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Boom…Bust…Bounce: Understanding Morale Through it All

A conceptual model of morale.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to develop and propose from a social constructivist perspective a dynamic model for the concept of morale as it exists within two Swedish organizations. The impetus for doing the study comes from the current emphasis on maintaining or improving morale given the need for redundancies in the face of an economic recession. Further, to address the claims made that improvements in morale will result in securing employee loyalty, productivity and engagement that organizations rely on to continue to be profitable. The study creates a model that outlines a cycle of morale and posits that morale cannot be managed as a single entity but rather that it must be conceptualized as it relates to other concepts such as leadership, relationships and motivation. Additionally, the concept of morale cannot be understood outside of the context of the organization that wishes to make significant changes. Finally, morale is perceived from an individual perspective but can only be articulated as it exists within the experience of dynamic social interactions.

Key Words: Employee morale, social constructivism, leadership, motivation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The current economic downturn brings with it much uncertainty and instability and yet it is not the first time we have experienced such 'bust' in the economy, especially after a significant 'boom'. As entire industries fall to the economic recession there appears to be significant emphasis placed on ensuring that organizations make good choices to not only manage the current condition but to look forward to what will be needed when the predicted 'bounce' in the economy occurs. This is where people management becomes critical as organizations make the difficult choice of downsizing or making other cuts to fit the current demands and to stay profitable. They must ensure, however, that they retain the talent they require to not only sustain the business but also to be able to rebuild when the time comes. Redundancies and cutbacks are sensitive and must be done in a manner that will create trust, integrity and most importantly manage the morale of those that survive. It is to the concept of morale that this paper hopes to provide some new insights, theoretical perspectives and a model to promote greater understanding.

Morale is a familiar concept, yet if one were asked to define it, measure it or in some way conceptualize it so that there is some common understanding, the task becomes less obvious. What is proposed is the idea that it must somehow be 'managed' and 'maintained' if an organization hopes to continue to be productive and profitable. Further, there are many seminars and workshops that teach leaders the different tools and techniques that they must have in order to have some semblance of impact. However, if we cannot conceptualize morale in a manner that allows for common understanding then how do we start to make an impact? The concept of morale can be likened to the story of the blind men and the elephant. There are five blind men that are asked to approach one part of an elephant and based on what they touch are asked to describe what an elephant looks like. In coming together they are unable to find a cohesive description because they only have access to their particular experience. In some cases the belief in their reality is so strong that conflict ensues and the men are unable to come up with a description and leave the task unfinished. In our story the men are leaders of organizations and the elephant is morale and the task is not to walk away but find some way to communicate, build relationships and most importantly share their knowledge if they are to complete their task of sustaining and rebuilding their organizations.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Morale is a French word, which became part of the common vocabulary during the mid 1700's (Peterson, Park, & Sweeney, 2008). The word meant morality or 'good conduct', but developed to mean confidence and was often used in reference to military forces.

Today, morale is defined in Webster's online dictionary as:

1. A state of individual psychological well-being based upon a sense of confidence and usefulness and purpose.

2. The spirit of a group that makes the members want the group to succeed.

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Thus, in order to understand morale one must look at how this particular noun is broken down into its components. There is within this definition, elements of the individual as well as group processes, a psychological aspect which highlight issues of well-being, confidence, the desire for success and an element of usefulness and purpose that are all important. It appears that one may understand the concept of morale so long as one understands the elements that are used to describe it, something that the literature tends to take for granted.

In 1955, Roethlisberger criticized the term morale for being too vague to be useful, suggesting that instead of asking what the morale of an organization is we should instead ask "What are the particular classifications of human situations in your department, and how are you handling them?" (1955, p. 194). Roethlisberger emphasized the need to attend to particular individuals, situations, and groups instead of referring to an all encompassing general term, and recent research has to some degree chosen to move away from focusing on morale, while instead proposing more specific concepts that involve aspects of the job, the work and the organization (Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006). Specifically, terms such as "job engagement, work satisfaction, work pride, teamwork, task cohesion, and collective efficacy" are being studied and distinguished from morale (Peterson et al., 2008, p.25). These terms may overlap with morale and contribute to parts of the overall concept, but when studied individually they fail to capture the relationship and interaction between the parts (Organ, 1997 as referenced in Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006).

Organ suggests that morale should be used to refer to the underlying factor of all the individual parts, for example, "as a general term for positive feelings about the job" (Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006, p.337). This brings us back to the initial challenges identified by Roethilisberger with respect to the vagueness of the concept and yet focusing solely on the individual components of morale may fail to capture the potential cohesive nature of the concept. This catch-22 cycle is perhaps the reason that the concept has been abandoned and the desire to further study morale has waned. The ambiguity surrounding the conceptualization of the term morale has led to great variation within research attempting to measure it and its influence within the greater organization.

1.2 KNOWLEDGE GAP

The story of the five blind men and the elephant captures succinctly the problems that organizations face with respect to the concept of employee morale. As with most organizational concepts such as leadership, identity and knowledge, there are no cohesive and concrete ways in which to define such concepts so that there is a consensus regarding the basic meaning of the phenomenon (Alvesson, 2004; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003, 200; Grint, 2005; Pfeffer, 1977; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). How an individual perceives such concepts will be linked to her experience, history, values and beliefs. Morale is no exception and in fact faces a greater challenge as it often carries the burden of being expected to produce outcomes that many organizations rely on in their attempt to sustain profits and competitive advantage.

Thus, the problem that is identified in this paper is how to begin to conceptualize employee morale in a meaningful and practical way such that organizations and more specifically their leaders can understand how improving morale can translate into daily behavior that will result in success for the larger organization. Further, organizations must understand employee morale as it is intricately linked to their employees' individual needs and that there cannot be a simple n-step program that can be implemented that will comprehensively capture all of theses needs. However, present within organizations and research is the assumption that there are well established and taken for granted conceptualizations of moral. The topic of employee morale is often believed to be widely understood and the concept and its outcomes attributed great importance, yet the literature and research on morale is limited and often contradictory.

Given the current economic crisis that is facing businesses today, the issue of morale seems to have resurfaced and countless newspaper articles, journal articles and websites have begun once again to discuss what organizations must do to ensure that morale is being maintained through such difficult times (Berta, 2008; Dunlap, 2008; Jacobson, 2009; Jakobson, 2009; Klein, 1987; Mishra, Spreitzer, & Mishra, 1998). This suggests that there are ways that organizations can manage the difficulty by simply managing the employee morale and that by doing so they can ensure the beneficial outcomes of customer and employee loyalty, motivation, commitment, productivity, retention of the best employees and thus maintain their competitive advantage (Abbott, 2002; Maier, 1948; O'Herron, 2005; Stanley, 2008). Morale is seen as a key element to organizational success and attention must be paid to the level of morale within the organization such that it can be harnessed and utilized especially in uncertain and difficult times.

Organizations have used surveys as a means to access the morale of their employees and often view these surveys as reflecting the feelings of the employees. Changes are then implemented to manage the

information that is discovered (Schneider, 1996, Worthy, 1950). However, how is morale understood within organizations with enough awareness to confidently assess what, if any, changes need to be made to improve or maintain the current state? How do organizations begin to determine whether or not the changes they implement are in fact beneficial? The research question under study in this paper attempts to understand how these questions can be answered authentically so that if an organization, that is already facing economic hardship, chooses to invest precious financial resources in boosting employee morale, it may actually reap the rewards of its investment. This is further supported by Smith (1976) where he states that "there are definite needs in an organization to determine the cost differentials for various training techniques along with their differentials in training effectiveness" (p.354).

1.3 RESEARCH AIMS

The purpose of the study is to take on the challenge of finding some way to understand and conceptualize the phenomenon of employee morale as it exists within two Swedish organizations. The aim is to embark upon a journey that that will develop a greater understanding of how individuals perceive morale within their particular social context. The question that the study hopes to answer is whether or not employees can in fact articulate their understanding of both individual and collective morale and how that translates into their daily behavior to meet the larger organizational goals. Additionally, the study hopes to be able to present the critical components that contribute to the perception of morale. The hope is to provide leaders with the knowledge to be able to allocate resources to these components such that they will impact and influence their existing morale in a positive and profitable manner. The overarching aim is to bring awareness surrounding the ambiguity of the term morale and to contribute to the greater understanding of this dynamic and elusive concept in hopes of making a positive impact for organizations and their employees.

Specifically, our research questions are:
1. Can employees authentically articulate their perception of employee morale as they experience it within their particular social context?
2. Is there a way to create understanding about the concept of morale that can identify the critical components that contribute and influence the perception of morale in organizations?

1.4 LIMITATIONS

The study will not attempt to find a concrete and absolute definition of employee morale. Rather, given the social constructivist perspective that is the theoretical foundation of the paper, the aim is to

create understanding of individual perceptions and how these perceptions are experienced within a larger social context. This study is exploratory in nature and so will not attempt to determine the morale of the organizations under study in any concrete way. Although the relationships between the components within the study will be discussed, it will be up to future research to elaborate on them and how they relate to each other. This study will not attempt to create causal relationships between the components in a linear manner such that one can assume that a positive change in one dimension will automatically result in a positive change in morale. The study will also not address to any great length the related concepts of identity formation, organizational culture or job satisfaction and performance as it relates to employee morale.

We acknowledge that we are limiting the scope of the study to be reflective of the two organizations that we studied and that these organizations exist within a Swedish cultural and organizational context. While the ability to generalize into other cultures or contexts needs to be considered and we limit the scope of our findings to the particular sample studied, we believe that it may be possible to find relevance of our study for other contexts and organizations.

1.5 CONTRIBUTION

The contribution of this paper is twofold. The initial contribution and key investigative process is a theoretical one in which an attempt is made to create a conceptual perspective of morale that can be useful to organizations. By understanding how employees perceive morale, organizations may be able to assess the return on investment of the different tools and techniques that are implemented to improve morale within the organization. Subsequently, organizations can also assess whether or not morale is a factor that they must attend to as a way to ensure other benefits such as loyalty, retention and productivity. Thus, by gaining understanding into morale, organizations can not only ascertain their current employee level of morale but also determine its relationship to other potentially beneficial organizational concepts. The second contribution that this paper hopes to create is a methodological one in the investigation of whether or not employees can authentically express and discuss their current level of morale. Since the concept of morale and its understanding is tied so strongly to an individual's capacity to articulate their perception of morale, it is important to know whether employees can authentically articulate the current level of morale and if a common understanding of morale exists within the organization. Perhaps what is important to consider is that the subject of morale may be what W.B. Gallie describes as an Essentially Contested Concept (ECC) whereby there are "endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of the users to the point where debates appeared irresolvable" (Grint, 2005, p.17).

The importance of acknowledging that the concept of morale could potentially be so ambiguous that it defies definition can on the surface appear to be problematic. However, not nearly as problematic as continuing to use it as a universally familiar concept capable of producing large-scale change, without understanding what it is or how it is perceived. What is important is that by acknowledging the difficulty we begin to draw attention to what more needs to be done before we can guarantee that the focus on morale will create the beneficial outcomes that organizations need. It forces us to pause and consider what it is that we are really looking at and in the end be able to stand behind concepts that have some consistency and cohesiveness. The purpose is to create a stronger conceptualization and understanding around morale to add support to the potential impact that good morale can have not only on the performance of the organization and the professional lives of employees, but on their interrelated personal lives - to improve overall functioning and contribute to the greater good.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF PAPER

The paper is structured to guide the reader to understand first and foremost the relevance of studying morale as the current economic environment will see increased unemployment, the fall of major industries and the instability of the global market. We then move into a methodological discussion including our core assumptions and how the semi-structured interviews and observations were carried out within the two organizations. It is important to note that the study is written from a social constructivist perspective and it is our belief that the way the concept of morale is understood and articulated comes from experiences and interactions that the actors engage in to understand and attribute meaning to this concept (Berger & Luckman, 1991; Jackson & Klobas, 2008; Simina & Hamel, 2005; Woo & Reeves, 2007). The analysis begins by detailing the categories and themes of morale generated through our application of iterative grounded theory to the interview material (Orton, 1997). The themes and categories from the interviews and observations are used to develop a dynamic model of the cycle of morale, as we claim that morale cannot be managed as a single entity, but must be understood as it relates to other key concepts. The study also finds that morale cannot be understood outside of the context of the organization that wishes to make significant changes and that although it is perceived by the individual it can only be articulated in relation to social interactions. Finally, we discuss the managerial implications of our findings and urge future researchers to elaborate on our study by testing the model developed and generating greater awareness into the interaction of the components of morale and the value of its influence.

2. FRAME OF REFERENCE

2.1 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In reviewing the literature, the number of times that morale is used without being defined is immense (Abbott, 2002; Ariss, 2002; Graber, Huang, Drum, Chin, Walters, Heuer, Tang, Schaefer & Quinn, 2007; Klein, 1987; Maier, 1948; Ristig, 2008; Schneider, 1996; Smith, 1976) and it is often linked to issues such as motivation, trust, leadership, fairness, commitment, empowerment and more often than not it is implied that morale is something that organizations must pay significant attention to (Fiorenza, 2008; Klein, 1987; O'Herron, 2005; Peterson et al., 2008; Stanley, 2008; Vroom, 1964). However, it is not defined in any concrete manner even though related concepts such as burnout (Graber et al, 2007), trust and empowerment (Mishra, et al., 1998) are defined and one could assume that such definitions could also be taken for granted. When studies do define morale, the definitions vary greatly and the measurements are often simplistic such as assuming morale to mean the attitude towards management (Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006). O'Herron (2005) states that, "morale happens when you create a trusting environment where supervisors communicate with agents in an honest, direct and inspiring way" (p.33). By assuming that there is a common, taken for granted understanding of morale, organizations are taking steps to improve and maintain something which is at best ambiguous. Although there is not a consistent definition of the concept of morale, people make grand claims that they can measure, affect and change it.

The desire to measure, maintain, and affect morale is attributed to the increase in profits, commitment, productivity, performance, and individual and group happiness suggested to accompany a higher level of morale within an organization (Klein, 1987; Peterson et al., 2008; Schoeff, 2006; Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006). According to a recent study by Sirota Survey Intelligence, the stock price of organizations with high morale may increase faster than organizations where morale is less positive (Schoeff, 2006). Klein (1987) suggests that employee ownership leads to higher levels of morale and employee commitment, while Weakliem and Frenkel (2006) suggest that there is a link between productivity and morale. Although morale is perceived as an essential concept in each study, the sources cited above were not necessarily working with the same understanding of morale when making claims to these positive outcomes. The study linking morale to higher stock prices suggested morale to be the same as job satisfaction, while the study on morale and performance considered morale to be the attitude toward management. Although morale may be seen as a way to monitor group health or well-being, there is a need to gain understanding into whether morale does in fact predict positive outcomes, aide against stress and negative feelings, and positively impact and enhance other strengths within the organization (Peterson et al., 2008).

The literature is replete with advice on how to maintain and improve morale through open and direct communication (Jacobson, 2009; Kennet, 2003; O'Herron, 2005), perception of success (Graber et al., 2007) compensation and benefits (Doh, Stumf, Tymon & Haid, 2008; Jakobson, 2009), perception of fairness (Fiorenza, 2008; Frumpkin, 2008; Graber et al., 2007), recognition (Graber et al, 2007; Harvey, 2008; Sullivan, 2008), career development and opportunity for promotion (Graber et al, 2007; Stanley, 2008) and the importance of the relationship to leaders and leadership style (Graber et al., 2007; Johnson, 2008; Joshi, Bailey & Wills, 2008). There are some very clear guidelines that also draw attention to what organizations must avoid in order to prevent negative or "bad" morale such as stifling bureaucracy (Allen, 2008) monitoring and surveillance (Ariss, 2002) and unethical behavior and practices (Hunter, 2008).

An interesting study that was conducted in 1958 by Baehr and Renck looks to define and measure morale in an industrial setting. Previous studies on employee morale often looked to the idea of group rapport and solidarity as the key element in achieving organizational success in terms of absenteeism, efficiency and productivity. However, the element of the individual was recognized as having a significant role and as such there was a need to "study individuals as well in terms of prevailing needs, expectations, attitudes and motives" (Baehr & Renck, 1958, p. 158). The study acknowledged three different approaches in defining morale based on needs psychology, hierarchy of needs and the interaction between group members. These approaches highlight that there is a belief that needs influence drives and motives and there exists a hierarchy within each individual that will decide which needs have priority over others. The interactions perspective emphasizes the social aspect of morale as it is influenced by the individual's membership in a working group and that the dynamic within this group has an influence on the morale of its individuals. Five factors were identified as being related to morale, three of which were related to relationships within the organization and the other two were more intrinsically motivated. The conclusion of the article highlights the importance of the relationship the employee has with the supervisor, job satisfaction, co-workers and that pay is relevant in terms of the minimum standard that needs to exist for an employee to continue to do her job (Baehr & Renck, 1958).

This study describes that the concept of morale is related to the relationships the individual has with elements of the environment and that morale can be a function of the relationship that the employee has with her immediate supervisor and co-workers. The study also points to the importance of acknowledging individual needs as driving the motivation of employees with respect to behavior (Baehr & Renck, 1958). According to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, individuals have different levels of needs ranging from physiological to self actualization whereby the satisfaction of "lower" needs allows an individual to focus on satisfying the "higher" level needs that are often

related to issues of self-esteem, love and safety (Malsow, 1954). Thus from an organizational perspective, employees must satisfy their basic physical needs (food, water etc.) before they can begin to master needs of belonging, creativity and problem solving. Perhaps this is where some assumptions are made that once such needs are satisfied, often via pay and benefits, organizations can then target the higher level needs to their advantage. The goal then is to create an atmosphere where relationships among members of the organization can be utilized to harness the creativity and problems solving that can lead to competitive advantage.

Wittgenstein (1976) proposes that morale may not be characterized by certain absolute conditions because it is an ordinary language concept. Peterson et al. (2008) concur that it should be looked at as a 'multidimensional concept' made up of interrelated factors. These components should be articulated and separate measures should be established, as has been done with other ordinary language concepts in positive psychology such as 'happiness' and 'character'. These components have little meaning without being contextually based within the goals and tasks of a given group or individual at a given time because they are states of being and not traits. The morale of individuals and groups may be profiled by assessing its components and many combinations may make for 'good morale' depending on the given situation. These components exist on a continuum and vary in relevance when referring to the individual or group morale (Peterson et al., 2008).

The tentative set of components that make up morale, according to Peterson et al. (2008) are: confidence, enthusiasm, optimism, capability, resilience, leadership, mutual trust and respect, loyalty, social cohesion, common purpose, devotion, sacrifice, compelling group history, honor and a sense of moral rightness. The difficulty with this rather exhaustive list is that by defining morale with so many concepts there is the risk of essentially defining nothing simply by including too many things into one concept (Alvesson, 2004).

Peterson et al. (2008) further propose that research conducted on morale typically treats it as a 'unidimensional term', making it difficult to address questions on the subject (p.22). By breaking morale into the above components they encourage further research that question whether different types of groups have different morale profiles, whether components have varying consequences, whether some components are more easily cultivated and whether some components are resilient while others are fragile. In addition, Peterson et al. (2008) acknowledge that group morale has to be studied not only by looking to the individual in interviews and questionnaires but also by looking into the interactions of the group.

The above literature review depicts the inconsistency in the understanding and conceptualization of the concept of morale which highlights the need for further investigation. Given the discrepancy and yet assumed familiarity regarding morale, we hope to create awareness and potentially find a meaningful way that organizations can utilize a more cohesive understanding to their benefit.

2.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

It is important at this point to discuss the social constructivist perspective that will underlie the discussion of morale in this paper. The social constructivist perspective attempts to understand the development and sharing of knowledge through the use of language and symbols in an interaction between people such that "an entire world can be actualized at any moment" (Berger & Luckman, 1991, p. 54). Durrheim (1997) proposes that social constructivists do not believe in one 'truth' or one reality and that knowledge and reality are socially constructed and negotiated through 'contextually embedded' discourse. Further, Stead (2002) posits that there is little interest in discovering the true nature of things given the belief that multiple meanings are constructed through relationships, interactions, and meaning making. Given the definitions of morale in the literature and the potential outcomes of this study, it is important to recognize the impact dynamic social interactions have on the development and maintenance of morale. A social constructivist perspective outlines that knowledge and language are socially constructed through the interactions and dialogues between individuals and that this process is what continues to support the existence of understanding and meaning making of such concepts (Alvesson, 2004; Berger & Luckman, 1991; Jackson & Klobas, 2008; Newell, Robertson, Scarborough and Swan, 2002; Simina & Hamel, 2005; Woo & Reeves, 2007).

From this perspective, the concept of morale is being constructed or understood as it is developed continuously within a social environment and through the interactions of people. It is therefore not surprising that groups were the initial focus when it came to the concept of morale and yet it is important to not ignore the element of the individual as she creates reality through this social dynamic. Additionally, the importance of continuing to study morale as it exists in the current economic climate is highlighted by Cronbach (1975) when discussing that "social changes – partly fueled by social science itself – tend to render empirical findings obsolete over time" (Alvesson & Karreman, 2007, p.1268). In creating an understanding of the concept of morale it is important to include not only morale as it exists within the individual but how that level of morale is influenced and alternatively influences the morale of the larger organization. One must acknowledge the reciprocal nature of morale as it exists within the relationships that the individual has with members of the organization. From a social constructivist perspective, our goal is not to pin down a specific definition, but rather to

gain greater insight into how people construct and understand the concept of morale. As such a working definition of morale that this paper will begin with is one that conceptualizes morale as:

The individual perception with respect to how one feels in relation to the larger organization in terms of level of contribution, recognition, support, trust and safety that allows the individual to indicate with confidence that her well-being and personal self is respected, accepted and understood by the larger organization.

Another important element that needs to be considered is how this personal feeling or perception is communicated to others in such a way that it is determinable and can be correlated to behaviors that are rewarded and recognized. The issue with morale being socially constructed is that potentially it is ever evolving and changing depending on the circumstances of the environment. Given this, we need to look at understanding morale as existing in a constant state of transition and perhaps we cannot understand morale in an absolute state of good or bad but rather to acknowledge the range in which an individual's morale can exist. Thus morale is a contextually situated phenomenon that cannot be managed through a universal, n-step program with general recommendations. Rather, we need to consider that each organization has a unique enacted environment and compilation of individuals that must be incorporated into any processes that are aimed at influencing morale (Weick, 1988).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 CORE ASSUMPTIONS

The fundamental paradigm that lays the foundation for this paper is the social constructivist perspective which is often associated as a learning paradigm and emphasizes "the co-construction of meaning within a social activity" (Simina & Hamel, 2005, p.219). The idea of constructivism as a theory of learning is most closely associated with both Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky who differ with respect to the focus on cognitive versus social interaction in the construction of knowledge (Simina & Hamel, 2005; Woo & Reeves, 2007). Social constructivism has been associated with many different areas of practice that allow for the generation of common understanding and learning across different specialties and occupations (Devine, 2008; Jackson & Klobas, 2008; Simina & Hamel, 2005; Woo & Reeves, 2007). Such shared understanding is negotiated through language within the group or community. Communities of practice are quite important for knowledge sharing within an organization as they create a medium through which meaning and sense making is created (Tietze, Cohen & Musson, 2003; Weick, 1995; Wenger, 1998; Woo & Reeves, 2007). How this relates to the

concept of morale as discussed in this paper is highlighted in the ability for individuals to articulate their socialized interpretation of what is expected of them, their perceptions of positive or negative communication and behaviors that indicate personal happiness, which together create their collective understanding.

The study is based on the exploration of two organizations with the aim of eliciting their understandings and interpretations of the concept of employee morale. We refer to these organizations as MC Inc. and CoreTech. The primary method of gathering data was the use of semi-structured interviews conducted in the boardroom of the office that the two organizations shared. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were chosen based on the assumption that such dialogue would allow for a rich account of the interviewee's experiences, ideas and beliefs and would allow for some understanding of how individuals conceptualize the social phenomenon of morale (Alvesson, 2003; Bryman, 2004). Additionally, CoreTech allowed us to observe two monthly meetings where most members of the organization were present. The observation of the employees within the meeting was based on the assumption that the interaction between employees would reveal some insight into the concept of morale from the social constructivist perspective. Such a perspective assumes that the interaction of individuals is critical in the development of understanding and knowledge (Alvesson, 2004; Berger & Luckman, 1991; Jackson & Klobas, 2008; Newell et al., 2002; Simina & Hamel, 2005; Woo & Reeves, 2007). Finally, we were given access to a survey that CoreTech called the "Employee Voice" for further analysis (Appendix 5).

The core assumptions made with respect to the methodology of the paper are that through the context of an interview, we would be able to elicit the perceptions and ideas of the respondents, once rapport and trust were developed. Through the interview and the questions asked, we felt confident to observe the behaviors of CoreTech employees within the setting of a monthly meeting to further support the stated beliefs of the participants in an attempt to achieve data triangulation (Bryman, 2004). It is interesting to note that the leadership of CoreTech had begun seeking employee feedback on their perception of the organization as a whole, including several dimensions such as vision, structure and leadership prior to us approaching the organization to participate in our study. The employees had filled out two surveys at the request of their CEO, with the first being done approximately eight months before the second. This data was made available to us, which assisted in providing background around employee perceptions and beliefs. Such information provided a holistic foundation upon which the analysis could be done.

3.2 ONTOLOGICAL PARADIGM

From a social constructivist perspective the ontological orientation that lays the foundation for this paper is based on a non-essentialist paradigm (Calas & Smircich, 2006). What this means for our study is that the way the concept of morale is understood and articulated comes from historical experiential and interactive processes that the actors engage in to understand this concept. The way individuals in our study describe morale is based on their beliefs and understandings at this time. We do not believe that morale or anything else within the social sciences may be pinned down as a concrete and absolute object. For example, morale may be described differently depending on the socialization, culture, and relationships of the people asked. Our approach supports a non-essentialist perspective in which we may develop theories while respecting that nothing is permanent and generalizations should not be made outside of the present context (Simina & Hamel, 2005).

3.3 EPISTEMOLOGICAL PARADIGM

The techniques used to understand the concept of morale come from a constructivist epistemology which "assumes that learners construct their own knowledge through interaction with their social and physical environment" (Simina & Hamel, 2005, p. 219) and that "the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality" (Berger & Luckman, 1991, p. 15). The constructivists believe that knowledge comes from the reflection on experiences individuals have within a social context and how that new information will fit into their existing knowledge framework (Simina & Hamel, 2005). When relating this back to our study regarding the concept of morale, we suggest that the meaning created around the concept of morale is imposed by people. Our understanding of the 'real world' and the meaning generated around it is derived through our senses. We use our five senses to develop an understanding of the world around us. For example, by seeing the way others react to us, by hearing the dialogue of colleagues, by feeling a friend's touch, or by tasting the champagne of a celebration what we think, feel, and know continues to form, evolve, and change. Thus, the purpose is to pursue meaning and understanding of the concept as it is experienced by the individual rather than the attempt to explain or define causal relationships.

3.4 PARTICIPATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL SAMPLING

Our interest in these two organizations comes from the level of change and transition that they have gone through in the past few years. The splitting of the one organization into two as well as the rapid growth in CoreTech provided fertile ground to see how morale is impacted by such growth and change. Additionally, both firms seemed quite interested in capturing the tone and atmosphere of their organization and to find ways to create positive change. Also of interest was the varying influence the

current economic environment would have on the organizations in our study. Due to the great interest in morale, we were granted a high level of access and cooperation to conduct interviews, observations, and review previously gathered information such as the "Employee Voice" surveys. Both organizations were quite interested in our findings and were very open to obtaining the results of our study as well as wanting feedback on any insights we may have on their organization.

Most employees within the two firms, MC Inc. and CoreTech, were between 25 to 35 years of age with backgrounds in business or technology. There were two women and four men working within MC Inc. CoreTech employed twelve males and one female. We interviewed all nineteen employees in both firms. There were no access issues as both organizations were open and willing to share their experience and work life. All interviewees were assured of confidentiality and were provided the option of not participating if they chose not to.

3.5 TECHNIQUES AND METHODS

Upon acquiring commitment from the organizations that we could study their employees we were asked to contact one member of each organization to assist us in organizing the interviews. We supplied both organizations with dates and times of when we could conduct the interviews and asked that each employee sign up for a time slot that suited them (Appendix 1). Given the nature of their work, we felt it was important for participants to be provided freedom to choose when to do their interview. There were no instructions given to the participants by us and the sign up sheet simply displayed a title of "Thesis study- Employee Morale".

The interviews were conducted over a four week period while the monthly meetings were held the second week of April and May. The interviews were between one to one and a half hours in duration and conducted in the boardroom of the office space the organizations shared, which was a closed and private environment. Approximately 75% of the interviews were conducted with both researchers. One of us conducted six interviews independently, and a combination of both English and Swedish were used during the interviews. Interviewees were encouraged to use Swedish if they felt that they were being limited by the use of their non-native language. The interviews were recorded, when permission was given, and notes were taken by both of us. The interviews began with asking each participant what a typical day for them would be like to create some context for the questions that followed. There were eight questions in total that were asked of each interviewee; however, each interview often included additional questions that related to the responses given by the participants (Appendix 4). The interviewees were provided ample time to respond to questions and they were given the option not to answer questions if they did not want to. Both organizations requested copies of the completed thesis

and as such we felt that it was very important to assure each participant that their responses would not be identified in an attempt to elicit their most truthful answers. For this reason everyone was assured of their confidentiality in answering the questions at the beginning of each interview.

The questions were designed to elicit the participant's understanding of the concept of morale. The interviewee was able to ask clarifying questions if she needed but the utmost care was taken to not influence the participant or guide her in a particular direction. Regardless of the care that was taken to avoid influencing respondents, this is not always possible as there are nuances of conversation where people complete each others sentences, provide a word when a person is stuck and reframe the statements to obtain clarification. The questions were designed to elicit accounts of behaviors that were associated with the concept of employee morale so as to have something to look for in the employee meetings as well as assist participants in communicating their perceptions. In the first half of the interviews we injected the Swedish terms "stäming and klimat" as a way to guide the questions away from "moral or morals" in an attempt to move away from the translation issue because there is no Swedish word for morale. However, upon discussion it was determined that this too perhaps was too directive and so we chose not to provide a Swedish alternative and rather allowed them to expand on the term as they saw fit. In the last half of the interviews, if the participant was focusing on the concept of "moral or right and wrong" then we would create context by the following statement:

"Given the current economic crisis and the decision for some organizations to downsize or lay employees off there have been some newspapers or journal articles which state that it is important to keep employee morale high. Within this context how would you define morale?"

Thus, it is acknowledged that there were two formats used between the first half of the interviews and the second half, although we would assert that the differences are minor and ultimately we acknowledge this as a limitation of our study.

We participated in observations of two monthly team meetings of CoreTech. We used the interview themes and categories generated from questions two, three and four, which ask what behaviors and outcomes are associated with morale, and paid special attention to the verbal communication, the non-verbal communication, the social interaction, and the impact of work, while watching for behaviors provided by respondents as being linked to employee morale. One of us speaks Swedish and took detailed notes on the verbal communication, while the other of us who does not speak Swedish was able to focus on body language and interaction from a different perspective. During the first meeting, we sat in the back corner to observe without participating as members of the meeting in an attempt to reduce our influence on their interactions. This was not possible in the second observation as one of us

had been hired as a consultant and was giving a presentation with a member of MC Inc. on the overview of their marketing project. However, we feel that this allowed for an insider and outsider perspective of the meeting which we believe allowed for a more natural interaction from employees than would have been possible had an unfamiliar researcher joined the gathering to observe without being a part of the meeting.

As mentioned above, one of us provided unrelated consulting services to CoreTech during the time of the study and spent approximately eight hours per week working in the office, participating in meetings, and sitting in the lunch room with direct access to observe the organizational interaction as a participant. Employment began two weeks after the first employee interview. Business interactions were conducted with three members of MC Inc. and CoreTech, with a majority of the time spent with one employee of MC Inc. This dynamic allowed for an insider and outsider perspective which we feel enhanced our ability to have access to the essence of the organization but also enhanced our ability to capture the social context of both organizations.

3.6 RELEVANCE AND LIMITATIONS

We acknowledge the possible limitations surrounding our decision to conduct this study in English, about an English concept within the country of Sweden. The initial limitation that we encountered was one based on the word morale itself as there is no direct translation in Swedish. Additionally, the word was often taken for the Swedish concept "moral" which was related to ethics and knowing "right from wrong". As such it needs to be acknowledged that the perceptions generated regarding morale are from a Swedish perspective. Since the word is not present in the Swedish language, we may question the relevance of the concept for some of the participants. Although this does not limit the validity of the research, we acknowledge that the context of the study affects the understanding and interpretations of the participants. As such, the Swedish culture and societal understandings of the concept and Swedish words related to morale will be incorporated in our findings.

Although a large majority of the employees seemed comfortable expressing themselves in English and we did provide the option to use Swedish, we recognize that it was not the native language for any of our interviewees and more authentic perceptions may have been available had the interviews been conducted in Swedish. It is worth noting that when several of the interviewees were directly asked how they would describe the concept of morale in Swedish they recited the same definition they had provided earlier when speaking English. This would suggest that many of the interviewees had expressed themselves in a genuine manner although other explanations, such as a desire to be consistent, are also possible. While we began each interview by explaining that both languages may be

used, we recognize that people may have chosen not to take this option for several reasons. For example, the desire to please us, the researchers, to avoid being rude to the non-Swedish speaking researcher, to preserve a self-image of being an English educated Swede, or to have an opportunity to practice language. Once again, a more authentic answer may have been provided in the native language of the interviewees.

We also need to recognize the potential limitation in our understanding when the interviewees chose to speak Swedish. One of us has an understanding of Swedish, but is stronger in the English language while the other has little understanding of Swedish and could no longer actively participate when the conversation moved from English. About half of the interviewees chose to express some words in Swedish instead of English. The ability to do so may have provided a more genuine answer but it also made for possible misinterpretations and removed one of us from the interaction. It is important to recognize that the team meetings observed were also conducted in Swedish, which again made it difficult for one of us to understand context and yet it was still helpful to have both of us present when discussing non-verbal communication and perceptions.

The influence of our understandings may have been impacted when both were not present for the interviews. One of us conducted six interviews independently. The other researcher listened to these interviews from the recording, but was unable to pose questions or witness the body language or facial expressions of the participants. These six interviewees were also not provided the option to use Swedish, possibly impacting their ability to fully express their understanding and making for an inconsistency in procedure.

We further recognize certain limitations with respect to one of us being employed at CoreTech. It is possible that people adjusted their behavior in her presence as several of the organizational members had participated in an interview with her; however, since the employment period was spread out over a two month time period, it is also possible that the individuals stopped categorizing her as a researcher. This may have provided insight into a more natural interaction than could have been maintained in a situation of planned observation. To limit the possible negative effect, we conducted a majority of the interviews prior to employment and the employed researcher refrained from participating in person during the interviews with the leadership staff of her employer.

Finally, the specific instruction provided about the research, amount of discussion between employees, and time to think about the subject matter may have varied depending on the participant and time of the interview. The employees who agreed to the study were asked to only tell the other employees that there would be a thesis project for which their participation was requested. For CoreTech, the CEO

informed the employees that the interviews were a part of the "Employee Voice" survey as a follow up. We are unaware of exactly what each participant was told or if a consistent message was delivered to all employees. The order in which individuals signed up for their interviews may also have influenced their responses. Given the open floor plan of the organization, we felt that the less pre-conception or pre-understanding that the participants had the better; however, we were unable to control for possible discussion between employees who had already participated in the interview process and those that had not. Thus, a limitation of our study would be any bias or influence that later interviewees might have had from management communication or from being informed by other employees of the questions they would be asked.

Despite the above limitations, we still feel that it was quite relevant to study these particular organizations given their strong interest as well as the changes that both organizations were going through. We feel that despite the translation and cultural issues presented, the material gathered through the interviews will provide valuable insight into the concept of employee morale.

3.7 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

The credibility and trustworthiness of our study was established through researcher triangulation which is a process of using more than one technique to interpret findings separately and then cross-checked for consistency (Bryman, 2004). As stated earlier, notes were taken by both researchers during the interviews and observations. Although meetings were held after each session to discuss and cross reference our findings, the in-depth analysis was conducted individually prior to collaboration. Note taking was done through two different approaches: one of us took concise and categorized responses according to each question, while the other researcher took verbatim notes without categorizing responses in any way during the interview. These processes of comparison enabled us to code and develop our own interpretation of the data prior to discussion. Upon completion of individual coding, we then compared the themes and categories to determine whether or not we were able to determine cohesiveness and consistency. This cross checking of findings allowed for credibility and trustworthiness as the categories and themes developed were almost identical.

An additional factor that assists in the credibility and trustworthiness of the study is that there was an insider and outsider perspective because one of us worked with both organizations on a regular basis. The nature of the work was part time and may be generally referred to as business consulting. Responsibilities included CV editing, market research and developing the content to present the company on its website. In this intimate role, one of us had the opportunity to gain insider access into the culture, mission, and relationships that existed within the organization. The one of us that was not

employed within the organizations acted as a neutral sounding board thus allowing both the perspective of an employee and that of an external observer. The insider perspective provided quality access while the outsider perspective complimented this access with critical distance.

3.8 ANALYTICAL METHODOLOGY

The process of analyzing the material gathered during the interviews and the observations was based on the philosophy of Orton's (1997) iterative grounded theory. The research questions posed in this study attempt to capture a very complex and abstract concept within organizational studies and the ability to move between deductive and inductive techniques provides the opportunity to present the material in a simple and understandable manner (Orton, 1997). The iterative nature of this analytical tool allows for data collection and analysis to occur simultaneously and consistently referring between the two which allows for a more complete and cohesive development of knowledge (Bryman, 2004). The aim, given the theoretical and methodological questions posed by this research study, is thus to understand if there are consistent themes or constructs that individuals use to conceptualize and understand the concept of morale. Grounded theory as presented by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was the attempt to include inductive theory generating research into the dominant deductive theory testing methods to "strengthen the mandate for generating theory, to help provide a defense against the doctrinaire approaches to verification" (p.7).

Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) have also positioned grounded theory as a viable methodological tool in that it allows for development of knowledge after observation through the coding of the dialogue into themes and categories. However, a criticism that often accompanies the grounded theory approach is that the attempt to remove theoretical bias also removes the valuable element of context and potentially creates trivialized knowledge (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). Thus, what appears to be missing is the ability to link the existing theory to the data that is collected to capture a holistic picture of the organizational phenomenon under study. Orton (1997) argues that the result of this conflict is that researchers end up "distorting their theory to fit their data and distorting their data to fit their theory" (p. 422). Thus, iterative grounded theory allows the researcher to move between the theory and data freely so as to capture the complexity that exists given that the data gathered comes from and is also generated within a social context.

Specifically, the material was initially broken down into the various themes that emerged within each question. Each question produced between eight to twelve themes which were then further broken down into categories that would further capture the essence of the material gathered during the interviews. Thus, coding of themes and categories took place from the start as one of us was

categorizing responses according to questions asked. The other one took notes verbatim and discovered categories and themes upon review of the material gathered. As previously indicated, we had created a working definition for the concept of morale after the literature review and prior to starting interviews. This working definition provided each of us with a theoretical foundation upon which the material gathered could be referenced to. The combination of these two techniques supports the iterative grounded theory approach as it allowed for movement between the data and the theoretical perspectives that we had coming into the interviews. Additionally, we were able to discuss what we were experiencing after each interview which allowed for further hypothesizing and theory generation.

Given the semi-structured nature of the interviews, there were often follow up questions asked that did not necessarily fit into the eight prescribed questions. These were developed into additional themes and categories using a similar coding technique. Additionally, the results of the survey used in one organization was also codified and placed into categories that would assist in creating context of that particular organization. Theoretical perspectives were then applied to the themes and categories using the literature review that had taken place during the development of the research questions. Once these themes and categories were identified, a model was developed that attempted to capture the relationship between the different categories and overarching concepts. This model was further explored within the theoretical framework that had previously guided the exploration of the concept of employee morale. Direct quotes were used to further support the development of this model and again linked back to previous literature that seemed to capture similar concepts. Finally, data and theory were linked in a process that allowed for an integrated argument that captured the essence of the concept of employee morale as well as the factors and components that build and reinforce its existence or non-existence within an organization. An overview of the themes and categories are included in the analysis of the material.

3.9 LIMITATIONS OF ANALYSIS

The limitations of the analysis are based on several different factors including researcher bias, which we acknowledge cannot be removed completely. The social constructivist perspective that lays the foundation for the development of the theory and influences the interpretation of the data is very clear that context is always present and must always be considered. However, awareness of this bias and the constant discussion between us has hopefully allowed for some reflection on the bias. The creation of the themes and categories themselves pose the initial limitation since how we choose to interpret and capture what the interviewee said is filtered through a lens that we have created. Subsequently, we acknowledge that if the categories and themes are biased and they are the foundation

upon which the analysis begins, then one can argue that the entire interpretation and analysis would continue to carry that bias. However, we must begin somewhere and there are some aspects of the methodology that allows for management of this potential bias effectively.

First, all the interviews, with the exception of one, were recorded and we both went back and listened to the interviews several times to ensure that the words of the interviewees were carefully noted. Additionally, we both took notes during each interview, which were compared to identify any strong discrepancies. If discrepancies were found the interview was replayed in an attempt to correct any misunderstanding. An important aspect of credibility and trustworthiness of the study is that we each separately conducted analysis of themes and categories and upon comparison had come up with almost identical formulations of the material. Bryman (2004) refers to this as researcher triangulation. Finally, if there continued to be a discrepancy we contacted the interviewee for clarification.

We need to acknowledge a limitation of the methodological perspectives utilized to analyze the material. Grounded theory is criticized for its lack of emphasis on context as well as the plausibility of removing theoretical bias (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). As discussed above, our theoretical perspective will inevitably be present as the most fundamental aspect of the study, the questions asked, will influence how the categories and themes emerged. We recognize that although efforts were made to pose the questions with as little direction or influence as possible, we can never fully remove the unconscious understanding and desired responses that lay the foundation for our interest in the phenomenon being studied. Grounded theory does not acknowledge that the rules and norms that govern behavior and understanding are constantly shifting and changing which alters the perspectives of the "natives" (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). Additionally, several of the interviewees actually made reference to the idea that had we asked the same questions eight months previously the answers we received would have been quite different. A significant criticism of grounded theory is that the amount of coding and collecting of data can be overwhelming and remove the theoretical foundation upon which data is dependent. The result is a fragmentation of the incidents into its parts without considering its whole (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). The whole is potentially where the richness of the data can truly be appreciated. The use of iterative grounded theory potentially addresses these concerns and allows for the possibility to uncover and create awareness by enabling movement between data and theory.

Further limitations include the issue of authenticity as a crucial aspect of the study given that the ability for interviewees to fully express themselves may be dampened by language, cultural and translation issues with respect to morale. Secondly, the underlying hope is that the perspectives given by the sample in this study can somehow be generalized to other settings and other experiences and

yet this can be questioned as the interviewees themselves discussed morale as being context dependent. Thirdly, the desire for the interviewees to present a particular image to us needs to be considered as well as the unconscious communication we may have given to the interviewees to elicit certain desired responses. Fourthly, while the interviews were conducted within a month and often analyzed and organized soon after they were conducted, the element of memory and subsequent influence via discussion is always present. Fifthly, the observations of the monthly meetings pose a significant problem as one of us did not understand the context of the meeting or what was said as the meeting was held in Swedish. While the other researcher did understand the context, the observation was not taped and thus could not be reviewed. Finally, given that the interviews were conducted within a one-month period, we could not control for any discussion among the employees regarding the questions or the answers given by those interviews conducted in the second half of the month. It is possible that the consistency of the themes discovered comes not from the existence of such cohesion but through the discussion and perhaps prompting of one employee to another.

4. CASE DESCRIPTION

4.1 MC INC. AND CORETECH

The two business organizations participating in the study (MC Inc. and CoreTech) were originally part of the same firm and saw themselves as 'sister organizations' during the time of our study. The firms separated in 2007, but much interaction and collaboration remained. One employee had moved from CoreTech to MC Inc. and overlap existed between members of the executive management team and the board members within the organizations. Almost all employees were between 25 to 35 years of age with backgrounds in business or technology.

The office was one large room, without separators or walls. Everyone shared communal tables except for the leaders of CoreTech who had their own desks. The majority of CoreTech employees were at the back of the office, while the employees of MC Inc. were in the front part of the office together with the leaders of CoreTech who had their desks directly behind them in the same front space. There was one boardroom and a common kitchen area that was shared by employees of both organizations. This was the second office space the companies had shared together, as previously they rented office space in Lund. They moved when there was feedback that the physical space of the office was impacting how the employees felt about their work.

MC Inc. is a small consulting firm in Sweden with a focus on developing and conducting project management education, providing strategic and project management consulting, and outsourcing IT consultants. There are a total of six employees of which two are Senior Project Leaders, three are Project Leaders and one is a System Developer (Appendix 2). One of the Senior Project Leaders is President and CEO and one of the Project Leaders is Vice President. There are two women and four men working in the firm. Several of the employees have at some point owned their own businesses and later joined MC Inc. We were told that in the past, a few organizational members had different ideas regarding how the business should operate and had chosen to leave, but we were not provided any details. The current employees referred fondly to the organization as one respondent stated:

> "everyone is here because they love this company or the idea behind the company…if I have problems as my assignment……pretty much whatever I do it's Ok…it's like going to your mom….she will love you no matter what" (MC Inc. employee).

At the start of our research, two of the employees were on assignment and four were currently without a full-time project and spending a majority of their time on sales activities at the office. The goal of the organization is for everyone to be out on assignment and the economic downturn was discussed by employees as the main reason why some people were not currently working at a client. The company is based on employee ownership with the intention for all employees to eventually become part owners of the organization once they have participated in at least one assignment. At the time of the study, two of the employees had been with the organization for less than one year and had yet to go on assignment. They were not yet considered part owners. The members of the organization are given the flexibility to decide how much they would like to work and how they would like to be compensated. For example, one employee may choose to take greater amounts of vacation, while another employee decides to be compensated for longer hours worked. We were able to interview all employees within the firm.

CoreTech split from MC Inc. to build a business around the software developed in the original joint organization. Today, CoreTech is a web software developer and provider with thirteen employees. The firm employs twelve males and one female. The organization is made up of a CEO/Manager and a VP of Sales and Business Development who share leadership responsibilities. The CEO is largely responsible for the people management and technical strategy while the VP of Sales and Business Development spends 60 to 65% of his time away from the office building and maintaining customer relationships. In addition to the leadership, there are Product Managers, Project Managers, Operations/Customer Support Technicians and Developers (Appendix 3). Several of the employees at CoreTech owned their own businesses in addition to their employment in the firm.

Over the last three years, CoreTech has experienced significant changes. The organization has grown from three employees to six in 2007 and from six employees to thirteen in 2008. The focus of the organization is also transitioning from being a production company to a software company. During its quick growth, the organization experienced what many perceived as a decrease in employee morale. This led the leadership to take actions such as collecting employee feedback and holding collaborative meetings to identify and improve on the concerns expressed by the employees. Most of the employees referred to a perceived transition in morale from the way things used to be and the improved morale of today. Although there is no official mission statement, the leadership of the organization stressed the importance of trust and openness with internal relationships and with external clients. These values were often repeated and confirmed by the employees as being significant.

The level of change and transition experienced by the two firms over the last few years, along with their desire to understand the tone and to create positive change within their organizations is what drew our interest to MC Inc. and CoreTech when researching morale. We were also interested in how the current economic environment may influence the organizations in our study.

4.1.1 CORETECH EMPLOYEE VOICE SURVEY

CoreTech had initiated employee feedback regarding the atmosphere, management practices, organizational structure and processes as well as the overall mood of the organization prior to the start of our study. The tool used was a survey they referred to as the "Employee Voice" which was a survey of approximately 190 questions. The survey was based on a 5 point Likert scale that asked respondents to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with a particular statement. The results of the survey will be summarized to provide additional background and context for CoreTech.

Overall we see that there has been some improvement with respect to the results of the survey while taking into consideration that the first survey had seven respondents while the second survey had ten respondents. One of the most significant changes was the degree to which employees felt that the vision and objectives of the organization were being communicated much more clearly. Overall the communication of the manager was noticeably more direct and clear which also contributed to greater sharing of information and knowledge among the employees. Further, the respondents felt that their particular roles and responsibilities were also clarified; that there was an increase in the level of work processes and structure to the work; and an increase in faith and belief in the management and increased feelings of being respected and valued. Specifically, a change in clarity of vision, goals, communication and processes was accompanied by an increase in the level of job satisfaction, feelings

of respect and value as well as overall increase in the level of "fun" and enjoyment of the working environment.

There are some issues that continue to be of concern as indicated by the responses in the survey. There appeared to be very little change with respect to the awareness of customer demand regarding the product, customer feedback, meeting deadlines, quality measures and the external image of the organization. From an employee perspective, there still remains concerns regarding follow-up of performance issues, follow-up of work tasks and potential concerns, and setting clear and realistic goals. We can see that these issues are related to the above change with respect to communication and if communication were to continue to improve that these concerns would be also addressed. The focus on creating processes and structure for the product and the organization will hopefully have an impact in their ability to gauge quality of the product and thus further increase faith in the organization as a whole. An important aspect that was captured by the survey is that the level of trust was consistently high from the first survey to the second. Thus, outside of the structure, product and vision, the employees indicate that they had a high level of trust with respect to discussing mistakes as well as being able to openly and honestly manage conflict among the employees. Potentially the existence of such a high level of trust allowed for the management to make the necessary changes that has allowed for the above mentioned improvements.

5. ANALYSIS

5.1 THEMES AND CATEGORIES BY QUESTION

5.1.1 DEFINING EMPLOYEE MORALE

With respect to the definition of employee morale, the categories identified are associated with the concept of what drives employee morale. These drivers are related to either the individual or the collective or if it is internally or externally driven. An example of an individual driver is the concept of making a contribution and feeling proud where as a collective driver may be more related to the group dynamic or interaction among the employees, such as the collective spirit or energy. Internal drivers are also present with respect to individuals "liking what they do" and having a positive attitude whereas an external driver may be the impact of the relationship with or the style of leadership within an organization. Some of the identified themes, such as motivation or a sense of purpose or meaning seem to be applicable to more than one category, which may indicate that these themes are a fundamental components of morale. The themes discovered here are reminiscent of the findings that

Baehr & Renck (1958) discussed when defining morale as being larger than just the group dynamic and the need to consider the elements of the individuals and the specific needs of those individuals.

The categories of drivers described above were communicated as the reasons why employees were committed to the common goals of the organization. In delving deeper into the definitions that were identified by the interviewees, we see that a consistent theme is one of common purpose or goal or meaning that an employee can attach herself to. As illustrated in the quote below one respondent understood morale to be:

> "willingness to commit to the vision of the company" (CoreTech employee).

Most interviewees referred to the idea that having something that members of the organization work towards or are driven by is very important. The collective goal seemed to strongly influence not only the motivation but also the loyalty that interviewees had to their particular organization. One respondent conceptualized morale as by saying it:

> "involves such things as being loyal to the company" (CoreTech employee).

The interviewees expressed that morale may be associated with a general mood or feeling of the organization. Although it was sometimes described as a neutral mood, it was most often described as being positive and linked to happiness or a fun environment. One responded described morale as:

> "energy and the spirit of the employees with respect to the company" (MC Inc. employee).

The fundamental argument, from a social constructivist perspective which is apparent within this argument is that the social interactions among the employees do in fact create a common understanding which perhaps increases the cohesiveness of their desire to meet their common objective (Baehr & Renck, 1958; Berger & Luckman, 1991; Jackson & Klobas, 2008; Simina & Hamel, 2005; Woo & Reeves, 2007). Such goals and visions can be created by the employee but can also be created and impacted by the leader.

As presented, morale is strongly related to how connected the employee feels to the overall goal and purpose of the organization. How much an employee can relate to the organizational vision and direction of the organization is very important. As such what is significant in coming to understand the concept of employee morale is that it is based on the common goal or purpose of the organization

and whether that goal or purpose is something that the employee can believe in. One employee alludes to this by stating:

> "if individual goals can be aligned with organizational goals that would be good" (CoreTech employee).

This quote strongly highlights the need for there to be a connection between what the employee wants to achieve and what the organization wants to achieve (Jacobson , 2009; Joshi et al., 2008). Within this argument one can see the importance of communication, consistency and awareness.

Another important theme that emerged when interviewees were asked to define morale was the concept of doing the right thing or the idea that morale was the:

> "tool for making decisions concerning right and wrong" (CoreTech employee).

Initially, we reacted to this by attempting to differentiate between the idea of morals or morality from employee morale but upon further discussions it became apparent that this idea of doing the right thing is also very much associated with employee morale. The connection seems related to the idea of doing what one is paid to do or responsible for, to ensure that the work done does not negatively impact the work of others and to ensure that the actions one takes are beneficial for the company as a whole. One respondent indicated:

> "result we produce together is more important than the personal convenience....
> to understand each others, you know, jobs and challenges and what, I mean, if
> somebody, like, takes a short cut, I mean, it may fall back on someone else, you
> know, that everybody understands the process and the like, the harm you can
> cause others by taking short cuts" (CoreTech employee.).

For the first half of the interviews, we would direct interviewees from this concept as we wanted to make the distinction from the Swedish word "arbets moral" which translates into work ethic. Upon reflection, we recognized that doing so was potentially directing interviewees away from a concept that was related to morale due to our own pre-understanding and bias. The outcome of that change was that the interviewees continued to incorporate work ethic or "doing the right thing" as it impacted others and the organization within their description of morale. As such, we were able to acknowledge that the concept of morality or morals is linked to the definition of employee morale as it contributes to the overall cohesiveness and functioning of the team. An additional concept that may be related to this theme is the idea of fairness and how that can impact the perception of whether one is doing what one is expected to do. The link between fairness and morale was highlighted strongly in the literature

and supported within this particular analysis (Fiorenza, 2008; Graber et al., 2007; Hunter, 2008; Mishra et al., 1998; Vu, 2008)

5.1.2 BEHAVIORS ASSOCIATED WITH MORALE

An important aspect to consider with respect to studying employee morale is to identify the behaviors that employees associate with both good and bad morale. We feel that this is important for several reasons. Initially the desire to capture what interviewees perceive as behaviors associated with morale was to assist in the observational aspect of the study. However, by asking about behaviors we were also able to garner the process by which interviewees would assess the morale of their co-workers as well as create some context for identifying further their own perceptions of employee morale. Another reason that asking about behaviors is important is to determine the level of awareness and congruence between stated perceptions of morale and actions that signify morale. For example, a majority of the interviewees discussed good morale as being associated with humor, joking and laughing and this provided us with something concrete to look for when observing the interactions among employees. One interviewee referenced a story to illustrate the positive impact joking around has on morale:

> "There was what looked like a dirty picture on the white board on the first day and he started making comments back and then the boss made comments back and it was fun…like bantering and that's how it should be" (CoreTech employee).

Additionally, several interviewees discussed the level of flexibility with respect to staying later if that was required as a sign of good morale. Overwhelmingly, the perception of morale within CoreTech was positive, which was evident during the monthly team meeting when a majority of the team stayed well past normal working hours to participate in what we observed as a celebration the day before a major holiday. However, one employee chose to leave the meeting early due to inconvenience of travel prior to a holiday, which may or may not have been directly related to his prior statement of personal perception of low morale. Thus, the questions regarding behaviors not only allowed for creating a more structured context around employee morale but also some insight into the authenticity and congruence of personally stated levels of morale.

Through the analysis of the answers provided with respect to behaviors associated with good and bad morale, we are able to create the categories of verbal and non-verbal communication, social interaction and impact on work. With respect to verbal communication, the themes identified include talking either positively or negatively about co-workers, the tasks and customers, while non-verbal communication tends to focus mostly on positive or negative body language. Examples of positive body language are smiling, looking happy and giving "energy", while negative body language

includes hunched shoulders and a tense or a closed stance. Social interaction category includes being nice, helping each other out both personally and professionally and being accepting of each other. Impact on work category could be described in more concrete terms such as finishing work on time, positively or negatively impacting the work of others, and being loyal to both co-workers and the company. An interesting finding of asking this question is that most respondents did not have a difficult time identifying either positive or negative behaviors in comparison to defining morale. Rather it allowed them to expand their definitions of employee morale at a later time, as illustrated in the quote below:

> " small issues that….may or may not have with the real issue…… get focus and attention, that if morale was high you would just solve it , you just make it happen and it would not be a problem, but now every little thing becomes an issue" (CoreTech employee).

Discussing morale in relation to the behaviors that identify it, allowed us to further grasp the different perspectives on the overall role of social interaction among the team members in influencing morale. For some individuals the focus on work was the emphasis while for others the work aspect was not nearly as important as the social interaction and being "nice" and "helpful" to your colleagues. This was captured in a statement from one of the respondents who stated:

> "If you don't like what you are doing but you just like your colleagues I don't think you would have a good day at work anyways because you can't just sit for eight hours and have a good chat you have to do your work" (CoreTech employee).

Delving deeper into the question of behaviors, we consider what was observed during the team meetings. During the first meeting there was definitely a strong sense of humor and joking used mostly to contribute to a lively and enthusiastic atmosphere. Although we experienced that most joking was used to air grievances in a light manner, to be supportive and to build relationships, some joking was perceived as being about "poking fun" or "putting a co-worker in her place". Thus, within the behaviors we see that there is also an element of interpretation and meaning that is not so visibly obvious. Through the participant observation, the dynamic of the relationships among the members of one team became quite obvious as there were a few key relationships that were exclusive and resulted in the potential alienation of some team members. One respondent who appeared to feel left out had previously commented on being misunderstood:

> "they thought I was unhappy but that is not true….its just the way that I express myself" (CoreTech employee).

Thus, there does seem to be a strong congruence between the stated experiences of employees and the behaviors observed by us, which allows us a degree of confidence that the level of authenticity and awareness within this particular sample is quite high.

5.1.3 ASSESSING MORALE

Once interviewees were able to provide their definition of employee morale and the behaviors they felt were associated with morale, we were interested in knowing how they would assess morale if they were in a supervisory or management position. This approach was used to create distance from their particular bias of the concept and to think about how they would "know" the morale of others. What is interesting about this question is that the interviewees had a much more difficult time of actually expressing how they would assess morale. Often the interviewees would begin to discuss what they would do as leaders to improve morale which also provided us a great deal of valuable information. In creating the categories we were able to identify three ways that interviewees would assess morale: one, would be verbal communication, which often involves directly asking what the employees feel their level of morale is; two, would be using a standardized assessment tool such as the "Employee Voice"; and three would be "a gut feeling", thus really questioning whether one can truly measure or assess morale.

When probed further about whether they could trust the employee to be honest about how they felt about their morale, a consistent response was that:

> "it rather depends on the relationship that you have with them, but yes, for the
> most part I would trust their response" (MC Inc. employee).

In interpreting this statement, perhaps what the interviewees would use would be a combination of both asking direct questions and then the "feeling" that they would get depending on the relationship they had with that individual. The issue of building a trusting relationship is again very prominent in the literature as being a fundamental component in maintaining or building employee morale (Ariss, 2002; Maier, 1948; Mishra et al., 1998; O'Herron, 2005). The statements given by the respondents regarding the issue of trusting each other and being able to communicate in an open and honest manner are all very central to the perception of a high or positive level of employee morale. For example, one respondent said:

> "If I can trust my co-workers and they can trust me then we have an easier going
> relationship…I have a feeling that one of these day s [he] is going to do
> something really stupid and so am I…he is probably going to have to be the one
> who has to pick up the phone and tell everyone about it because that is the time I

> take my vacation …and that is when it is very good to have a professional trust
> and a personal trust" (CoreTech employee).

One interesting response with respect to assessing morale provided by an interviewee was the idea of "Expectancy Theory" and stated:

> "expectancy theory is that people perform as you expect them to… if you would
> then try to figure out the morale of the team then you doubt the morale of the
> team… so, you would actually get worse results; the morale would be lower if
> you try to measure it" (MC Inc. employee).

Expectancy theory, as explained by Vroom (1964), varies slightly from the socially constructed definition provided by the respondent in that it links the level of individual motivation to expectations that individual has that a particular outcome will result from performing a specific behavior.

This individual brought to the surface the difficulty that researchers have in asking the questions because simply asking the question begins to influence the context in which the question is being asked. The importance in considering the potential influence of the attitudes of the respondent towards the experiment and the experimenter was first recognized in the Hawthorne Studies (Roethlisberger, 1955). By bringing up the concept of Expectancy Theory, the respondent highlights that there are those individuals that have already created distance from the concept of morale and can thus talk about it from a removed stance. In contrast there are those who potentially had not considered the concept prior to the interview, which could have impacted their ability to articulate or discuss morale. This was illustrated in an instance when we attempted to create context by referring to the downturn in the current economy and how that could possibly impact morale. The respondent stated:

> "I don't read that depressing newspapers…I pretend that stuff doesn't exist…try
> to stay focused and to do good and forget about the depressed" (MC Inc.
> employee).

What we recognize is that perhaps the level of distance or separation from the concept impacted the resulting dialogue when these questions were asked. Such differences would impact the level of consistency and agreement between the themes and yet there are consistent themes that emerged that perhaps contradict the impact of distance. This strengthens the argument that there may in fact be some consistent ways that employee morale is viewed, at least within this setting. Additionally, it is interesting to consider the possibility that the interviewee's had much more interaction between interviews that may have led to the consistency. Perhaps the use of a standardized tool would allow for the control of both of these variables and yet may not capture fully the employee's perception due

to the lack of context and that the answers would be forced upon the respondent. A summary of themes and categories developed will now be presented.

5.1.4 TABLE OF THEMES AND CATEGORIES QUESTIONS 1-4

	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
Themes	1.Motivation 2. Role of Leadership 3. Loyalty 4. Group dynamics/ Collective Mood/ Spirit or Energy 5. Success/ Outcome 6. Decisions based on right and wrong 7. Belief in common goal/sense of belonging 8. Fairness 9. Positive Attitude 10. Like what you do 11. Contribution/ Pride 12. Meaning/ Purpose	1.Motivation 2. Role of Leadership 3. Loyalty 4. Group dynamics/ Collective Mood/ Spirit or Energy 5. Success/ Outcome 6. Decisions based on right and wrong 7. Belief in common goal/sense of belonging 8. Fairness 9. Positive At titude 10. Like what you do 11. Contribution/ Pride 12. Meaning/ Purpose	1. Not interested in the work/not doing the work 2. Body language 3. Negative talk about work, customers, mgmt, co-workers 4. Not communicating openly 5. Not helping or being supportive 6. Lack ambition or motivation 7. No flexibility 8. No loyalty or commitment 9. Not delivering a quality product 10. Lack of teamwork	1. Do what is expected 2. What people say 3. A feeling you get 4. The interaction between people 5. What you see on their faces 6. Learning from what happened 7. Standardized measurements and follow up on results 8. Level of motivation or commitment 9. Behavior when boss there and when he is not there 10. Profitable results for company
Categories	1. Internal Drivers 2. External Drivers 3. Individual Drivers 4. Collective Drivers	1. Verbal Communication 2. Non verbal communication 3. Social interaction 4. Impact on work	1. Verbal Communication 2. Non verbal communication 3. Social interaction 4. Impact on work	1. Verbal Communication 2. Feeling generated by assessor 3. Standardized assessments

5.1.5 OUTCOMES OR RESULTS OF MORALE

The interviewees were also requested to discuss what they thought were some of the outcomes or results of either good or bad morale. In an attempt to not lead the interviewees we left this question quite open. The categories that resulted were tangible rewards, personal or emotional rewards, loyalty and motivation. What becomes apparent is that respondents made a distinction between the tangible results such as profits, quality of work produced and relationship with the customer and the more personal or emotional rewards of employee morale. Personal or emotional rewards include happiness of the employee, harmony among employees and knowledge sharing. The quote below illustrates the connection between tangible and intangible results:

> "higher profit….I'm not sure about this but I guess people will call in sick
> a little less…better results um faster results….there is a reason that humans
> have a need to socialize, it's because it's effective….massively effective to
> cooperate with other people" (CoreTech employee).

Many interviewees also made the distinction between personal and professional while still alluding to the connection between the two. A consistent theme throughout seems to be finding the balance between these two priorities as illustrated by the following statement:

> "there should be a clear line separating private from work…..I like to think that
> when I have vacation I don't want to be called up in the middle of the night to
> work I am not sure that that won't happen here….he expects me to answer calls
> when I am home and I do when I can but when I can't he gets angry" (CoreTech
> employee).

Additionally, by separating these two variables we see that it is not only important for organizations to see success externally via profits but that there is a level of personal happiness that must also be considered. As presented, it is clear that for high morale to be perceived there needs to be a balance between the successes of the organization and how personally satisfied or happy the employee is within that success. An example of this was observed during the monthly meeting when one project came in under budget and champagne was brought out to celebrate the accomplishment of the team leader on the project. The champagne was used to recognize not only the financial success of the business but also the hard work of the individual. This alludes to the issue of ensuring that employees feel a correlation between effort put into the organization and the meeting of personal needs such as professional development, recognition, flexibility and fostering a sense of inclusion or contribution (Abbott, 2002; Graber et al., 2007; Harvey, 2008; Jacobson, 2009; Johnson, 2008; O'Herron, 2005; Stanley, 2008; Wescott, 2008)

The other categories associated with morale are motivation and loyalty, both of which are quite consistent with the current literature on the benefits of maintaining a positive or high level of employee morale (Abbott, 2002; Doh et al., 2008; Joshi et al., 2008; Maier, 1948; McDonald, 2008; O'Herron, 2005; Stanley, 2008; Sullivan, 2008). These two categories are very consistent within most of the responses with many respondents indicating that they left previous places of employment because the level of employee morale was low or poor. Prior to leaving a previous employer, one respondent stated:

> "I felt that I probably sort of took the morale down a bit cause I came to work and I was really tired maybe...and then probably I affected my co-workers in a negative way but when you are in that state of mind you don't see it yourself" (MC Inc. employee).

Additionally, some of the interviewees acknowledged that loyalty to the organization, which could be seen by putting the needs of the organization above personal needs, was a sign of good or high morale. As such, we see that loyalty does not only coincide with the idea of staying if morale is high but also that one could put personal needs aside in an attempt to achieve the global objectives of the larger organization. While we acknowledge that loyalty may be closely related to commitment, the participants in our study chose most often to use the word loyalty, which is also our reason for doing so. Some of the interviewees expressed that high morale was associated with increased flexibility and increased desire to do what was needed and necessary to achieve the best results. as this statement illustrates:

> "that I do work overtime, not always, but it happens… it's not demanded of me in anyway, it's just if it is needed…*What motivates you to work overtime?(interviewer)...*because I want to and I actually enjoy my work…I get all my overtime back in free time….I haven't had any longer vacation abroad since I have been working here… but I would have my phone because ...there are probably something's they can't answer…I'm pretty dedicated" (CoreTech employee).

Again, interviewees often saw the desire to see organizational success as a sign of high or good morale. Many of the interviewees viewed the concept of motivation as directly linked to employee morale and in one of those cases one interviewee contended that the two concepts were in fact synonymous:

> "low motivation is more or less the same idea as morale" (MC Inc. employee).

It is important to note that it would be difficult to separate the concepts of motivation and loyalty from the other factors such as trust, personal validation, and interest in the work which contributed to the positive morale in the first place.

5.1.6 IMPACT OF PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE ON MORALE

The question regarding previous experience was posed to create an opportunity for the interviewees to create some context around their experiences with employee morale and how it has affected their current situation. The ability to talk about previous experiences allowed us to further delve into their understanding and perceptions of morale which allowed for the additional themes and categories to be developed. What we see with this question is that all the interviewees felt that previous experience was important in shaping their current expectations, mostly from a learning perspective.

> "I guess I'm quicker today to actually see through people, to see if they only have
> a mask on or if it's genuine…and I guess I am also quicker to leave a job if I feel
> that it's not working" (MC Inc. employee)

The consistent themes are that prior experiences helped them to see things quicker, to be able to read people more easily and to create a context to compare situations to determine whether what they were experiencing was better or worse. This knowledge would allow them to make decisions about what to do and what to expect. Such expectations would necessarily influence how they experienced their current environment. This question supports the social constructivist perspective in that one can appreciate that our reality is a combination of what we understand based on our social interactions and the foundation of knowledge that those interactions establish. Further, we begin to integrate new knowledge with existing knowledge to create a holistic understanding of our environment. Such knowledge allows us to then interpret and perceive the current external world (Alvesson, 2004; Berger & Luckman, 1991; Devine, 2008; Jackson & Klobas, 2008; Newell et al., 2002; Simina & Hamel, 2005; Woo & Reeves, 2007).

5.1.7 PERCEPTION OF OVERALL MORALE IN ORGANIZATION

Each interviewee was asked to comment on their view of the morale in their particular organization. Each person was able to articulate the current level of morale within the organization as well as what they felt their perceived personal employee morale was. It is interesting that all employees were able to articulate the level of morale as it related to their situation even though several of them had a difficult time defining morale, finding behaviors that were associated with good or bad morale or even what morale was associated with, independent of context, as can be seen in the following statement:

> "how do I describe moral….uh….my general feeling and how things are going
> and…. I'm not that sure what I should answer here but…mmm…" (CoreTech
> employee).

Respondents are able to discuss openly, confidently and consciously what the overall morale of their organization is. While it may be interesting on one level to begin to discuss what the responses are, what is more interesting with respect to our study is that the interviewees were all able to state that the morale of their organization was high, uneven or low. One respondent said:

> "It is much better now than it was when I started a year ago… I think though that
> it can be even better… *How can it be better? (interviewer)*… this company has
> grown so fast, so it's different from when a company sort of grows organically
> and all these morale issues and all this other soft stuff can't go along… we
> haven't really grown into our new suit yet. There are still a lot of things to fill out
> sort of morally and emotionally" (CoreTech employee).

Another respondent stated:

> "it goes quite a lot up and down and its directly correlated to … how busy the
> management is, I think…in some times of the year they have lots to do and are
> less available and not listening….that a quite clear correlation between not
> listening leaders and bad morale workers" (CoreTech employee.)

When taken with the difficulties that some respondents had with defining employee morale it is striking to know that even if they could not find the words to articulate a definition when asked directly, they could answer with not only a rating of the morale but some of the reasons why the moral was the way it was when discussing their organization. Given this, a key interpretation is that while employees may not be able to define or state exactly what morale is, they are still very keenly aware when it is high, uneven or low. We may conclude that morale may exist at an individual level but can only be expressed or seen through the collective dynamic and social interaction of a group of people belonging to the same organization. This finding provides a compelling link between data and theory within our study. It also supports the theory that morale is made up of dimensions or components that exist to varying degrees within different contexts to create morale (Peterson et al., 2005). While an individual may not be able to define a specific set of components to describe morale in general terms, employees may be able to describe morale as it relates to a specific context.

The reason that this is so critical is in the implementation of programs, training, team building or even standardized assessments, organizations must take into consideration that their employees may not be able to talk, articulate or define what they know, but at the end of the day they know it anyways. So the real issue that organizations must address is that of accessing their employee's knowledge or

feelings about such abstract concepts in such a way that they take into consideration each employee's particular perspective and give it a voice and space to be heard. This may appear to be a daunting and exhaustive task, especially for those organizations that employ thousands or tens of thousands of employees' world wide, and yet to not allow each individual to be heard would circumvent a critical piece of the puzzle.

The desire for employees to be heard is another theme that emerged throughout the interviews and throughout several of the questions. Several respondents communicated the desire to know that they are contributing and that their opinions matter. One example is:

> "I think my boss has tried ummm to create a better gemenskap [community] and that people feel more involved in what they are doing …that their opinions are worth something…He probably listens more to us than he did before… but now he has realized that we are CoreTech, he is not CoreTech alone." (CoreTech employee).

Almost all employees needed to feel validated by their peers and/or the leadership either through verbal or non-verbal positive affirmation or through social interaction as indicated by this respondent:

> "feel that you get the same value back that you put in to the relationship …you commit with your skills and your education and your background and your time and that you get the pay that you deserve for that" (MC Inc. employee).

Another respondent stated:

> "there are little simple things that does keep the morale up and that makes people more loyal…actually noticing people when they do something good and probably in one way or another in the end compensating them for that…that could be simple things such as a Christmas present" (CoreTech employee).

Even employees who reported only needing a boss to take care of the business or that they did not need a pat on the back because they were already confident in themselves, ended up contradicting themselves by talking about the importance of putting the type of person who understands people in a leadership role or by discussing the importance of little things and making people feel appreciated.

A related component in maintaining morale involves respecting work-life balance and respecting that employees face demands outside the workplace. When speaking about a co-worker, one employee of CoreTech said:

> "he works 24hours a day and he seems to expect everyone else to do it. It seems like he expects people to be available and working every minute of every hour of

> the day… for example…before I started here they had a huge debate on whether to work on mid-summer's eve…I have never been to anyone, any company where you work on mid-summer's eve without a good reason.. .they were supposed to work a full day on mid-summer's eve and whatever you produce that day didn't produce enough to cover the cost of this conflict because many people took it very bad, because you don't. It was decided not to work…but it has still hurt the morale very, very much….and it still worries me a bit…it shows and attitude that isn't very good" (CoreTech employee).

The literature is very clear about the component of work-life balance and respecting employees as a fundamental element that organizations must consider if they are to maintain or improve morale (Klein, 1987; McDonald, 2008; Smith, 1976; O'Herron, 2005). Given this rather consistent theme and the idea that employees know more than they can or are articulating, seems to point to the necessity of accessing and knowing employees at a personal level that extends beyond compensation and work tasks. Leaders need to know their preferences, idiosyncrasies and most importantly what they are truly passionate and motivated by.

5.1.8 CONTRIBUTING TO OVERALL MORALE

The final question that was asked of each interviewee was to discuss what they did to contribute to the overall morale of the organization. This question was aimed at targeting their particular behaviors and perceptions of their impact on the collective morale. The dominant theme from this question is the need to be positive towards co-workers and customers, as can be seen in the quote below:

> "The most defining thing about morale is people helping each other…I know that if I help people then they will help me back…if you take the responsibility for learning someone than their competence is a reflection on you" (CoreTech employee).

Three distinct categories emerged; the development of positive working relationship with co-workers, doing a good job and common goal or vision. The themes present within the category of positive working relationship are based on being helpful, getting people involved and acting positively. The themes associated with doing a good job are knowledge sharing, role modeling appropriate behavior and finding solutions. The category of a common vision and goal continues to be present among all the questions and again is associated with themes related to commitment and belief in success. The final question reinforces some of the previous themes present in other questions, which supports that there is indeed a consistent and articulated way of understanding and conceptualizing employee morale within an organization.

An additional theme discovered is the need for an interest in the work being performed by each

employee. One respondent was very dissatisfied with the incongruence he was experiencing between the desired work responsibilities and actual tasks performed. This respondent's morale was negatively impacted because he was not interested in the daily tasks.

> "I have to…nobody else could do it…there was a position….that I applied to but I never got to work as that…I found myself working…[a completely different position] " (CoreTech employee).

Not all, but most of the participants described needing to feel 'passion' or enjoyment in the tasks themselves. A majority of employees with CoreTech were very passionate about technology. It became quite evident during our observation of the meetings that a collective motivator for the organization was the interest in technology itself and even employees with negative feelings toward the organization actively participated and become engaged to solve technological problems. The employees not sharing this common interest spoke less often. A summary of the themes and categories will now be presented.

5.1.9 TABLE OF THEMES AND CATEGORIES QUESTIONS 5-8

	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7	Question 8
Themes	1. Quality of work 2. Happiness/ Satisfaction of employee 3. Profitability of company 4. Harmony among employees 5. Creativity 6. Relationship with the customer 7. Loyalty/ Commitment 8. Motivation/ Efficiency 9. External image of company 10. Personal Rewards (S.E., S.A., Pride, Achievement 11. Knowledge sharing	1. Past is always influential 2. Learning process 3. Able to make comparisons 4. Expectations 5. Get to know people	1. Good 2. Uneven 3. Bad 4. External Environment 5. Changes are positive 6. Gut feeling 7. Able to identify those with poor morale 8. Common goal 9. Positive relationship among employees 10. Employee ownership 11. Role of the leader	1. Knowledge sharing 2. Getting people involved 3. Acting positively 4. Being helpful 5. Role modeling appropriate behavior 6. Mutual goals/ vision 7. Commitment 8. Belief in success 9. Raise questions/ find solutions 10. Allow people to have a voice
Categories	1. Tangible rewards – profits, relationship with customer 2. Personal/emotional rewards – pride, S.W., happiness 3. Loyalty 4. Motivation	1. Learning process	1. Internal Environment 2. External Environment 3. Changes made	1. Development of positive relationship among employees 2. Doing a good job 3. Common goal/vision

5.1.10 ADDITIONAL THEMES AND CATEGORIES

The final categories created are a result of the spontaneous responses of the interviewees and the non-structured questions asked by us. The outcome of these additional themes is the resounding focus on relationships. As such the categories created are internal relationship, external relationship, leader relationship and organizational governance. The relationship factor is very much present throughout the responses of the interviewees and for a majority of the respondents there is a strong need for these relationships to be positive in order for there to be a strong sense of morale. One respondent stated that the:

> "focus is on relationship and relationship management over the project management" (CoreTech employee).

This highlights the value of relationship for this particular individual. The literature is also quite clear with respect to the role that relationship building has on employee morale, especially when there are redundancies or a downturn in the economy (Abbott, 2002; Baehr & Renck, 1958; Maier, 1948; O'Herron, 2005).

The first three categories relating to relationships will be addressed to a greater extent in the discussion of the overarching themes present in the material gathered. The fourth category is of particular interest as it relates to how the interviewees consistently discussed the need for organizational structure or governance that would not only support them in their daily task but also create direction for the future of the organization as a whole. As expressed by one employee:

> "I think that people may feel a bit lost …they know where we are heading…we are there in paper or it's all in my bosses' head. He has a lot of grand ideas and visions and so on, but we have a lots of practical issues to deal with before we can think in those terms" (CoreTech employee).

Some of the themes within the category of organizational structure or governance involve issues related to enjoyment of work tasks, a sense of collective pride and belonging, a shared vision or goal and the execution of such visions and goals and flat vs. hierarchical structure. A deeper interpretation that can be made between the importance of relationships and structure is that most interviewees are able to openly discuss the consequence of low or bad morale of a single individual as illustrated below:

> "low morale is like yawning its contagious...and people have a tendency to inflict other people with bad morale...high morale is not so contagious unfortunately" (CoreTech employee).

It is clear that negative or low morale has a strong impact on the relationships among individuals and potentially it is up to the structure of the organization to manage and deal with the consequences in order to avoid the spiraling downward of morale. Delving further raises the question of what happens when the low morale of a few begins to negatively impact the whole and can morale be turned around once this happens? The table of additional themes, categories and meetings will now be presented.

5.1.11 TABLE OF ADDITIONAL THEMES AND CATEGORIES AND MEETINGS

	Additional Themes	Team Meeting 1	Team Meeting 2
Themes	1. Shared goals, vision, purpose, collective pride 2. Balance between work and personal life 3. Role of Management and Leadership 4. Org Structure is important – flat vs. hierarchical 5. Impact of those with negative morale 6. Having input, being able to contribute, knowing your role 7. Up to the individual to create morale but org also has a role 8. Impact on Customers 9. Relationship with others – respect, fairness, cohesion 10. Appropriate feedback 11. Motivation – individual and collective 12. Need for long term planning and execution 13. Communication	1. Importance and interest in the technology 2. Vision and strategy 3. Positive reinforcement and recognition 4. Lack of reinforcement or negative reinforcement 5. Attempts at using humor to engage and connect 6. Body language 7. Energetic atmosphere 8. Existence of groups that possibly alienate 9. Flexibility in staying past the time of the end of the work day 10. Desire for Celebration	1. Attempts at using humor to engage 2. Eye contact used to try to engage people 3. Side conversations between people are limited 4. Most people are disengaged and not participating 5. Most of conversation is guided by leaders 6. Interest peaks when discussion turns to their company/their work 7. Role of alcohol as a way to celebrate/engage employees 8. Mood of leader sets tone 9. Tone also set by discussion 10. Flexibility in staying past time of the end of the work day
Categories	1. External Relationship 2. Internal Relationship 3. Leader Relationship 4 Organizational Governance	1. Verbal Communication 2. Non verbal communication 3. Social interaction 4. Impact on work	1. Verbal Communication 2. Non verbal communication 3. Social interaction 4. Impact on work

5.2 OVERARCHING THEMES

Following the themes and categories for the initial eight interview questions, it is pertinent to discuss the overarching themes that emerged to create a more holistic perspective on the concept of employee morale. There are four themes present in the questions asked as well as the spontaneous responses that the interviewees gave. The overarching themes consistent with respect to employee morale are the importance of communication, relationship, common or collective vision or goals and organizational governance. Each of these themes will be discussed separately as these are the essential components that contribute to the purpose of the study and in potentially finding some way to conceptualize employee morale. The morale cycle, which will be discussed later, will capture the dynamic interaction that exists between these overarching themes.

5.2.1 COMMUNICATION

A consistent theme that interviewees articulated is the importance of communication. It is through communication that leaders can express their vision, goals, expectation and most importantly how they can give feedback to employees, which is strongly highlighted throughout the interviews. Additionally, employees wanted to feel in control and that they have the ability to influence the situation and that their feedback is being heard. It is very important for employees to be provided the necessary information in order to feel in control of their work environment and customer relations. People within the organization want to understand why something needs to be done instead of just being told to do so. Reducing uncertainty by being able to better plan the work load and customer reaction was provided as a way of improving morale as is indicated by the following respondent:

> "a lot of it has to do with communication….unclear guidance….we are going thru like a kind of a big change as a company from being one solid unit to splitting it up into three different areas of expertise…..setting up processes for working within these areas and processes for working between them as well…it's [a] big re-adjustment….its taking its toll" (CoreTech employee).

Communication seems to be a key way in which one may not only assess morale but also assess the relationship among employees. It was brought up time and again that what and how something is said is a critical clue as to how people are feeling towards co-workers, customers and the company. One respondent commented that:

> "talking a lot more...if the company morale is high, high spirit, people are much
>
> more willing to talk" (CoreTech employee).

Further, through non-verbal communication the interviewees are able to assess the level of happiness or satisfaction of their colleagues which is what they often directed us to watch for. As illustrated by the quote below the focus on non-verbal communication seems to be just as important as what is said:

> "facial impression...you can read a person quite easily during the day" (CoreTech employee).

Finally, it appears that through communication employees could give both constructive and destructive feedback which could also be used as an indicator to the level of morale within the organization. The result of providing feedback that employees engage in is the creation of the process of knowledge sharing which seems quite critical in many areas. The sharing of knowledge is not only a way to build relationships but also a way to allow for a successful output of joint efforts for the customer. The below quote highlights the importance of this:

> "[Leadership] started to involve the employees more in the sales chain and the relationship with the customers….making sure that everybody gets, uh, their information to be able to do their job" (CoreTech employee).

The literature contains many examples of the importance of communication not only between the employees but most importantly between the supervisor or manager and their direct reports (Harvey, 2008; Jacobson, 2009; Kennet, 2003; Maier, 1948; O'Herron, 2005; Smith, 1976; Hudson Thrall, 2008). Further, knowledge sharing and the development of communities of practice enhance the shared experiences and meaning making of employees through these social interactions (Tietze et al., 2003; Weick, 1995; Wenger, 1998).

5.2.2 RELATIONSHIPS

The second theme is the importance of the relationships one has with colleagues, customers, and the leadership team, which is critical to the development and enhancement of morale. Relationships provide the cornerstone for employee morale as several of the interviewees felt that one could not have positive or good morale if one did not like one's colleagues:

> "you cannot neglect colleagues as well…..because it affects your morale I'd say quite much…. I think you can be happy and have good morale even if you dislike what you are doing if you have great colleagues" (MC Inc. employee).

Additionally, even those respondents indicating that a good relationship with colleagues was not necessary often did allude to the importance of the relationship to the customer or the leader.

> "I got here and really shortly after that we had the kickoff, the last kick off which was rather welcoming…..leader was very open and very easy to talk to…that is a very big part of it" (CoreTech employee).

Another respondent stated:

> "once you actually get the notice that ok we're not going to be able to extend your contract, uh, you lose morale so it's not that much fun to work….so that's the hard part, to actually, to be professional and be nice and keep the relationship going and I mean, I know for myself I need to have this relationship working if I want to go there again and if I want to get more assignments from them" (MC Inc. employee).

Ultimately we acknowledge that the relationship element is a necessary component of employee morale and could possibly be the variable that organizations could focus on in an attempt to improve overall morale. Relationship building with respect to customers, colleagues and co-workers has been cited extensively in the literature as being the foundation upon which loyalty, communication and a sense of belonging rests (Abbott, 2002; Baehr & Renck, 1958; Graber et al., 2007; McDonald, 2008; Mishra et al., 1998; Stanley, 2008).

5.2.3 COMMON GOALS AND COLLECTIVE PURPOSE

The theme of common vision or collective goals is also a very consistent element in the interviews and on more than one occasion the German word "gemeinschaft" or the Swedish word "gemenskap" are used to clarify the concept and emphasize the importance of a sense of community and collective spirit. It appears that the sense of belonging to a community or a team is very important and that there is a strong belief in the vision or goal that is outlined by the organization. A respondent alludes to this by saying:

> "not being true to yourself and your colleagues about the fact that you don't believe in the vision, basically if you don't believe in the vision then you are not adding to it" (CoreTech employee).

Interviewees seemed to agree that part of what creates a strong or good morale is having a common goal to work towards and to know that those within the same organization have the same vision. It is also very important that employees have opportunities to have opinions heard and to be involved in the process of the vision and goal. Thus, membership or belonging is only one aspect of this theme but what seems to be a critical aspect is to feel that as an employee, one has a voice and can make an impact.

> "I think I will need to get more involved in the company to keep my morale high…I love learning new stuff…to keep my motivation, I will need to get a larger role in perhaps, designing products and stuff and actually I feel that I need to become part of the program process too because every now and then I feel, like, that there are things that I could make better" (CoreTech employee).

Several of the interviewees expressed the need to know that they were making a contribution and made it a priority to ensure that others were involved. The importance of employees knowing that their opinions are heard and having some influence has been discussed in the literature as being helpful in building morale as well as in recognizing what is important to employees. This may give some insight into what motivates them on the whole (Baehr & Renck, 1958; Joshi et al., 2008; O'Herron, 2005; Smith, 1976; Stanley, 2008).

5.2.4 ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE

The organizational governance of MC Inc. is one of employee ownership which contributed to the perception of high morale within the organization especially considering the current external economic environment. For these employees, it is very important to know that they have a say and that they have the responsibility of ownership and hence accountability.

> "a very special kind of company where, where every employee is or probably will become partner and actually own the company so the company is actually owned by its employees and that creates a very special situation where you invest a lot of things in your company and in your employer invests money and you invest effort, feelings and emotions and that creates a very special working environment" (MC Inc. employee).

Thus, what needs to exist is a strong and cohesive collective vision and goal that employees have some sense of ownership or influence over and that it is aligned somewhat with the personal goals of the employee themselves. Klein (1987) argues that there are three fundamental benefits to employee ownership which include: an intrinsic component that satisfies the need for ownership, ego enhancement and common interest; an instrumental component which taps into elements of commitment and decision making; and an extrinsic component that meets the financial need of the employee. Organizational governance in the form of employee stock ownership has been closely associated with increased feelings of commitment, satisfaction and morale among employees due to the increase in perceived decision making and involvement (Bartkus, 1997; Caramelli & Briole, 2007). This argument further strengthens the idea that employees having a sense of ownership or feeling that their opinions and contributions matter is critical to morale. However, there are some difficulties associated with the concept of employee ownership such as how much influence employees actually have in final decisions, impact of cultural values, abuse of power and access to privileged information

(Bartkus, 1997; Caramelli & Briole, 2007; Sauser, 2009). Thus, a strong culture of trust and focus on common values must exist in order for employee ownership to have the desired connection between the perception of increased control and decision making on employee morale (Bartkus, 1997; Sauser, 2009).

Related to the category of organizational governance is the theme of having balance between individual and organizational demands which plays a critical role in employee morale. The behaviors associated with high morale include ensuring balance, flexibility and being able to put personal needs aside for the sake of the company. One respondent discussed the idea of balance by stating:

> "putting your employer at the same level as yourself, so it's a win-win situation. I don't really believe in living through your work and that being the only thing in your life" (MC Inc. employee).

Additionally it appears that there needs to be some level of recognition and a sort of "give and take" type of relationship with the larger organization. Interviewees expressed that oftentimes they would be required to put in extra time or overtime to complete a task and that they would be able to take time off later to offset the time put in:

> "working late if you have to, uh, which is something that I feel…should be avoided as far as possible. I don't believe in having people working extra hours everyday….if you feel the commitment to your company you put in that extra work if its needed and you know that the management won't ask you if its not really, really important" (MC Inc. employee).

This type of trust and win-win arrangement seems to really signal a high level of morale. Flexibility and the autonomy to do what needs to be done appear to increase the morale within the organization (Bartkus, 1997; Johnson, 2008; Maier, 1948; O'Herron, 2005; Westcott, 2008; Wilson & Peel, 1991). Further, interviewees commented on the idea that it signaled low morale when individuals were not flexible or did not put the company needs before or equal to their own needs. Given the nature of the work of all interviewees, flexibility seems like a familiar concept that employees associate with high morale so long as there is some level of fairness on the part of the larger organization not to take advantage of their good will.

Given these four distinct and consistent themes we can begin to identify the variables that contribute to the conceptualization and understanding of employee morale. Given the analysis based on the material gathered in these settings it appears that morale can be constructed by looking at the communication used by and among employees, the internal and external relationships that are present within the organization, the level of collective vision or goals within the organization and finally the

organizational governance of the organization. Further the element of motivation and how that relates to levels of loyalty, productivity and commitment to the vision of the organization is important to consider as a fundamental variable in the concept of employee morale. Finally, we need to consider the role recognition, validation and feeling valued by the organization plays in impacting the motivation of the employee which may be at the heart of their morale.
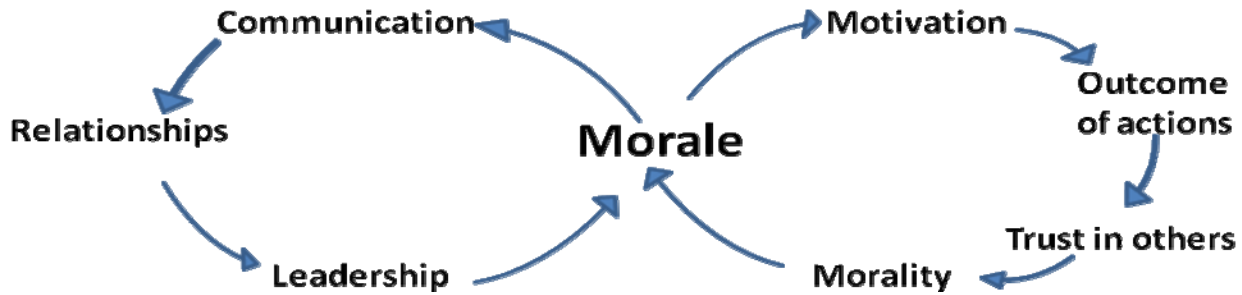
5.3 CYCLE OF MORALE

Morale has been categorized as an ordinary language concept, which suggests that there are no absolute factors that define morale and that it is viewed as a multi-dimensional term or a group of related components (Wittgenstein, 1976). The components may apply to both individuals and the group to varying degrees. Groups may have different 'morale profiles' where the components emphasized to produce morale differ from group to group and over time in the same group (Peterson et al., 2008). Morale is always changing and becoming depending on internal and external factors in the group and the way we speak about the morale of a group may also vary depending on which components are emphasized. An example of such dynamics is shown through the Oakland Athletics baseball team who hated their owner and sometimes each other, but still won the world series three times. One could ask how we would asses the morale of this group when they were probably high on the dimensions of common purpose, confidence, and optimism, but low on social cohesion and devotion (Peterson et al., 2008).

Our study confirms that morale is a multidimensional term made up of components that both conceptualize morale and influence morale. Our findings of critical factors largely overlap with those identified in the literature review of Peterson et al. (2008). We include their components and expand on the interaction between them by suggesting a cycle of morale model that includes leadership, relationships, communication, motivation, morality, trust in others, outcome of actions, and morale itself which all exist within the context of the external environment.

Fundamentally what we are able to discern given the above analysis is that we can not understand morale as a separate and individual concept but rather that it exists within a mutually influential and supportive cycle with communication, leadership, relationships, trust in others, morality, motivation and outcome of actions. Morale cannot be discussed as existing apart and separate and in fact emerges as well as impacts these other variables mutually and consistently as well as impacting itself. What we argue is that morale is always in a state of becoming or emerging because the variables that it influences and is dependent on are also in a constant state of flux and transition. We suggest that the components that impact morale are also the components that conceptualize and help us to understand

morale. Finally, we argue that morale cannot be captured in absolute terms or assumed to be consistent, but rather that it shifts and changes as the organization and its employees shift and change.

5.4 CYCLE OF MORALE MODEL

The cycle of morale is an interconnected cycle where all components interact to produce morale, including morale itself. The impact of each dimension may vary depending on the individual and the situation, which means that certain components will influence the employee's conceptualization of morale to varying degrees. The infinity shape represents the constant state of transition and becoming that is involved in the perception of morale within an individual and the organization. Although all the components make up one cycle, we distinguish the left side of the cycle from the right. The left side of the model is comprised of communication, relationships and leadership which represents an individual's perceived reality of these concepts in their interactions with others. The right side of the model includes motivation, outcome of actions, trust in others, and motivation. These components are created as the individual reflects on the self and are associated with the specific experiences, values and beliefs of that particular individual. The model is depicted as a figure of eight, or an infinity shape, which highlights the connection and continuous nature of the various components as they interact and influence the morale of an organization.

For example, perceived morale influences the motivation of an employee, which depending on her perception of the other dimensions, may enhance her behavior to create a positive outcome of actions such as meeting a deadline or finding an innovative solution. This positive result may enhance trust in others as employees are able to depend on colleagues to do their part to achieve a successful product. The enhanced trust in others positively influences the sense of morality or doing what one considers to be the right thing, which was strongly related to the concept of morale. The interaction of the cycle continues onto the other side of the model as positive morale is seen to enhance communication between colleagues which results in knowledge sharing, feedback and support for one another. These

outcomes may enhance the relationships that colleagues have with one another, strengthening the bond individuals have with the larger organization. These enhanced relationships may result in improvement on the leadership's ability to capture commitment to the larger organizational goals. The presence of a strong leader will in many cases enhance morale, as was indicated by the interviews conducted in the research. All of this exists within the context of the external environment, which includes the significant role played by the current economic milieu.

Thus a distinction is made between the reflections that the individual makes in relation to self and the resulting reality as created by the individual's interaction with others within a social context. Morale is placed in the middle of the cycle given that the other factors change to influence morale and consequently morale also influences the other components and itself. We will now proceed to discuss the individual dimensions of the cycle and how they relate to each other, as conceptualized by the respondents.

5.4.1 MOTIVATION

We agree with Roethlisberger (1955) that the first question an organization needs to ask when discussing 'human problems' or the human side of an organization's functioning is *"how to secure the cooperation of people in attaining its collective purpose"* (p.110). In other words, finding out how to motivate individuals to strive and work for the goals of the organization. In our study, we find that the word motivation itself is sometimes used to define morale, while a majority of individuals describe morale as the motivation to do a good job. Those who do not describe morale as motivation or the desire to do a good job instead describe the factors that may motivate people to produce results in line with the goals of the organization.

It is acknowledged by some interviewees that morale could exist within a group without their being the motivation to produce good results. An example was provided of factory workers who got along great, but were very inefficient in their work. These employees may have been motivated by their social relationship or the pay check and not by their desire to achieve an efficient level of performance for the organization. However, as it relates to our group, very few employees interviewed provided a personal example of a time they had worked in an organization where they did not desire to produce positive results. We acknowledge that morale can be defined as a positive mood or climate which may be tied to social relationships or having fun without the desire to produce good results for the organization. When studying morale in an organizational setting, we assert that finding the motivators that gain collaboration to the common purpose of the organization is most critical

While we acknowledge that the motivational drivers may vary depending on the individuals and the situation of each organization, our research suggested that there are certain factors especially relevant when describing what motivates employees to collaborate with the goals of the organization. They are:

- A greater purpose: a belief in a greater common purpose that is bigger than the organization itself (i.e. helping starving children or saving the environment).
- Loyalty to the organization: a belief in the goal/vision of the company or the leadership; putting organizational needs above personal needs.
- Internal/Individual motivators: self-actualization; being happy with what you are doing or being able to fulfill your goals.
- Relationship and community: committed to being a part of a system, project or group; a feeling that you contribute to the overall production.
- Ethics, morale, right and wrong: doing the right thing; a tool for making decision concerning right and wrong; honesty.

All of the drivers above may also be considered in relation to one's identity, which is constantly being shaped and molded in relation to the social interactions, the common goals, and the moral rules within the organizations (Berger & Luckman, 1991; Caramelli & Briole, 2007). Identity work and regulation is ongoing within organizations and will to varying degrees contribute to our needs for positive self-image and self-esteem in relation to others and the organization (Alvesson & Willmott , 2002; Brown & Starkey, 2000).

The motivators of morale may overlap and change depending on the task, external factors, organizational members etc. For example, one of the interviewees indicated that morale is ultimately about social projects to create a better world. The respondents described that the current employer was not in that kind of business so the respondent chose to focus instead on the relationship and trust with other employees, being motivated to help and support them to achieve the common goals of the organization.

5.4.2 OUTCOME OF ACTIONS

The outcome of actions is the next component in the cycle. Perceptions of good results may lead to greater morale, just as greater morale was expressed to increase the quality, timeliness, and ultimately the desire to do a good job for the organization. Our findings suggest that morale impacts the desire to take responsibility for problems, to take initiative to fix things, and to go above and beyond to contribute creative ideas. Hence, morale impacts motivation, which impacts the work. The literature

supports the link between productivity and morale (Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006).

Often times positive conceptualization of morale is associated with a positive outcome of actions and vice versa, but the opposite could potentially also occur. One respondent indicated an understanding that positive results also have the potential to decrease the morale of the organization if people become overly confident.

There remains a strong interaction between success for the organization and morale felt by the members however, as mentioned previously, even in the face of less work or less desirable results, employees can still maintain their morale depending on the other components in the cycle. Although it was acknowledged that there may be a high level of morale without employees being motivated to produce results, the possibility of producing good results without a positive conceptualization of morale within the organization was seen as unlikely.

5.4.3 TRUST IN OTHERS

The element of trust that there is a balance between what the organization ultimately wants and what the employee ultimately wants is a component of morale (Peterson et al., 2008). This includes trust in the belief that one's best interests are kept in mind. Since morale is largely connected to managing motivations of the individuals, the individuals need to feel that they can trust the leadership and each other to fulfill their needs. Without trust, there is no openness or communication, which breaks down the morale (Maier, 1948; Mishra et al., 1998; O'Herron, 2005). Additionally, there needs to be a strong sense of trust in others that they will perform their responsibilities in such a way as to not negatively impact the work of their colleagues. Thus, trust must not only exist in relation to the organization but also in the behaviors and actions of others.

5.4.4 MORALITY

As discussed previously, it is important for there to be a common understanding of what constitutes ethical behavior among employees. It is important to acknowledge that if people act outside of this understanding, it may negatively influence morale as it exists within the cycle. Included in the employees understanding of morality are the related concepts of perceived fairness and experienced honesty (Fiorenza, 2008; Graber et al., 2007; Mishra et al., 1998). Additionally, the perception that employees have with respect to the ethical conduct of the organization as a whole also contributes to how they will experience morale (Hunter, 2008; Vu, 2008).

Respondents expect fair, honest, and ethical intentions and actions by co-workers, the leadership, the

organization, and the industry. It is evident that the conceptualization of what it means to be moral is more black and white in its impact on morale than the other dimensions. Although an individual may be able to work through a relationship issue, an undesirable leadership style, or a lack of communication, differences in moral understanding are perceived to have a more eminent impact on morale. Individuals often have rather ingrained understandings of what is right and wrong, which possess a potential challenge when working in diverse, heterogenic organization. One respondent described how overall understanding of what constitutes moral behavior in the world may impact the organization:

> "We are a bunch of many different people from… I call it cultures, so…I try to raise a few questions because I think it is quite important that people are a bit more aware of their part in the big picture. It's not my intention to improve or dis-improve the morale" (CoreTech employee).

5.4.5 COMMUNICATION

The component of communication includes both the existence of communication and the quality of communication from the leaders, the employees, and between co-workers. Employees describe the desire for an open environment where they are able to share and express their opinions. Directness and the ability to speak frankly and honestly are brought up often. The interviewees overwhelmingly describe the preference for people sharing their grievances as opposed to being passive aggressive or resentful. A lack of caring to communicate or contribute is consistently tied to poor morale.

Employees want open channels of communication from the leadership to understand expectations and why things are being done in order to modify their behavior and understand why. They also want the ability to express their feelings and opinions to the leadership and each other to make the organization better and to manage their individual motivators. This feedback is in line with Roethlisberger's (1955) explanation of the importance of communication channels when securing collaboration among the members of the organization. It is important for leaders to possess the interest in and the social competence to assess the feelings and sentiments of the employees. It is also important that the leaders of the organization communicate clearly the expectations regarding the goal of the organization and provide feedback for how employees may contribute to these collective goals (Baehr & Renck, 1958; Jacobson, 2009; O'Herron, 2005; Roethlisberger, 1955; Smith, 1976).

When discussing communication, it becomes evident how interrelated the dimensions of the cycle truly are in discussing morale and how to positively influence it. It is impossible to discuss direct and open communication without including the other dimensions of the cycle. For example, employees will not communicate openly and directly unless there is an element of trust that there will not be

negative repercussions for doing so. Also, the desire to impact the results and contribute ideas for how to improve the organization may vary depending on how well the needs of the individual are being met. An individual who feels she is being treated in an unfair manner may be indifferent and keep contributions to a minimum. However, an individual being treated unfairly by the leadership may still choose to communicate to solve a problem due to an existing relationship with a co-worker. The dimensions of the cycle are always acting together to influence the morale of the organization.

5.4.6 RELATIONSHIPS

Morale is always being created within the social interactions of the people of the organization and different relationships may be present that impact the morale (Maier, 1948; O'Herron, 2005; Peterson et al., 2008; Simina & Hamel, 2005; Worthy, 1950). Several examples were provided to explain the variations of morale within the organization depending on the relationship with the leadership or the relationship among the co-workers. As described above, the motivator of needing to feel accepted by the group and having a feeling of community was expressed in most interviews with employees and confirmed during the observation of CoreTech. With respect to the cycle, the quality and presence of relationships is strongly connected to how morale is perceived within the organization. Additionally, respondents expressed the necessity of liking one's colleagues as an essential component of morale. Further, such positive relationships enhanced the communication present among team members, which led to positive outcomes such as knowledge sharing, support and an open atmosphere.

The social cohesion and caring for members of the group is illustrated at MC Inc. Many members expressed that their morale went down if they thought others were being negatively impacted by lack of work due to the economy. It is interesting to note that many of the employees in the organization where business had decreased due to the economy felt good about their own morale, but worried about other people's morale, suggesting it may be decreasing due to the economic times. Even though they knew their morale was not down they still worried the morale of others would be. This supports the need for communication to ensure people are not being negatively impacted by the perception of negative morale when it does not actually exist.

5.4.7 LEADERSHIP

While acknowledging that the importance of leadership may vary depending on the governance of the organization, when looking at the material gathered there are a few consistent suggestions made as to the role and behavior of leaders that influenced morale. Leaders need to listen to employees, to ask questions and create an open environment where employees feel respected and acknowledged. Leaders need to possess the social competence to be able to read employees and to 'pick up' on feelings. This

was especially deemed important when holding together a group of heterogeneous individuals.

Leaders need to show that they care about the employees and their right to a balance between their work and personal lives (Klein, 1987; McDonald, 2008; Smith, 1976; O'Herron, 2005). This includes acknowledging the pressures put on employees outside of work (Roethlisberber, 1955). The leader sets the tone for the organization and needs to act as a role model by conveying enthusiasm and eliciting commitment to the common goal. Even the culture was said to be attributed largely to the leader of the organization. The leader should also enable the employees to do their jobs by providing the necessary tools and time as well as setting realistic goals**.** The important role that is played by the leader in influencing employee morale is strongly supported in the literature (Maier, 1948; Stanley, 2008)

The above requirements of leadership are communicated as being necessary in order for our respondents to feel high morale; however, the relationship with the leaders within the research varied from individual to individual, which reinforces the critical need for leaders to listen. One leader communicated:

> "Maybe I spend quite a lot of time on making sure that I understand. I mean it is really important for me to verify that I understand, so usually I rephrase to check" (MC Inc. employee).

Of the relationships within the organization, that with the employee's supervisor is often of most significance (O'Herron, 2005). Out of the employees who expressed some lack of morale in the past or the present, the leadership and the behavior of the leadership was almost always a factor. The following quote illustrates how the relationship between the supervisor and employee may be expressed:

> "how different people behave when their boss is at the office or when the boss is out of the office…..if they have good morale then they work in the same way, energetic…motivated…but low morale as soon as the boss is away then they are really negative" (MC Inc. employee).

A few of the participants in the study discussed the difference between those who were meant to be people managers and those who were meant to be business managers. One respondent said:

> "There are few types of managers or bosses and not all of them fit all positions. Most managers as they are now are more business oriented. It's I need to get business done and not I need to get people working…In the situation here, [he] is trying to do both and he is surprisingly doing a good job" (CoreTech employee).

Roethlisberger (1955) also discusses the need to make a distinction between securing "the economic purposes of the business organization from …the cooperation of people in attaining these purposes"

(p.111). These distinctions often included the person's social competence, willingness to listen, and respect for the wants and wishes of the individual in relationship to those of the organization.

The importance of listening and managing motivation seems to be largely understood as drivers of morale within the leaders of the organization, which is also supported by the literature (Hodgard, 1994; O'Herron, 2005; Smith, 1976). The leaders conveyed how developing and maintaining a positive morale is about each individual finding something to motivate them, that employees live up to the expectations that are set for them and the importance of gaining understanding and commitment to the vision. One leader discussed the key to morale being the ability to manage expectations of the members:

> "It is a two way communication. I think that you should have some expectations from your work place, but as an employer you should also have some expectations of the employees. I think it is a two way communication. (CoreTech employee).

While all of the leaders expressed the importance of managing the needs or motivators of their employees, there existed variation in their execution as it related to meeting the needs of certain group members. The lack of morale in a small number of team members was not necessarily solely due to the leadership, as other dimensions interact with leadership to create morale.

5.4.8 EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

The external environment is the context in which the cycle exists to create the perception of morale within the individuals and their interactions with others. We consider the external environmental factors and events that are not within the organization's control but may also impact morale. These include a downturn in the economy, the addition and removal of people to the organization, and significant events in the personal lives of employees.

Here, it is important to highlight that the existing dynamic of the cycle of morale within an organization will to some extent determine how morale is influenced by outside factors. In the study, one of the organizations was experiencing a decrease in business due to the economic downturn, but instead of feeling that morale was decreasing, many felt that morale was being maintained due to the strong existing morale and the enthusiasm of the leadership who made a point to be positive and to focus on their weekly accomplishments. The goal of the organization was to have all their consultants on assignment rather than being in the office. One employee not currently on assignment said:

> "I should feel low morale, but I don't. I'm not sure why. I think it has something to do with the morale of our organization" (MC Inc. employee).

Further, during this time the leadership was also taking the time to encourage members to do some professional development and encouraged ongoing learning through workshops as a way to keep employees engaged and motivated.

5.5 INTERACTION OF THE CYCLE

Using the above descriptions of the individual components of the morale cycle we can now discuss how the model actually works from a theoretical perspective. An iterative grounded theory paradigm lends itself to linking data and theory as a way to generate new knowledge about the phenomenon under study (Orton, 1997). What is critical to understand with respect to the cycle is that not only does it identify the different components that define morale and the factors that influence morale but it also provides some explanation of the spiraling effect that morale can have in an organization. Essentially, the left side of the model identifies those components that are related to the individual's perception of morale based on their interactions with others, which is creating the socially enacted context that individuals share (Weick, 1988). The right side of the cycle represents the individual reflecting on the self, which is based on their preferences, history and values. We feel that it is important to separate these two sets of components to highlight how the cycle is very much dependent on the mix of individuals in an organization and how morale is always in a state of becoming and emerging given that individuals are also shifting and changing. Thus, we argue that it is difficult to apply a general model to 'boost' or improve morale without considering the many personalities that contribute to the overall morale.

What the model attempts to show is that the interaction of the different components with each other will influence morale in a reciprocal manner, but also in a way that reinforces its current state. If one component were missing or altered, such as a change in leadership, then the whole cycle would be vulnerable to shift in a positive or negative manner depending on what changes were taking place and the perception of the individual. As morale continues to emerge and develop, the components are also influenced which is where we see the potential spiraling effect of morale. As the components continue to positively impact each other, the motivation to produce positive results in line with the organization may increase, resulting in the reinforcement of the high morale. Alternatively, a negative impact on morale or motivation may have an impact on the components and cause the spiral to begin to move downwards. However, the attribution of negative or positive does not exist as a black or white dichotomy. Rather, the dimensions are always specific to the individual and the context in which they are being created. Thus, what one person interprets as positive could be interpreted negatively by another.

A negative perception of one component will not necessarily lead to an overall negative morale. What we argue is that the components exist in a dynamic interaction whereby each part will influence the cycle distinctly depending on the perception of the individual. This is due to the belief that individuals will prioritize needs in a diverse manner and as such will be affected differently by the presence or absence of a particular component. For example, one individual may prioritize relationships far above the need to see the immediate outcomes of their actions while another individual may have the reverse priorities. Thus, the presence or absence of positive relationships will impact these two individuals differently and will ultimately impact their morale. Yet both may experience positive morale if the manner in which they prioritize their needs is aptly met within the dynamic of the interaction in the organization. The components shift and interact to create different variations of the cycle of morale. Many unique combinations may exist in organizations to produce the perception of high morale and the importance of certain components may vary depending on the organization, the individual and context. It is important to note that there exists a continuous dynamic interaction. The statement above also applies to the dimensions themselves as they too are always in a constant state of becoming as they are perceived by the individual.

One respondent provided the example of having poor leadership communication, however, the strong trust and relationships between the co-workers allowed for a relatively even state of morale. As Vroom (1964) contends, there is not a causal relationship that exists between work satisfaction and job performance, thus one cannot assume a similar causal relationship such that an increase in morale will automatically impact the results. The critical argument based on this model is that morale is as much a part of the cycle and as such cannot be defined or 'managed' as an independent entity. It must be considered and discussed as it relates to the other components identified in the cycle.

A final critical piece that needs to be emphasized is the distinction that is often made between individual and collective morale. Our argument based on the above cycle and the material gathered from our respondents is that morale is indeed an individual concept and the components identified in the cycle are dependent on the perceived reality of the individual. However, employee morale can only be articulated and influenced when taken in the context of the dynamic interaction of a group where the goal is to secure collaboration for a common purpose. Once again, it is not a matter of separating out individual versus collective morale but rather that the existence of one is manifested in the other. The result, given the social constructivist perspective that has been the foundation upon which the study is based, is that the understanding of the individual is very much based on their sense making or meaning creation of the interactions they have with others (Berger & Luckman, 1991; Jackson & Klobas, 2008; Woo & Reeves, 2007; Weick, 1995). Morale is not an exception and in fact

is largely influenced by the reality that is created by individuals. Each individual perceives situations, conversations and events of their outside world based on their history, values and personal experiences and as such we cannot take for granted that an incident will be understood similarly by individuals exposed to the same event. Despite this, the study was able to capture some fundamental components and dynamics that truly seem to create a cohesive understanding of a rather obscure and abstract concept.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 ARGUMENT

Our research supports that there is not one universal definition available to describe the concept of morale. Rather, we recommend that morale be conceptualized as it exists within a mutually influential and supportive cycle that can not be defined in an absolute set of terms but instead as an interacting set of dimensions, including morale itself. The components of leaderships, communication, and relationships create the arena where the social interaction between individuals create perceptions of their experience of trust in others, morality, motivation, and outcome of actions which are always emerging. Morale is always in a state of becoming because the variables that influence it and are dependent on are also in a constant state of flux and transition. Therefore, the conceptualization of morale may change depending on the context and the perception of the individual and the group. Hence, morale cannot be discussed without the components that it influences and is also influenced by. Put another way, the components that impact morale are also the components that allow us to conceptualize morale.

Since morale is made up of a cycle of evolving components, it is unreasonable to assume that individuals will verbalize a consistent definition. Rather, the conception of morale may be described using the components of morale as they relate to the understanding of a specific context or situation. Although expressing an understanding of morale may prove difficult when taken out of the context of a certain organization or group, the ability to feel or know morale as it relates to a specific situation proved to be much easier. Everyone in our study was confidently and authentically able to describe their own morale and that of the overall group without hesitation, even if the concept itself proved elusive.

Fundamentally, what this means is that employee morale may best be articulated and influenced when taken in the context of the dynamic interaction of a group. How people conceptualize their individual morale as well as that of the group is constantly being socially constructed and evolved within the

ongoing interactions and relationships present. It becomes evident that a discussion of organizational morale is most relevant as it occurs in the context where the goal is to secure collaboration for a common purpose. Although morale may exist in organizations in the form of a good mood or a feeling, the goal of organizational studies is to find a way to understand morale in a way that benefits the employee and the employer.

6.2 WHAT ARE THE MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE CYCLE

There are several managerial implications of the cycle of morale. Our study emphasizes that there cannot be a quick fix when it comes to influencing the morale of employees. Leaders and managers must actively begin to understand how their employees conceptualize and perceive the concept of morale, how they understand the collective purpose or goal of the organization and how this all translates into their day-to-day behavior. Further, leaders must themselves be aware of how their actions, relationships and communications directly influence and impact employees. The cycle of morale clearly outlines the many components that managers must attend to while maintaining a comprehensive understanding of how their employees contribute to their unique organizational context. Subsequently, managers must develop social competence to be able to create relationships that are built on trust and honesty as well as be able to pick up on the non-verbal nuances that are ever present in any type of human interaction.

In addition to the necessity of social competence, managers must also be able to determine the links morale has to productivity, efficiency and profitability. Individuals in our study often commented on how morale could be associated with increased efficiency, creativity and meeting deadlines which supports the existing literature linking morale and productivity (Abbott, 2002; Klein, 1987; Maier, 1948). We do not suggest that there is an absolute relationship between morale and profitability however, how employees perceive the success of their organization and how they have contributed to that success is important. Fundamentally, if an organization's goal is to increase its market share and maintain its competitive advantage, it must harness the talent it currently posses and also attract new individuals who can fulfill the necessary roles. Thus, leaders must acknowledge the critical role that morale has, as depicted in the cycle, in influencing the business potential of an organization and as such must not lose sight of how morale can be a tool they can utilize to secure the future of the organization. That morale exists and is experienced within the dynamic of the group is a key concept that leaders must begin to understand and incorporate within their business objectives.

The above two implications lead us to a final and more critical perspective of the implications the cycle of morale has. In bringing these two tasks together, leaders and managers to some degree must

accept that an element of manipulation exists in how the different components of morale interact. Essentially, leaders are probing and delving deep into the psyches of their employees in an attempt to create an understanding of their underlying drivers and motivators so that they can use such knowledge to further the success of the larger organization. Morgan's (2006) discussion of the metaphor of the organization as an instrument of domination fits quite well into this argument. He proposes that organizations exist such that the power differential between the leaders and those being led is one where by "organizations often consume and exploit their employees, taking and using what they need while throwing the rest away" (Morgan, 2006, p. 297). Thus, leaders and managers must acknowledge the power they ultimately have and thus must act with integrity.

Our paper began by attempting to establish a working definition of morale, which reads:

The individual perception with respect to how one feels in relation to the larger organization in terms of level of contribution, recognition, support, trust and safety that allows the individual to indicate with confidence that her well-being and personal self is respected, accepted and understood by the larger organization.

What our study discovered is that morale can only be understood within the context in which it is being described, taking into consideration the interaction of the dimensions as conceptualized by the individual. There are elements of our original conceptualization that fit with our current model with respect to the individual needing to relate to the larger organization however it does not capture the element of dynamic interaction that our model suggests. Although, the original working definition is not incorrect, it may be too linear to capture the fully dynamic concept that is morale.

6.3 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Directions for future studies will require that the cycle of morale be tested within different organizations, within different cultural settings and several different industries to assess its true value. The value of testing the model would be to ascertain the unique interaction of the components that influence the overall morale within a particular organization which would allow the leaders to allocate resources in the most relevant areas. Additionally, such testing would assist in building knowledge within organizational studies by increasing awareness of the value and impact of influencing morale. The organizations of our study are quite unique with respect to their governance and also in the manner in which they came to be in existence. Additionally, the cultural climate of Sweden and the fact that there is no direct one-to-one translation for the word morale may create nuances that could not be captured within this particular study. Finally, it would be quite beneficial to test the model in

large or multinational organizations where the diversity among employees and the organizational structure may influence components such as relationships, communication and trust.

One area for future research would be to address the possibility that a high level of morale could exist within a group that is resistant to or opposed to the leadership or the goals of the organizations. A fundamental argument developed in the study is that morale is an individual concept but that it can only be articulated and experienced within the dynamic of a group where the goal is to secure collaboration for a common purpose. It is also possible that morale may be high when the group consciously resists the common purpose and because of the strength of the relationship and sense of belonging to the collective goal of resistance, members could experience their morale as being high. However, there remains the possibility that ultimately morale is linked to belonging to a group that has a common purpose, although it may not be so dependent on alignment with the larger organization.

Finally, the connection between identity and morale was discussed briefly in connection to what drives employees to collaborate with the goals of the organization. We understand the significance of identity formation as a component of morale but feel that a comprehensive analysis of its contribution was beyond the scope of this study. Thus, we strongly recommend that future studies look at how organizational and individual identities influence the cycle of morale. This can be accomplished by discussing how the different components of morale interact to influence the identity of the individual and the group.

A final reflection is that while the purpose was to conduct a study that attempted to conceptualize morale within an organization, we discovered that providing employees with an opportunity to discuss their ideas and perceptions was validating. From a more humanistic perspective, perhaps what our study has done is given a voice to the concerns that employees have when they dedicate not only a majority of their time but also their energy, passion and spirit to an organization. To know that potentially something will come of their courage to share their understanding and experience may have in and of itself impacted their overall morale.

7. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Thesis Study: Employee Morale

Sign Up Sheet

Date	Time	Name	Company
Wed. March 11	9:00		
Wed. March 11	10:30		
Wed. March 11	13:00		
Wed. March 11	15:30		
Friday March 13	9:00		
Friday March 13	10:30		
Friday March 13	13:00		
Friday March 13	15:30		
Thursday March 19	9:00		
Thursday March 19	10:30		
Thursday March 19	13:00		
Thursday, March 19	15:30		

APPENDIX 2

Organizational Chart for MC Inc.
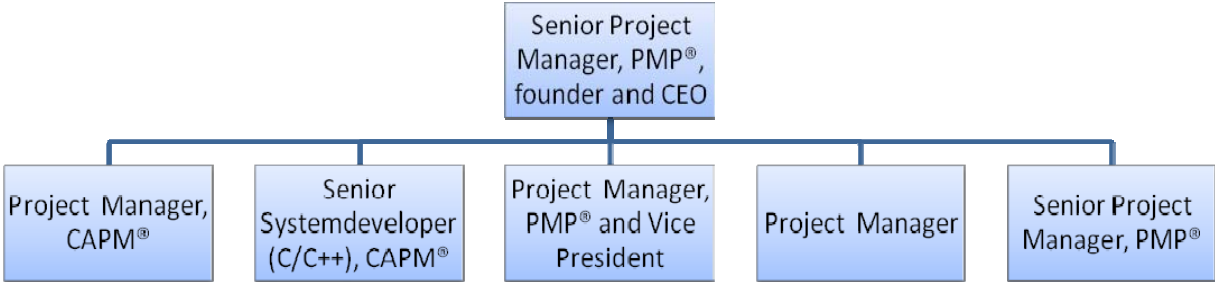
APPENDIX 3

Organizational Chart for CoreTech
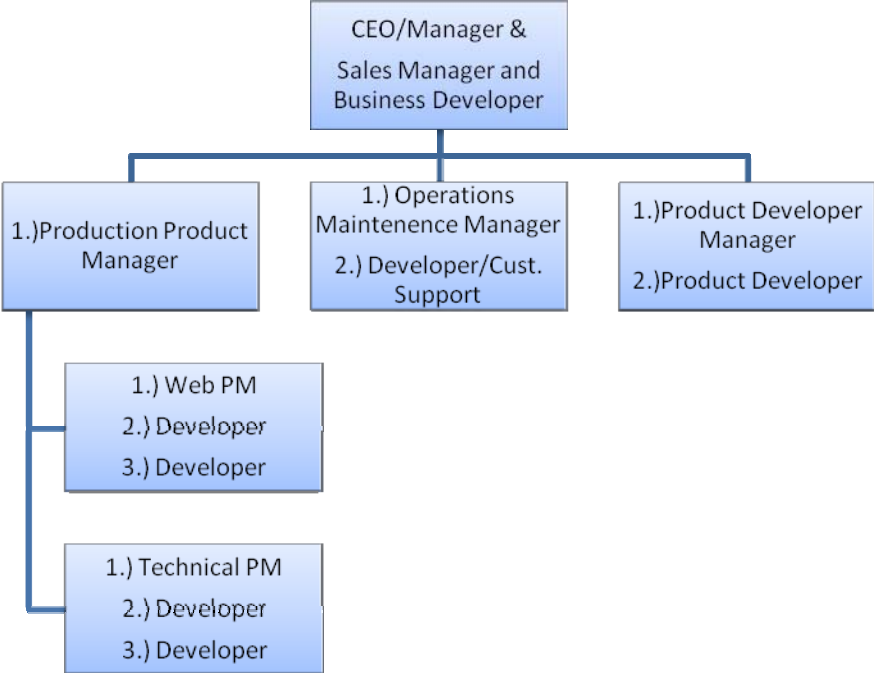
APPENDIX 4

Interview Questions:

      1.) How do you define employee morale?

      2.) What behaviors would you associate with good morale?

      3.) What behaviors would you associate with bad morale?

      4.) As a manager/supervisor how would you assess the morale of your employees?

      5.) What do you think morale is associated with?

      6.) Do you think you past experience influences your morale?

      7.) What do you feel is the overall morale of your current organization?

      8.) How do you feel you contribute to the morale of the organization and vice versa how does the morale of the organization influence your morale?

APPENDIX 5

**Core Tech Employee Voice
Survey**

JMF 1	To what extent do you agree with the following statements according to you and your situation? 'Team' means the people you work directly with				
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
a) I am familiar with the vision of CoreTech					
b) In my team we work towards clear objectives					
c) In my team our objectives are regularly followed up					

JMF 2	To what extent do you agree with the following statements according to you and your situation?					
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**	**Don't know**
a) I feel strongly committed to CorTech's vision						
b) I can clearly see how my work contributes to achieving CoreTech's vision						
c) In my team we have a clear strategy						
d) I take initiative to get involved in our local strategy process						

JMF 3	How much confidence do you have in the managers at the various levels within CoreTech? How much confidence do you have in ...?				
	Very little				**Very much**
a) ... your immediate manager					
c) ... the board of CoreTech					

JMF 4	To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your immediate manager?				
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
a) My manager communicates the strategy effectively					

b) My manager makes sure that our team contributes to the overall goals					
c) My manager is able to translate CoreTech's strategy into tangible goals and actions for team members					
d) My manager frequently update us on business strategy					
e) My manager sets up clear and realistic goals for me and the team					
f) My manager follows up on goals and agreements					
g) My manager drives our performance through passion for the business					
h) My manager actively drives performance through recognising successes					
i) My manager addresses performance issues in a timely manner					
j) My manager is good at building long term relationships based on mutual trust.					
k) My manager communicates in a clear and comprehensive way					
l) My manager shares information in an open way					
m) My manager manages expectations and keeps promises					
p) My manager is open to non-traditional solutions					
q) If I take measured risks my manager supports me					
r) My manager enhances self understanding through regularly seeking feedback from others					
s) My manager coaches and supports me in my development					
u) My manager gives me constructive feedback					

JMF 5	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?				
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
a) I have the skills/qualifications I need to carry out my assignments at work					

b) I am well aware of what is important in order to make CoreTech profitable					

JMF 6	To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (Customer = external customer like operator, retailer, consumer etc.)					
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**	**Not applicable**
a) I am aware of our customer's quality demands regarding our products and services						
b) In my team we know how to respond to an external customer when problems occur						

JMF 7	Are the demands put on you at work ...?
... far below your experience and abilities	
... below your experience and abilities	
... equal to your experience and abilities	
... above your experience and abilities	
... far above your experience and abilities	

JMF 8	How much of the time do you feel satisfied with your workplace?
Almost never	
A small part of the time	
About half the time	
A large part of the time	
Almost all of the time	

JMF 8	How much of the time do you feel satisfied with your performance in your role?
Almost never	
A small part of the time	
About half the time	
A large part of the time	
Almost all of the time	

JMF 9	Here, two people are talking about their work at CoreTech. Their remarks represent extremes on a scale. If you agree entirely with A, mark next to "A". If you agree entirely with B, mark next to "B". If your views fall somewhere in between, mark the appropriate position on the scale.
	A says:
	In my job I do what I have to do, therefore no one can complain about me. I see no reason to work harder than I do.
	B says:
	I feel strongly involved in my job and most of the time I do more than is expected of me.

Person A						Person B

JMF 10	To what extent do you agree with the following statement?				
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
a) In my team everyone takes responsibility for any problems that arise in their work					

JMF 11	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?				
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
a) When required, within my area of responsibilities, I have considerable freedom to act without having to seek my managers' permission first					
b) I have the authority to carry out responsibilities assigned to me					

JMF 12	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?				
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
a) The way we in our team divide our work between us, makes it easier for us to achieve our objectives					
b) We have very effective processes for our work					
c) In my team we are organised in such a way that everyone knows who is doing what					

PSK 1	How do you and your colleagues react when confronted with problems at work?				
	Never	**Seldom**	**Sometimes**	**Often**	**Always**
a) When problems or shortcomings arise in the work of your team, do you try to					

solve the issue together?					

PSK 3	To what extent do you agree with the following statements? At my place of work ...				
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
a) ... new ideas are strongly encouraged and supported					
b) ... we often try out new methods and ways of thinking					
c) ... we make decisions urgently when necessary					
d) After a decision has been made things happen very quickly					
e) In my team we always deliver on time					

PSK 4	To what extent do you agree with the following statements? At my place of work ...				
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
a) ... there is an atmosphere of trust where conflicts and disagreements can be discussed in an honest way					
b) ... we can openly and without fear talk about mistakes made at work					

PSK 5	To what extent do you agree with the following statements? At my place of work ...				
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
a) ... there are good systems for finding the information I need to do my work					
b) ... we are encouraged to share our knowledge and experiences					
c) ... I constantly benefit from the knowledge and experience of others					

PSK 6	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?				
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
a) I am familiar with the latest in…services available on the market					
b) In my team we use customer feedback to improve our products and services					

PSK 7	To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding the Partners?					
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**	**Not applicable**
a) I am familiar with how our partners rate CoreTech as compared with our competitors						
b) We have sufficient knowledge and skills to satisfy the partners' present requirements						

PSK 8	To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding the Clients?					
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**	**Not applicable**
a) I am familiar with how our clients rate CoreTech as compared with our competitors						
b) We have sufficient knowledge and skills to satisfy the clients' present requirements						

PSK 10	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?				
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
a) CoreTech's management team have quality processes on their agenda					
b) My management team are very involved in the daily quality processes					
c) In my team we work towards fixed quality objectives					
d) In my team the work processes are based on quality objectives					
e) In my team we always deliver according to the quality objectives					
f) In my team we always receive deliveries according to					

the quality objectives					

PSK 11					
	Not at all well				**Very well**
a) How well would you be able to describe what the CoreTech company values are about?					

PSK 12	To what extent do you agree with the following statement?				
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
a) CoreTechs' company values inspire me in my work					

PSK 13	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?				
	In my team we live up to the following CoreTech company values:				
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
a) We are following "…					
a) We are following "…					
a) We are following …					

PSK 14	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?				
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
a) I feel respected and valued in my work at CoreTech					
c) I have very interesting assignments to carry out					
d) My working place is characterised by humour and positive thinking					
f) I believe CoreTech will become one of the winners within its field					
g) I feel that I develop and expand my capabilities at CoreTech					
h) By having an employment in CoreTech I become more attractive for other companies					

PSK 15	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?				
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
a) I feel content with my overall situation at CoreTech					
b) As things now stand, I feel that my work contributes to the					

customers' satisfaction					

PSK 16	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?				
	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
b) I would gladly recommend a good friend to apply for a job at CoreTech					
c) It would be easy for me to find another job with similar position, salary and benefits					

RND 5	Vad vill jag få ut under 2009?			

RND 5	Vad är det mitt största bidrag till att vi kommer lyckas?			

RND 5	Vad behöver jag för att kunna lyckas i min roll?			

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