequency so. Because it's not like I have… they are quite adapting to changing and they were already into insight messaging and they were already working a bit towards questioning the customer and pulling out any need so what I see changing is there preparational organisational part of their role and me being closer to them all on that. So you know I could try to increase the observation I could but as I said every quarter, that's 4 times a year with each person. I think that's good at the moment (FLM22, CEE-MEA).

> Challenges are of course the time, the location and the distance. This is my challenge right now because I can not meet my team every day [...]. We need a good planning and also need to see what we are doing and so we can reach our goal of having once in every quarter for the observation meetings (FLM51, South-East Asia).

> Since our guys have not gone through the Sales Excellence training it is a little bit tougher to introduce because the salespeople don't use the same language as us yet so when the people go through the training it will help because then we can use the same language when we talk about this Sales Excellence approach. Right now it is a bit complicated because they don't have the tools but they will have the tools (FLM64, North America).

From the collected data it can also be seen that some of the respondents, as part of their work, travel with their sales representatives on a regular basis and through this they have been able to overcome some of the main challenges, geographical and physical distance, that often face first-level managers with regard to implementing some of these meetings with their sales representatives.

> Yeah and I performed many observation meetings with my territory managers. Again what priority… my salesmen has about… well under my group we have about a thousand customers so we go a lot of small OEM which affords me the opportunity to not make just one or two observation calls when I travel but many times my sales guys are making three of four sales calls a day so I can do it over

the course of I can make multiple observation meetings in a single day (FLM64, North America).

4.11.2 RAC-talks and Coaching Meetings

From the respondents a similar trend to that one outlined for observation meetings appear to emerge. A majority of all the respondents express that they now have monthly RAC/coaching meetings with all of their sales people while most of the remaining respondents have these meetings quarterly. Only a few respondents convey that it is something they have not at all started with. The pattern that emerge is however that many of the respondents that had implemented the observation meetings to a lesser extent than defined in the programme also many times do less than was outlined the programme regarding RAC/coaching meetings as well. Many of the respondents also express that they also have more ad hoc and informal coaching many times with their sales people and that sometimes substitutes these kind of formal meetings defined in the programme, as illustrated by one first-level manager:

> That is why to have one meeting per month is too much, and then... I think it is better to have the meeting... this kind of meeting where we touch critical things with experienced people, having computer in front of us, I mean it is much better to have a beer probably [laugh]. That is my opinion (FLM38, South-West Europe).

From systematically going through the findings it becomes clear that many of the challenges or reasons behind the implementation of RAC/coaching meetings to the lesser extent than outlined in the programme are the same as those for the observation meetings.

> It is time management because also for RAC-talks we have to update and review the RAC-talks monthly and that is a challenge at the moment. Because before the business plan we followed up the business plan and reviewed the business plan quarterly and now it's monthly. So this is a challenge to review business activities once a month (FLM21, CEE-MEA).

> Well now that they have, remember number 1 as I said earlier they have not had the training yet. So I chose to begin with the RAC process first and now when they have a little more feeling of what's going on in their lives (FLM60, North America).

Interesting to note is also that many of the respondents on the questions how they will work with regard to these meetings in the future many of the respondents often use the word 'try'

when talking about their future meetings both when it comes to observation meetings and RAC/coaching meetings indicating that they see there to be a possibility that that plan or ambitious may go unfulfilled. As previously discussed, there are many different factors influencing the sales managers ability and capability to continue to implement the programme in the future and some sales managers have been better than others to accommodate for these changes and thus overcome these challenges. That leaves much to wonder if respondents will be able to fulfill that ambition of further implementation without making any other changes in their day-to-day work.

4.11.3 Customer-Centrism and the Insight-Approach

According to the findings from the respondents the scale and scope concerning the use of insight stories and inside the sales organisation is very much varying in regard to degree. A handful of the respondents do not really comprehend either the meaning or purpose of the stories and often equate them to a 'old' method that they had been using before which is not really the same tool. However, a clear majority of the people have shown their people examples of 'insight stories' and many times also actively work with them so that they can take them from theory to practice. There are also a dozen respondents who express that insight stories is nothing they work with and it is either because they do not feel that it can be used inside their organisation with their customers or that they are waiting to have their people training with regard to these concepts.

From the systematic analysation of the findings it becomes apparent that the top two challenges faced with developing the sales people with regard to this methodology is by a wide margin the learning curve of the people to this new way of working and the lack of information and knowledge to create these stories.

4.11.4 Proactiveness and Taking Control of Sales Process

From the interviews with the respondents it becomes clear that they work very differently with regard to taking control and being more proactive in the sales process with customers. About two-thirds of the respondents convey that that is something they are continuously working to improve and most of these perceive that they have a long way to go in order to achieve the desired skills within the sales team, others perceive that it is mainly about fine-tuning the work and trying to always improve. A third of the respondents, however, express that they are already good with regard to taking control and does not mention any need or

ambition for further continuous improvement. Many of those respondents who express that their sales representatives already are good at taking control are also many times the ones that have had much fewer observation meetings and have them ad hoc. Some of the respondents perception of the level in which sales representatives in their sales organisation take control might be based thus be based in a lack of awareness.

> I've noticed during the observation meetings that my team are not as good at taking control as I would like. I always thought they were really good at it but I learned that actually they need work. They are not as good as I thought they were (FLM64, North America)

Just like with training their people to become more customer-centric in the sales process and using insights the top challenge for the respondents when asked in relation to taking control and becoming more proactive in the selling is the learning curve of their people and many stress that they perceive that this change will take time to implement.

> It is a long process and it is important that it is followed up because otherwise people will revert to old habit and the change will die (SLM5, CEE-MEA).

The summary of the data collected depicts a relatively fragmented implementation of the core methods and tools addressed above. However, the main trend that can be deduced is that a majority of the respondents have to various degrees started to have these different kinds of meetings aimed at coaching and developing their sales force even though there are still a significant amount of the respondents that still express a degree of implementation that is either insufficient or lagging behind what is outlined in the Sales Manager Excellence programme. The same trend can also be seen with regard to the extent the first-level managers have started to work with their people to be more customer-centric and proactive. There can be said that those who have started and those that have not can be split into two equally sized groups which leaves much room for improvement.

5 ANALYSIS

This chapter brings forth the most important findings presented in the empirical chapter and analyse them in relation to the literature review presented in chapter two. In addition, the distinct findings presented in the empirical part are linked so asto give a broader context concerning what factors facilitate and challenge the sales transformation in a global industrial organisation.

The findings show a quite fragmented implementation of the teachings in the Sales Manager Excellence programme and thus also a diverse transformation of the global sales organisation approximately one year after the first training with the sales managers held. Behind these findings are the stories that portray the underlying factors that have influenced the success of the focal programme.

5.1 Planning and Roll-Out

There are several major factors affecting the implementation of the Sales Manager Excellence programme which can be traced back to the initiative's planning stage. The factor that has had the most impact is the resource planning of the Sales Academy. The roll-out model that the institution chose was a throughput-maximising effort where all available resources were allocated to training as many individuals as possible. The main activity once the rolling-out started was to receive untrained individuals in the various training locations around the world, train the individuals during the three-day course, output them to the online training, and then take in new untrained individuals. Its modus operandi has been similar to a mass-production plant using all its production lines to assemble knowledge and managers into knowledgeable managers, but without any capacity to process returns and end-user support needs. Figure 5 provides an overview of the training process.

Figure 5: The Training Process
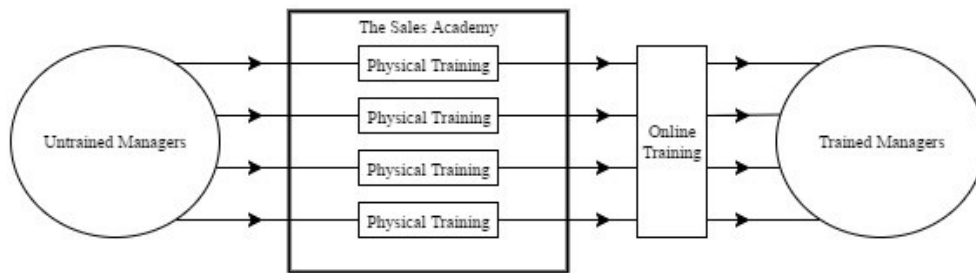
Source: Figure compiled by the authors.

The findings are uncontroversially in line with other researchers' findings in that they highlight the importance of post-sales training support (Bradford, 2014; Wilson et al., 2002). However, to approach such a complex sales organisation, across such a broad multinational span, and still hear a clear message, rich in detail, is unique. As described, the investigated SKF sales organisation spans across six continents and a vast majority of the world's countries, it is embedded in a wide variety of economies, national and local cultures, and due to its fragmentation it also varies in terms of corporate culture. It encompasses several distinct industries, varying degrees of maturity and previous training experience, a multitude of customers and customer relationship types, and a variety of organisational differences. It would stand to reason that the sales managers in an environment matrix featuring this rich array of aspects would express an equally complex picture of what needs and expectations they have in terms of post-training support. Yet the message conveyed is relatively clear in this aspect, the post-training support that the respondents need and expect is for the training institution to be active in answering questions, providing guides, sharing inspirational stories of successful implementations, and provide complementary training. It is a known fact that repetition and feedback benefits learning and transference (Chonko et al., 2003), hence if a proactive post-training support was included already at a planning phase, resources could have been allocated to have a presence in the participating managers' implementation, allowing the mitigation of many challenges faced in the implementation of the programme. In the implementation subchapter it is described how many tools were sometimes not used the way it was intended or not used at all due to misconceptions. For instance, it was common to equate the insight stories concept to a previous tool called 'success stories', observation meetings were sometimes equated to common customer visit with one's sales representative,

and taking control of the sales conversation would sometimes be equated to being dominant or 'pushy'. These misconceptions would all have been limited by repetition and a continuous presence of the training institution within the sales organisation. Almost all adverse individual factors of acceptance would have been limited by such a presence. For instance, the most significant such factor was a large amount of experience and it was common among the more experienced to express that the content within the programme was something which they had 'always done' and that there was nothing new, but when they were asked more detailed questions about specific tools, it became apparent that they had not fully understood the content. With repetition and access to a support function, increased understanding would follow. Naturally, the reasoning applies to all managers facing similar challenges, regardless of their experience. In addition, a support function would have been able to support managers across the complex organisation in how to use the tools in their particular context, such as special industry divisions, organisations that experience cultural challenges, organisations where the tools are particularly novel, organisations with idiosyncratic customer types or relationships, or organisations characterised by certain organisational structures. Managers expressing that there were language difficulties would have gotten the support they needed to fill in missing not-yet-understood information, and it is reasonable to believe that, in some cases, it would also have been beneficial in easing emotional resistance such as apprehension. Finally, repetition and continuous support would also have constituted a new communication channel as well as emphasised the manager's new role and reduce the risk to fall back into old comfort-zone behaviours. This research shows that a one-time training programme is not sufficient in efficiently creating effective change, notwithstanding the ambition that the support necessary would come from senior managers, and it provides a high-resolution picture of the underlying principles. Put simply, it is not enough to mass-produce knowledgeable managers but not provide support when the knowledge-part breaks or the finished product fails to function as intended. Nevertheless, like in all resource planning, there would have been drawbacks to this kind of resource allocation. Less resources would have been allocated to rolling out the programme, and considering the pressured situation caused by the delay in developing the sales representatives-aimed Sales Excellence programme, the detrimental gap described in the Sales Academy subchapter between that programme and the manager-aimed Sales Manager Excellence programme would have increased, subsequently causing some managers to put off their implementation further. However, for the reasons outlined through the content of this paragraph, the benefits of planning a post-training presence would most likely still have been greater. A slower pace in

rolling out the programme would also allow the trainers to become more comfortable with the material in the early training sessions, increasing satisfaction among the early participants, and a greater opportunity to adapt it to the various, often challenges-causing, contexts across the diverse SKF sales organisation.

As indicated generally throughout the empirical findings, and especially in *4.8 A Silo Mentality*, there are communicative needs within the sales organisation which are not yet fully met. Many managers and representatives states that they would require information which they have not received and which they do not know how to acquire, and many of them also have a lot to say that they would like others to hear, but those messages are often only communicated within the individual's own team. To highlight a few examples, a common account were that they did not know to what extent the implementation was mandatory, if they could turn to the trainer with questions or discussions about a situation they needed guidance with, or that they would like to send the message through the researchers to the training institution and SKF top management that they highly appreciated the programme, its content, and that they hoped for a perseverance in maintaining the programme. Similarly, the training institution had messages which they wanted to convey but which was not always fully received. For instance, their intention was that the second-level managers actively receive practical support from their managers, and provide practical support to their reporting managers, but that message has not fully been received and understood. There are active channels, for instance through e-mail and face-to-face interaction within the units, and a large share of the first-level managers have received relatively large portions of the messages conveyed through the programme, i.e. the content on a general level, which must be seen as a package of messages itself. Nevertheless, an efficient change management facing increased competition in a fast-changing environment demands, as this research shows, adaptability and rapid interactiveness. Many of the existing channels are conveying messages indirectly, which limits their speed and richness. For instance, the training institution communicates with most of the participating managers through the long path that are the various levels in the management chain, and through the training supplier. In the light of this, the various teams have a need for more and richer communication channels with the surrounding world, and satisfying this need would benefit implementation significantly. However, the focal organisation shows a tendency to move towards more networking, partly as a consequence of the training programme itself, for instance through the physical training sessions and the cross-organisational groups creating insight stories.

The development team was aware of the complex environment within SKF and that many within the fragmented organisation considered their environment too idiosyncratic for a joint training and development effort to work. That was one of the very reasons why the Sales Academy was not until recently re-established. Still, the team decided to go for a one-size-fits-all approach in order to transform the entire sales organisation and create a 'common language' within the organisation, as opposed to developing adapted versions of the programme accounting for the main complexities. As described in the empirical chapter, many managers have appreciated this uniformity, and some have highlighted it as one of the main benefits of the programme. Taking how reallocation of limited resources works into consideration, developing adapted versions would have caused additional costs that would take resources away from other, change-beneficial, areas, and delay the roll-out through a longer development time, as well as hamper the throughput capacity by making the training process less streamlined. However, the choice is not necessarily a binary matter. Developing versions of the programme with only minor adaptations, still relatively similar in terms of content, would limit the disadvantages. Creating various application models for tools that were considered a low-fit to an environment, for instance, would not necessarily take considerable resources. A relevant example is the observation meetings tool, which originally had only one application model, but was extended by 2-3 additional application models ('joint visits') during early deployment of the programme since it was not considered well-suited for the Asian market. A relatively light adaption which benefitted its implementation in the mentioned region. The managerial community active within specific industries has highlighted that the training material was heavily adapted to the general industry majority within the organisation, that many tools were perceived as not fitting their context, and express a sense of marginalisation. This 'division-centralism' can be traced back to the planning stage, where the automotive industry division was focused on a cost-saving programme and did not participate as actively in the early phases of the programme as other sales divisions. The intention from the developers was that the tools would be generally applicable to each context, and they have put the responsibility for the contextual adaption on the managerial community. While many managers have taken the initiative to adapt the tools to their context, the intention was not efficiently communicated to the managers which notably has lead to some confusion regarding to what extent the implementation of the tools, in the way they were described in the training sessions, is mandatory. In conjunction, these aspects have added to an impression that the programme content is a suit almost exclusively

fitted for the general industry divisions, which, in turn, has added to a not-invented-here phenomenon (see *2 Literature Review*). Since the programme was only to a limited extent adapted to, developed by, and communicated about with the Industry Specific managerial community, there is a sense among that community that this programme and the changes that the top management wants to bring about are not for them, a sense that is at its strongest within the automotive industry. This phenomenon has severely limited the implementation within that community.

The development team's ambition to build a trickle-down effect throughout a strong, interlinked, chain of managers from the top to bottom is in line with the findings of Hamlin et al. (2001) which has found that middle and senior management's active commitment, involvement, and participation are essential in actualising business transformation. Notably, since those in the upper tier have more authority and more resources, they are also in a better position to enact strategic decisions that can help to facilitate the change. It is thus of considerable value to include the entire management structure in the change as it can help build awareness and 'ownership' around the forthcoming change. Furthermore, by actively participating in the change, upper management demonstrate their own ability and willingness to make the difficult journey of change themselves, which signals a significant commitment to the intended transition. This contributes significantly to the legitimacy of the programme. As found in the empirical chapter however, the ambition has only partially been manifested in reality. It has been successful in aligning the second-level sales managers' attitudes, but the practical support is to a large extent yet to take place.

5.2 Cracks in the Link

As highlighted by the findings, there are apparent cracks in the multi-level interlinked chain of management support setup to facilitate the organisational change arranged to be attained through the Sales Manager Excellence and its close kin the Sales Excellence programme. The cracks are manifested in that the change, with regard to the second-level managers and their supervisors' roles, to a large extent have failed to materialise. In the absence of fully committing to making the demanding journey of changing themselves, a majority of them do not to a large extent display the role-model behaviour which would convey an undoubtful commitment to the organisational change. Furthermore, as active involvement and participation by upper management in the change demonstrates to the sales managers, and

also likely to the sales force, that the change is worthwhile (Jacobsen, 2013), the opposite can also be assumed to hold true.

The findings highlight and make it clear that the degree and extent to which role model behaviour have been adopted diminishes the higher up the management tier one looks. The second-level managers' managers have, for example, often made no significant changes with regard to their own role since the programme, contributing to a large extent to the relative absence of coaching, and even more so observation meetings, in the linkage between the second-level managers and their supervisors. Even though the second-level managers have taken on a more active role in the implementation than their own managers, they are also often far from the strong link in the chain they were intended to be. Since the programme, only a minority of the second-level managers have implemented dedicated coaching meetings to the degree that is asked by them in their new roles. Even though a few of the second-level managers have these sessions monthly and regularly, the more common occurrence is that they happen less frequently and sometimes on a more ad hoc basis. The fissures in the linkage become even more apparent when considering that a large majority of them have not started to have observation meetings on any regular basis either. Hence, most of the second-level sales managers and above have only travelled so far on the road to transformation. Kotter (1995) and Jacobsen (2013) underlines that strong commitment and support from senior and upper management makes up a vital cornerstone with regard to change efforts, and in their absence change will have a much tougher time taking root and staying alive. As such, in the absenteeism of more extensive participation, the level and speed of sales transformation, future and present, is likely to be adversely impacted.

The paucity of practical support in the second- to first-level manager linkage is reiterated by the findings in the first-level manager tier. Even though coaching meetings are something the majority of first-level managers have with their superior, and some on a monthly and regular basis, there are many which have them less regular and/or informal. Furthermore, observation meetings for the purpose of observing their subordinates is, as previously accentuated, not a practice ambitiously adapted in the upper management tier, including amongst the second-level managers. In light of this, many first-level managers are not receiving the practical support, in the form of dedicated coaching sessions and observation meetings, to the extent advocated in the Sales Manager Excellence programme. In the vacuum left by the paucity in practical support many of the challenges and obstacles facing the first-level managers in the

implementation often goes unnoticed or unresolved. This goes in line with the experiential learning theory which establish observation as a key element in individual and organisational learning as well as understanding (West, 2000).

Seeing that the findings depict an array of different thorny obstacles that lie on the path to change there is a significant need for support to resolve them so as to clear the path for continued transformation. For many of the first-level managers, the hurdles are issues relating to lack of time and resources and lagging competence when it comes to coaching. However, as outlined in the empirical chapter, several other hinders also litter the pathway to transformation. With the sales organisation's presence in a majority of the world's countries, an array of obstacles relating to operating in this environment follows. Many of the complexities of transformation inside a globally spanning sales organisation with units featuring different contexts and constraints, are hard to plan and address in advance. This is in line with Keupers (2011) who argue that complex change efforts cannot easily be planned since it can unfold in unpredictable ways. It thus demands a greater level of nimbleness and support in the implementation phase so as to be more responsive in solving hinders that emerge. Due to their impeding influence on the realisation of change, there is a significant need for these issues to be adequately dealt with. However, the absence of observation meetings is bound to lead to necessary understanding regarding the issues and complications facing their managers to remain incomplete, which is evident from the findings. Noteworthy, a 2009 survey of companies' change programmes by Moorhouse Consulting found a considerable gap in belief between senior and middle managers, as to the success of the change programmes they have initiated. While 37 percent of the responding board members believing that the intended benefits were actualised at least most of the time, only five percent of middle managers were of the same opinion (Stern, 2009). It highlights the incognisance generated by managerial distance. As a consequence, the lack of observation meetings, and thus awareness, is impeding both the second-level managers' and their managers' ability to help resolve the challenges faced by the sales manager in the implementation and also their ability to get a real understanding of whether the change is progressing as it should.

This issue is magnified by the fact that a systematic monitoring of the progression in is often not taking place. Thus, the tools that could help the sales managers gain a greater understanding of the implementation is left much unutilised, as highlighted in the subchapter *4.9 Leadership Under Change*. This is essential, as Senge (1990) highlights, the intended

change have a tendency to loses its momentum when people no longer perceive the problems as bad enough that it forces them to change. Thus, without sufficient supervision of the changes there is an increased risk that they will level off and even fail to materialise, depending on the stakeholders perceived urgency of the change in relation to other issues. Given the inherent resource scarcity of the sales organisation and the continuous pressure from 'hot stones' arising from both management and customers, there is a real possibility that the intended changes will lose prioritisation as their perceived urgency starts to fade in comparison to the other pressing issues.

5.3 Accommodating Change

The findings portray a growing pressure on the sales organisation to increase their productivity by delivering more for less, aligning with Ingram et al. (2015) depiction of the constant and increasing pressure on the sales units to deliver higher sales productivity. It means that sales organisations are left with mastering the difficult task of how to increase and reduce the top- and bottom line at the same time. There is as such, as can be seen from the findings, an increased need and pressure on the sales organisation to make sure that the changes are accommodated for so as to facilitate for a successful transformation. Becker et al. (2001), Kotter (1995) and Waterman et al. (1980) all emphasise the importance of aligning the organisation in accordance with the intended changes to achieve successful change. However, being generic models they do not adequately address how to make those accommodations in a complex and global organisation, where not only time and resource constraints are ever present, but also in an environment where distinct organisational structures and performance measurements all exert significant influence on the intended change.

5.3.1 The Constraints of Time and Resources

The complex and changing business environment needs an industrial sales force that works smarter, not harder. Given that research has found that in some cases, sales representatives who, on a weekly basis, receive half a day worth of coaching from their sales manager are twice as productive as other sales representatives (Chally Group, 2007), there is significant value to gain from sales leadership and coaching within the sales organisation. In light of this, the Sales Manager Excellence change initiative have great potential to strengthen the sales force and subsequently increase the organisational profits. However, as emphasised

previously, the sales organisation is under increased pressure to do so with decreasing resources which makes change management within the sales organisation a uniquely complex and difficult challenge. This is a depiction highlighted by Kotter (1995) who mention that lack of resources is one of the main reasons for change initiatives to fail. In light of this, despite the hearts and minds of many of the sales managers having been won over, reflected in their expressed motivation and realised need concerning the changes, the constraints of limited resources in both time and manpower, along with the 'distress to deliver results', many times means that the implementation of the changes often is left taking a backseat in their daily operations. For many the issue of time thus acts as an obstacle to deliver on the changes since they are 'squeezed' between different top priorities and responsibilities where one trumps the other. As such, the lack of time in their daily workplaces puts many first-level managers in a situation where they know that coaching and developing their people is the 'right' thing to do as it will save them time in the long-run by avoiding them having their sales representatives always coming back with the same questions, and that it would be a mistake to not change and coach their people since that would mean that they 'will never have enough time', however, time is simply not always there when the prioritisation of the short-term financial targets takes precedence. In the absence of adjustment, it is likely that what is seen as short-term sales productivity could come at the expense of long-term sales productivity. This since the message echoed from the upper management tier is very much on financial results and targets which must be balanced along the constant influx of 'hot stones' which needs to resolved with customers since the sales organisation is the 'firewall' standing between SKF and the customer. There is thus a constant pressure from two equally demanding stakeholders for the constant delivery of results. In that demanding environment, the calls for change fades to the voices from management demanding results and customers demanding assistance. This leaves change the second place priority. These findings correlate with Simons' (2000), who argues that empowered employees are continuously making decisions balancing between various goals such as short-term and long term profits, and as highlighted by Hanna (1986), long-term development, and thus profit, is often at the losing end of that battle. Furthermore, even though many stress that their ability and proficiency to coach is something that will come with practice, clear warning signs flash raising flags of concerns as time is shown to have a tendency to push the managers back into managing mode, and thus revert back into old habits. As such, highly pervasive and significant challenges for most managers in this study are the issue of time and the individual manager's competence and skills with regard to coaching, something which is still a weakness for many,

notwithstanding that some regions are better than others at freeing up time within their organisation (see *5.3.2. Aligning the structure*).

As illustrated by the findings, the main reason for the weakening of the interlinked chained, aimed at creating a trickle-down effect of the changes, is the time the second-level managers and upper management can dedicate to the change. As seen, the changes and intended changes for the second-level manager takes up significant time and it is difficult for the second-level manager to prioritise the change over many other tasks. The second-level managers and upper tier managers have a variety of demanding responsibilities which are taking up their time and energy. As such, an ideal level of support is hard to come by in relation to this. The fact that their sales managers are disputed over a large geographic area which many times extends over several countries is not making it easier. They are thus unable to dedicate sufficient time required for themselves to adopt the changes, which would otherwise put them in a better position to support their sales managers, allowing them to provide the assistance necessary for efficient transformation. In light of this, there is an unserved need for support both expressed but also latent as sales managers still struggle with challenges relating to the implementation. According to Smith et al. (2015), some organisations utilise middle managers as agents of change in the absence of a specific change agent network, however, as evident from the findings the second-level managers have not been able to shoulder that role due to their own demanding situations. This leads to a weakening in the chain which also leaves the implementation hanging in the air to some extent, as obstacles remain unresolved.

As has been extensively covered, time and resource constraints is not only the everyday reality of work in the sales organisation, it is also one of the greatest challenges standing in the way for successful transformation. Being such a profound obstacle blocking the pathway to transformation it stress the importance of creative solution making and structural alignment so as to overcome, or at least minimise, the impact they have on the intended changes.

5.3.2 Aligning the Structure

As highlighted, the initial training and management commitment is not really sufficient by itself to pave the way for successful change. There are still many unresolved obstacles that hinder the transformation and there is often limited accommodation for the change which is very much apparent throughout most of the organisational structures as the change is tried to

be 'squeezed' into their organisation without much other changes to allow it to happen. Thus, besides the need to remove obstacles that lie on the path to transformation, there is also a necessity of aligning the systems, processes, procedures so as to accommodate for the change. In light of this, there is a need for more than verbal support from upper management despite many first-level managers' proclamation that it is on their own 'shoulders now to implement'. This further highlights the need for a strong interlinked chain of support. As upper managers having more resources, network and authority, as highlighted by Jacobsen (2013), they are also in a better position to deliver on that needed agility as challenges and obstacles that relate to the complexities of not only significant resource constraints however also issues pertaining to such things as language, customer, and contextual differences, that have emerged during the transformation. There is thus a need that the accommodation for the change does not only encompass the first-level managers, however, the second-level managers and their managers as well. That means creating more room for middle managers to be able to manage and engage their sales managers. That would allow for the chain to be strengthened and create space for further support to solve the current uncovered and unresolved obstacles, and also further assistance needed for the successful implementation and subsequent transformation.

From the findings it is apparent that some regions have been better at accommodating for the change. SKF USA early on decided to reorganise the organisation by reducing the number of sales representatives under each first-level manager's supervision, so as to free up time for each manager to be able to shoulder the role of leading the development of their sales representatives. The largest obstacle for achieving the transformation outlined in the Sales Manager Excellence programme is often time, and by making the organisational change, the regional sales organisation has been able to better overcome one of the obstacles most pressing issues, with regard to the transformation ambitions. However, their accommodation should be seen as an exception to the rule rather than the general trend. In the rest of the global organisation, the efforts made to accommodate for the change have been mostly individual and ad hoc efforts to delegate more of their responsibilities, so as to free up the time required for the implementation of the programme. Hence, the findings show that little progress has actually been made in the other regions with regard to alleviating the constraining force time has on the implementation. Constrained resources are the norm for most sales organisations and will likely be even more so in the future, as argued by Ingram et al. (2015). In light of this, the sales organisation needs to become even better at overcoming these challenges that arise from limited resources, so as to be able to deliver successful sales

transformation in an ever increasingly changing world. The sales organisation must thus to a greater extent master organisational agility. It means that it must master continuous reconfiguration of internal resources so as to optimise the integration and building of internal resources, in this case tacit and explicit knowledge for the development of sales representatives (Teece, 2014).

5.3.3 Incentivising Change

Research has shown that the transfer of what is learned during training is also very much dependent on the transfer climate, which includes how well incentives align which either encourage or discourage the use of the skills learned during the programme into the daily job. The findings show that there is a mismatch between some of the key performance indicators, on which the individual salesperson is assessed, and the changes defined in the programme. There is thus conflicting messages coming down to the sales representatives from management. On the one hand the programme is trying to push the representatives to prepare much more prior to customer meetings, and on the other hand the KPIs are measuring them on the amount of customer visits they perform. The mismatch has a significant influence on the sales manager's ability to fulfil its role in transforming the sales representatives since it is dependent on the willingness of the sales representatives to drop old behaviours and methods and adopt new ones. Given that the KPIs are structured around motivating old behaviours it becomes an obstacle in motivating new ones. The findings are in line with Noe and Schmitt's (1986) research which indicate that people many times will abandon and disregard new learnings due to amongst other lack of motivation. Gollenia and Uhl (2016) further argue that the failure to align the incentives with the overall change effort is one of the main reasons why change may fail to be released and sustained. There is thus an increased need to accommodate and find strategies for facilitating the expected increased transformation needs inside the sales organisation in the future.

5.4 Organisational Constraints on Change

As highlighted by the findings, other organisational and contextual factors can exert significant influence on the level and speed of the implementation and its intended change. From the findings it can be detected that the decentralised sales structure conjointly with budget considerations influence the first-level managers ability to transform into its new position as leader of current and future sales transformation inside its team.

As highlighted in the subchapter *4.6.2 The Degree of Novelty*, the decentralised structure of the sales organisation has lead to a difference in how equipped managers throughout the organisation are, to take on the new role as to leading the advancement of their sales force. By pushing out the responsibility for the development and training of the sales force into the individual sales units, senior management is able to ensure good economisation within the different sales units and thus safeguarding against any wasteful spending, including investments in trainings just for the sake of it. However, since investments in training is chewing away from the bottom line, units and regions have been in unequal positions to invest wide-spanning resources into the training and development of their employees. As such, given the central concept of coaching in the Sales Manager Excellence programme and in the sales managers new intended roles, some are more accustomed to the method than others. Nevertheless, many express that it is not a competence they really have, at least not yet. In light of this, and given that the successful implementation depends to a large extent on the individual sales managers having the ability and competence to coach their people it is thus key that those skills are cultivated. However, the findings affirm that some regions and organisational sales units that are relatively small have a much tougher and uncertain journey towards transformation, and that is rooted in the lack of experience and training with regard to the method and practice of coaching. Some of the second-level managers in these smaller organisations expressed that it is a major concern they have and they also expressed the potential need for external coaches to be able to implement the change in their sales organisation. However, given that these are still small organisations which do not have the same resources as others, it poses a dilemma which is likely to impede the effective implementation of the intended changes. In light of this, with various starting points in their path to transformation and given their individual financial strength to facilitate that change, some organisational units have a more uncertain future to go without any further assistance. Due to the costs being allocated in the individual units, it will thus have an impact on the change. These findings correlate with Hanna (1986) in that given that the individual units have both operational and strategic responsibilities there is constantly a balance between short-term and long-term goals and profits and considering that the control systems are short-term accounting-driven they tend to trump the long-term institutional development.

This picture by Hanna (1986) is reinforced by the findings that show that certain regions decided to freeze the Sales Manager Excellence programme's sibling programme for the sales

force due to budget restraints. The findings show that the freezing creates greater difficulties for sales managers in transforming their organisation and sales force due to them not having people that have been trained adequately for this new transformation the first-level managers is intended to lead. Furthermore, since the coaching from the second-level manager is often limited it is important to make the right investment into programmes to develop the first-level manager's own coaching competencies so as to move them from managing to leading and coaching. This is essential since the success of the transformation depends on the extent to which this new way of guiding the sales force becomes the flesh and bones of the organisational body, something which it appears to not be in large parts as many still emphasise on practicing and making it a habit.

As highlighted in the findings, the sales organisation has pressure on it deliver both higher profits as well as keeping its costs down. It is thus not uncommon for saving requirement coming down from management to rain in on costs in these units, which the findings show that all of them have. However, this added pressure to reduce costs leads to costs being cut from the training of people as the findings clearly showed happening. This findings correlate with the Mohrman and Worley (2009) and Jones (1984) that training costs are often one of the first things to be cut in more economically tough times.

Even though there are significant advantages of having budgets allocated in each region it also has an impeding effect on the intended sales transformation. Since the units are judged on their short-term profits investments into training is not always prioritised. The hunt for short-term sales productivity thus often has adverse effects on the investment into long-term productivity.

5.5 The Individual Decision

At the core of organisational change lies the individual's choice. Every involved individual makes a choice to what extent a change will be disregarded or accepted, and at the core of every conscious decision lies a narrative, a story. The narrative is the way we cognitively and emotionally understand the decision in front of us, it is the very *meaning* of it. One of the narrative's components is legitimacy, and that can have various sources. Legitimacy, put simply, is the reason fueling a decision (Landau et al., 2014). There are several sources of legitimacy related to the Sales Manager Excellence programme. One of the major sources for

the participants in this study is the sense that the SKF top management are investing in the managerial community, i.e. in the individual. The programme is perceived as containing the very latest in best practice selling techniques, based on solid research and experience, and hence it is seen as a welcome attention from the top management tier that will allow the respondents to develop and become more skilled managers. Another source of legitimacy is the narrative regarding the rapidly changing market with fierce and increasing competition which was signalled as one of the rationales behind putting together the change programme. This is a very strong source of legitimacy because it is something which many managers can see in their daily work and which is related to a sense of urgency, hence it applies to their reality in a very concrete way. Put simply, it makes the programme seem important. There are also sources of legitimacy which relates to influence. It would be reasonable to believe that with a less instructive and authoritative leadership, a manager would lose influence to the benefit of the reporting employee. Au contraire, with observation meetings, RAC-talks and coaching meetings comes knowledge and influence. The manager gains a greater access to rich-in-detail market knowledge than they had previously, such as first-hand information regarding the important issues for the company's customers, challenges they face, and what 'is going on' in the market in general. The manager also gain access to richer information about the sales representative, such as its behaviour out 'in the field', what its relations to the customers are, and what it perceive as its struggles and strong sides professionally. The manager also uses these tools to guide and influence the actions and beliefs of the employee. In essence, there are many reasons why the managers are generally winners from the change, and that is a positive motivational factor that benefits transformation since it makes the individual more likely to decide on a high acceptance for the change. In line with this reasoning, the managers who does not see these benefits for various reasons, or perceive themselves as losers from change because they, for instance, would need to give up an important customer account, are also less likely to show a high acceptance for change.

As described in subchapter *4.8 A Silo Mentality*, the sales organisation displays a low level of networking. The respondents saw several advantages with increased networking activities, such as being able to discuss issues arising and best practices in the implementation process, exchange experiences and knowledge of the change programme, inspire each other, and for some to take the lead and act as role-models for the others. Id est, the respondents want to diffuse existing knowledge, as well create new. As emphasised by Cowan & Jonard (2001) and Grant (1996), knowledge creation and diffusion are network dependant activities, and the

individual acts both as an agent for knowledge creation and as a repository for the same. Knowledge is created by the individual in two ways; (i) by gaining experience from using knowledge in practice, and (ii) by recombining received knowledge with existing knowledge within the receiving individual. Applying knowledge in practice results in various outcomes and degrees of success or failure, constituting a creation of knowledge which the individual agent did not have previously. Similarly, receiving knowledge and process it using other received or experienced knowledge re-combines it into knowledge that was not in itself received from an external source or discovered through practical application. This means that the result of networking is a rapid increase in the total knowledge stock of an organisation (Cowan & Jonard, 2001; Grant, 1996). In the light of the collected data, the limited networking among the sales managers within the organisation also limits knowledge creation around the Sales Manager Excellence programme (such as best practices in implementation, experiences, etc.), and adding insult to injury, the knowledge which was never created can not be transmitted and applied to yield experience or re-combined into new knowledge, subsequently the adverse impact grows with time. Knowledge is created and diffused within the network, however, all nodes within a network does not have equal access to knowledge, and it is not sufficient that it is possible to plot a pathway between two nodes for knowledge to flow between them efficiently. Empirical studies has shown that distance within a network has a detrimental effect on knowledge flows (e.g., Jaffe et al., 1993). Knowledge is transmitted through interactions, and the number of interactions necessary for knowledge to travel from one node to the other constitutes the distance. Like an echo, it loses its strength and richness in information with every bounce. As a practical example, it is not enough that a sales manager in North America has experiences in using insight stories for a sales manager in South-West Europe to benefit from that experience efficiently, notwithstanding that they are connected, if the pathway linking them runs through multiple nodes (such as other managers). Proximity is key in efficient knowledge diffusion, hence network configuration matters for rapid knowledge creation and diffusion. This is especially true for tacit knowledge, which by definition is difficult to transmit. It stands to reason that a relatively large share of the knowledge created by practicing the tools within the Sales Manager Excellence programme will be tacit. Furthermore, network connections are most likely to happen between nodes that have already interacted, and is unlikely to happen at random. Not contra-intuitively, a sales manager is more likely to interact with a colleague that it has had previous interactions with, for instance through the physical Sales Manager Excellence training sessions or a joint teamwork, than to pick up the phone and call a random other

manager when it has knowledge to request or share. Thus, stimulating the first contact between managers builds the internal network, beneficial for the transfer of knowledge into practice as well as for the development of implementation best practices (Kop, 2012; Cowan & Jonard, 2001; Grant, 1996; Jaffe et al., 1993). The individual functions as a recipient, processor, and transmitter of knowledge, and MNC knowledge research such as Minbaeva et al. (2014) shed some light on this role. According to Minbaeva et al. (2014), which builds upon the concept of *absorptive capacity* as the ability to evaluate, assimilate, and apply new information, previous training is one of the significant factors that determines the efficiency of this role. However, the underlying principles explaining the correlation is not elaborated upon in their research. This research shows that the respondents' lack of previous training related to the their role as leaders has had a detrimental effect on their ability to assimilate and apply the leadership related knowledge from the Sales Manager Excellence programme. Many managers expressed that they were unaccustomed to coaching and that they had difficulties adapting to their new leadership role since it was novel to them. Nevertheless, this research also shows that previous training can also have an adverse effect on assimilation and application of knowledge since it was also common among the managerial community that previous training caused confusion. Many managers equated the tools from the Sales Manager Excellence programme with similar tools that they had acquired from other programmes, the 'success stories' were, for instance, equated with insight stories. The effect of previous training programmes is thus ambiguous and can work both beneficially and adversely.

6 CONCLUSION

The following chapter answers the stated research question and presents conclusions drawn based on the analysis and the empirical findings. It is divided into three subchapters; Findings and Theoretical Contributions which addresses the research question and contributions of this research, Managerial Implications which offers managers guidance with regards to this research, and Recommendations for Future Research which suggests directions for future research within the field.

6.1 Findings and Theoretical Contributions

This research set sail to explore the vast seas that is Change Management. It narrowed its exploration to a largely uncharted gulf where the research question *"what factors influences the success of a global change programme within the complex environment of a worldwide MNC?"* guided its search for new knowledge. Homeward-bound, it carries several mapped-out findings that will contribute to the body of knowledge within the selected area.

Change management is difficult, and change management aiming to achieve a cultural transformation in a complex environment, replacing a broad range of old practices with new ways, is nothing but a Herkules' task. Investigating the factors affecting the implementation of the Sales Manager Excellence programme has generated several findings and theoretical contributions to the field of change management. Some of them revolves around the role of the training institution, others around dealing with a complex environment, and yet others around the individual's acceptance of change.

6.1.1 The Training Institution

Some of the most significant and unique findings revolves around the role of the training institution. Investing in training human capital is similar to most other investments, it needs to be maintained not to lose its value. When investing in real estate, for instance, it is economically sound to also allocate a stream of funds to applying paint, changing light bulbs, and once in awhile upgrade the heating system to a more cost-efficient one. In terms of change management and training, that maintenance is spelled support and retraining. An active support function ensures that the practical and theoretical knowledge conveyed is properly received and applied even when that knowledge faces challenges such as broad

contextual diversity, confusion with previous knowledge, and comfort-zones. All managers do not actively request the support that they need, and the ones who try do not always find the appropriate channels to communicate this need, which means that in order to effectively create change across the field, the training institution need to maximise its availability by being both proactive and multi-channelled. Repetitio mater studiorum est, that repetition is the mother of learning is a saying old enough to be engraved in stone and summarises the second of the parts constituting this role-defining finding. Knowledge is a fugitive and living matter, it is under constant change and escapes the mind easily. A training institution that only provides a certain set of knowledge once and then support it but do not actively refresh and re-establishes that knowledge will soon find scarce and out-dated knowledge to support. Thus, effective change management require a continuous cycle of training, support, and retraining. As a practical example, Figure 5 from *5.1 Planning and Roll-Out* depicting the current SKF training process has been adapted to reflect and illustrate this finding which can be seen in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Cyclic Version of the SKF Training Process
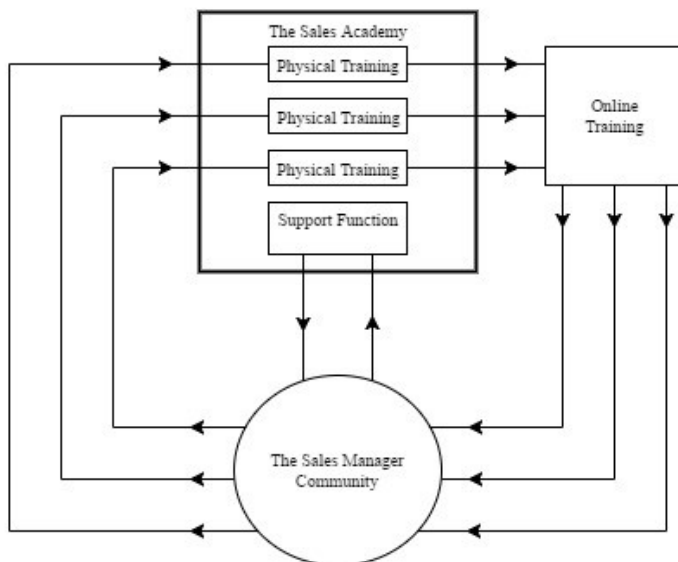
Source: Figure compiled by the authors.

Such a cyclic training process would also support networking through its regular training sessions where participants can create new links, which is the subject of the next finding. Actively encouraging networking is beneficial for change, agents within the network will

share and process knowledge, creating new knowledge such as a best practice in implementation, as well as act as inspiration and role-models to other agents within the network. A network of inter-connected agents will also act as an extra safety net when other mechanisms fail to support implementation, and as a relief of these mechanisms. Well-developed networks will not only allow information to flow among the implementers, but also allow information to flow in and out of the training institution acting as a rich communication channel through which the training institution can hear the voices of the agents 'in the field' as well as broadcast the messages it wants to convey, allowing it to act even more efficiently in its role.

Another finding of this research is that an active and thought-through communication plan, relying on a stakeholder analysis as well as a channel analysis, outlining the communication between the training institution and its surrounding organisation has a significantly beneficial effect on change management. The lack of such plan added to the broken chain of support affecting the middle-management tiers, hampering implementation in these tiers but also in tiers below and thus leaving several tiers without practical support. An effective communication plan would also allow the training institution to detect and address such issues arising at an early stage. In addition, the not-invented-here phenomenon within the Specific Industries is in part caused by a sense that the content of the change programme was not developed with their contexts in mind and thus does not apply to them. Hearing that the content indeed was developed for their context as well and that also their top managers were supporting the full implementation of the programme would have limited the extent of this issue. Effective communication would, however, not have fully avoided the challenge. The responsibility for contextually adapting the tools was fully left to the managers in each context, which lead to some re-inventing of the wheel, but most importantly, the failure of some implementers to adapt the content as well as rejection of some of the changes. In a highly complex environment, communicating alternative application models where the basic concepts are the same but where the practical application is adapted to the most common minority environments, is a valuable support in implementation efforts.

It is this thesis' finding that the strong legitimacy of the programme has benefitted implementation greatly, fueling many managers' decision to accept, endorse, and actively participate in creating change. Some of the strongest contributors to this strength was the inter-linked chain approach aimed at creating a trickle-down effect throughout the managerial community, the down-to-earth narrative around the fast-changing market with increasingly

tough competition, and the perceived increased influence stemming from more knowledge and a more guiding leadership role. That lead to a high attitudinal support across the managerial community. This legitimacy has, nevertheless, been weaker within the Special Industries due to the not-invented-here phenomenon found within those divisions, which has had a negative effect on the efficiency of the organisation's change management within those divisions. In the light of this, it must be considered established on a concrete and detailed level that legitimacy play a large role in change management.

Provided that more resources are not easily available, the training institution's larger role found necessary in order to effectuate efficient change management requires a reallocation of resources within the existing budget. A continuous cycle of training, support, and retraining as well as measures to promote networking, communication and adaptation requires resources in order to be effective. Such resources can be made available by a slower but team-wise roll-out. If resources dedicated to train new programme participants were redirected to support the managerial community post-training, that would slow down the pace and limit the training institution's throughput. However, if the training sessions were scheduled team-wise so that the members of each unit were trained in parallel, the slower throughput would not have significant detrimental effects on the implementation since it takes place mainly on a team basis. The financial model where the training institution funds the development of the programme while the participating local organisations fund the roll-out phase has been working well. It has contributed to a sense of value for the participants, beneficial for the implementation, as well as alleviated a large part of the financial burden from the training institution. The high participation in the programme also speaks for the success of the model. Nevertheless, it has also had the consequence that financially less strong units has seen a larger impact from training their representatives, to the extent that one region even halted their training. Needless to say, it has had an adverse effect on the implementation in that region. A financial model which ensures that all regions have the financial means to participate, for instance by a slightly higher fee for financially strong regions subsidising a lower fee for financially weaker ones, would be advantageous in the effort to create change.
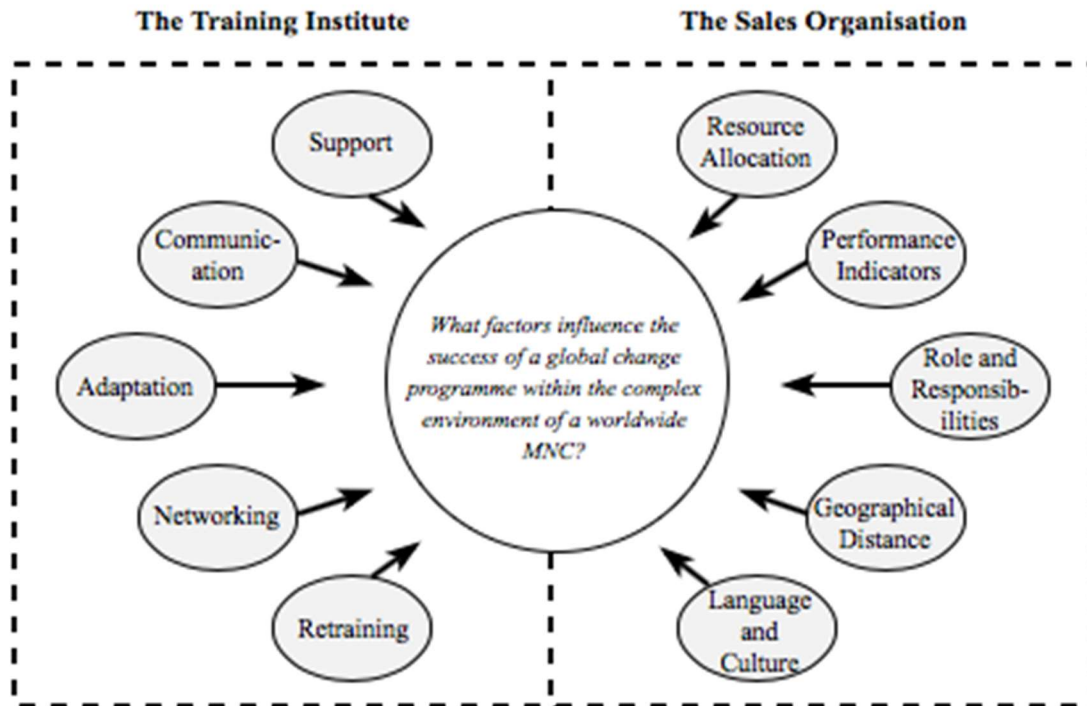
6.1.2 The Organisational Structure
This research has also made several findings related to the organisational structure. The way an organisation is structured significantly impacts the success of change management efforts, and the greatest impact found in this research stems from the issue of time. In an

organisational environment where implementers are under a high pressure to prioritise their time, new practices face tough competition. This is especially true if the new practices are perceived to take more time than the old ways, even if so only during an initial transition period. Organisational factors, such as the number of employees and the amount of administrative work, often constitutes a high workload which prompts a pressing need to prioritise what tasks to perform, to what extent to perform them, and what tasks to postpone or reject. In that prioritisation, other tasks often take precedence, subsequently leading to a hampered implementation. Geographical distance is also an organisational factor that has been found significantly effecting change management efforts. Not being present naturally hinders practices which require presence, such as the observation meetings practice, but an absent manager also has less knowledge and influence in the daily activities of a unit. The absence relates to a certain degree of autonomy for the unit in which the manager is less active, in turn limiting that manager's ability to effectuate changes and act as a role-model for other employees within its unit.

In this research it was also found that it is important to align an organisation's incentives systems with its change efforts. If an organisation has effective incentives systems that measures and rewards behaviours which competes with the desired changes, change management becomes less effective. This effect stems both from the individual's own interests as well as a mixed message from the organisation where the intended implementer hears a message from the training institution and other actors within the organisation, such as the top management and its manager, that the changes are of importance and urgency. Via the incentives systems, nevertheless, it is indicated that other things are more important at the end of the day, which leads to a conflict of interests that limits the efficiency of the change management efforts. In this research, the workload, geographical distance, and the design of the incentives systems in conjunction constitutes major factors determining the organisational capability for change facing external pressures such as a fast-changing market and increasingly fierce competition.

Figure 7: Factors Influencing the Success of a Change Programme in a Global MNC

The Training Institute

The Sales Organisation

What factors influence the success of a global change programme within the complex environment of a worldwide MNC?

Support

Communic-ation

Adaptation

Networking

Retraining

Resource Allocation

Performance Indicators

Role and Responsib-ilities

Geographical Distance

Language and Culture

Source: Figure compiled by the authors.

The figure shows the various factors which are influencing the implementation of the global change programme within the complex environment of an MNC operating in most parts of the world. It can be seen that the factors do not only pertain to the change agent, in this case the organisation's training institute, but also factors intimately linked to the sales organisation and its global presence. Together they connect and provide a framework of factors important to consider in order to successfully implement a global sales programme in the global organisation.

6.2 Managerial Contributions

This study highlights many important aspects for a managerial team to consider in its ambition to conduct efficient change management. The first success factors is found already in the planning phase. The successful managerial team makes sure to create a communication plan, perhaps making use of one of the pre-existing communication templates, or proceeding on their own. Either way, the communication plan compiled should address questions such as who the stakeholders are, what influence they have on the success of the project, what their communicative needs are, what messages does the programme need to convey, what channels does the programme need in order to communicate efficiently, who is the main responsible for what communication, and what timing and frequency is best for the various messages

transmitted and received. It is also important for such a team to analyse what sources of legitimacy the intended change could have, and for whom. For instance, how does one make the important stakeholders realise that they are, in fact, winners from the change? What problem descriptions are the most relevant for them, are there any urgent issues the change might address? And how will the project win and display the support from stakeholders such as champions and top management? Furthermore, when creating the content, it is beneficial to involve managers from senior positions within all the affected divisions at an early stage in order to source legitimacy from them, but also in order to make sure that the content, as intuitively as possible, can be applied into various context. During the planning stage, it is also important to include what support the intended implementers will benefit from. If the changes are complex and extensive, the implementers will need a pro-active and multi-channeled support, for instance through the use of internal change consultants that will be available through channels such as e-mail, phone, various interactive computer softwares, and/or intranet forums answering threads, as well as actively ask questions and initiate other change-beneficial interactions with the implementers. A 'how is it going?' can go a long way. Other tasks could include providing guides, sharing inspirational stories of successful implementations, and provide complementary training. Such agents would act as an important communication channel, keeping the project management aware of the project's status. A complex and extensive change project is likely to require repetition in some form, and the successful managerial team recognises this. Depending on the nature of the situation and the needs of the organisation, such repetition could range from a simple re-run of the most difficult parts of the programme to, for instance, a yearly event where the change agents can attend courses to refresh, update, and deepen their knowledge as well as create networks among each other. Finally, a managerial team that wishes to compile an efficient change programme can find inspiration in the financial model that SKF utilised in the Sales Manager Excellence programme, where the training institution financed the development and the participating regions financed the roll-out phase, save for a mechanism that ensures all regions' or divisions' ability to participate regardless of their financial strength.

Managers wishing to increase their organisation's ability to change purposefully encourages networking within the organisation, with special focus on the initial interaction. Such encouragement could take the form of cross-divisional team-building activities, cross-divisional project teams, and expat programmes. They make sure that the workload within the organisation allow the employees to prioritise change-related activities, as well as align the

organisation's incentives system with performing such activities. Finally, it is important for managers driving change to be present in the units where the change is intended to take place, in order to ensure that it has the knowledge and influence required to support and effectuate the desired changes.

6.3 Recommendations for Future Research

When it comes to complex and global MNC environments, the space between Change Management and practice is relatively unexplored which prompts a general recommendation to conduct research on how to manage change in such a complex environment. This research was conducted in one composition of environments and factors, but what differences would research in another composition find compared to the ones described above?

Future research is also needed to determine what type of post-training support is suitable under what conditions. In order to help managers further fine-tune support functions and increase efficiency in change management practice, future research could investigate and compare the post-training support subsequent to a number of programmes, and determine what factors influence the success of their respective programme and the underlying principles behind that influence. It stands to reason that it is difficult to, during the planning phase of a programme, determine what kind of support and to what extent the participants across a broad range of contexts will need in their implementation efforts, yet, it is important that such support is planned.

The link between individual factors of acceptance and the content of global change programmes is another area which needs further investigation. As seen in this research, they have a significant impact on the success of such programmes, while the logics behind them is still shrouded in fog. The link between factors of acceptance and the environment which the individual is active within is also unclear. For instance, how does a heavy workload or geographical distance between team members affect their individual attitude towards change?

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Appendices

1. Overview of Respondents and Interviews

Area	Region	Respondent	Position	Interview Method	Duration	Date
SKF HQ	*The Sales Academy*	*Anna-Lena Carlsson*	*SKF Sales Academy Owner*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*95 min*	*21/04/2017*
		Dag Mannheimer	*SKF Senior Learning Specialist*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*95 min*	*24/04/2017*
A&A + LBU	*Industry Specific (Automotive, Aeroplane, Seals, Lubrication)*	*FLM1*	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*50 min*	*16/03/2017*
		FLM2	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*50 min*	*16/03/2017*
		FLM3	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*45 min*	*09/03/2017*
		FLM4	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*50 min*	*13/03/2017*
		FLM5	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*50 min*	*14/03/2017*
		FLM6	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*80 min*	*08/03/2017*
		FLM7	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*55 min*	*09/03/2017*
		FLM8	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*40 min*	*08/03/2017*
		FLM9	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*45 min*	*17/03/2017*
		FLM10	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*70 min*	*15/03/2017*
		FLM11	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*55 min*	*17/03/2017*
		FLM12	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*75 min*	*16/03/2017*
		FLM13	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*55 min*	*20/03/2017*

| | | SR1 | Sales Representative | Telephone English Recorder used | 65 min | 07/04/2017 |

Area	Region	Respondent	Position	Interview Method	Duration	Date
EMEA	*Central Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CE-CIS)*	FLM14	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	40 min	8/03/2017
		FLM15	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	105 min	7/03/2017
		FLM16	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	55 min	14/03/2017
		FLM17	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	75 min	09/03/2017
		FLM18	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	50 min	10/03/2017
		FLM19	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	60 min	08/03/2017
		SLM1	Second-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	60 min	11/04/2017
		SR2	Sales Representative	Telephone English Recorder used	30 min	13/04/2017
		SR3	Sales Representative	Telephone English Recorder used	40 min	14/04/2017
		SR4	Sales Representative	Telephone English Recorder used	30 min	14/04/2017
	Central Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa (CEE-MEA)	FLM20	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	95 min	14/03/2017
		FLM21	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	55 min	13/03/2017
		FLM22	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	95 min	08/03/2017
		FLM23	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	80 min	23/03/2017
		FLM24	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	80 min	23/03/2017
		FLM25	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	60 min	16/03/2017

EMEA	*Central Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa (CEE-MEA)*	*FLM26*	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*35 min*	*10/03/2017*
		FLM27	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*70 min*	*21/03/2017*
		FLM28	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*65 min*	*09/03/2017*
		FLM29	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*50 min*	*16/03/2017*
		FLM30	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*50 min*	*20/03/2017*
		FLM31	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*65 min*	*08/03/2017*
		SLM2	*Second-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*70 min*	*06/04/2017*
		SLM3	*Second-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*40 min*	*03/04/2017*
		SLM4	*Second-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*30 min*	*07/04/2017*
		SLM5	*Second-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*55 min*	*17/04/017*
		SR5	*Sales Representative*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*70 min*	*03/04/2017*
		SR6	*Sales Representative*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*40 min*	*03/04/2017*
	Nordic	*FLM32*	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*60 min*	*15/03/2017*
		FLM33	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*95 min*	*10/03/2017*
		FLM34	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*80 min*	*09/03/2017*
		SLM6	*Second-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*35 min*	*07/04/2017*
		FLM35	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*60 min*	*10/03/2017*
		FLM36	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*60 min*	*30/03/2017*

Area	Region	Respondent	Position	Interview Method	Duration	Date
EMEA	South-West Europe (SWE)	FLM37	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	60 min	29/03/2017
		FLM38	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	50 min	22/03/2017
		FLM39	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	65 min	29/03/2017
		FLM40	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	65 min	21/03/2017
		FLM41	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	45 min	21/03/2017
		SLM7	Second-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	60 min	05/04/2017
		SLM8	Second-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	50 min	03/04/2017
		SR7	Sales Representative	Telephone English Recorder used	45 min	19/04/2017
		SR8	Sales Representative	Telephone English Recorder used	55 min	19/04/2017

Area	Region	Respondent	Position	Interview Method	Duration	Date
ASIA	India	FLM42	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	95 min	23/03/2017
		FLM43	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	65 min	20/03/2017
		FLM44	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	75 min	22/03/2017
		FLM45	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	35 min	24/03/2017
		SR9	Sales Representative	Telephone English Recorder used	30 min	14/04/2017
		SR10	Sales Representative	Telephone English Recorder used	40 min	13/04/2017
		FLM46	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	60 min	17/03/2017
		FLM47	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	65 min	21/03/2017

Area	Region	Respondent	Position	Interview Method	Duration	Date
ASIA	Nouth-East Asia (NEA)	FLM48	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	75 min	22/03/2017
		FLM49	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	70 min	21/03/2017
		FLM50	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	50 min	10/03/2017
		SLM9	Second-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	55 min	06/04/2017
	South-East Asia (SEA)	FLM51	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	50 min	13/03/2017
		FLM52	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	60 min	14/03/0217
		FLM53	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	50 min	17/03/2017
		FLM54	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	50 min	10/03/2017
		FLM55	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	55 min	16/03/2017
		FLM56	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	65 min	17/03/2017
		FLM57	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	60 min	16/03/2017
		FLM58	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	65 min	16/03/2017
		FLM59	First-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	75 min	27/03/2017
		SLM10	Second-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	65 min	12/04/2017
		SLM11	Second-level Sales Manager	Telephone English Recorder used	70 min	04/04/2017
		SR11	Sales Representative	Telephone English Recorder used	80 min	05/04/2017
		SR12	Sales Representative	Telephone English Recorder used	50 min	05/04/2017
Area	**Region**	**Respondent**	**Position**	**Interview Method**	**Duration**	**Date**

AMERICA	*North America (NAM)*	*FLM60*	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*45 min*	*09/03/2017*
		FLM61	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*35 min*	*24/03/2017*
		FLM62	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*55 min*	*27/03/2017*
		FLM63	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*95 min*	*28/03/2017*
		FLM64	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*45 min*	*27/03/2017*
		FLM65	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*35 min*	*24/03/2017*
		FLM66	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*40 min*	*09/03/2017*
		SLM12	*Second-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*50 min*	*06/04/2017*
		SLM13	*Second-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*50 min*	*06/04/2017*
		SLM14	*Second-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*45 min*	*06/04/2017*
		SR13	*Sales Representative*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*35 min*	*11/04/2017*
		SR14	*Sales Representative*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*40 min*	*13/04/2017*
	Latin America (LAM)	*FLM67*	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*80 min*	*10/03/2017*
		FLM68	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*55 min*	*08/03/2017*
		FLM69	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*55 min*	*10/03/2017*
		FLM70	*First-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*60 min*	*30/03/2017*
		SLM15	*Second-level Sales Manager*	*Telephone English Recorder used*	*50 min*	*10/04/2017*

2. Interview Guides
2.1 Interview Guide - SKF Headquarter

Background/Purpose

1. **How would you describe your role within SKF?**
    a. And what is your role in relation to the Sales Manager Excellence programme?

2. **What is the reason why the Sales Manager Excellence programme was put together?**
    a. What needs were behind the creation of the programme?
    b. What actors were driving champions in creating the programme?

3. **How would you say the programme was created?**
    a. SKF is, as you know, a complex organisation with many different contexts. How did you think about the balance between these when creating the programme?
        i. To what extent is it expected that external actors will be involved in the implementation, such as agents and distributors?
    b. How did the thoughts go when deciding to divide the programmes into two parts and rolling it out in two separate rounds?
    c. In what way was the Sales Manager Excellence program tailored to the various ERP and CRM systems in the organisation?
    d. What is the intended role of the various hierarchical levels involved with regard to the implementation of the Sales Manager Excellences and Sales Excellence programme?

4. **What has been thought about the purpose of the programme?**
    a. How did you go about to put together the programmes?
    b. To what extent is it the implementation of the programme is mandatory for all sellers and sales managers?
        i. What do you see as most important?
    c. How do you think about the risk of the programmes becomes diluted if everyone can choose what to implement and what not to implement?

Challenges

5. **What have been the biggest challenges regarding the rollout of the Sales Manager Excellence programme?**
    a. When it comes to the Sales Excellence programme?

Support and Communication

6. **What specific support has Sales Academy and SKF's management given to the sales managers' in their efforts to implement the programme?**
    a. What additional support do you think would be good?
    b. What pros and cons do you think a follow-up programme would have?
        i. Is that something you have been thinking about at the Sales Academy?
        ii. How could such follow-up look like, practically?

<blockquote>
c. What does the support look like from the trainers towards the sales managers after they have completed the training?
</blockquote>

7. Can you describe how communication around the application and implementation have looked like from your side?

Financing

8. How does the funding for the programmes look like? (SE, SME)
   a. To what extent are local organisations involved in funding?
   b. What financial support is available to a local organisation that wishes to start its own training efforts on the continued implementation of the programmes?

Networking

9. In what way does SKF promote networking within the organisation?

2.2 Interview Guide - Second-Level Manager

Background

1. How many sales managers are you the manager for?
   a. And how many do you have in your team in total?

2. When it comes to the methods and ideas from the Sales Manager Excellence programme, how different did you find them to be, compared to what you were already doing previously?

Progress/Challenges/Support

3. What does your first-level managers do differently today with regard to the Sales Manager Excellence training programme?
   a. What have your first-level managers not yet implemented, but are planning to implement in the future? (and when?)
   b. How have your first-level managers work with observation meetings changed since the programme? (to what extent)
      i. What have been the most difficult things with implementing this?
      ii. And how do they plan to work with observation meetings in the future?
   c. How have your first-level managers work with individual coaching meetings and RAC-talks changed since the programme?
      i. What challenges have your sales manager team faced when it comes to coaching and RAC?
      ii. What are the team's plans for the future when it comes to coaching and RAC-talks?
   d. How would you say the progression is going when it comes to insight stories?
      i. How new is this area for them?

      ii.   What can you tell me when it comes to their challenges in *this* area?
           1.   And what are your plans to overcome this?

e.   One of the more difficult concepts of the programme is 'taking control of the sales conversation', how does your first-level managers work with implementing that?
      i.   What has changed in regards to this, after the programme?
      ii.   What are the main difficulties for your first-level managers when implementing this concept?

f.   One of the main issues for the first-level sales managers is to have enough time for the implementation; what could you do in order to free up more time for your sales managers?
      i.   Is there any administration or other task that you feel is perhaps redundant for them?
      ii.   If they had more time, do you think that they would prioritise the implementation?
      iii.   How are you working with empowering your sales managers so that you do not have to deal with so many issues?
      iv.   And your own time; what could SKF do to free up more time for you?

4. What do you see that you first-level managers should do more of with regard to the training from the programme? (if applicable)

Progress/Challenges/Support

5. What do you do differently today after the programme? (observation meetings and RAC-talks etc.)

a.   What can you do in order to support your team's implementation of the programme?
      i.   Are these are things that you do already?

b.   How far have you come in your work with coaching meetings with your first-level managers?
      i.   What has been the major challenges when it comes to this?
      ii.   What has been the outcome of these meetings?
           1.   So they have (not) been valuable to you? (if applicable)

c.   How far have you come in your work with observation meetings with your first-level managers?
      i.   What are the most difficult things in working with this?
      ii.   What results have you seen from these meetings?
           1.   Okay, so they have (not) been valuable to you? (if applicable)

d.   How do you follow-up on their progress?

e.   In what way are you working to motivate them to use the tools in the programme?

f.   What changes in behaviour of your first-level managers do you think is important in relation to the future implementation of the Sales Excellence programme?
      i.   How do you think that can be succeeded?

g.   How motivated do you feel to implement the programme? Why? Why not?
      i.   And what are (de-)motivational factors for you?

Support

6. How do you perceive the support from your manager have been so far?

a. And how do you perceive that the support have been from the Sales Academy and the SKF top management?

b. What do you Sales Academy should do differently?

c. Is there anything (else) you feel would be good to have in order to support you?

Change Management Experience

7. How much previous experience do you have from change management?

a. And how do you think that has prepared you for this change?

2.3 Interview Guide - First-Level Manager

Background

1. What industry are you working towards?

2. How many sales representatives do you have in your team?

3. When it comes to the methods and ideas from the Sales Manager Excellence programme, how different did you find them to be, compared to what you were already doing previously?

a. What did you find particularly different? (if applicable)

b. And how did you deal with it? (if applicable)

Progress/Challenges/Support

4. What parts from the Sales Manager Excellence training programme have you implemented in your organisation so far?

a. What has worked best?

b. What challenges have you faced in your implementation?

c. What have you not yet implemented, but are planning to implement in the future?

d. What changes have you started to implement, but for some reason later discontinued or put on hold? Why?

5. How has your work with territory planning changed since the programme?

a. If no: Why not?

b. What was the purpose of these changes?

c. What challenges did you encounter making these changes?

d. What results have you seen from making the changes?

e. And how are you going to work with territory planning in the future?

f. What can SKF do to support your work with this?

6. To what extent do you prepare and perform individual observation meetings?

a. And has this changed since the programme?

  i. If yes: How much? If no: Why not?

b. And how do you plan to work with observation meetings in the future?

      c.   What challenges do you see in reaching this goal?

7. To what extent do you perform individual coaching meetings/RAC-talks?
      a.   How has this changed since you finished the programme?
      b.   Are you satisfied with the amount of coaching you have today?
      c.   What challenges do you face in your every-day coaching?
      d.   What has been the outcome of the change in the coaching?
      e.   What do you think is the best way to set and follow-up your representatives' individual goals? Why?
      f.   How do you plan to work with coaching going forward?
      g.   And what challenges do you see in reaching this goal?
      h.   What can SKF do to support you in your coaching

8. How are you working with inspirational sales meetings?
      a.   Has this changed since you finished the programme?
      b.   What has been challenges?
      c.   What has been the outcome?

9. To what extent do you work with insight stories in sales your team today?
      a.   If no: Why not?
      b.   What is your perception of using insight stories in practice?
      c.   What results have you seen from working with this?
      d.   And how are you planning to work with insight stories in the future?
      e.   What challenges have you encountered in working with insight stories?
      f.   What can SKF do to support you in working with this?

10. How does your sales reps work with taking control of the sales conversation?
      a.   If no: Why not?
      b.   Can you give me an example of a common situation of this in practice?
      c.   How do you avoid that your sales representatives takes control the wrong way? (becoming too 'aggressive' or dominant)
      d.   How has the way you work with this changed since the programme?
      e.   What challenges have you found in working with this?
      f.   What results have you seen from working with this?
      g.   How do plan to continue working with taking control in the future?
      h.   What can SKF do to support your work in coaching this?

Motivation

11. Do you think these changes are the right way for SKF?
      a.   Why/Why not?
      b.   What has been motivational factors for you?
      c.   And what has been demotivational factors for you?
      d.   What do you think would make you (even) more motivated in the future?
      e.   Is there something from the Sales Manager Excellence training that you have found irrelevant to you?
            i.   If yes: What and why is that?

Their Role

12. What role do you see for yourself in this new change programme?
    a.   And how do you plan to fulfil that role?

Support in Implementation - Extended

13. What support have you gotten from your manager in your implementation?
    a.   What support from your manager would you ideally like to have?
    b.   How often do you have coaching meetings with your manager?
    c.   How does your manager follow-up the progress of the implementation?
    d.   How often would you like to have coaching meetings?
    e.   What value do you feel that the coaching meetings have for you?
    f.   If time issue: How have you put forward the issue of time with your manager?
         i.   And what has the outcome been?

14. How do you perceive that the support has been from the Sales Academy and Top management?
    a.   If not good: Why not? + c
    b.   What has been particularly useful?
    c.   What additional support would you like to have?

Value of Programme

15. Now in hindsight, how valuable was the training to support you in your challenges related to your professional role?
    a.   What do you think was particularly valuable? Why?
    b.   And finally, what do you think are the most important things to consider when going forward from here? Why?

2.4 Interview Guide - Sales Representatives

Background

1. Have you been given the Sales Excellence training yet?
If not, skip to question 2.
    a.   What did you think about it?
    b.   How new did you think that the methods and concepts were?
    c.   How well did you feel that the content fitted your particular context? (country, culture, industry etc.)

Progress/Challenges/Support

2. What major new things has your manager introduced in your team, since s/he finished the Sales Manager Excellence training? (Over the last 12 months)
    a.   How have they been working for you?
    b.   What (other) challenges have you faced in working with them?

     c.   How new are these things, compared to what you were doing previously? (Skip if answered in Q1)

3. **How has the way you interact with the customer changed since your manager finished the Sales Manager Excellence training? (Why (not)?)**
   a. What are (the/other) challenges specifically when it comes to implementing the new tools in customer interaction?
   b. What results have you seen from making these changes?
   c. How does your manager support you in using these new tools?
      i. What else could your manager do to support you?

4. **How much do you work with insight stories today? (Why (not)?)**
   If not, skip to question 5.
   a. How do they differ from what you were doing previously, before the training?
   b. How well are they working so far? (perception & results)
   c. Could you give me an example of how an insight story could look in your team?
   d. What are the most difficult things when using this tool?

5. **To what extent have you started to perform observation meetings with your manager? (Why (not)?)**
   a. Can you describe how your team does observation meetings today?
   b. What is different compared to what you were doing previously?
   c. What value do you feel that this tool have for your?
   d. What are the main challenges when using the tool?

6. **To what extend do you perform coaching meetings and RAC-talks with your manager?**
   a. How would a common coaching session look between you?
   b. How about a common RAC-talk?
   c. What would you say are the greatest differences compared to what you were doing previously?
   d. What value does these tools have for you?
   e. How are your individual goals set?
   f. How does your manager communicates his/her expectations on you?
      i. What could make this communication (even) better?

Motivation

7. **How does SKF work with incentivising you to perform well?**
   a. What incentives are connected to implementing the tools specifically from the Sales Manager Excellence training?
      i. How motivated do they make you feel?
      ii. What could make you (even) more motivated?
   b. And what has been demotivational factors for you considering the changes?

Time Issue

8. **Time is often an issue; in what way would it help you if you had more time?**
   a. What things would you say takes the most time in your daily work?

    b. In what ways could SKF or your manager free up more time for you?

    c. How much of your administrative work do you feel is redundant?

    d. How empowered do you feel, as opposed to having to ask your boss for approval of everything?

Networking

9. **How would you feel about more opportunities to interact with sales representatives from other parts of SKF?**

    a. In what ways do you think such interaction could take place?

    b. What would be the advantages and disadvantages for you?

General

10. **Is there anything you would like to clarify or add that I have not covered in this interview?**

    a. What message would you like to send to the top management with regards to the topics we have been talking about?