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*Digitalization and the renewal of
employee engagement surveys*

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Abstract

The worldwide digitalization within the field of HRM forces organizations to reorganize and adapt to new technological changes in order to stay competitive. One of the most important HRM issues in organizations today is the work with employee engagement due to its stated positive relationship with organizational performance such as customer satisfaction and profitability. However, recent numbers reveal that only one out of eight employees is engaged in their work which indicates that new solutions needs to be established in order to turn the numbers around. One way to work with employee engagement is through an annual survey that is intended to measure the engagement within the corporation among employees.

Although, the annual survey has been criticized lately due to its ineffectiveness and has led to a demand of new methods that measures employee engagement. Thus, the aim of this report was therefore to study the challenges with current engagement surveys and evaluate what contributions digital tools such as frequent engagement surveys could bring. In order to touch upon these factors, in-depth interviews have been conducted with HR-managers at different subsidiaries within the multinational corporation Stena as well as one interview with the founders of Nevin Insights AB that offers a new digital employee engagement survey.

One of the main findings is that a frequent digital engagement survey in several ways can improve the employee engagement within a firm by speeding up the informational process, disrupting physical distance, decrease the administrative work and discover issues faster than before. However, it is important that managers get the time to work with the results and for them to do the afterwork properly. Otherwise there is a risk of having the opposite effect such as disengagement within the organization.

Keywords: Employee engagement, Digitalization, E-HRM, Engagement surveys

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David Lager



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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

During the recent decades, a new digital era has been emerging. Technology has made major developments that have helped many organizations to speed up the information process. Due to new IT solutions, firms can access, gather and process information much quicker than before (Heikkilä, 2013). This improvement enable firms to be more productive and cost efficient and therefore, firms need to adapt to these evolving technologies in order to seduce the demands from a dynamic and demanding market (Dixit, 2017; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014). Every department of an organization needs to make use of what the technology offers especially the department of Human Resource Management (HRM) since they manage the most valuable resource within a company - humans (Unger et al., 2011; Guest, 2001).

HRM involves every aspect of how people are being managed in an organization and includes many areas such as recruitment, strategic planning, training, development and organizational development just to mention a few (Dixit, 2017). Managing human resources today has become more complex than before due to technological developments and some resistance towards implementation of digital tools has been present since there are problems with understanding both the language and the digital transformation (Heikkilä & Smale, 2011; Sheu et al., 2004). However, the electronic part of HRM is growing and has emerged as a new trend named Electronic Human Resource Management (e-HRM) (Sheu et al., 2004).

E-HRM encompasses the integration mechanisms and contents shared between HRM and Information Technology (IT) and includes all cases when IT is used to plan, implement or perform any HRM activity (Bondarouk & Ruël, 2009; Strohmeier, 2007). Also when computers and telecommunications are used to for example collect, store, retrieve and disseminate HR data, it is referred to as e-HRM (Stone et al., 2015). The term e-HRM is today used in several HRM-areas and the relation between HR & IT leads to cost reduction, informed decisions, competitive advantages and higher profitability (Ulrich, 2000; Brockbank, 1997; Lepak & Snell, 1998). With the help of technology, firms can improve and speed up the process of information gathering among their employees worldwide (Nenwani & Raj, 2013). Also, a recent study presented by Deloitte showed that 56 percent of the measured companies will redesign their HR-programs to implement digital and mobile tools, which will

redefine HRM-practices during the upcoming five years (Deloitte, 2017).

One of the areas inside the field of HRM that has begun to utilize digital solutions is the HR-department that handles employee engagement. An engaged employee works to improve the benefits of the organizations and holds a positive attitude towards the organization and its values (Robinson et al., 2004). Furthermore, the relevance of employee engagement has become more clear in the recent years as several studies show that employee engagement is connected to organizational performance (e.g. Sorensen, 2013; Harter et al., 2002) and in addition, engaged workers take less sick leave, has lower rates of resignation and creates stability to the workforce (CIPD Annual Survey Report, 2014). However, a study by Gallup (2011) which included research on 200 000 employees from 142 countries revealed that only 13 percent of the participants felt engaged in their work. Only one of eight employees in the studied countries were psychologically committed in their field of work and likely to contribute in a positive matter to their respective organizations (Crabtree, 2013).

Firms today utilize annual engagement surveys in a large extent in order to measure employee engagement (Modrek & Cullen, 2013). It is of interest to study the challenges with the current way of measuring since only one out of eight employees are psychologically committed in their field of work and likely to contribute in a positive matter to their respective organizations (Crabtree, 2013). New tools have started to replace the traditional engagement survey and there has lately been an increase of digital-/mobile applications that works with employee engagement, such as pulse survey tools. The increase of new digital tools is a transition within the field of HRM which is said to be one of the most important shifts in order to improve the employee engagement within firms (Deloitte, 2017).

1.2 Research gap

The world has undergone some changes with the increase and dominance of digital tools in every branch. In line with these changes we now live in a period referred to as the “digital age” where technology plays a prominent role in every organization (Strohmeier & Perry, 2014). Stefan Strohmeier (2007) explained that the rapid development of Internet during the last decades has opened up and accelerated the implementation of electronic solutions in the field of HRM. The planning, implementation and application of digital tools within HR-practices is referred to as electronic human resource management (e.g. Bondarouk & Ruël,

2009; Strohmeier, 2007) and there is a radical and dramatic change occurring in the field of HRM where IT is implemented in every field (Paauwe et al., 2004). Hence, outcomes when utilizing e-HRM includes consequences such as standardization, elimination of distance constraints as well as an increase in the speed of processes (Gonzales et al., 2011). However, when it comes to scholarly activity Strohmeier (2007) claims that it does not keep up with the rapidly changing environment regarding information technology (IT) and digitization within HRM. This area still lacks a great amount of research and is in its “youth-phase” (Strohmeier, 2007; Ruël et al., 2007). In fact, when looking at top HRM journals only one percent of the articles focuses on IT (Hoobler & Johnson, 2004) and between 1995 and 2007 only 57 relevant reports could be found in peer-reviewed journals (Strohmeier, 2007).

The current research in the field of employee engagement within multinational corporations is not focused on the digital transformation that the world is experiencing today. There is a research gap within this field of research that needs to be explored and explained in order to understand the possibilities of digital tools and how they could work to benefit the employee engagement within multinational corporations.

1.3 Purpose and Research questions

Employee engagement is rising of importance due to stated positive and direct relationships between organizational performance and employee engagement. Benefits such as profitability and higher customer satisfaction has been stated previously in this dissertation (e.g. Harter et al., 2002; Sorensen, 2013). However, recent studies have showed some alarming numbers where only one out of eight workers is engaged in their work (Gallup, 2016). Therefore, it is of interest to explore the possibilities of a more effective way to handle employees by using a frequent digital solution currently available at the market. This dissertation wishes to close the current research gap in the field of e-HRM among multinational corporations and also to address possible contributions of practical kind that corporations can use to enhance employee engagement within their organization.

The study will furthermore investigate how a continuous digital survey could help the HR-managers and departments in multinational firms to utilize the sampled information for improvements. In order to investigate how multinational firms can benefit from utilizing digital solutions, problems associated with the digitalization needs to be addressed. This thesis

will focus on exploring the possibility of integrating a digital tool within an organizations work with employee engagement and investigate issues that might arise. Thus, the first research question is:

- What are the challenges with current employee engagement surveys within a multinational corporation?

The aim of the report is to investigate if e-HRM can contribute to an organization's work with their employee engagement both in their native plants but also on plants abroad in order to eliminate some of the consequences that physical distance may bring. Leaders in multinational organizations with plants at different locations are faced with challenges such as motivating employees and also with performing follow-ups (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002). It is therefore of interest to study how a multinational firm can work with frequent digital engagement surveys in order to improve the employee engagement. Thus the second research question is:

- How could e-HRM such as a frequent employee engagement survey contribute to the work with employee engagement?

1.4 Contributions

This dissertation will contribute to existing research regarding employee engagement and how it is treated and dealt with inside a multinational corporation when working with a traditional engagement survey. The study aims to describe the challenges that take place inside firms when working with engagement surveys. The thesis will contribute to existing literature by providing an empirical exploratory study with focus on if and how e-HRM such as digital tools can contribute to a multinational corporations' employee engagement. To be able to investigate eventual positive outcomes by utilizing digital tools to increase the employee engagement within a company, this report builds on a case study within the Stena Sphere with a practical example of digital pulse survey tools.

The study wishes to contribute with new insights and practical examples of how multinational corporations can incorporate digital solutions in their management of employees across the world. The research hopes to enlighten some challenges with the ordinary way of measuring engagement among employees with the traditional annual survey and to address the possibilities with incorporating digital pulse survey tools in their practices.

1.5 Delimitations

Within the area of human resource there are several different topics to explore. Electronic Human Resource Management is one of them and this area includes many subcategories as for example recruitment, employee engagement, training & development and organizational development (Dixit, 2017) and this study will be delimited to focus on employee engagement. Just as there are several different topics within e-HRM, there is also various ways to impact employee engagement as for example inspiring leadership and rewards (Imandin et al., 2016). However, in order to conduct a deep analysis, both e-HRM as well as employee engagement needs to be narrowed down in scope and therefore delimitations will be applied. In terms of e-HRM, focus will solely lie on digital frequent engagement surveys as the only electronic tool discussed in this dissertation. When discussing employee engagement, only engagement surveys will be put in focus.

Furthermore, this thesis will focus on investigating tools such as frequent digital engagement survey. However, how engagement is measured within those tools regarding the structure of questions will be mentioned but not discussed further.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Employee engagement explained

Engagement among employees is a well studied field where a few definitions have been presented over the years. One of them describe employee engagement as “a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its values. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization (Robinson et al., 2004, p.4)”. Engagement in a firm is something that needs to be nurtured and constantly maintain since it is a two-way relationship between employer and employee. In order to maintain a committed and engaged workforce, firms need to put in real effort to improve the key drivers of engagement that is explained as the sense of feeling valued and involved (Robinson et al., 2004). However, a distinction is made between commitment and engagement where commitment is said to be the first step whereas engagement is derived from commitment as a latter process (Robinson et al., 2004). The

definition by Robinson et al. (2004) is the one that will be used throughout this report since it captures other descriptions of how employee engagement is explained.

According to several studies, employee engagement is important for organizations since the higher the level of employee engagement, the better the business outcome (e.g. Robinson et al., 2004; Harter et al., 2002; Macey & Schneider, 2008). In 2002 a direct relationship between employee engagement and business outcomes was confirmed by Harter et al. (2002). Initial findings in the study indicated that engaged employees deliver better customer satisfaction which in turn generates better customer ratings and thereby better financial outturn (Harter et al., 2002). Another study made by Gallup in 2013 also stated that employee engagement has a well established connection with organizational performance outcomes such as profitability and productivity (Sorensen, 2013)

2.1.1 How to measure employee engagement

The substantial rise of interest in employee engagement has lead to proposals of methods to measure employee engagement such as Gallup's Q12 survey (2016) or a model by Imandin et al. (2016). The latter method is destined to measure employee engagement and was invented with the help of previous literature and empirical evidence in order to present a managerial tool to measure employee engagement (Imandin et al., 2014). The theoretical model includes seven constructs that combined measures employee engagement (Imandin et al., 2016).

The first construct, employees' perception on management and leadership, refers to having managers with the ability to inspire employees to stronger performance which is decisive for building up a high engagement in the organization (Brunone, 2013; Imandin et al., 2014). The second construct is behavioral engagement, which refer to the physical manifestation of the emotional engagement in the organization and can be explained as the levels of effort directed towards the fulfilling of organizational goals. Those who are willing to put in discretionary effort to reach organizational success are the ones that are engaged (Shuck & Reio, 2014; Imandin et al., 2014). The third construct is named change management and stress-free environment, which means that most employees performs better when they can be innovative in a relaxed atmosphere. Personal ideas and experiences are encouraged since it increases the engagement among employees. (Kanaka, 2012; Imandin et al., 2014). The fourth construct from the model is career growth opportunities, which refers to when employees have

opportunities for career progression and development within the organization since that increases the engagement. (Mone & London, 2009; Imandin et al., 2014). The fifth, sixth and seventh construct are called in following order emotional engagement, nature of my job and feeling valued and involved. Emotional engagement refers to the investments employees put in of the emotional character such as pride, trust and knowledge (Shuck & Reio, 2014; Imandin et al., 2014). The sixth construct nature of my job is explained as the degree of employee participation and autonomy. When employees receive responsibilities it increases their motivation which is a key thing for maintaining high engagement (Hughes & Rog, 2008; Imandin et al., 2014). The last of the seven constructs, feeling valued and involved, refers to the positive effects of high involvement that can generate and stimulate better performance. To communicate information to the employees on how their work actions influence the unit performance and in addition reward them for positive contribution creates a win-win situation between managers and employees (Konrad, 2006; Imandin et al., 2014).

Another way of measuring employee engagement is with the help of the Gallup survey created after 25 years of research within the field of employee engagement with both qualitative and quantitative research as foundation (Harter et al., 2002). Gallup's "Q12 employee engagement survey" consists of 12 questions that measure the engagement at work by categorizing the employees in three different categories - engaged, not engaged and actively disengaged. The questions were designed after conducting research in 189 different countries with over 25 million respondents that resulted in a 12 question survey that can be bought from Gallup with the intention to measure employee engagement in an organization (Gallup, 2016).

2.2 Annual employee engagement surveys

In order to help Multinational Corporations with managing their employees around the world, some research has been done in the field of employee engagement that points out its importance within firms (e.g. Rana et al., 2014; Rich et al., 2010) and as stated previously, it is believed that engagement among workers is positively related to organizational performance (e.g. Macey & Schneider, 2008; Sorensen, 2013). It is proven that engaged workers lead to higher customer satisfaction, higher customer ratings and therefore higher profitability (Harter et al., 2002). A common method of measuring employee engagement today is for employees to answer an annual engagement survey (Gable et al., 2010; Modrek &

Cullen, 2013). However, a problem with the engagement surveys performed annually is the lack of action by the management which may affect employee engagement in a negative matter since employees may feel that their inputs are neglected (Edwards et al., 1997). It is often the action plan process of an engagement survey that is the reason to why employee engagement surveys fail to be an effective tool. Managers do not take action by the results of the survey and do not devote enough time to the action plan (Cava & Fernandez, 2017). Furthermore, it is suggested for organizations to integrate their work regarding employee engagement throughout the year instead of only measuring it at one point in time. Employee engagement should always be in focus (Gable et al., 2010).

In a report from Deloitte (2015), culture and engagement was ranked the most important HRM-issue overall. According to the same study, organizations who create a deep employee engagement will outperform their competitors in both numbers as well as they attract the best employees. The Deloitte study points out some measures that companies can implement in order to increase the engagement among employees and one of them is to put in measures in real time by using tools to evaluate and to better understand the organization. By doing this, the companies can take the temperature among the employees which enable managers to adjust and improve the engagement within the firm faster than before (Deloitte, 2015).

A two year later report from Deloitte confirmed the importance of employee engagement. This report highlighted the technological development in firms overall and how this rewrites the rules inside HRM. Technology creates new opportunities for organizations and the report mentions the importance of putting employee experience as a priority for HR leaders instead of delegating problems to an annual engagement survey (Deloitte, 2017). However, the recent years of the rise in digital-/mobile applications targeted to measure employee engagement might change the market look. New pulse surveys tools are emerging the market and has started to replace the traditional annual surveys used in firms today (Deloitte, 2017). The Deloitte report emphasizes this transition from annual measurement surveys to real-time pulse surveys as one of the most important changes in order to increase employee engagement and reduce employee turnover (Deloitte, 2017). In the same report, 56 percent of the companies responded that they will redesign their HR-programs to implement digital and mobile tools that is a part of e-HRM, which will redefine HRM-practices during the five upcoming years (Deloitte, 2017).

2.3 e-HRM explained

Electronic Human Resource Management is a relatively new area in the field of HRM, which importance has grown since the modern technology evolved the industry where the rapid development of Internet during the last decades has opened up and accelerated the implementation of electronic solutions in the field of HRM (Strohmeier, 2007).

In previous stages when discussing digital implementation inside the HRM-field, e-HRM was often mentioned as Human Resource Information System, abbreviated HRIS (Tannenbaum, 1990). In 1990 HRIS was defined as “a system used to acquire, store, manipulate, analyze, retrieve and distribute pertinent information about an organization’s human resources” (Tannenbaum, 1990 p. 31). HRIS is even today connected to e-HRM, although the two concepts could be distinguished in signification but still with many similarities. HRIS refers to automation of systems for benefitting the HR function, for example storing employee data, managing payrolls and recruitment processes (Heikkilä, 2013), while e-HRM is more focused on the application of internet and web-based systems, which in turn leads to a modifying integration between the HR-personnel, line managers and employees (Heikkilä, 2013). This report will focus on the latter of these two expressions, partly because the engagement survey that Nevin AB offers falls in the arms of e-HRM and since this sector is growing rapidly in usage (Deloitte, 2017).

In order to investigate how e-HRM such as frequent engagement survey can influence employee engagement a proper definition of the term e-HRM needs to be put in place. The term e-HRM is growing in usage however, it still a new field within HRM and therefore lacks a proper definition. Depending on what source you read from the explanation often differs but emphasis lie on an having an internet supported way of executing HR-practices. In 2007, Stefan Strohmeier specified e-HRM as follows “e-HRM is the planning, implementation and application of information technology for both networking and supporting at least two individual or collective actors in their shared performing of HRM activities” (Strohmeier, 2007, p.20). Another common definition of e-HRM is the one by Bondarouk and Ruël (2009) where e-HRM is described as “an umbrella term covering all possible integration mechanisms and contents between HRM and Information Technologies aiming at creating value within and across organizations for targeted employees and management” (p.507).

Throughout this report the latter description will be used since it is believed to capture the most relevant parts of what e-HRM actually is. Furthermore, the description is a consensus understanding of many other relevant explanations of e-HRM that currently exist.

2.4 e-HRM and frequent employee engagement surveys

The Human Resource Planning Society and the Center for Effective Organizations (CEO) has performed an extensive study of HR in large organizations and concluded that more focus needs to be put in the development of business partner relationships with the help of IT to increase the overall profitability of the firm (Lawler & Mohrman, 2000). Furthermore, a better and more integrated link between HR and IT is required in many corporations since HR-units are an underperforming section in many cases and therefore is in need of new solutions to become more profitable by integrating HRM with IT (Coates, 2001). This would lead to a wider usage of e-HRM which in turn is expected to result in outcomes such as higher service level and a more efficient HRM-process overall that would contribute to accomplish the goals of the organization (Ruël et al., 2007).

A reason to implement e-HRM solutions such as a frequent engagement survey in firms practices today is since it is said to create cost reductions (Hannon et al., 1996). E-HRM activities could reduce operational costs in several areas but for instance it can decrease the paperwork (Behera, 2017) and also improve efficiency when collecting, storing and retrieving data (Stone et al., 2015). Furthermore, e-HRM could make it more efficient to manage geographically dispersed businesses such as MNCs by acting as a link between all areas (Hannon et al., 1996). Also, it can extract more time for things as organizational planning, design and development (Lawler & Mohrman, 2003). Employee satisfaction has been noticed as beneficial after implementing e-HRM since the organizations that use up-to-date technology were perceived as modern and progressive (Panayotopoulou et al., 2007; Voermans & Van Veldhoven, 2007; Allen et al., 2007). This common knowledge means that firms worldwide no longer are unfamiliar by the positive outcomes that e-HRM might generate and they are therefore willing to invest in implementing e-HRM solutions among them digital engagement surveys (Van Geffen et al., 2013).

2.4.1 Language & Culture

In comparison to several other areas inside a firm, HRM is considered more influenced of local institutional settings due to impact from cultural values and social structures surrounding the business that comes along with employees (Myloni et al., 2004). This is demonstrated further by Björkman et al. (2008) who declares that HRM practices in MNC subsidiaries needs to be adjusted in some extent and kept low of standardization (Björkman et al., 2008). Otherwise, the standardization of e.g a surveys language could increase employee resistance among staff that is not fluent in the English language and will therefore create a barrier towards implementing e-HRM in the company (Sheu et al., 2004). The employees might therefore be in need of language training in order to properly understand an engagement survey and their usage of the tool will depend on their degree of language competence (Heikkilä & Smale, 2011). Standardized IT solutions is not only an issue for the staff but among the HR managers as well. More recent literature suggests that HR managers might be affected when implementing IT solutions since they will be the ones forced to translate and explain questions that the employees do not understand (Heikkilä, 2013).

Another study has made it clear that it is essential for an organization to adopt to cultural differences in order to retain their employees. This is due to different e-HRM preferences that the employees have depending on their origin (Beulen, 2009).

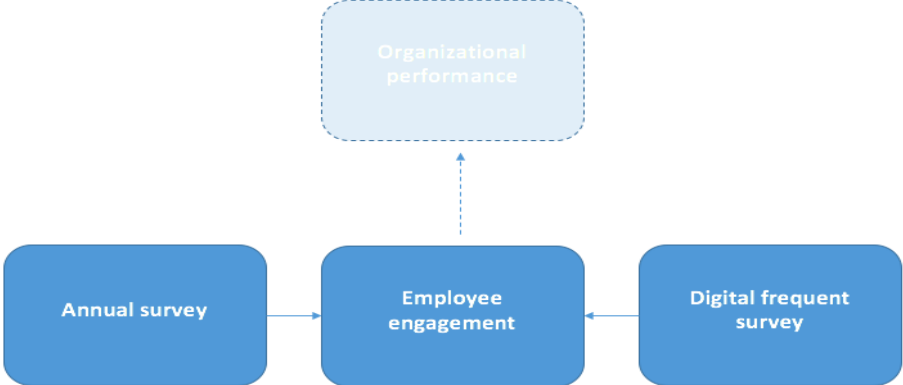
2.5 Framework of employee engagement surveys

Previous studies within the field of employee engagement has stated that there is an obvious relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance. This relationship is not measured, only confirmed in this thesis and is therefore not highlighted in following framework. Instead, focus will be put on how the traditional way of measuring employee engagement through an annual engagement survey is perceived within a multinational corporation and if there is a need of a digital and more frequent survey to be implemented.

The arrows of both annual survey and digital frequent survey points towards employee engagement since they both are a tool designed to measure the engagement within a firm. Annual surveys are the traditional way of measuring and has been criticized as ineffective while new pulse survey tools (frequent engagement surveys) has started to enter the market. The study will investigate how a digital frequent engagement survey will contribute to a firms

work with employee engagement and what challenges the annual survey brings. Thus, the following framework has created to clarify the conceptual framework used within this thesis.

Figure 1.



Source: Lager David & Milojkovic Emilia, (2018-04)

3. Methodology

3.1 Research strategy

Different types of research strategies can be used in order to collect relevant data for a thesis. The research strategy is most commonly divided into two main approaches: qualitative and quantitative (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This thesis has used a qualitative research approach with the motive of building a deep analysis where value can be added by interviewees thoughts and explanations. The qualitative approach gives room for the individuals own interpretation and perception of the studied phenomenon, thus, this gives a more subjective perspective in comparison to what a quantitative method would result in (Bryman & Bell, 2015). It is important to remember that this is a single case study where only one multinational company has been investigated. Therefore, only their perceptions and interests have been considered and reflected on when compiling this report.

The names of the interviewees as well as the respective company that they work for has been fully exposed in this survey. This is necessary in order to show full transparency throughout the report and since that hopefully raises the credibility of the thesis in total. It is believed to be an advantage to keep it transparent in order for the reader to make their own perception

and judgement of the interviewed candidates and the relevance of their beliefs. However, due to the transparency and full exposure that this thesis represents, interview candidates might sometimes answer in a way that is representative of their company and not always the entire truth. Therefore, their answers might be partially bended in their own favor. With this said, we still believe in the qualitative way of conducting interviews with transparency since the information the interviewees present is not believed to be sensitive and therefore not harmful for themselves nor for the company that they represent.

3.2 Research Design

In this report focus has lied on investigating how a multinational organization works with employee engagement and if they could benefit from utilizing a digital solution in their HR practice within the field of employee engagement. Discussions regarding how multinational corporations could apply digital tools like a continuous survey have been held along with discussions about the potential consequences it would result in. Would an implementation of the survey e.g. prevent or ease dissatisfaction among their staff? The aim was to see if a multinational corporation could make use of a digital solution that is used on a frequent basis in order for them to understand and to improve the engagement among their employees in the organization.

Information and data have been gathered from one multinational corporation situated in Gothenburg, namely Stena and its subsidiaries. Interviews have been held with HR managers within the Stena Sphere to gather implications and perceptions of relevant questions for this report. The interviews focused on a discussion regarding how their division works with employee engagement and if they could benefit if implementing digital tools in their current practices.

In this report has Nevin Insights AB and their engagement survey worked as a practical example as one of the many emerging innovations floating the e-HRM field with focus on employee engagement. Nevin will be presented further in chapter four. An investigation will be made regarding the eventual positive outcomes that could benefit multinational companies that make use of a continuous survey which might be a new way of discover dissatisfaction at an early stage. The purpose with these new inventions is that problems will be discovered in

real time rather than expose them by the traditional annual reviews that the corporations in high extent utilize today (Deloitte, 2017; Modrek & Cullen, 2013).

3.2.1 A single case study

If a researcher only wants to study one single thing or a single group, a single case study is the best choice (Yin, 2003). It is possible for the researcher to make a single case study with related units within one corporation. It gives the possibility to investigate the findings between departments and make a cross-case analysis (Yin, 2003). Furthermore, the single case study approach is entitled by the integration of how and why questions in the study (Yin, 2003). Moreover, the single case study method is an informative way when having a context of subsidiary-headquarter relations for interpreting the data correctly as in the case with the Stena Sphere (Yin, 2003).

The field of e-HRM is in need of more qualitative and theory building research (Strohmeier, 2007). Hence, an exploratory research approach was chosen to be conducted in order to develop a theory from the data and to build a theory (Davies, 2006). Furthermore, this thesis is an exploratory single case study conducted with a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach was chosen in order to conduct a profound understanding of the respondents regarding their view of what are the challenges with current employee engagement surveys and if digital tools can contribute to improving the engagement among employees. In point of fact, the qualitative exploratory single case study approach was also supported on the fact that existing literature lacks extensive research within the field of e-HRM (Hoobler & Johnson, 2004; Strohmeier, 2007).

3.2.2 Selecting the case study

The case study method is a contemporary bounded system which is being explored and through collected in-depth data it creates a case description and case theme (Creswell, 2013). In this thesis the case study was selected in order to match the purpose of the report and in order to be able to respond to the research questions. By reason of clear connections to the founders of Nevin Insights AB and since their service is a digital continuously survey focusing on employee engagement their company was a natural choice to apply as an example in this study. Prior to the research began, it was brought to attention that Nevin had performed a pilot-project at the multinational corporation Stena AB which led to a form of snowball

sampling. Snowball sampling is defined as the “technique for gathering research subjects through the identification of an initial subject who is used to provide the names of other actors” (Lewis-Beck et al., 2007, p.1043). It was therefore a natural choice to conduct a case study within the Stena Sphere since they had prior knowledge of Nevin and their service.

The decision to investigate the transition occurring in HRM with the implementation of digital tools was a conscious choice. Mainly since the transition is a well discussed phenomenon as of today since it is believed that the majority of companies will redesign their HRM practices and implement digital tools in the upcoming five years (Deloitte, 2017). A case study approach on the Stena Sphere is also justified by the fact that it fits well in studies with international context since the method offers good opportunities to get sufficient answers and clarify interpretations between the researchers and the interviewees (Ghauri, 2004).

3.2.2.1 The Stena Sphere

The selected multinational corporation of performing a case study on in this thesis is one of the largest family owned companies in Sweden, the Stena Sphere. The sphere consists of three parent companies: Stena AB, Stena Sessan AB and Stena Metall AB whom are all owned and founded by Sten A Olsson. In total the Stena Sphere has around 19 000 employees worldwide which therefore makes them one of the largest family-owned companies in Sweden (Stena AB Annual Review 2016). Stena AB who is the largest of the three parent companies, reached a revenue of 34 799 million Swedish crowns in 2016. This is approximately two thirds of the Stena Spheres total revenue of 50 950 million Swedish crowns in 2016 (Stena AB Annual Review 2016).

The Stena Sphere holds several well renowned subsidiaries such as Stena Line, Stena Property and Stena Recycling. This confirms the wide spectra of business areas the Stena Sphere controls including everything from ferry operations to assets management of properties to financial instruments designated to create a sustainable value for society and the industry (Stena AB Annual Review 2016). This report has conducted their empirical research and interviewed HR-responsibilities within the following business areas Stena AB, Stena Line, Stena Property, Stena Metall and Stena Recycling (a part of Stena Metall) that is visible in figure 2.

Figure 2.

STENA SPHERE			
BUSINESS AREAS	STENA AB (PUBL)	STENA SESSAN AB	STENA METALL AB
Ferry operations Revenue MSEK 12,630 Profit MSEK 730	STENA LINE		
Offshore Drilling Revenue MSEK 7,360 Profit MSEK -937	STENA DRILLING, SHUTTLE TANKERS	SHUTTLE TANKERS	
SHIPPING Revenue MSEK 4,053 Profit MSEK -379	STENA BULK, STENA RORO, STENA TEKNIK, NMG	CONCORDIA MARITIME (52%)	
Property Revenue MSEK 4,136 Profit MSEK* 2,220	STENA PROPERTY, STENA REALTY		
New Businesses Revenue MSEK 6,834 Profit MSEK 8,917	STENA ADACTUM	MYLAN (1.1%), SCANDIC (14.6%), BEIJER ELECTRONICS (29.8%)	
Finance/other Revenue MSEK 826 Profit MSEK 371	STENA FINANCE		STENA METALL FINANS
Recycling, environmental services and trading Revenue MSEK 16,404 Profit MSEK 305			STENA METALL

(Stena AB Annual Review 2016, p.34).

3.2.2.2 Nevin Insights AB

In this report, Nevin Insights AB has functioned as a link to the studied company Stena AB because of their previous cooperation with a pilot-project. Because of the readers' absence of knowledge in Nevin Insights AB this section provides an overview of their business idea.

Nevin Insights AB was founded in the beginning of 2017 by Stefan Svensson and Björn Åhlander. B. Åhlander explains the business idea by saying "Nevin is an innovative service for strengthening the business culture and engagement within a company that could be measured in real time". S. Svensson clarifies by saying "Nevin provides a service we refer to as microsurveys, that is a continuous short survey on a weekly or biweekly basis that is sent out to employees in order to collect feedback for the managers". S. Svensson continues by explaining that all that Nevin needs is e-mail addresses of employees that are supposed to answer the survey who then receives a link to the completely anonymous survey that usually contains around 5-10 questions. B. Åhlander points out that Nevin has a list of questions by saying "the platform is built on a question bank that is divided into several topic areas depending of what is supposed to be measured as well as the respondents' answers". B. Åhlander continues explaining that after the poll closes the platform receives and extract data into a designed report that later on is sent back to whoever is responsible for the survey at site.

3.3 Data Collection

The gathered data consists of both primary and secondary data. The heart of the study is however the in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with personnel at Stena and Nevin Insights AB. The interviewees' perceptions on employee engagement and e-HRM have been central in the progress of investigating the research questions.

3.3.1 Primary data: Interviews

Interviewees were chosen based on convenience sampling since a pilot project between Nevin and Stena had occurred since before. Some of the interviewees at Stena were therefore aware of Nevin's service and a deeper interview could be performed. Furthermore, other interviews with HR-managers at Stena were conducted since the research is of an exploratory kind and a bird's-eye perspective was implemented where the thoughts and perceptions of HR-managers were relevant to investigate the research question. This is since the report is aimed to explore the possibilities of implementing digital tools in order to increase the employee engagement and it was therefore of relevance to interview HR-managers to discuss if there was a need of new innovative tools in the field.

The data was gathered through six in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Bryman and Bell (2015) defined semi-structured interviews as "it typically refers to a context in which the interviewer has a series of questions that are in the general form of an interview schedule but is able to vary the sequence of questions" (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 213). In-depth interviews are especially appropriate when researchers intend to understand the behavior of decision-makers within different cultures (Piekkari & Welch 2011). Before conducting the interviews, questions were designed in order to explore and answer the research questions and the interview guide is attached in appendix. However, the questions varied a bit in format depending on the interviewee in terms of differences in duties or if they managed employees abroad. Additionally, the semi-structured approach allowed the authors to be flexible and to get rich and deep answers since the structure permits supplementary questions of the exploratory kind. All the interviews were conducted in English and were audio recorded and later manually transcribed by the authors of the report. The choice of conducting the interviews in English was discussed between the authors and the interviewees. However, because of the interviewees' high level of linguistic knowledge the choice of language was not

believed to harm the respondents' ability to answer the questions. Therefore, all six interviews were performed in English and not in the interviewees native tongue (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.3.1.1 Interviewees

The interviewees at Stena were chosen based on convenience sampling since representatives at Stena had been involved in a pilot project together with Nevin prior to this research. The initial contact was made with Linda Mickelson who is HR manager at Stena AB and accepted participating in a interview. Later, contact was taken with HR-responsibilities working in other business areas within the Stena Sphere who all accepted participating in an interview which created new perspectives and arguments for the study. The roles of the respective interviewees are specified in the table below and interviews have been conducted on managerial level in order to answer the exploratory research questions from a bird's perspective.

Furthermore, one interview was conducted with the founders of Nevin Insight AB in order to explain the role of Nevin and the contribution their service can make for a multinational company like Stena and their work with employee engagement.

Table 3.

Interviewee	Title & business unit	Date	Place	Duration
Stefan Svensson & Björn Åhlander	Founders of Nevin Insights AB	2018-04-16	Gothenburg	45 min
Camilla Åsviken	HR Business Partner Stena Metall AB	2018-04-24	Telephone	30 min
Maria Holmberg	HR Director Stena Properties AB	2018-04-24	Gothenburg	30 min
Linda Mickelson	HR Manager Stena AB	2018-04-26	Gothenburg	30 min
Lina Hestner Fri	HR Business Partner Stena Line AB	2018-05-02	Gothenburg	30 min
Sara Backelin	Head of HR and Strategic	2018-05-02	Telephone	30 min

	Functions Stena Recycling			
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3.3.2 Secondary data

This dissertation includes secondary data that has been gathered both from electronic as well as printed sources to elaborate the content of the study. Utilizing secondary data from secondary sources enables researchers to work more time efficient (Sreejesh et al., 2014). Also, utilize the internet has benefits since it captures a wide scope and encompasses almost every applicable subject. Therefore, acquiring secondary data from the Internet is acceptable (Sreejesh et al., 2014).

In this thesis, secondary data has been collected mainly from scientific articles or academic reports with high credibility to maintain a high trustworthiness in the study. The secondary data chosen has as far as possible been either peer reviewed or collected from well established organizations. Examples of organizations utilized as sources in this study are Gallup and Deloitte.

This study was also provided with information from the pilot-project between Nevin Insights AB and Stena AB to increase the comprehension regarding their cooperation. This has simplified the preparation of the interviews and helped design relevant questions.

The founders of Nevin has also provided this dissertation with internal documents and material that has given the study a deeper understanding of Nevin and their service.

3.4 Quality of the study

In this section a discussion regarding the quality of the study will be presented together with reference to confirmability, credibility, transferability and dependability. By highlighting this, the trustworthiness of this report will be assured (Riege, 2003; Krefting, 1991; Guba, 1981).

3.4.1 Confirmability

Confirmability is the part of the study which guarantees that the findings presented in the empirical chapter was shaped completely by the interviewees. To ensure that personal

reflections was minimized in the study, following measures were assumed (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

The gathering of data material was ensured by utilizing tape recorded interviews which later included transcription of the data collection. During the interviews, written notes were taken in order to simplify the writing process further ahead (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Riege, 2003). It is notable to mention that in both cases, mistakes could have been made since important information could lie in how an answer is delivered in form of intonation and hesitations (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.4.2 Credibility

Credibility includes the approval of research findings by peers because realities could sometimes be perceived in various ways (Riege, 2003). Therefore, the following arrangements were implemented in the report to demonstrate its credibility.

Since the thesis is constructed as an exploratory single case study the data collection techniques utilized were based on either primary data from interviews or secondary data that was as far as possible either peer-reviewed or compiled by some acknowledged organization such as Gallup or Deloitte. In addition, several proficient respondents from different business areas within the Stena Sphere participated which improved the overall understanding of the organization and created diverse perspectives. This provided increased credibility of the gathered data (Eisenhardt & Grabner, 2007). Furthermore, an interview with the founders of Nevin Insights AB was conducted to sample expertise for this thesis in the area of e-HRM and the new digital tools emerging with the purpose of improving engagement among employees.

During the interviews, some of the questions was both repeated and reframed to avoid misinterpretation with the respondents. A few questions were also expanded and included follow-up questions that creates a clear comprehension for the report (Krefting, 1990).

The findings from the conducted interviews were discussed and presented during the course of the fourth chapter and included direct quotes from the interviewees which guaranteed fairness in the process (Krefting, 1990). After the writing process was completed it was submitted to all of the interviewees for inspection to confirm that their responses had been interpreted correctly and a confirmation of publication was requested.

3.4.3 Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research is equivalent with generalizability and is stated to equip future readers with evidence that the findings could be applied to other situations, contexts or populations (Statistics solutions, 2018). It is not the researchers' responsibility to demonstrate that the research study's findings will be applicable. Instead, the researcher should provide only proof that so that the reader can make their own judgment. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) that states "It is, in summary, not the naturalist's task to provide an index of transferability, it is his or her responsibility to provide the data base that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers" (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p.316).

This dissertation has investigated theory developments in the field of e-HRM and its possible influence on employee engagement in a multinational corporation. Hence, the study does not make pretensions about generalizability. As it is described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) the interview material was sampled to establish a database that allows possible transferability judgments in the future. This was accomplished through a extensive collection of data from the Stena Sphere presented in chapter four.

3.4.4 Dependability

To maintain the right level of dependability in the thesis and exhibit a stability and consistency in the research, following measures have been taken. Primarily, an accurate description of the research strategy and research design was presented in the two first subchapters in the method part. In the next subchapter the procedure of data collection was described in two divided categories. This sectioning of the method part was developed to ensure that the reader could follow the progress of insights and that the analytical process was applied in the entire study (Guba, 1981).

Before the full study was completed, material from all phases of the research process was kept including things as the annual review of Stena as well as transcripts from the interviews. By storing a large amount of data the quality of the study has been ensured and confirmed (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.5 Limitations

This study has limitations regarding the gathering of the empirical data. Firstly, the primary data for this thesis has been based on interviews from only one international firm located in Gothenburg. Alternatively, other international corporations could have been involved and created a multiple case study. Having that said, that alternative was deselected since various interviews was carried out at the Stena Sphere with personnel from different departments and subsidiaries that gave a wide comprehension and a possibility to create a deep analysis. Even though, focus on solely one multinational corporation should make readers cautious about generalizing the results and drawing statistical conclusions.

Secondly, during the collection of the interview data at the selected firm it became clear that an extent of interviews would not provide the dissertation with new perspectives. Therefore, six semi-structured, in-depth interviews was believed to be enough to equip this thesis with sufficient material for the analysis section. However, one could argue that the dissertation has a limitation as it does not include a wide range of characteristics among the respondents. Factors such as gender, age, computer experience could have influenced the interviewees perceptions, although this has not been taken under consideration during this study.

4. Empirical data

4.1 Employee engagement within the Stena Sphere

Companies today are profit seekers and that the engagement of employees has an impact of the overall result of the company according to L. Mickelson when stating “It is extremely important with employee engagement within the company because it has big effect on the result”. It is therefore important to work with engagement especially at Stena who is a family owned company with most of their workers staying for several years. Furthermore, M. Holmberg argues that employee engagement is important to work with since it has an effect on the company results and since management today is not about telling people what to do but instead to engage them in how to achieve company goals that will make them conduct better decisions that in turn will affect the result and says “And in everyday life I think management nowadays it is not telling people what do to at all, not in any level of Stena Fastigheter anymore. So it is extremely important that our employees have an understanding of what we

want to achieve, how we want to work and the values that we have. If you have a high level of engagement and people really truly believe in the same goals and visions and they want to contribute to what we want to achieve, we will make better decisions”. Also, C. Åsviken declares that it is a connection between employee engagement and organizational outcomes since engagement derives better performance towards organizational values and goals by stating “If employees are engaged or satisfied of course they perform better and then work towards the common goals”.

4.2 Annual survey - Stena Voice

In the whole Stena Sphere, the same employee engagement survey is utilized and it is named Stena Voice. It is a completely anonymous survey and total anonymity is significant especially in some cases where the manager might be the problem and revealing issues to the manager would therefore not be an option according to C. Åsviken that states “When anyone is feeling dissatisfied they should talk with their manager. But of course there is situations when the manager is kind of the problem and then they could talk to the union or directly to me within HR”. The HR manager at Stena AB, Linda Mickelson, explains this by saying “one of the common denominators in the Stena Sphere is that we utilize the same tool to measure employee engagement and it is called Stena Voice”. In Stena AB, L. Mickelson explains that they perform Stena Voice every 18 months and that they just recently reduced the amount of questions from 75 to 50 since it was too long and that the respondents would lose focus because of the length. At Stena Fastigheter they experience the same problem with the survey that is performed every 24 months within their business unit. It is believed that it sometimes is very long and the employees will answer the questions just randomly half way through the survey according to M. Holmberg by saying “It is 80 questions and you go to sleep midways. Maybe it would help if we had a more modern tool”. The Stena Voice is also performed every 18 months within Stena Line and it is believed to be too seldom, include to many questions and employees do not really understand why they answer the survey at all according to L. Hestner Fri “The survey is not a perfect tool because it is performed too seldom and some might not even have the opportunity to answer. Employees feel it is to many questions at a company level that makes the employees feel like why should I answer this”.

In Stena Recycling they perform the engagement survey once a year, however criticism is that it is way to massive since it only measures the temperature at one day according to S.

Backelin “It is basically a classic employee survey from 10 years ago that is very intensive in a way with a lot of questions. We are trying to measure basically the whole working environment to the whole business area to the whole leadership-thing all in one go. It is a lot of questions for one day once a year. It is a very very large survey measurement for only one-day temperature measurement I would say”.

At Stena Metall, C. Åsviken explains that they perform their employee survey annually. She states that it is a very big survey and overall a large project that makes it hard to perform more frequently by saying “Stena voice is such a big project so it would not be possible to do it more than once a year”. However, she believes that it is beneficial to have a big engagement survey since it gives a clear picture of how the employees are feeling and that it results in numbers that they can present to the and states ”we can communicate to our employees that we once a year do a big follow up and a big questionnaire to take the temperature within a bunch of areas. I know it is a big thing for our owners and for the top management to get a receipt of how things are going”. B. Åhlander claims that there is heavy work with an annual report since the scope is very big and consequently it takes about 6 months to analyze the answers. This brings very long lead times for fixing the discovered issues and makes the annual big engagement surveys inefficient. The survey will lose its overall purpose if there is not any plan after gathering all the answers according to L. Mickelson when she explains “I am really serious with it (the after work) and I think it is important that you work with the whole process. Otherwise it is not worth anything. So I am quiet hard with that. But I think that if it would be a easier or funnier way to do it, then maybe we could increase it even more”. She also believes that it is important for the employees to understand why they answer a survey and that they can see implementation afterwards, otherwise there is no purpose of having a survey at all by explaining “I need to have a very good plan with what I will be doing with the gathered information. So they understand why they answer to me”. L. Mickelson also explains the importance of doing the afterwork properly. At Stena AB they have seminars after the result from the annual survey that all managers need to attend and where they do a plan of how to improve the employee engagement in every unit.

The afterwork is a crucial part of the survey process according to L. Mickelson since there is no point of having a survey if you do not work with the results and she states “the numbers are not worth anything. You have to remember than an employee must feel they get the feedback and that they answer and something happens. It is not just measuring”. This is also

important for the employees, because if they do not see any implementation they will not see any point of answering the survey truthfully according to L. Hestner Fri “The employees feel like why should I answer this. It is not going to change anyway. We (*the management*) has not been good with working with the result so the employees feel like oh no it is coming again and it will not change anything”. Furthermore, a digital engagement survey is a tool to measure the engagement and will provide the management with useful numbers to work with. However, it is not a solution to the problems that might be discovered since that is up to the managers to fix according to S. Svensson “Nevin does not improve employee engagement by the platform. It gives the managers the tools and then its up to HR-managers to do changes. The leadership needs to take action from our data. Otherwise it is pointless”.

4.2.1 Coaching and management

In Stena Fastigheter, M. Holmberg explains that they work with employee engagement by having educated managers that are aware of the importance of engagement among employees by saying “I work with different areas that I think is important to affect employee engagement and one is leadership and that we have the kind of leadership that enables our employees to feel engaged and that the managers understand what kind of leadership that affects that”. She addresses the need of being able to talk to your manager directly whenever an employee feels stressed or dissatisfied with anything, no matter if it is work related or not and states “I am not that strict if it is work-related or private. 10 years ago you really need to know if it was work-related and if we should pay for it. Nowadays people work in a different way and we can help people really quick by getting a coach”. That is why they have implemented something called “Health talks” at Stena Fastigheter that is an opportunity for the employee to have a meeting with the manager or someone from the HR department to discuss their current situation. The management is therefore coached in order to be able to deal with many types of happenings that could arise after a health talk or an engagement survey. M. Holmberg explains “By coaching the managers in how to deal with these type of issues, it is important. I sometimes help managers with coaching”. L. Mickelson also discusses the importance of coaching managers to be good leaders since that will improve the employee engagement. If you have a good leader, then you will immediately discover if there is a problem and not wait until for example a survey arises.

Furthermore, at Stena Metall they work closely with the health service available within the firm where the HR-department immediately gets a notification if an employee is reported sick

due to work related issues and states “we have a routine when they call in sick. We work together with occupational health care that employees report to when they are sick They talk to a nurse and if the they are sick because of working conditions, then we in HR get a signal”.

4.3 Digital employee engagement surveys

All interviewees believe that the future will be more digitized and C. Åsviken expresses the need of becoming more digitized in the HRM field since the society is heading that way as well by saying “I believe it will be more digitized in the future in the HR questions since all other areas are going in that direction. Still I think there is always going to be some process and some things that will take a bit longer. But of course we can not hold back where the society is heading”. S. Svensson agrees that there is a definite change in HRM that might occur now or just lies around the corner and states “there is definitely a change in HRM and if it is not now it is just around the corner. It is impossible to neglect the online presence today and how people living their lives online”. E-HRM is therefore relevant for firms today to speed up the informational process of HRM. The current way to measure employee engagement through an annual survey is according to B. Åhlander incredibly insufficient since you wait a whole year until next measurement. What HRM needs is real time data so you could follow trends and act on it immediately rather than wait until the annual survey when it might be too late to implement a change.

4.3.1 Frequent checkups

At Stena Fastigheter they perform The Stena Voice survey every other year and that might not be enough. Even though they have low levels of employee turnover in their organization, some people might leave the company before even taking part in an engagement survey so they could miss out on valuable information according to M. Holmberg “Sometimes people start and leave the company without having one survey because two years is quite a long time”. Also, L. Mickelson argues that they are in need of a more up to date alternative in Stena AB as well, in order to measure employee engagement which is easy and fast to answer and admits that their current way of measuring is outdated by saying “It is kind of the old-fashion questionnaire that we have. What we are looking for is maybe to measure it more instantly and for it to be quicker”.

Have a survey like Stena Voice more regularly is believed to be impossible since it is too much work involved according to L. Mickelson that states “I would say we are in need of a more frequent survey but a bit reluctant. But if it is easy and fun to answer I would say yes. But not this kind of survey we have today. It would kill the managers and bore them to death. It is too big to handle. Too much work”. What Stena needs is something that could be accessed easily through the phone and something that could measure the engagement more instantly and quicker according to M. Holmberg by saying “It needs to be easy and accessible and you should be able to answer it through your phone very quickly”. What companies today actually need is something to replace the old annual survey and that includes a smaller set of questions more often according to L. Hestner Fri that states “It (*annual survey*) is out of date and it is not the tool that are liked by managers nor employees. They are quite sick about it and we should have smaller set of questions more often instead. That is the future”. L. Mickelson furthermore explains that even though they are in need of more frequent checkups it does not necessarily mean that they are in need of more surveys since there are several other ways to improve the employee engagement and states “You have to work with your staff more frequently but you could do it in many different ways. So it is not necessarily the employee survey that is the answer at the question I must say”.

Furthermore, it is still argued that it is the managers’ responsibility to conduct more frequent checkups with their employees. A digital tool could help to gain more interaction with employees abroad however, it is still up to the managers to conduct regular meetings with their according to L. Mickelson “The managers have the responsibility and you have to reach the managers and sometimes that is very hard. So for us it is not an HR-thing, we can provide a tool but in the end it is the manager's responsibility”. M. Holmberg also states that they are in need of more frequent check ups and especially with the people abroad. She explains that it is harder to help the people abroad since HR is a lot about building personal relations through trust and this becomes harder due to the physical distance by saying “I would definitely say it is a lot harder helping them (*the employees*) since they are abroad. HR is a lot about trust, being close, being present and it is so much more than just dealing with problems. It is a lot harder since they are abroad”. Some workers at the Stena Line ship, Stena Saga, travel between Oslo and Fredrikstad while their HR-responsible is located in Gothenburg. This is sometimes an issue since it is hard to meet with the employees according to L. Hestner Fri “If you take Stena Saga for example that goes between Oslo and Fredrikstad. There we have one of my colleagues responsible. If she is going to meet someone she needs

to travel to Oslo and board the ship or be there in Tuesday when the ships arrive in Oslo. That is a bit hard”.

A digital survey undertaken frequently would get a clear picture of the temperature in the organization in the moment and they could discuss real time happenings soon after the actual occurrence at informal ways that would be easier and faster than the afterwork of an annual survey according to L. Hestner Fri “The managers would get the temperature on how the group is feeling and what is on the table right now. Then they could just bring that up at the next group meetings on board quite easily and say that something has happened since the last survey and then see what they could do about it. Have a discussion that does not have to be so formal with action plans but rather more easy to handle so it gets more accurate feedback and becomes faster and easier to work with”. However, M. Holmberg claims that it still is the managers’ responsibility to decide if more frequent checkups is needed. According to her, she wants her managers to have weekly checkups and daily contact with their employees to build trust and have a good relationship and says “I really need the managers and the employees to have check-ups every week. I would like them to have weekly meetings and daily contact. Work with good relationships and build trust, but that is up to them”.

4.3.1.1 Digital surveys on board

Some of the blue-collar workers are in periods working abroad at the cruising ships at Stena Line. To conduct a survey online when working at a ship in the ocean could sometimes be problematic. The workers do not have their own email addresses nor a work-phone which could make it troubling accessing an online survey. It is important for the workers to be able to access it when at work trough Stenas servers since the work union probably will not accept something work related to be conducted through a personal email or phone according to L. Hestner Fri “A link on the phone is not possible because they (*the blue-collar employees*) do not have a work phone and that would be an issue with our unions. It is always issues if they need to do something at home cause then the unions say you have to pay for that. It is just the white-collar personnel that has an email address”. Another issue when working at the sea is the internet connection that sometimes is troubling according to L. Hestner Fri “It is hard to implement this at the ships because the Wi-Fi and internet access on the ships are quite bad, so the internet capacity could be a problem”.

4.3.2 Lost of human touch

When implementing a digital tool like an engagement survey, one might lose the benefits of the human touch according to M. Holmberg that says “maybe you could see it as keeping a distance, losing the human touch. Instead of meeting and talking you need to fill in a survey”. Also, some previous comments the founders of Nevin have encountered has been about the fear of implementing digital tools since that might affect the personal relationship that is needed. However, a digital tool is not supposed to remove that type of communication but rather to add a new and easy alternative according to S. Svensson that explained “a few clients have pointed out one disadvantage by implementing a digital tool and that is that they are a bit afraid of losing the human touch. Although Nevins’ aim is not to remove that part of office community, we just add an alter dimension”. It is important to remember that one thing does not have to exclude the other. It is important to have both digital and personal tools since different generations might request different things as stated by L. Hestner Fri “We need more options and there has to be different ways to reach me. Young persons do not want to pop in here for meetings, they want to message me through a chat while someone that is sixty would feel the opposite. So it is important to have both options. And with really difficult questions I think it is important to meet anyway”.

By implementing more digital tools within HRM, it allows people to have less administrative work and enables more focus on human touch, coaching and meetings. Digital tools is not something that will get rid of the human touch but rather make new solutions for having more interaction than before according to S. Backelin that says “For me it is only about reading the organization and allowing my HR responsables, my business partners in my organization to have more qualitative work in the organization. What I mean by that is that they will have less administration and therefore be able to coach and meet the people more than they are doing today. So I see it the other way around. I am not afraid of losing the human touch, I would not allow that to happen”. The digital way of meeting could also be time efficient since the HR-workers would not have to travel as much in their work to meet employees located at different places according to L. Mickelson “I think we could have even more interaction with the employees abroad. Today we travel quite a lot in the company but we could also see a decrease of that because we have more and more simple ways of interaction”.

4.3.3 Language barriers

A problem that could arise when conducting surveys in a multinational corporation is the language barrier that might occur. It is important to be given the possibility to have the survey in the employee's mother tongue according to B. Åhlander by saying “it should be in there native tongue. Swedish, English, Korean and so on”. This is important in order to understand the questions completely according to S. Backelin “We have the annual survey in all languages. It is important for the employees so they really understand the questions”. In order to get fully expressed answers, it is important to be able to choose the language you are the most comfortable with according to C. Åsviken “The language is very important for get fully expressed answers. We could not do it in English for all employees, it would not be possible”. This is even more important among blue-collar workers since they sometimes have trouble with the Swedish language and therefore are in need of having the survey in their mother tongue according to L. Hestner Fri “You could have it (*the survey*) in your mother tongue and I think it is important. Because many people on board has been living in Sweden since the sixties but they are quite bad in speaking and understanding Swedish so it is good they have it in their mother tongue so I think it is important for the blue-collar workers however that is not an issue among the white-collar employees”. L. Mickelson only works with white-collar personnel and in her field the survey is only needed in English or in Swedish and she states “From my point of view it is only needed in Swedish and English. In Stena Line they have more languages since we believe it is good to answer in your mother tongue for those who need. But for my department it is enough with Swedish and English because we have the organization in UK, US and some parts in Germany and Luxembourg and they manage to have it in English”.

Another problem regarding translation of questions was mentioned by S. Svensson that he had come across while working with Nevin. It was that a direct translation was not possible from a English version to the Swedish version since the questions came across as more harsh in a Swedish context and they therefore needed to soften the questions a bit. S. Svensson explained it as “We have been learning a lot when translating questions in these surveys from English to Swedish. The English version is more direct but that does not work in a Swedish context. Not always at least so we had to soften the questions in the Swedish version”.

5. Analysis

Both current literature as well as empirical findings from the conducted interviews points at a link between employee engagement and organizational performance and that the link has indicated higher customer satisfaction, better customer ratings and higher profitability just to mention a few (e.g. Harter et al., 2002; Robinson et al., 2004; L. Hestner Fri; L. Mickelson). For companies, it should therefore be of interest to figure out new and up to date versions of how to improve the employee engagement within their corporation. That is since it has obvious effects on organizational performance and also since the organizations that use up-to-date technology were perceived as modern and progressive among the employees (e.g. Panayotopoulou et al., 2007).

5.1 Traditional employee engagement surveys

The current and ordinary way of measuring engagement among employees is through an annual engagement survey which measures engagement. However, it is believed not to be performed frequent enough (Gable et al., 2010; L. Hestner Fri; L. Mickelson; S. Backelin). Some employees might have resigned before having the possibility to answer one engagement survey (L. Hestner Fri). In those cases, the company will lose valuable information from new employees that could have new insights with improvements from different perspectives. It is suggested for firms to integrate their work with employee engagement throughout the year instead of only measuring it at one point in time (Gable et al., 2010). The traditional survey measures the engagement at the company once a year and states the result in one compiled report. There is a challenge with only measuring the engagement so seldom since that might not be representative of how things are experienced during the year.

HR-leaders should focus on working with employee engagement frequently instead of delegating problems to an annual engagement survey (Deloitte, 2017). The current engagement survey in the Stena Sphere is performed annually, every 18th or 24th month and things that happen that affect engagement could be forgotten if waiting 18 months until the next engagement survey. A problem revealed during the interview sessions was that it is hard to measure engagement at only one point in time since engagement in a company is something that fluctuates (S. Backelin; B. Åhlander). Therefore, in line with previous literature, firms should measure engagement several times a year through engagement surveys in order to work with it more frequently (Deloitte, 2017). Additionally, it becomes possible to

discuss real time happenings in a more informal way since the seriousness of the measurement is eased (L. Hestner Fri). If it becomes fun and easy to answer, it will create incitements to actually perform it without seeing it as an obligation that is considered time consuming or boring (L. Mickelson). However, important according to all interviewees is that the survey needs to be a lot shorter than their current one that ranges between 75 and 50 questions (L. Mickelson). Mainly since the employees lose focus halfway through which leads to deceptive results (M. Holmberg).

5.1.1 Implementing results

It is crucial for the managers to do proper afterwork after conducting the surveys, otherwise employees might feel that their inputs are neglected (Edwards et al., 1997; L. Mickelsson). Previous research in the field of engagement surveys has stated some negative effects caused by the surveys due to the lack of action by management after conducting the surveys (e.g. Edwards et al., 1997; Gable et al., 2010). The employees could sometimes feel that their inputs are neglected and feel that there is no point in answering the survey since no actions are taken afterwards (Edwards et al., 1997). This problem was confirmed by the interviewees that explained that there is no point of doing an engagement survey if no one worked with the results from it (L. Hestner Fri; M. Holmberg; L. Mickelson). An engagement survey is only a tool that can help to discover problems and issues within the company after an analysis of the gathered answers. However, a frequent survey like Nevin can not solve those discovered issues since that is up to the managers to actually implement the changes (B. Åhlander). It is therefore crucial to work with action plans and that the managers make use of what the digital tools present. Otherwise, employees will feel neglected and the employee engagement survey will do the opposite of what it actually is supposed to do. Instead it will create disengagement and a resistance towards having the survey.

If adding frequency to the surveys that is suggested (e.g. Gable et al., 2010; S. Backelin; B. Åhlander) it gives more statistics to work with for the managers and if they have trouble working with the results from an annual survey that is performed once a year, they still might have a problem working with results every month. Nevin Insights AB should consider this problem when working with their survey and possible solutions. One way would be to work with the results more easily and for the owners and top management to set of time for the managers to actually work with the results after every conducted survey (Cava & Fernandez, 2017).

5.1.2 Other measurements

Although an engagement survey could improve the employee engagement within a company, it is not necessarily the one and only tool (Holmberg, 2018; Mickelson, 2018). This is important to remember when analyzing the possibilities with an online survey. Several other ways such as coaching and health talks that can be used in order to increase the engagement in an organization (Holmberg, 2018). These other ways of working with employee engagement are important to have in combination with a survey in order to be able to work with the discovered issues within a company. Being able to talk to your manager about problems you might have is important in order to build long and healthy relationships that are built up on trust. However, sometimes the actual problem might be the manager and in those cases it is important to have something anonymous such as a survey in order for the employees to be able to express their true feelings (Åsviken, 2018).

5.2 The digital era

Society today is heading towards a more digital era and every branch, no matter location will get affected (e.g. Strohmeier, 2007; Bondarouk & Ruël, 2009). It is important for organizations to follow the trend and see where the society is heading in order to keep up (C. Åsviken). Organizations should make use of the potential that the digital technology offers since it could generate positive outcomes such as time efficiency (S. Backelin) and since it reduces operational costs (Behera, 2017). If one way of becoming more time efficient is by implementing digital tools it should be considered as an opportunity of improvement that organizations should make full use of since it allows them to focus on other things that are more efficient (Lawler & Mohrman, 2003; L. Hestner Fri).

Digital tools such as employee engagement surveys can benefit multinational corporations work with employees abroad by eliminating physical distance that usually is a problem (M. Holmberg). Managing employees abroad is believed to be more difficult than managing employees at sight due to the physical distance that separate them (L. Hestner Fri; M. Holmberg). HR is a lot about trust and building relationships (M. Holmberg) and that becomes a challenge when needed to manage employees in multinational settings. An opportunity would be to use digital tools such as surveys to reduce the need of travel just to

conduct a meeting that would have generated the same information flow as a survey could have relayed (Hannon et al., 1996).

Something that has been brought to attention when conducting this report is the freight of becoming too digital and therefore lose the human touch that is important within the field of HRM (M. Holmberg; L. Mickelson). Since we are becoming more deeply immersed in technology it is not unusual to be frightened of becoming too digital where real face to face meetings might be put aside. If so, the behavioral aspect of HRM might lose its purpose since a big part of HRM includes work with emotions and beliefs of an employee that preferably is done face to face and this is a problem that comes with the digitalization of HRM (M. Holmberg). Without real time meetings it can be difficult to combine an individual's own beliefs with an organization's cultural values that in time will make an employee feel engaged according to the definition by Robinson et al. (2004). However, even though digital solutions now are becoming available at the market it is not a reason to remove all other ways of personal relations that are occurring right now. Organizations can use engagement surveys to increase the data gathering and in deed speed up the informational process that would have taken days if conducted with personal meetings face to face (Heikkilä, 2013). But it should not remove real-life meetings that are the common practice today (S.Svensson). Digital tools should be used in combination with physical meetings in order for organizations to keep the human and caring touch. With that said, it is not necessarily believed to be a problem when minimizing the human touch within an organization. One should not forget that the primary goal for an organization is to make profit and it is therefore of interest to effectivize as many procedures as possible. Certainly, the organization should not remove all types of behavioral work, however if digital tools could speed up process and remove a bit of the personal meetings to get time efficient, it should be an opportunity worth testing.

Digital pulse survey tools such as the service Nevin Insight AB offers, will take the temperature in the organization and is designed to provide companies with data and numbers from real time (B. Åhlander). This might be a way to discover and ease dissatisfaction at an early stage (Deloitte, 2015). An annual survey could sometimes discover things too late as in a case with sick leave for example. When it comes to sick leave the HR-department gets notification if the sick leave is caused by work related issues (C. Åsviken). However, in these cases it could be considered too late. The employee is already sick by things that could have been discovered at an earlier stage and the sick leave could have been prevented (C. Åsviken).

Frequent engagement surveys could therefore contribute to improvements of the employee engagement since it will discover things in real time and might prevent them from occurring if the right actions are taken (Deloitte, 2015).

5.2.1 Local adaptations

An issue when developing a digital engagement survey could be local and cultural values that are present in the business and that could create barriers towards implementing digital solutions in the company (Myloni, 2004; Björkman et al., 2008; Sheu et al., 2004; B. Åhlander). This problem is common for both traditional engagement surveys and frequent engagement surveys. However, since the problem is still present when talking about a frequent survey it is brought to attention as a problem that needs to be dealt with. Barriers could be difficulties of understanding the language which highlights the importance of having the possibility to choose the language of the survey otherwise it could create resistance among the employees (Sheu et al., 2004) . This belief was sometimes contradicting after doing empirical research. What could be concluded was that HR-managers responsible for blue-collar workers found it to be important with a possibility to choose language (C. Åsviken; S. Backelin). However, HR-managers responsible for white-collar workers did not see the need of having the survey in multiple languages and believed English would be enough (L. Hestner Fri; M. Holmberg). This is a take away that firms can utilize by knowing the workforce and regulating the language depending on the employees need. There is no need to conduct surveys on a person's mother tongue if their second language is at a high level. The fewer languages needed, the faster it will be transcribing the answers.

5.2.2 Resistance towards digitalization

Previous literature suggested that new types of pulse survey tools have started to replace the old and traditional surveys that are used within MNCs (Deloitte, 2017; Modrek & Cullen, 2013). However, every department in the Stena Sphere still uses the old version of engagement survey (L. Mickelson). It is still used even though resistance among both workers and managers is present (L. Hestner Fri; S. Backelin). The owners and the board show resistance towards implementing new solutions. Changing a practice that has been present in the sphere for several years such as the Stena Voice survey might be a costly process. Besides, the new digital tools are rather new on the market and not fully developed so it could be considered a risk to implement new tools such as Nevin and this can be considered a

problem at the moment since it has not been tested for a longer period of time. The owners and the management at Stena need to work together in order to find an alternative tool that performs better than their current one, otherwise it will not create any incitements for their owners to change the current practice since it probably still gives them valuable numbers of performance that is comparable between subsidiaries in the sphere and therefore makes good use (C. Åsviken). The pilot project conducted between Stena AB and Nevin Insights AB is a good way to start since it gives both parties valuable information of possible improvements within their field of work. However, some resistance is yet present by the owners since an old survey, that is believed to be outdated and ineffective by coworkers (L. Mickelsson; L. Hestner Fri; Edwards et al., 1997), still is utilized within the company. Since both managers and employees are resistant towards the current engagement survey, the top management and owners should consider changing strategy. Resistance towards a tool that is aimed to create employee engagement could instead generate the opposite effect such as dissatisfaction and discourage and that is not the proper way of working with employee engagement since it the loses its purpose (L. Hestner Fri)

Another issue with adding frequency to an engagement survey is when having workers with no personal e-mail or work phone (L. Hestner Fri; B. Åhlander). Since it is suggested for firms to increase the frequency of surveys (e.g. Gable et al., 2010; S. Backelin; B. Åhlander) the firm would need to find a way for the employees to access the survey on work hours since it otherwise would be a problem with the work unions. Currently, the only personnel that has an e-mail address is the white collar workers so it would be an issue to access a survey through the phone that is the case with Nevin (S. Svensson).

6. Conclusions

-What are the challenges with current employee engagement surveys within a multinational corporation?

Every unit within the Stena Sphere works with the engagement survey called Stena Voice. It is conducted every 12th, 18th or 24th month depending on the manager's choice. After conducting the empirical research of this report as well as reviewing previous literature, it has been confirmed that the current way of measuring employee engagement through the Stena Voice survey is not sufficient enough. Both managers and employees believe that the current engagement survey is outdated, performed to seldom and that the scope is too massive. All of

the interviewees at Stena implied that there is a great amount of resistance towards their traditional engagement survey. A tool that is destined to increase the employee engagement now has the workforce against it and this might lead to disengagement instead of engagement among the employees. The owners of the Stena Sphere should consider replacing the old survey and invest in something that the managers and employees have faith in.

The lack of motivation to perform the traditional engagement survey among employees is related to the lack of proper afterwork by the managers. This makes the employees feel that their opinion does not result in any change and creates resistance towards the survey. The challenge is therefore to motivate the managers and to ensure that the employees answers are analyzed and used properly. The managers should be offered extra time to work with the results without being pressured by time.

-How could e-HRM such as a frequent employee engagement survey contribute to the work with employee engagement?

A digital, shorter and more frequent tool measures real time data and captures issues and dissatisfaction among employees at an early stage. With the current old practice Stena Voice, the engagement is measured (at best) once a year and in those cases it might be too late to discover issues and dissatisfaction. Employees could already have resigned or be gone on sick leave so a frequent survey could be able to prevent those things and therefore increase the engagement. Hence, what is needed is an engagement survey that is fun, easy accessible and performed more frequent since that will generate incentives for actually answering and working with the engagement survey and contribute in a positive matter to employee engagement in total within the firm.

Additionally, implementing a digital tool such as an engagement survey can speed up the informational process by easing the administrative burden of collecting, storing and retrieving data which will enable firms to be more productive and ease the work with employee engagement. Both employees as well as managers will have time to focus on other tasks and travel needs for managers will be reduced since many things can be brought up in the survey instead of having the need for personal talks. It can even increase the amount of contact between manager and employee since the survey is supposed to be more frequent than the previous traditional survey was and therefore improve the engagement since it can generate trust.

Finally, firms need to utilize the possibilities that come along with new digital tools and not be afraid of changing current practices for the better if resistance is present among the workforce. Digital tools such as Nevin is not here to replace all old practices, but rather here to be used in a combination with what works best for each company since it needs to be adapted depending on the workforces need. Each firm will need to see what benefits the firm as a whole and their work towards improving their employee engagement.

6.1 Theoretical and managerial contributions

This dissertation contributes to existing research in the field of employee engagement surveys by providing a single case study on how a digital frequent survey tool could impact the work with employee engagement within a multinational corporation. This was achieved by demonstrating how the Stena Sphere could benefit from replacing their annual survey to a more frequent employee engagement tool. The analysis points out some resistance among both managers as well as employees against the traditional annual survey. Resistance towards the annual survey that is destined to measure and increase employee engagement could have the opposite effect if not implemented correctly and instead create disengagement.

Furthermore, this exploratory study has displayed new insights and practical examples on how to integrate digital solutions in order to assist managers' handling of employees around the world. Implementing digital tools could speed up the informational process that enable firms to be more productive and cost efficient. The managers can act on real time data that enable them to discover issues and dissatisfaction at an early stage.

Finally, the study has contributed with important findings for firms focusing on frequent engagement surveys like Nevin. The importance of having the survey in the respondent's mother tongue has been questioned, since it is believed to be a matter of linguistic knowledge. The study has highlighted difference in demand where white-collar workers only need the survey to be in English or Swedish while blue-collar employees often need a survey in their mother tongue.

6.2 Outlook on future research

Since this thesis have based its findings from a single case study performed at Stena, it is difficult to draw conclusions in general by adopting these into other organizations and businesses. Therefore, it would be relevant to conduct additional studies on e-HRM such as frequent employee engagement surveys and its influence on employee engagement in other industries and countries. This would lead to a wider empirical base where comparisons could be integrated.

Finally, the study has demonstrated that with a more frequent survey the firm could discover issues like stress and dissatisfaction quicker in comparison to the traditional annual survey. Therefore, it is suggested that future studies do a quantitative research in order to investigate if there is a direct relationship between frequent engagement surveys and employee engagement.

7. References

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Stefan Svenson & Björn Åhlander, Founders of Nevin Insights AB, 2018-04-16

Camilla Åsviken, HR Business Partner Stena Metall AB, 2018-04-24

Maria Holmberg, HR Director Stena Properties AB, 2018-04-24

Linda Mickelson, HR Manager Stena AB, 2018-04-26

Lina Hestner Fri, HR Business Partner Stena Line AB, 2018-05-02

Sara Backelin, Head of HR and Strategic Functions Stena Recycling 2018-05-02

7.1 Appendix

7.1.1 Interview guide Stena Sphere

- What is your role in the company?
- Have you heard about the expression employee engagement before?
- What does employee engagement mean for you at Stena?
- Is employee engagement important? Why?

- Do you work with employee engagement today? YES/NO...how? Annual survey?
- If yes... What do you do with gathered answers from the annual survey?
- How quickly would you discover if an employee for example feels stressed or dissatisfied?
- Are you familiar with the expression e-HRM?
- Do you work with electronic HRM today in order to increase employee engagement within the organization? How?
- Does every plant abroad report to the headquarter? If yes- how often and in what way? If no- why?
- Do you have regular meetings with the employees abroad?
- If an employee would feel stressed or dissatisfied, what should they do? Could they report it anonymously?
- Are you in need of more frequent check-ups with your staff?
- In what way would a continuous survey (like Nevin) improve current HRM-practices?
- Could any problems arise when using this kind of survey?
- Would a weekly/monthly internet based employee survey benefit you as an international company? How?
- How would the survey affect the employee engagement?
- How would the survey affect the ability for the company to ease discovered issues?
- In what language should the survey be in? (Only in English or adapted to country or employee?)
- Do you believe that the HRM practices will become more digitized in the future?
- Can you see any disadvantages with implementing digital tools in your HRM practices today?

7.1.2 Interview guide Nevin Insights AB

- What is Nevin?
- What is the purpose with Nevin?
- Can you explain the process of how Nevin works in practice?
- Do you experience a transformation within HRM today?
- What problems can Nevin solve in the field of HRM?
- How can firms benefit from your service?
- Have you heard about the expression employee engagement before?
- Can Nevins platform improve the employee engagement? In what way?
- How would the survey affect the ability for the company to ease discovered issues?
- Are there any disadvantages with implementing digital tools inside HRM?
- In what language should the survey be in? (Only in English or adapted to country or employee?)