

The Social Construction of Crisis



**constructed realities of employees at
Scandinavian Airlines in they face of
organizational change**

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Abstract

- Title:** The Social Construction of Crisis: constructed realities of employees at Scandinavian Airlines as they face organizational change
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- Authors:** Andrew Donham and Abdul Al Mukit
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- Five key words:** Social Construction, Scandinavian Airlines, SAS, Organizational Development, Change Management
- Purpose:** Explore the socially constructed reality found among employees of SGS at Malmö Airport with respect to the preparatory stage of Strategy 2011 Change Program
- Methodology:** Abductive approach is taken following a postmodernist, poststructuralist meta-theoretical frame of reference
- Theoretical perspective:** Social construction is explored as a process interconnecting discourse, understanding and identity.
- Empirical foundation:** Empirical sources include internal corporate text communications as well as print media. Face-to-face interviews with organizational members from management, union and worker levels of the organization were also conducted.
- Conclusion:** Though the value is apparent in managing through an interpretive sense, findings illustrate the difficulty in doing so, based on the ambiguous nature of meaning making in management.

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1 Introduction

In what literature describes, as a notoriously dynamic, fluid, and often-unpredictable nature that is the airline industry, change becomes a means of survival. This study examines one particular airline's strategic survivalist response to its changing environment. To address the changes it senses in its environment, SAS Group (Scandinavian Airlines System) has implemented a program entitled Strategy 2011 (S11). In this study, a social constructivist approach will be taken in examining the discourse, understanding, and identity associated with this program, providing the framework used for developing an understanding some of the realities of employees regarding this change program. Further explanation of the organization and change program will be given later in the introduction.

1.1 Research Gap

In preliminary literary reviews, a gap in knowledge is presented in this area of study. These literary investigations present studies on organizational development and human resource management. In organizing discussion, the reviews are placed in two groupings: approaches to change and experience of change. This gap in knowledge is further outlined below.

Beginning with the review of approaches to change, Appelbaum and Fewster (2005) present a piece on the inappropriateness of HR support in the airline industry, charging that a more interpretive style of HRM should be used. Bingham and Galagen (2007) provide an article on Southwest Airlines that explains the important strategy of becoming a learning organization, explaining the importance of allowing people to think differently and clearly through what confronts the people as an airline. Lima (1995) follows this up, explaining strategies used by SAS and British Airways to undertake a similar strategy to that of Southwest.

The second half of the literature review discusses various case studies of experience to change. Fisher (2004) offers a case study on a merger of two Delta

Airlines subsidiaries, which had negative implications due to insensitivity to employees' perspective. Saksvik's (2007) research looks at the potential for stress and health related issues resulting from organizational change. Kiger's (2003) article presents successful and unsuccessful examples of organizational attempts at changing understanding, exploring the responses of employees to various discourses. Finally, Edström (1986) discusses positive effects of organizational change at SAS during a previous organizational change.

Though these articles all highlight the importance of interpretive approaches to understanding, none provide insight on the self portrayed realities of employees in the airline industry—of what discourses affect them, how they see their organization, how they interpret the meaning of a major change program and how these affect their ability to identify with and embrace the program. By filling this gap, knowledge can be gained on the effectiveness of a particular organization in the airline industry to manage the employee understanding, based on an exploration of the constructed realities of its employees. This gap leads to a theoretical framework based on social constructivism and connecting concepts of discourse, understanding and identity.

1.2 Purpose and Aim of the Study

In the airline industry, change is a part of organizational survival. Through various literature reviews and theoretical discussions, it comes to light that change is difficult to direct in a purposeful manner and to a purposeful outcome. Likewise, change can present stresses and hardships on employees. To the benefit of both employees and organizations, it is important to understand what is necessary to create change, how to influence it and what implications it has for individuals.

The aim of this study is to explore S11 organizational change program at SAS Group, revealing the various discourses, understandings and identifications found among employees that portray the constructed realities surrounding this

program. In so doing, similarities as well as contradictions will be sought after in comparing discourse to understanding as well as comparing various understandings from the different subjects. Furthermore, the ability of employees to identify with the program will be examined.

The intention of this study is not, however, to make an in-depth discourse analysis of the various communicative symbols available to the employee group. Instead, the intent is to view subjects of the study (employees) as analysts of discourse. Researchers then study the subjects' analysis—how they see and interpret what is happening in their world. Though the content of some company discourses are of interest to the study, the focus remains on how these discourses affect the thinking of employees. This study's purpose should also not be considered a generalizing study. Alvesson & Sköldbberg (2000) explains that postmodern methodology proposes, "there is nothing dominant to reveal...[and]...we must [therefore] be cautious in making generalizations" (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2000, 188). In addition, our study of interpretations of individuals is in line with Alvesson and Sköldbberg's (2000) point regarding the partly neutralized nature of politics in postmodern method, where it is applied primarily on the particular micro level, with "a view to indicating the researcher's choice of representations of the reality to be expounded" (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2000, 188).

1.3 Research Focus

In explaining the focus of this study, research subject, time period and location on are given. These pieces are further explicated through application of organizational development and approaches to change.

Referring to Cummings and Worley (2005), three theoretical models are discussed for planned organizational development, including Lewin's Model, the Action Research Model and the Positive Model. The discussion highlights the convergence of certain initiatives from the three organizational development models, of which the most applicable to this study is the models' emphasis on a

stage preceding their action to implement change—referred to by Lewin as the unfreezing stage, by Action Research as diagnosis and by Positive Model as initiating the inquiry. This preliminary preparatory period is the specific piece of the planned organizational development program this study focuses on. Lewin's model especially is relevant for this study as we wish to explore what Lewin refers to as the 'unfreezing' period, which is described as the step that "involves reducing those forces maintaining the organization's behavior at its present level" (Cummings and Worley 2005) through a process of introducing information that shows discrepancies between behaviors desired by organization members and those behaviors currently exhibited. In so doing, it is proposed that members can be motivated to engage in change activities.

It is important to note the specific time this study covers. Data were collected over a two-week time period in early May—eleven months following the initiation of the program, which was made public 13 June 2007 in the form of a press release from the SAS Group. Thus this study offers a snapshot of the realities of those employees participating up to this point in time only.

In further explaining the focus of this study, we premise the theoretical portion of this thesis, discussing two approaches to organizational change: implementation of change and the experience of change. By first addressing the former (showing how the organization approaches the prospect of changing the organization), it is possible to find the latter (how employees experience this change) of the two, which is the ultimate goal of this study. This humanistic and experiential point of view highlights the importance of considering the individual perspective on organizational development by exemplifying the potentially negative affects of neglecting this perspective highlighted in the literature review. In this case, the subject of interest is the ground service worker of the SAS Ground Service business unit at Malmö Airport.

1.4 Problematization and Research Questions

Sandberg and Targama (2007) assert, people create and develop understanding on an individual basis. The resulting inconsistencies in understanding are manifestations of Sandberg and Targama's (2007) description of the intimate relationship between identity and understanding. Inconsistencies in the ability of employees to form a common identity are likely and, as a result, problematize an organization's ability to effectively align employees in identification with and understanding of their change program. Two questions that surface are:

- What are the various discourses that influence employee's understanding of the organization's change program and what is the resulting range of understandings?
- How do their various understandings of the change program affect their ability to identify with and embrace the program?

It is the intention that in answering these two questions, employee perceptions can be understood, granting a more enlightened view of organizational change with a goal of achieving results with a higher degree of success as well as a healthier process for organizational members.

1.5 Building Context

In the next few sections, background on the topic of study will be granted through an explanation of the particular industry, the organization and change program, including history of what lead to the organization's current situation.

1.5.1 Airline Industry

Morgan (2006) makes reference to studies inspired by theoretical biologist, Ludwig von Bertalanffy's principles of General Systems Theory, where organizations can be discussed in a similar manner to that of biological organisms. Though Bertalanffy's approach is grounded in a natural science

ontology, literature reviewing the nature of the airline industry makes this an effective metaphor to use in understanding this metaphor, though not an overlying epistemological or ontological strategy of this study. To this length, Morgan consider organisms to be open to their environments, made up of interrelated systems and establish congruencies between the interrelated systems, identifying and eliminating potential dysfunctions. In many respects, this metaphor reflects the various discourses that describe Scandinavian Airlines System (SAS) as an organization, the environment in which it operates and how it responds to happenings in this environment.

The first point in Morgan's account of Open Systems Model highlights the importance of the environment, explaining that in order to be sustainable, organizations tend to design themselves with the environment in mind. Following this metaphor, a report by SkyTECH Solutions airline consulting agency describes the European airline industry as "a dynamic industry that changes its trends in accordance to the general European economy" (Datta and Chakravarty, 3). The publication further describes several phenomena that are impacting this industrial environment. Some of the trends noted by SkyTECH as influencing the nature of this industry include changes in legislature and economic agreements (such as the recent Open Skies agreement which entails further deregulation of transnational air transport agreements), changes in fuel prices, disease (such as the 2004 SARS epidemic in East Asia), war, acts of terrorism, or simple changes in demand.

1.5.2 SAS Group

Further tracking Morgan's organism metaphor and specifically referring to his second point in his discussion, SAS has designed itself in an interrelated network of sub systems, focusing on key business processes which fulfill needs the organization requires in order to survive. Also, by Morgan's third point, in discussing his organism metaphor, a congruency or alignment of different systems can be noted that identify and eliminate potential dysfunctions. These concepts can be observed in how SAS has structurally organized itself—largely

based on a decision on structural change in 2004, which had the purpose of providing transparency in profit performance for the different parts of the airline (Flint 2008).

SAS is now a group of separated business components (a movement from a much more centralized organizational structure prior to 2004) cooperating to form a system of air transportation focused on travel to, from and within Northern Europe (Flint 2008). The separate business components are organized into three subgroups of SAS Scandinavian Airlines (including Scandinavian Airlines International, Scandinavian Airlines Sweden, Scandinavian Airlines Denmark and Scandinavian Airlines Norway), SAS Individually Branded Airlines (including Widerøe, Blue1, airBaltic and Spanair) and SAS Aviation Services (including SAS Ground Service, SAS Technical Service and SAS Cargo) (SAS Annual Report 2007, 2). Executive vice president of SAS, John Dueholm, explains in an Air Transport World Magazine article that the product is fully harmonized as far as common distribution platforms and sales channels, ground and inflight services and frequent-flier programs, all of which is insured by an established strategic commercial board, made up of the managing directors of the airline, Jansson and Dueholm, where decisions and definitions on all commercial activities are made (Flint 2008). In 2007, the SAS Group employed 21,898 employees system wide, operating 260 aircraft and providing service to 152 destinations in 34 countries and held 40 percent market share in Northern Europe (SAS Group 2008).

1.5.3 SAS Ground Service

In further building context for this study, a discussion of the sector of the organization to be studied is explained. According to their website www.sasground.com, SAS Ground Service (SGS) is an independent subsidiary of the SAS Group that provides passenger and ramp service to SAS Group Airlines as well as marketing these services along with management and consulting services to airlines outside of the SAS Group. SGS is the third largest ground

handler in Europe with 8,200 employees, providing ground service to almost 80 airlines at more than 160 airports in 40 countries.

1.5.4 Malmö-Sturup Airport

The location of this study is at Malmö-Sturup Airport. According to the Luftfartsverket (LFV), airport authority of Sweden, webpage (www.lfv.se), (Malmö Airport is located in southern Sweden 30 kilometers outside the city of Malmö, Sweden. The airport is frequented by 20 Airlines, both charter and scheduled service, with parking for 20 large aircraft and seven small aircraft. According to station managers SGS Passenger Service Manager and SGS Ramp Service Manager, the company employs approximately 30 ramp and luggage service employees and 20 passenger service employees. The majority of employees are full-time status with five or six passenger service employees holding part-time status and the same for ramp and passenger service employees. SGS at Malmö Airport provides ground-handling services for five airlines besides SAS, including scheduled and charter passenger service airlines as well as ground service for cargo and mail air transport companies.

1.5.5 Strategy 2011 Program

As explained previously, the nature of the airline industry is one of constant change and concurrently necessitates organizations existing in this environment to change accordingly. SAS is no different in this respect, having undergone several major organizational changes in the past 28 years, including Jan Carlzon's 1981 entry into the SAS company and subsequently much admired change program, which was held responsible for its return to profitability in just over one year's time (French et al 2005, 208). On April 17, 2002, SAS announced the implementation of a major realignment of the traffic and production systems, focusing on a new air traffic route system as a platform for long-term profitability along with new technologies such as Internet ticket purchase (Johnson, 2002).

Morgan explains in his account of Open Systems Model how organizations like organisms react to stimulus in their environment, which is supported in a

publication by Sky TECH Solutions, where the European airline industry is described as “a dynamic industry that changes its trends in accordance to the general European economy,” (Datta and Chakravarty n.d., 3). This is exemplified by the recent initiatives at SAS as in an April 2008 article from Air Transport World Magazine noted SAS AB had lost close to SEK 6 billion between 2001 and 2005 (Flint 2008). Previous CEO Jørgen Lindegaard’s Turnaround 2005 program (which cut costs by SEK 16 billion) along with the sale of non-core assets such as Rezidor Hotel Group, European Aeronautical Group and Jetpak express delivery operation allowed for the company to survive this period. In a company publication, current CEO Mats Jansson reported a profit of just over SEK 1 billion for 2006 (SAS Group 2007 ‘Our Challenge!’ 3). Jansson, in a company publication explains that in order to ensure SAS’ future, there is a need to provide owners with a sufficient return and continued growth of business, setting a pre-tax profit margin goal of seven percent, meaning an annual profit of approximately SEK 4 billion (SAS Group ‘Our Challenge!’ 18). Deputy CEO John Dueholm explains, “If we don’t achieve 4 billion by 2011, our board will have to take a decision regarding independence” (Flint 2008, n.p.)

To achieve these goals, the company has launched an all-encompassing restructuring program known as Strategy 2011 (S11) (Flint 2008). The initiatives of the S11 program are outlined in five points, including a cultural turnaround, through stronger customer orientation, clarity in management and a greater commitment from employees; a focus on airline operations and units directly associated with them; concentration on air transport to from and within Northern Europe; harmonizing of services and products across the various airlines of the SAS Group; and competitive nature with regard to cost and performance (SAS Group ‘Our Challenge!’ 2007). Impacting SGS specifically, S11 proposed the divestment of all non-airline assets and as noted in the SAS Group corporate publication, ‘Our Challenge!’ (2007) SGS was placed under investigation as to whether it should be considered an airline asset or be divested under the interpretation of the group as a non-airline asset.

Air Transport World Magazine reported that a decision was made in February 2008 to retain the reportedly unprofitable business unit under strong indications that the unions would strike to prevent a sale or spin-off—this under the contingency that, according to a 5 February 2008 SAS Group press release, that the business unit achieve SEK 400 million cost savings along with the achievement of profitability targets and service performance goals agreed to by management and trade unions, which would act to keep the group on its profitability targets. According to the SGS April corporate publication, *On Ground*, this initiative took on the name, Challenge '09. According to an April 29, 2008 SAS Group press release, 2008 first quarter earnings of -973 million Swedish Kronor blamed on rapidly increasing fuel prices and increased over-capacity, among other things, brought about what was termed an 'expanded action program' termed Profit '08. According to the press release, the program would act to respond to changes in the industry, that resulted in negative earnings in the first quarter, to return the organization to profitability in line with the goals of S11. These included a 2008 earnings effect of 1.1 billion Swedish Kronoer, through capacity reduction of 11 aircraft, delay of one long-haul aircraft order and approximately 1000 full-time employee lay-offs due to resulting redundancies. According to the release, Jansson comments on the plan,

"At the same time, it is important to keep S11 on track to ensure that we can develop SAS to become an even stronger and more competitive airline."

1.6 Conclusion

As stated earlier, this study provides important possibilities for knowledge generation in the area of organizational change strategy with the individual experiential perspective in mind. The objective of such a study provides opportunities for a more broad perspective on organizational change—especially in regard to how the individual experiences change, through understanding. The non-generalizing nature of this study results in the possibility for finding the marginal or peripheral aspects of this study, but makes it difficult to apply in a

more general sense. On a positive note, however, it presents the possibility of future, more comprehensive studies which emerge in the analysis and conclusion of this study.

In order to accomplish this, eight chapters are used to organize discussion of this research topic. Chapter one offers a brief introduction to the organization to be studied as well as the topic of study, a description of the aim, focus and research questions. Chapter two gives an overview of the methodology used, including a summary of meta-theory, discussing postmodern and critical theories, frame of reference and approach, practical approach, which describes case studies and interviews and methodological limitations. Chapter three covers theory, beginning with a fundamental description through use of metaphor of social constructivism, and theory surrounding discourse, understanding and identity, followed by a practical look at these ideas through a variety of case studies and theoretical discussions. Chapter four summarizes the empirical material gathered from face to face interviews, internal corporate communications and external communications. Chapter five, provides an application of theory to the collected empirical material, eliciting discussion of the various discourses, their impact on employees as well as a look at the ability of individuals to identify with strategies of the organization. The conclusion, chapter six, summarizes the findings of the research, offering possibilities of future study

2 Theory

In this chapter, the postmodernist, poststructuralist meta-theoretical frame of reference is applied through a dissected portrayal of social construction and later connected to various practical applications of more specific, but related theories targeting organizational change and strategic human resource management in the context of the airline industry.

2.1 Social Constructivism

The approach to this study assumes a socially constructed reality, meaning realities are unique to the individual, built off of their distinctive experiences and generally manifest in parallel. In addressing this, the concept of social constructivism is presented as a sequential process, encompassing three dimensions of discourse, understanding and identity. An explanation of social construction is necessary first to give a theoretical outline, after which the three conceptual dimensions will be used to colour in this outline, with the intention of providing a complete and sensible picture. It should be acknowledged, of course, that this is a simplistic point of departure, however it is effective in describing on a basic level ways in which realities can be built, influenced and changed.

The theoretical approach this study takes is reminiscent of Alvesson and Kärreman's (2000, 1126) review of discursive definition, which describes two approaches to discourse. In their article, discourse is first viewed as a social text that "highlights the 'talked' and 'textual' nature of everyday interaction in organization." In this situation, discourse is considered distinct from the level of social reality that constitutes meaning and practice. It is secondly offered discourse can be approached as a discursive construction, determining social reality through a historically situated discursive move. It "views discourses as general and prevalent systems for the formation and articulation of ideas in a particular period of time." In this study, the first definition of discourse is adopted, as textual discourses are described. The secondary definition, denoting

the social realities of individuals is conceptually considered as well, however in this case, it is the interpreted portrayals of individual's understanding and subjective judgments in how they identify on the basis of these understandings, which is considered.

Hacking's (1999) discussion of social constructivism begins by presenting the critical nature of this theoretical concept towards the status quo and presents the possibility for parallel and even opposing realities that can emerge. Touching on this, he explains (in terms of 'X'), that "X need not have existed, or need not be at all as it is. X, or X as it is at present is not determined by the nature of things; it is not inevitable" (Hacking 1999, 6). Developing this concept further, Prawat and Floden suggest that social constructivism provides a redefinition of *truth*. They posit that knowledge develops out of a process of negotiation within discourse communities and that the product (knowledge) is influenced by cultural and historical factors that surround the discourse. Prawat, R. S. and Floden, R. E. (1994). Following this fundamental introduction to Social Construction, Sanberg and Targama (2007) refer to Berger and Luckmann's description of social construction as an ongoing dialectic process between subjective and objective reality, describing this in three parts: Externalization, objectivation and internalization. Externalization, they explain, is "the means that we produce our reality through our activities, such as talking, thinking, building, managing, curing, eating, writing and driving" (Sandberg and Targama 2007, 92). Objectivation refers to the experience of activities as having an objective existence independent of ourselves as individual subjects. Finally, Internalization is referred to as the socialization process through which we become part of the reality we have produced.

Based on Berger and Luckmann's three aspects of social construction, externalization can be related to discourse, objectivation to understanding, and internalization to identity. Considering Alvesson and Sköldbberg's (2000) caution toward creating an overly standardized depiction from metaphor, we follow a

given metaphor only to the extent of its use in the following brief depiction. A metaphor of a billiards game offers an analogy for these concepts.

2.2 Discourse and Externalization

Tietz, et al (2003) refer to Potter's (1997) concept of discourses that have been defined across a range from everyday, commonsense understandings to highly specific, academic definitions reflecting particular theoretical positions, grounded in linguistics, cognitive psychology, sociology, post-structuralism and literary theory. Tietz, et al (2003) further explains discourses to be like genres, to be understood as framing devices or systems of sharing meaning, which can be used in sense making of cultural texts. Most relevant to this discussion is Marshak and Grant's (2008) portrayal, where they address the significance of discourses in terms of new organizational development practices such as the process of applying change strategy. They mention the significance of discourse as a form of language and other discursively mediated experiences that influence organizational behaviour act to modify its members' mindset, thereby transforming social reality. In fact, the note some studies of organizational discourse have facilitated alternative thinking about the change process by proposing new language and metaphors.

Extending a metaphor of a billiards game to social construction, reality is produced through activity and activity is the cue ball's launching across the billiards table, with the intention of a given outcome—in this case that one or more object balls find their way to a pocket in the table. The discursive action is the angle of contact between the cue ball and object ball the player surmises must occur in order to 'persuade' the object ball to its objective—the pocket.

2.3 Understanding and Objectivation

One description of understanding uses what is referred to as a hermeneutical interpretation. According to Sandberg and Targama (2007) understanding is something that forms through a previous understanding of

particular interest, which lends itself to a circular description. Schleiermacher (quoted in Palmer, 1969: 87) defines understanding as:

“...a basically referential operation; we understand something by comparing it to something we already know. What we understand forms it-self into systematic units, or circles made up of parts. The circle as a whole defines the individual parts and the parts together forms the circle. ...By dialectical interaction between the whole and the part, each gives the other meaning; understanding is circular, then. Because within the ‘Circle’ the meaning comes to stand, we call this the hermeneutics circle.”

Sandberg and Targama (2007) note Heidegger reference to ‘pre-understanding’ as the basis for this circular process. From a phenomenological view of understanding, there could be a qualitative variation among people’s ways of understanding their reality (Marton and Booth, 1997, Marton et al, 1977, in Sandberg and Targama (2007)). Individual understanding is, therefore, a prominent factor to develop human competence. According to the Sandberg and Targama individual understanding develops from social action context, in which she or he is constantly embedded.

Again, returning to the billiards metaphor, past the discourse stage, the cue ball (discourse) is launched into the constellation of object balls (current understanding) on the billiards table to a reactionary stage. Understanding can then be compared with the influenced movement of the billiard balls as a result of the billiards player (source of discourse) launching the cue ball into the constellation of object balls. The billiards player has an objective for the outcome of his or her action; however, it is almost impossible to exactly calculate how all the balls will react and interact, so the final outcome remains quite ambiguous, thus portraying the unpredictability of response to discursive actions. In the context of social constructivism, objectivation becomes the acceptance of the cue ball (discourse) into the environment, along with the reactive nature of the object balls as they ‘experience their activity in an objective manner independently of themselves as individual subjects, according to Sandberg and Targama (2007).

2.4 Identity and Internalization

Explaining the connection of understanding to identity, Heidegger, referenced by Sandberg and Targama (2007, 116) explains that understanding is “not only something we do, but is also something we are [and] therefore forms a fundamental part of our whole way of being, meaning our identity is intimately related to how we understand phenomena in the world. Alvesson (2004, 189) describes identity as a subjective meaning and experience, such as ‘who am I and how is it implied that I should act?’ He further explains that a personal identity “implies a certain form of subjectivity, and thereby ‘ties’ a person’s feelings, thinking and valuing in a particular direction” and is best understood as “constructed, multiple and varying, rather than fixed, monolithic and robust.”

Describing the social nature of identity, Alvesson (2004) explains that it is not a reflection of psychological or social ‘objective reality,’ but rather about how individuals or groups of people understand and define themselves “constituted through comparisons and interactions with other people and groups” (Alvesson 2004, 190). Remarking on the feasibility of influencing identity, Alvesson (2004) explains that organizations engage in identity work with the intention of creating a feeling of coherent and strong self along with a basis for social relations, deemed necessary for coping with work tasks and social interactions. He describes identity alteration as constituted, negotiated, reproduced and threatened in social interaction through narratives and in material practices and further, as noted by Foucault (1982) and Knights and Wollmott (1982) in Alvesson (2004), are at least partly developed in the context of power relations. It is these subjective aspects of identity that is the focus here as organizational members’ ability to identify with their organization—especially its initiatives and strategies that is explored.

In the final stage of the billiards metaphor, cue ball and object balls eventually come to a rest in a new constellation that, depending on the abilities of the billiards player may or may not have come to rest in a formation similar to

her or his objective—as per Alvesson’s (2004) inferred power relations referenced in the previous paragraph. The new constellation can be compared to the various individuals’ new perspectives based on the direct and indirect impacted by the cue balls discursive influence. Referring back to Alvesson’s (2004) description of identity as constructed, multiple and varying, this may compare to the repeated firing of the cue ball into the billiards constellation continuously changing the constellation of balls on the table. The final stage of internalization is referred to as the socialization process, through which we become part of the reality we have produced, just as the billiard balls have come to rest in a new constellation, granting each a new perspective on the world (of the billiards table).

2.5 Social Constructivism and Change

Through this representation, a chain of events is portrayed from a beginning discourse, to its influence on understanding, and subsequent influence on identity. Hardy and Phillips (2002) support this depiction of process stating, “the things that make up the social world—including our very identities—appear out of discourse” (Grant 2004, 177).

A further connection between organizational change and social construction is further drawn in Fetzgerald’s, et al explanation of Ai’s theory base for change (French, et al 2005). Ai (appreciative inquiry), it is said, reflects the core values of organizational development practice and theory developed over the past half century. It is further suggested that Ai is the cooperative search for the best in people and posits that we have considerable influence over the nature of the realities we perceive and experience and that we actually create our realities through collective symbolic and mental processes. The intention of this theory is to discover and build on the strength and vitality of human systems as experienced and reported by their members. Ai’s theory is based on five principles, three of which are based on social construction. The first of these three principles found to be grounded in social construction is constructionist

principle, which remarks on the importance of analyzing organizations as living human constructions—noting a ‘humanist’ approach to change, which will be discussed in the following portion of this chapter. The principle of simultaneity is the second and discusses linguistic material as the stories out of which the future is conceived, referring to the discursive material as the ‘seeds of change.’ Finally, poetic principle sees organizations as a co-authorship by individuals with endless interpretive possibilities, which coincides with the idea of parallel understandings explained earlier. Though Ai’s theory does not follow the same progression explained in the theoretical framework earlier, its agreement in the prospect for manipulation of reality coincides and the principles are most certainly related to the theoretical framework.

One might conclude that a constructed reality can be connected to one’s identity and understanding, influenced through discourse. In an organizational setting, discourse is the organization’s capacity to influence how employees construct their reality through their understanding and identity. As described previously, the process is not straightforward or predictable and the results are ambiguous, requiring both skill and perhaps luck to achieve desired outcomes.

2.6 Discourse, Human Resource Management and Organizational Development

In every day life processes are not as clean and clear-cut as what is described previously. In the following portion, a practical look at the process of social construction as it relates to organizational change is given from a multifaceted practical standpoint through a literature review of various case studies and theoretical discussions. In addressing this, two standpoints are taken: approaches to change, followed by experience of change during organizational change. Through this discussion the complex nature of organizations in their natural, chaotic state shows the plethora of variables that add to the ambiguous nature of influencing understanding and building identity.

2.6.1 Approaches to Change

From a strategic standpoint, the design of change is important as discussed below, addressing first the idea of turnaround management, a look at strategies in human resource management in the airline industry as well as its use in organizational development.

2.6.1.1 Turn Around Management and ‘New Organizational Development Practices’

Lawlor (1985) outlined a scheme for turn-around management. He characterized the overall process as a series of specialized actions required to lead a failing organization through a correction process to a surviving, and eventually competitive state of organizational health. Provisionally, he notes, a successful turnaround cannot be described by entirely by formula, however, if one were to present the general order of necessary steps, Lawlor’s framework acts as an example, providing three distinct steps to the turnaround process. These include, ‘positioning and survival diagnosis,’ ‘emergency actions—implementing the recovery plan,’ and ‘initial growth.’

In the positioning and survival diagnosis stage, the ‘turnaround manager’ is placed in the key power role of the threatened organization. Simultaneously, this agent should lead a survival diagnosis by means of a systematic process of information and context gathering. It is further explained that such an agent takes an active personal interest in the workings of the organization through a variety of paths, such as: taking ‘get tough’ actions by immediately eliminating obvious organizational process obstacles, participating in ‘floor walking,’ personally collecting some outstanding receivables and spending time with key customers to define product and service short-comings. Within this first dimension, it is also necessary to lay out a plan of action, where the core business is placed in focus, key people are evaluated for their ability to support the core business, necessary action is determined for recovery of internal strengths and market positioning in the previously defined core business, and an evaluation of return on investment is applied.

The second dimension, according to Lawlor (1985), is to put the previously described emergency actions into play. The final dimension is initial growth, where the organization can begin healthy business growth. In doing so, it is necessary to identify the market niche for future growth, avoid internal or external errors which may have caused the crisis in the first place, identify and avoid pitfalls of overly rapid growth, evaluate pricing, find internal and external means of raising new cash for future growth funding, and ensure the business presence is one of health and strength.

To finalize the process, Lawlor (1985) suggests that the turnaround manager develop a long-term vision for organizational sustainability, and this should be shared with employees across the organization. This description of the turn-around management process does not consider sociological consequences and pitfalls of managing what proves to be an exceedingly difficult, complicated and stressful process for an organization.

Heracleous and Barrett (2001) provide insight on discourse analysis in organizational change, emphasizing language not only as enabling informational exchange, but also as constructing social and organizational reality. They relate this to their observation of increased interest by organization theorists to make inherent the intimate relationship between language and organization and the implicit construction of metaphorical discourses. Their study explored the discourse of different groups and how these discourses shaped the organizational change process. Marshak and Grant (2008) follow this theme recounting their observation of a recent metamorphosis of organizational change research, which they suggest may result in a new set of organizational development practices. In their discussion, they suggest that these new organizational development practices (influenced by recent developments in study strategy for social science) incorporate a more ontological and epistemological perspective, including a constructionist and post-modern approach. Marshak and Grant further conceptualize the new organizational development, noting the possibility for multiple realities and the inherent

subjectivity of experience so that there can be no transcendent objective truth. They note that interventions based on constructionist assumptions are intended to shift system members' thinking to a more positive and generative consciousness in order to achieve transformational change.

Noting a potential over-emphasis on tool and technique, Marshak and Grant (2008) advocate practices for promoting shifts in mindsets and (or) consciousness as the principal method to address change dynamics rather than more traditional focus on material processes, relationships, rewards, etc. Sandberg and Targama (2007) describe this shift from using rules and regulations to a leadership based upon visions and ideas as a managerial paradigm shift—further, towards an emphasis on understanding—as the basis for human action as an interpretive perspective.

2.6.1.2 Human Resource Management in the Airline Industry

Appelbaum and Fewster (2003) studied the importance interpretive thinking in organizations and the need for effective human resource management specific to the airline industry by examining HR audits of airlines of nine countries from around the world between 2001 and 2002. Results of this study showed that airline accidents and poor service quality are primarily rooted in socio-technical human factors and not technology. Based on these findings, the study points to the inappropriateness of the “traditional product-centred industrial model of corporate structures and industrial relations” for a decidedly safety-sensitive, customer service-centric environment—and for what the study refers to as a “highly knowledge-based service market” (Appelbaum and Fewster 2003, 57). The study found five themes that occur frequently in HRM literature, including the importance of employee attitude surveys, name recognition and performance recognition, easy access to top leadership, possibility of genuine communication with management—including opportunity for meaningful input to transpire with regard to operational matters, and leadership participation in lower-level work. A particularly relevant finding was the failure of “airline administrators to make the connection between what

external customers value and how and why employees provide that value,” noting that the bridge linking customer value to employee performance is human resource management (Appelbaum and Fewster 2003, 66). Other findings included management’s tendency not to communicate many types of important information (with the exception of rules, regulations and disciplinary procedures) to their internal customers and often not providing sufficient internal services to support internal customer performance, such as training and development. Finally, Appelbaum and Fewster (2003) criticized airline industry HR for being too ambiguous in regards to organizational member responsibility for labour relations.

Missing from Appelbaum and Fewster’s work, however, is a discussion of whether increased emphasis on human resource management actually results in a significant difference in employee performance and a worth-wile return on investment. Despite the proposed lack of effectiveness of airline HRM, the return may not be sufficiently less (compared with costs) to warrant the suggested emphasis on HRM by providing sufficient training only in areas that present the most costly consequences for employee infractions, such as security and safety measures. This is exemplified in Appelbaum and Fewster’s (2003) observation of the industry’s tendency to unevenly stress communication of rules and regulations over organization’s mission, strategy and desired culture. John Godard’s concepts, in Salaman (2006) challenge Appelbaum and Fewster’s charges in his discussion of the ‘high-performance paradigm,’ which notes many organizations’ denotation of this strategy as the ‘best practice.’ Two types of practice make up this paradigm. First, there are alternative work practices, including alternative job design practices, such as work teams, job rotation and other associated amendments as well as formal participatory practices, such as quality circles or problem solving groups or town hall meetings. Second are high commitment employment practices, which include sophisticated selection and training, behaviour based appraisal and advancement criteria, contingent pay systems, job security above market pay and benefits, and grievance systems, etc.

Considering these suggested HR strategies, an extensive HR support system could be assumed necessary and therefore, proposes an increased cost in this function of the organization. According to high-performance paradigm theory, this practice should, however, yield what the author refers to as a positive-sum solution to workplace problems, addressing “labor market problems not through strong rights for workers, but rather through [the previously mentioned] practices that also happen to enhance performance” (Salaman, et al 2006, 148). It is noted that not only might the return on these increased costs be questioned, but also a lesser performance response may result than what high-performance paradigm theory suggests.

2.6.1.3 Human Resource Management and Organizational Change

Despite Appelbaum and Fewster’s (2003) critique of airline human resource management, there are reports of higher degrees of HR consideration outside of the reported concentration on regulatory and disciplinary discourse. US low-cost carrier, Southwest Airlines’ CEO Gary Kelly was queried about organizational strategy in the wake of recent industrial changes such as fuel costs, attacks from other carriers and union-driven salary increases about the role of employee learning in dealing with such strategies, according to Bingham and Galagan (2007). Kelly responded that “the challenges we face necessitate change and that as much as anything reveals a dramatic need for learning,” which he defines as “allowing people to think differently and clearly through what confronts us as an airline” (Bingham and Galagan 2007, 32). Referencing previous discussion on the correct amount of investment in HR support systems, Kelly says he doesn’t believe anybody has the right answer for the amount of investment in learning, just that they “want to have more education hours per employee than...today,” whether that’s eight or 40 hours per year (Bingham and Galagan 2007, 34).

In 1995, SAS also referenced the importance of being a learning organization, and in fact depicted itself as such, referring to a high degree of employee participation, reminiscent of high-performance paradigm theory,

according to Lima's (1995) article. Similar to the Southwest Airlines depiction of a learning-style organization, SAS director of leadership development, Lena Ahlström, referenced the importance of ability to adjust continuously to challenges through dialogue, explaining that customers, competitors, people from other branches of the company would all be important participants in this process. This program paralleled a program, under the Jan Carlzon administration, of information sharing with employees meant to involve everybody in the job of turning the airline around. Carlzon also included other changes in the organization, such as scrapping all passenger service manuals, remarking to front-line employees that, "you are the only ones who can decide what is good passenger service" (Lima 1995, 52). The result to these changes at SAS were reported to be a change in corporate culture, from what before was considered "a sort of public-service company" to a new understanding of long-term potential in having repeat business and a resulting new-found excitement in work (Lima 1995, 52). The study not only noted the improved human experiences in work-life, but also reported increased earnings of almost USD \$80 million within one year and after two years was named Air Transport World Magazine's airline of the year. British Airways structured their own change program entitled *Putting People First* from 1983 to 1985, which involved the incorporation of ideas from a various parts of the organization to put together strategy for operational optimization.

Countering Appelbaum and Fewster's charge that Airline HRM does not effectively make a connection with the inter-relatedness of internal and external branding, Lima points to Chris Byron, senior general manager of Manpower. He notes that where SAS seems to have stopped, British Airways was able to institutionalize continued training under the philosophy that a chain exists linking internal service strategy and external service strategy in Lima's (1995) article. Also confronting Appelbaum and Fewster's criticism for the industrial-model corporate structure of airlines, considering the safety-sensitive, customer service-centric environment—and for a what the study refers to as a "highly

knowledge-based service market” (Appelbaum and Fewster 2003, 57), British Airways introduced the “managing people first” management style, which was meant to prepare leadership to coach, support, facilitate and tolerate the creative chaos that can come from involvement and participation—this, the article said, was needed to run a customer-service business (Lima 1995, 53). Specific positive outcomes of the HR initiatives by British Airways are not documented, but the point is to acknowledge existence of these systems. Also, regarding the initiatives of both SAS and British Airways programs, these systems were discussed in an article published eight years earlier than Appelbaum and Fewster (2003). Given the time frame this argument can only be that the systems historically have been prevalent in the airline industry and are reported by the article to be present as well in many other airlines worldwide such as Japan Airlines, Lufthansa, US Airways, Cathay Pacific, Ansett, Northwest, Qantas, Kenya Airways and others, according to Lima (1995).

2.6.2 Experience of Change

A humanistic perspective is defined by Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) as perceiving one’s self as an active subject with goals, intentions and responsibilities and creating one’s own meaning, interpretive approach, focusing on individual perceptions and understanding by employees who are experiencing organizational change. Studies document the importance of this perspective, noting the potentially negative effects that can result from neglecting to consider the interpretive nature of individuals—they “act in ways that make sense to them” (Sandberg and Targama 2007, 30-31).

2.6.2.1 Humanistic Approach During Organizational Development

J. T. Fisher (2004), vice president and CEO of Delta Connection, Inc. (DCI), a group of five regional airlines contracted to operate regional aircraft for Delta Airlines, Inc., presents a case study that portrays serious implications resulting from the organization’s lacking assurance of understanding among its employees. In this situation, the integration of two acquired regional airlines into the core business of DCI is discussed, where following the transaction,

marketing, sales, and process teams were integrated. Fisher points to the lack of senior management and HR process integration as the source of unclear communication lines to the parent company as well as lack of involvement from parent company, Delta Airlines, Inc. (DAI) senior leadership and the lack of appreciation by DAI of union expectations regarding pay and benefits, job access and union consolidation goals. Without HR process integration and strategy, these issues were not identified, nor were the risks managed. One of the more serious consequences was the understanding by the pilot union of one of the acquired airlines that pilot pay would be brought into line with that of Delta Airlines'—Delta Airlines had never effectively communicated that a pay provision was never a plan. This communication failure resulted in action from this pilot group in the form of the longest pilot strike on record in the airline industry.

Saksvik, et al. (2007) stress sensitivity to the human experience in organizational change in a study exploring the wellbeing of shop floor workers during organizational change. In this case, the study focuses on the importance of change process, suggesting that this has more bearing on the positive or negative experience of organizational change rather than the type of change. The study suggests that following poor process can not only threaten the quality of outcome and success factor, but also can have health-threatening effects for those involved in the program. The study concluded with four strategic points that can create a more 'healthy change process,' including paying attention to awareness of local norms and diversity, early role clarification, manager availability, and constructive conflicts. The study's results suggested that these strategies can help to avoid insecurities and defensiveness leading instead to empowered employees, with restored perceived control and induced job security, resulting in both individual and organizational gains.

A study by Morgan and Rachid (2003) on employee trust during organizational change further explores the importance of the humanistic experience of organizational change. The study highlighted the importance of

interpersonal trust for sustaining individual and organizational effectiveness, suggesting the degree of effectiveness is contingent on the influence of trust at the interpersonal and institutional level of organizations. Just as Saksvik emphasizes the significant bearing *process* of change has on results, Morgan and Rachid's study indicates a clear relationship between *approaches* to change and trust in management in that any change negatively affects trust. Morgan and Rachid (2003) indicate direct consultation with higher levels of management result in higher trust. They also noted that an implied assumption that employees cannot be trusted to make important decisions about their work activities had negative effects on trust and if these sentiments can be reversed, managers would be able to build a higher level of trust in relationships with employees, thereby increasing the likelihood of employee buy-in, or ability to identify with the objectives of the program.

2.6.2.2 Discourse and Change in the Airline Industry

Marshak and Grant (2008) note the constructionist perspective's placement of discourse at the center of sense-making, pointing to the on-going sense-making of social reality, and go further, citing that there is an implicit focus on meaning making, language and discursive phenomena used as the central medium and target for changing mindsets and consciousness. Discourse, they define in this case, as a set of interrelated texts that may be comprised of, for instance, conversation and dialogue or narratives and stories. For them, transformation requires a change in consciousness, starting with leadership and extending through the organization. Critical perspective begs the awareness of individual's attempts to "find meanings in ways that will serve their interests," and points to the power of discourse to shape and convey the concepts that organize how we experience the world (Marshak and Grant 2008, S12).

Taking these concepts, we look at two examples of change management with a focus on the discourses at work. Kiger (2003) compares various discourses and their organizational impacts, both positive and negative at United Airlines and some of its US competitors. He described some of the initial discourses the

chairman, president and chief executive of UAL Corporation (parent company of United Airlines) used in the first two months in his position as the organization was losing USD \$22 million per day. These included meetings at five cities over a three day period, where, for instance in San Francisco, he “worked his way through a roomful of airline mechanics, shaking hands all around without retreating behind a podium,” fielding questions on “what United could do to survive and re-emerge as a viable airline-industry player,” stating (according to the San Jose Mercury News) that “the issue is not how many jobs we lose, but how we are going to compete in a market that’s changed dramatically” (Kiger 2003, 26). Optimistic responses were said to result from these initial meetings, quoting one union officer who referred to him as a ‘straight shooter,’ as well as one pilot’s statement that “every time he opens his mouth he seems to say the right thing” (Kiger 2003, 26). Tilton’s interaction with front-line employees was a “key success factor for United right now,” as well as pointing to the face-to-face reassurance he presents, which could be an important first step toward building a credible and caring reputation which could be essential for perseverance through foreseen wage cuts and other employee concessions (Kriger 2003, 26).

What could be implied, but is not well stated in Marshak and Grant’s article is something Sandberg and Targama (2007) discuss—that managers have never had complete control of activities that lead to business results and that methods and instruments (such as discourses) do not always produce intended outcomes. Discourses by United Airlines (some intended and some unintended) provide examples of the lack of control that exists in both foreseeing resultant member interpretations and in this case how organizations are not always capable of controlling the discourses it discharges. From 1994 to 2000, employees were give 55 percent of United’s shares in exchange for pay and benefit reductions, however workers found that tax law took much of the financial benefit away from stock grants. Also, flight attendants didn’t participate in the plan. Kiger (2003) gives two negative outcomes: first, divergent interests across the employee group were created; and second, stock ownership resulted in nervous and angry

worker-shareholders due to 90 percent stock devaluation between 1998 and 2003. In another situation, actions by United were perceived by pilots as stalling tactics in contract settlement along with secret merger negotiations with US Airways that would have resulted in negative impact on employee seniority. These constructed perceptions resulted in work slowdown and subsequently tens of thousands of flight cancellations. Attempting to remedy these issues, the company offered raises to the pilots; however, this too had unexpectedly difficult results for the airline, as other work groups demanded similar wage increases. US air carrier Continental Airlines is also noted as having its own set of difficulties in achieving desired meaning-making, such as the report that pilots routinely turned down air-conditioning on flights despite passenger discomfort due to a policy that gave them incentive pay for reducing fuel consumption.

Despite the difficulty in controlling discourses and the interpretation of discourses, some examples also exist for successful use. Continental Airlines, for instance, provides a successful use of discursive actions that resulted in a reportedly positive cultural turnaround. Some of this discourses included the public burning of a previous company handbook titled 'Thou Shalt Not' that held a set of 'arcane work rules' that were to be followed regardless of customer satisfaction (Kiger 2003, 28). The company also turned over management's implied communication policy of "don't tell anybody anything unless absolutely required" to a more overt policy of "tell everybody everything," supported by the installation of hundreds of bulletin boards at continental facilities and quarterly visit by a corporate officer in every location in which the company had operations, which resulted in a strong organizational rebound, and higher than expected revenue growth following the September eleventh 2001 US terrorist attacks that placed United Airlines in bankruptcy protection.

2.6.2.3 Discourse and Change at SAS

The previously described S11 organizational change program is not the first major overhaul Scandinavian Airlines has undertaken. Writing in 1985, SAS Senior Management Consultant, Olle Stiwenius portrayed the development and

diffusion of new corporate philosophy at SAS under the leadership of Jan Carlzon, beginning in 1981 (French, et al, 208; Stiwenius 1985, 22). Stiwenius described the nature of the change program as “a major transformation from a production-oriented airline to a market-oriented service company” (Stiwenius 1985, 22). After years of surviving profitably under the protection of the international airline agreement, an exacerbated destabilizing of the industrial environment called for drastic change in the organization. The problem lay in the company’s previous strategy to cut costs when profitability was not reached. However, with increases in fuel prices, rising costs, price wars, dwindling demand, and liberalization of the air-transport competition, the business model resulted in a downward cyclical trend of cuts in cost resulted in cut backs in service, which produced lost market share, which called for more cuts on cost and a resulting loss of, at one point, GBP £7000 per hour.

Stiwenius presents an overview of change in strategy, beginning with SAS’ overriding ideology—the “only thing that counts in a service company is a satisfied customer” (Stiwenius 1985, 24) and in this designation, the organization came to the realization that, instead of trying to sell the product they had, they needed to create a market based on what customers wanted. Opening itself to its customers, resulted in a ‘front-line employee focus—as staff neared to the market notices changes first. One such change in this group was the lessening of restriction on their behaviour, as they were previously living by detailed rules and regulations, disallowing them to give the service customers demanded. More specifically, he remarked the company’s change in prioritizing prompt customer problem resolution over correct problem resolution, avoiding slow and arduous bureaucratic processing as mistakes can be resolved, but lost time can never be recovered.

Developing this strategy further, Stiwenius (1985) explained that culture reflects the market situation in a successful enterprise and therefore, the corporate culture should work with the commercial market and that this culture should permeate the entire company where support staff should have greater

exposure to their customers (front-line staff) as well. Taking this customer focus one step further, he highlighted the concept that everyone is responsible for satisfying customers; effective and responsive support from the non-front-line employees would be important. Describing culture as the pattern of habits, goals, concepts ideas and behavior found within the company, he further explained that corporate culture should harmonize with commercial environment and when the environment changes, the culture should change as well in order to survive. Stiwenius emphasized the speed by which the change process occurred, noting the 5 month period in which restructuring was completed, which is attributed to the 'crisis awareness' based employee understanding of heavy deficits the airline was undertaking, meaning the staff was ready to change things. He emphasized change as a condition for survival through a continuous process of change in people and organization.

Edström (1986) addressed the development and diffusion of new corporate philosophy through a study of the organizational change program previously described by Stiwenius (1985). In his article, Edström (1986) attempts to study what forms of leadership and organization are successful in handling the emerging business conditions. Edström (1986) refers to a Swedish phenomenal mismatch between existing strategy and stagnating environment that reflects management's inability to identify and interpret changes in environmental conditions as they occurred—something that Stiwenius established in his account of deficiencies at SAS and remedied by granting front line employees freedom and support to better serve this function for the airline.

Edström (1986) pointed to the necessity for employees to personally care about the outcome, quality and productivity of their work, which he suggests should come from a "mobilization of employees" (Edström 1986, 583). In discussing this, he offered Zaleznik's distinction between leaders and managers, stating that leaders shape ideas instead of responding to them, create excitement in work and relate to people in intuitive and emphatic ways. Edström asserted

such leadership offers a strong connection between strategic change institutional leadership and the character of the leader.

Edström (1986) summarized the mobilization of the organization as a gigantic education process with emphasis on developing a new business management philosophy with cost effectiveness through higher quality of management and better organizational forms. He charged that there had been no shift in leadership, as a result of two factors: 1) competition pushes for rapid change process on the companies and 2) changes in administration and control are not just a technical problem, but a cultural problem that requires CEO intervention. He recommended strategic change in a trend toward a continuous mobilization of people. He asserted that divisional managers react to leadership of the CEO and their new roles as a product of their own value orientations as well as structural and cultural conditions for their roles.

Three key implications of human resource management are listed. Recruitment of people who can function in line with corporate philosophy is critical in fighting management's tendency to recruit in line with their own value orientation. Edström (1986) recommended the use of an agent well associated with corporate philosophy to present judgment in recruitment for these key positions. Also, noted was the importance of understanding basic motivation and understanding of key managers in order to have a deeper understanding of human motivation and allow for reflection on their action repertoire, which Edström (1986) says would be essential for judging potential of managers and for their further development. Finally, he notes that potential for understanding is based on role constellations, explaining further that a single individual may not be enough to have an impact on the organization, but by building new role constellations, this may become more possible.

2.7 Conclusion

As noted by Saksvik, et al (2007), there is not one all encompassing or broadly accepted theory of organizational change and no absolute guidelines for

tactics of change agents. The studies presented discuss the emphasis and considerations of interpretive, humanistic approaches to management both in situations of organizational change and airline human resource management. A general structural view of turnaround management is then balanced with an interpretive view of change management. The potential economic impact of interpretive management on understanding is evident in the case study of an airline merger at Delta Connection, Inc. Adding to this, the importance of stress awareness during organizational change has been found to have implications on organization change success. Finally, the importance of employee trust has been examined for its effects on individual and organizational effectiveness. A critical view of airline human resource strategy raises concern regarding appropriateness of current airline human resource support systems. Countering this judgment, Godard's study from Salaman (2006) on high performance paradigm questions the return on such HR investments. In response, Appelbaum and Fewster (2003) portray the engagement of various levels of the companies for the purpose of creating learning organizations necessary for the ever-changing environment of this industry. Next, discourse in organizational change initiatives is discussed and later applied to effective and ineffective uses of discourse at United Airlines as well as other airlines. A review of a successful turnaround management initiative at SAS, under the leadership of previous SAS CEO Jan Carlzon, is portrayed first, from a strategic point of view by Stiwenius (1985). This is followed with analysis by Edström (1986) of what is necessary in leadership and organization for sustainable operation in emergent business conditions.

The concurrent theme of these various investigations is the importance of interpretive approaches to management based on the potential negative implications of neglecting such considerations. This relies on Morgan's statement that leadership is primarily about managing meaning (Sandberg and Targama 2007, 42). Likewise, Smircich and Morgan explain that "through these diverse means, individual actions can frame and change situations, and in so

doing enact a system of shared meaning that provides a basis for organized action” (Sandberg and Targama 2007, 43). Tying this back in to our look at the process-like nature of discourse acting on understanding, identity and thus also constructed reality, we note again the difficult to manage nature of organizational development due to the way that people independently and uniquely build their understandings, develop identity and construct an overall reality.

3 Methodology

In this section, an explanation of methods used to address the posed research questions with regard to collection, analysis and elicitation of findings. The methods discussion opens with an explanation of the overall theoretical frame of reference followed by a more specific application of this theory to practical research method used for this study.

3.1 Methodological Frame of Reference

Bryman and Bell (2003) point out the importance of epistemological and ontological research design specific to a particular study, explaining, different research environments call for different research theory. With this in mind, a presentation of the methodological frame of reference is first clarified. According to Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2007), using a meta-theoretical frame of reference both encourages reflection and also promotes creativity with interpretation of empirical material. In following these guidelines, an interpretive methodology is used in an epistemological and ontological framework of post-modern and critical theory is used. Considering the Critical Theory aspects of the frame of reference, fallibilist, dialectic qualities are used to explore interpretations of individual employees of perceived reality and proposing possible ways of viewing the sociological happenings of the organization. According to Adorno and Horkheimer in Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000), attention is drawn to any political conditions and decisions that might be concealed beneath the technocratic ideology of the organization. The study also seeks to build a broader context by considering the relationship between cultural critique and historical or social context around ideas viewed as inevitable and necessary. From this critical standpoint, the rationalistic assumption that people have a simple and common understanding of the reality of the intricacies of the organization they are a part of is challenged, suggesting, rather, that parallel understandings are likely to exist.

Turning to the post-modern, poststructuralist perspective, it is not the

intention to prove or disprove a particular theory, but rather to achieve an understanding of 'what the natives are thinking.' To achieve this objective, an abductive approach is taken, which Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2007), referring to Hanson, explain as the existence of patterns and deep structures are uncovered. Also, following post-modernist and poststructuralist theory, attention is drawn to individuals when collecting our empirical material in order to develop an understanding of the various cultural realities that exist. Hanson explains that discourses can lead to particular power relations that lock people into forms of subjectivity and thereby disallow the free development of discourse, leading into domination of certain discourses. This is addressed through minimal application of preconceived sociological theory to the possible realities in the field, allowing informative observations to emerge and thereby provide more freedom of interpretation by various readers.

Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) remark on the overly sceptical nature of postmodernism, suggesting that it shies away from more systematic theory. They warn of the potential for an overly closed system through an intertextuality of meaningless signs, which are cut off from the subject. In order to avoid this difficult-to-interpret result, a degree of theoretical structure is used to encourage meaningful results from collected empirical material. At the same time, this theoretical structure seeks to maintain the interpretive, constructivist ideals that post-modern and critical theory hold so dearly. In order to accomplish this, constructivism is dissected into a process of meaning making, starting with a discourse, formed into an understanding and used in building identity. In this simplified form, we refer to the hermeneutical process of individuals interpreting their own world.

In following this frame of reference, samples of textual discourse from both corporate and private medial sources are compared with the understanding and ability of organizational members to identify with the initiatives of the organization. Adding to this, a comparison is made of different understandings and ways in which members identify (or don't identify) with the organization

and its initiatives as portrayed by organizational members. In this way it is the intention to shed some light on the diversity of understandings and ability to identify with the organization's initiatives as well how closely aligned to organizational initiative these understandings appear to be.

3.2 Case Study

According to Bryman and Bell (2003), a case study is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of case in study, where 'case' is defined as an object of interest in its own right, of which the researcher aims to provide an in-depth elucidation. They furthermore note the researcher is usually concerned to expound the unique features of the case and generate an intensive examination of a single case, to which they then engage in a theoretical analysis. Again, the goal of this study is to explore the constructed realities of organizational members at a specified location and in relation to a specific event, an objective appropriate to case study method.

3.3 Empirical Material Collection

Empirical material was collected through interviews, internal and external corporate materials, as well as private media sources. Material is used both as primary and secondary sources as texts are used both for building background context for the reader as well as providing a sample of discourses available to organizational members.

3.3.1 Sampling

Bryman and Bell (2003) report that much of the time, researchers are forced to gather information from whatever sources are available, and often are faced with opposition or indifference to their research, relieved to take information from whoever is willing to tender such information. Such was the experience of researchers in this study. Two examples of sampling tactic are shown, one of which places great emphasis on representative interviewees of the overall population, focusing on demographic features such as gender, race, ethnicity and

regional origin, while the second of the two is more concerned in finding participants purely with relevance to the particular topic of study.

Due to the non-generalizing nature of this study, a 'representative' sampling group was not necessary and due to difficulties concurrent with Bryman and Bell's statement on finding research participants, the sampling group was based on two criteria. First, it was the intention to have representation from management, trade union and workers. Both local managers were willing to participate in the study as well as the one union representative, covering 100 percent of these groups. The worker group at the location of study was at the time about 25 from passenger service and 30 from the ramp service. No ramp service employees could be persuaded to participate in the study. During the break time for passenger service employees, researchers would enter the break room and asked if employees would be willing to take part in the study. All passenger service employees present in the break room were addressed and researchers took all who were willing to participate.

They emphasize that (notwithstanding these challenges) researchers have to ensure that they gain access to as wide a range of individuals relevant to the research question as possible so that many different perspectives and ranges of activity are the focus of attention. It was the intention of this study to make findings with regard to understandings of organizational members. In this case, a diverse representation of portrayals was found, making the sample group effective.

3.3.2 Interview

Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) warn that some empirical evidence suggests it is difficult to know what to make of interview statements. They explain that how interviewees appear or represent reality in specific interview situations has less to do with how they themselves, or reality really are. Rather, it is about the way they temporarily develop a form of subjectivity and how they represent reality in relation to the local discursive context created by the interview. They suggest participant observation be used in conjunction with

interviews for production of empirical material on 'non-trivial' phenomena, while adding the insertion that even observations in the 'natural context' can be substantially affected by the vague nature of language. Despite this point of view, time constraints and security considerations (the setting of the organization is an airport, which entails limited access to certain work areas due to national and corporate security standards and regulations) made participant observation impractical for this study. Therefore, it must simply be taken into account that certain biases in portrayal by interview participants may exist as a result of the interview environment alone and how the interviewees wished to portray themselves.

Bryman and Bell (2003) suggest if the researcher is beginning the investigation with a fairly clear focus, rather than more general, interviews should be semi-structured in order to draw material from the specific topics they endeavour to cover. In this case, two specific interview questions were posed, leading interview strategy in this study to a semi-structured format. Developing this further, they suggest formulating interview questions in a way that will help you to answer your research question while not making them overly specific. In following this tactic, a set of subject themes was used to guide respondents who are asked to recall examples of specific events that illustrate each theme, considering the objective Bryman and Bell (2003, 349) advocate, "what do I need to know in order to answer each of the research questions I'm interested in?" In this case, dissection into three subjects: discourse, understanding and identity, was used to construct the interpreted realities of organizational members. In employing this theme, interview questions were based on these three subjects, asking members what discourses are available, what they understand to be happening in the organization, and how they identify with this situation. Bryman and Bell (2003) posit that language used in interviews should be comprehensible and relevant to the people interviewed. In following this advice, the words discourse and understanding were not used during interviews, as there was doubt that they would have the intended meaning to interview

participants. For instance, instead, when discussing the topic of discourse, interviewees were simply asked what and where they found out about the program. When discussing identity, they were simply asked to make subjective, or value judgements on the topics.

This format is meant to follow the author's asserted description of a semi-structured interview as a list of questions on fairly specific topics to be covered often organized into an interview guide, allowing the respondent liberties in how they replied. Bryman and Bell furthermore explain that questions not included in the guide can be asked as the interviewer continues through the process of developing an understanding of the interviewee's portrayed responses. They clarify that using this interview process must emphasize how the interviewee frames and understands issues and events, allowing the interviewee to determine what they view as important as they unfold their interpretations.

As Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000, 193) explain, instead of treating interviews as "machinery for harvesting data from respondents, they can be viewed as an arena for interaction in its own right." In following these principles, interview guides were devised to present questions on a general topic, where follow-up and probing questions could be asked based on the responses to the original question for further clarification on the various responses of interview participant. In this way, it was the intention for the respondent's depiction of reality to emerge through an organic, conversational process.

Bryman and Bell (2003) offer a number of suggestions in developing the interview guide and procedures. In premise, they note interview guides should be used as a memory prompt to ensure that all intended points are covered during the course of the interview. For instance, question order also comes to light as they explain that early questions can have an impact on the answers to later questions. They furthermore suggest that questions be grouped into sections, allowing for better flow rather than skipping from one topic to

another—furthermore within question groupings, general questions should precede specific ones. In this study, question grouping strategy was used, where a very general question for one of the three themes listed earlier was first posited, followed up by more specific questions that were either included in the guide as being relevant to the interview participant or were not included in the interview guide, but were relevant to the initial response of the interviewee to the general question asked.

Bryman and Bell (2003) note interviewing can be stressful for interviewers and it is possible that under procedures can cause interviewers to get flustered and miss questions or ask wrong questions. They suggest an interview guide should be used as a memory prompt, taking into account a certain amount of organization. In this way, it is ensured that during the course of the interview, all valid points are covered and that questions ‘flow’ reasonably well. It is suggested prospective respondents be provided with a credible rationale for the research in which they are being asked to participate and for giving up their valuable time. Interview guides were premised with a description of the research project and following this explanation, were offered the opportunity to ask any questions they may have. They also suggest the use of a face-sheet in building contextuality for the individual being interviewed. Considering the importance of context in postmodernist and poststructuralist research, this too was taken into consideration when developing criteria for the research guide. The interview guide in this case, included the name, sex, position, function, previous positions with the organization, previous positions prior to beginning with the organization, time in position and total time with the organization.

They furthermore suggest researchers familiarize themselves with the organizational environment to which interview participants belong in order to help them understand what the interviewee is saying in their own terms. In this situation, it was helpful that one of the two interviewees had several years of work experience in the operational side of the airline industry. A certain amount of knowledge transfer thus took place between the two researchers in this study

in order that both had good basic knowledge of the organizational setting. Another important and helpful practice was completing a detailed literature review of the organization of study as well as on the environment of the organization, granting the researchers an adequate competency in the area in order to grasp the concepts interviewees portrayed. Other suggestions that were followed in this research included the use of a tape recorder and transcription of interviews in order to make a detailed analysis as well as holding interviews in a quiet and private setting in order to promote a higher quality recording of the interview as well as setting the interviewee at ease for about not being overheard.

It should be noted that though the research was conducted in Sweden with an organization in which the business language is officially Swedish, because the researchers held limited competency in the Swedish language, interviews were conducted in English. Though some difficulties were encountered in conveying meaning, these situations were minimal. This may be because interview participants actively deal with international customers on a regular basis, where a good command of the English language is necessary and according to the SAS recruitment website (<http://www.flysas.com/en/About-SAS/Career-at-SAS/>), is a requirement of their respective position.

3.3.3 Documents

Documents are described by Bryman and Bell (2003) as items that can be read, where the word 'read' is used in a looser term to include visual materials as well—such as photographs. In their account, personal documents such as diaries, letters and autobiographies are discussed separately from official documents. In this study, only official documents are used. Bryman and Bell (2003) refer to John Scott's (1990) further distinction of official documents into public and private. In the context of this study, though documents relate to some degree to government reports from institutions such as The International Air Transportation Association (IATA), documents are all *produced* by private organizations. Following the postmodernist, poststructuralist perspective it was

the intention to include a plurality in 'voice.' In so doing, two document sources for this study, organizational and mass media outputs were selected for two reasons; they provided a satisfactorily comprehensive context-building literature review as well as granting a sample of the discourses available to organizational members.

While some organizational documents used in this study were readily available in public domain, some employed documents were available only to internal organizational members. Bryman and Bell (2003, 414) report that such documents deriving from private sources like companies are likely to be authentic and meaningful for the researcher furthermore suggesting, "Organizational documents that are in the public domain, such as company annual reports, may not be an accurate representation of how different organizational actors perceive the situation in which they are involved." Finding inconsistencies, however, in how actors perceive the situation and how the organization 'officially' portrays it was a focus of this study, however, further legitimized the use of such documents.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to obtain unlimited access to internal corporate materials. For instance, the corporate intranet was something that was simply not accessible to researchers. Also, only documents released around the time of the study were considered. The documents that were obtained and used in the presentation, however, presented an adequately conclusive representation of the company's official position and portrayal of the given situation at that particular time, which satisfied the needs of the research project. Mass media, another type of document exploited in this thesis, in the form of magazine and newspaper articles.

Bryman and Bell (2003) refer to four criteria of Scott (1990) for assessing the quality of documents, including authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning. According to them, authenticity considers whether the evidence is genuine and of unquestionable origin. In this case, all organizational documents were gathered from official organizational websites of Scandinavian Airlines or

SAS Group, or collected in person from representatives of the organization at the station of study. Documents of private mass-media origin were collected from web-based catalogue searches affiliated with the Lund University Library periodical databases or directly from a web-based database of the particular publication. Credibility posits whether evidence is free from error and distortion. Corporate materials are endorsed by senior leadership, using direct quotes, and in some cases including a president's signature on personal letters included with newsletters, for instance. Based on these observations, there is a high likelihood that an accurate portrayal of official corporate portrayal is given in these documents. Mass media documents are from known and distributed publications and also include direct quotes in portraying accounts. Representativeness regards whether evidence is typical of its kind and if it is not, to what extent is this known? Findings in this study show consistency from one source to another with little contradiction. Finally, meaning looks at whether the evidence is clear and comprehensible. In this situation, all publications were linguistically correct and written in understandable terms with little 'jargon.'

3.4 Empirical Material Analysis

Considering Alvesson and Sköldberg's (2000) assertion that human experience is itself discursively constituted, existing in language, the portrayal of employees' interpreted realities must then be taken as discourses interpreted, compared, analyzed and portrayed by the author. They furthermore explain, ironies, incoherencies, inconsistencies and intertextuality of sociological writings are played off of in this approach. As they explain, qualitative research involves less concentration on collection and processing of data, and greater emphasis on interpretation and reflection on both the object of study and the researcher's own political, ideological, meta-theoretical and linguistic context.

In following Alvesson and Sköldberg's (2000) 'anti-methodologically described' post-modern, post-structural approach, an attempt was made at not developing an overly structured method of analysis, such as the 'coding' method

of grounded theory. Practical method of analysis included a review and summarizing of samples of corporate and independent medial discourses. Interviews were conducted, with organizational members to build understanding of a number of different interpreted realities. Interviews were transcribed and statements were compared with those from other interview transcript as well as with samples of corporate and private media documents to find points made by participants, which researchers considered to have significance. Semiotics, which Bryman and Bell (2003, 418) refer to as “a science of sign,” was used as attention is paid to signs and symbols considered to hold functions and communicative meanings aligned with this study in photographs of some collected documents. Per Alvesson and Sköldbberg’s (2000, 181) account of post-modern, post-structural method, “striking contradictions between opposing ontological positions” were sought after in identifying and analyzing significant findings that lead to answering the research questions.

In analyzing the empirical material, research questions were answered based on the dissected aspects of social construction. Researchers first explored discourses described by employees as well as those found in the media and corporate communications. They compared the reported understandings of the organizations situation and approach to change with available discourses as well as comparing the different understandings among the organizational members interviewed. Second, portrayed understandings of employees were compared and related to how employees were seen as identifying with and embracing the initiatives of the organization and more specifically with the initiatives of the S11 program.

3.5 Empirical Trustworthiness

Based on the meta-theoretical frame of reference including a fusion of post-modernism, post-structuralism and critical theory used in this study, begs a constructivist rather than positivist view, alluding to not one absolute truth but rather an interest in the plural, parallel truths as interpreted by the various actors

of the subject studied. Explaining this further, Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) note the importance of understanding cultures, as the reality—even though this is seen as open in terms of how it may be represented beyond the text. They explain that ‘reality’ is often left rather unclear as the emphasis is on the textual and fictional. Due to the textual, fictional emphasis, presentation is considered most important in post-modern, post-structural presentation. Fictional influences are inevitably political as countless choices are made in representation, driven by values and interests, leaving portrayal to be a question of what is selected and not selected for attention and how this is presented to the reader. Representation and presentation, however, emerge as crucial methodological problems as “not even procedure-steered qualitative research can avoid letting value-judgements, interpretations and a whole host of—often subconscious or non-reflected—choices as regards language, perspective, metaphors, focus, representation and so on pervade the whole research process” (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2000, 168).

Despite Alvesson and Sköldbberg’s (2000, 168) assertion that “empirical reality can obviously never unequivocally determine the final text which reports ‘the results of the research,’” a certain scientific credibility will be ascribed to in this study with the intention of examining the ways in which the portrayal is grounded in some way to actual empirical material and not a completely manifested fabrication. According to Bryman and Bell (2003), qualitative approach to organizational study begs a different set of criteria from the classic positivist, qualitative research. They instead refer to Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) assessment, which points out two criteria: trustworthiness and authenticity. According to them, trustworthiness is divided into four standards, including credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

3.5.1 Credibility

Credibility entails determination of acceptability of empirical sources to others. Two methods they designate as important in establishing this credibility are also employed in this study. Interviewers used *member validation*, which Bryman and Bell (2003) explain as providing research participants with an account of what he or she said to the researcher. As is shown on interview guides, participants were presented with a summary of the meanings conveyed during the course of the interview, granting interviewees the possibility to comment on the researcher's interpretation. *Triangulation*, using more than one method or source of data in the study of social phenomena, is also suggested as a method of establishing credibility and is exercised in this study. This is also supported by Alvesson and Sköldbberg's (2000) account of the critical theory, post-modern and post-structural approach, explaining that authors in these schools of thought generally lean towards a more pluralistic view of society, valuing multiple voices. Sources of empirical material include interviews from various parts of the organization, including workers, middle management and union representation. Also included are text materials from corporate sources both internal and external as well as material from unaffiliated, private media.

3.5.2 Transferability

Bryman and Bell (2003) describe transferability as entailing the depth rather than breadth is described as the fixation of qualitative research. Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) address this in discussion of post-modern, post-structural authorship, elucidating the reader's importance as emphasized in representations from this approach, claiming that 'truths' are perceived as rhetorical expressions and can constantly be opened to alternative interpretations. This leaves authorship open to portrayal and increased opportunities for different readings, where interesting readings may even be divorced from the possible intentions of the author. Connecting these concerns to transferability, Brymen and Bell (2003) describe the centrality of context in

qualitative research, which requires a rich and detail oriented description of the cultural situation, providing readers with the ability to build, what Guba and Lincoln refer to in Bryman and Bell (2003) as a 'database' for making judgements about the possible transferability of findings to another environment. Pointing this towards post-modern and post-structural approach, limitations of the possibility of transferability come to light, as reasoned by Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000, 176), "Contribution, apart from general theoretical and philosophical expositions, is...limited to comments and/or analyses which can only be understood within the specific [context] at hand." According to them, it is hardly possible to produce knowledge of more general theoretical value through this approach.

It is also the intention that this thesis provides the broad theoretical and philosophical exposition Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) describe in portraying how socially constructed realities emerge in the organizational setting. In accounting for the highly context-dependency this methodological approach exudes, great attention is paid in this study to in-depth descriptions of the particular internal and external environment and of this organization, including an extensive review of literature. This empirical material has two purposes: first, it provides the reader with a background on which to build their understanding of what they interpret as happening in the organization and its environment; second, it provides the reader the possibility of comparing the discourses freely available to subjects of the study to the interpreted understandings subjects portray in interviews.

3.5.3 Dependability

Dependability is described the importance of an auditable study, which simply requires the salvage of documents from the research process allowing the reconstruction of research process should there be question soundness of research practices. As this concept applies to this study, interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Notes taken during interviews are also

maintained. In the empirical section of this thesis, summaries of empirical material that are later used in the analysis are presented, further grounding the trustworthiness of assertions made in this portrayal.

3.5.4 Confirmability

Bryman and Bell (2003) describe confirmability as holding sensitivity to limiting bias from personal values or theoretical inclinations that may sway the conduct of the research and findings derived from it. In so doing, they allow for the fact that complete objectivity is impossible in business research. This begs considering the hermeneutics of understanding, as when the researchers for this study interpret the understandings of interviewees and other empirical texts, the basis for finding these understandings will always be based on the researchers' pre-understandings. Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000, 80) support this, referring to Collingwood's statement, "any interpretation of a past happening is subjective and historical, since it involves in a fundamental way the researcher's own time-bound frames of reference, values and so on." They continue "there is no longer any Truth, with a capital 'T,' in the sense of mirroring an objective reality in an absolute and purely rational subject, independent of time and space." Allowing for this, attempts were still made to limit any bias in interpretation researchers might be holding. For instance, interview guides were used to keep questions fairly consistent. The style of interview guide used was a semi-structured, open question format, which was intended to allow interview subjects to describe their interpretations of reality. Follow up questions were used in order to achieve a more rich collection of empirical material, where follow-up questions would be based solely on the original answers from interview subjects. When interpreting and portraying the understandings of employees, direct quotes were often used in order to save as much of the interview subjects intended meaning as possible.

3.5.5 Authenticity

Authenticity is approached as a wider set of issues such as the political impact of research, considering fairness, ontological authenticity, educative

authenticity, catalytic authenticity and tactical authenticity. Similar to triangulation, fairness exudes a sense of whether research fairly represented different viewpoints among members of the social setting. In this sense, the study took viewpoints from multiple parts of the local station staff, including management, workers and union. The ontological authenticity seeks to answer whether the research will help members to arrive at a better understanding of their social milieu. Because the intention of this research is to present some of the different understandings members of the organization have, this study does achieve the goal of attempting to give further better understanding of social setting. Educative authenticity asks whether research will help members to appreciate better the perspectives of other members of their social setting. As in this study, analysis is made through a comparison of various understandings, highlighting similarities and contradictions with one-another and with discourses, which sets precedence for where members are similar in their interpreted realities and where they differ. Catalytic authenticity looks to find if the research functioned as means for members to engage in action to change their circumstances. With regard to this study, interpersonal, sociological phenomena are problematized and will be available to members of the organization to consider. The opportunity to see if attempts at change result from this study might be reason for additional future studies. Finally, tactical authenticity looks at whether members are empowered to take steps necessary for engaging in action. The free availability of the study to any members interested in the results provides the opportunity for organizational members to reflect on the findings, granting them the possibility to act or not act as a result.

3.6 Methodological Critique

As alluded to earlier, certain shortcomings of postmodernist, poststructuralist perspectives come to light, presenting important considerations both to its ability to produce knowledge and for application of generated

knowledge. A review of some limitations to this study's frame of reference most relevant to this study is given.

Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000), remark on the overly closed system postmodernists and poststructuralists develop through intertextuality, which runs the risk of portraying a 'free play' of meaningless signs separate from the referent and subject. Post-modern, post-structural dictum suggests absence or limitation of authority, in authorship, as Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) refer to Sangren, who criticizes postmodernism for locating power solely in the text, maintaining that power relations in the research community are even more important to an understanding of the character of text production. In response to this, a certain amount of authorship is used to present some possible meanings out of the collection empirical material. Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000, 169) remark on the necessity of fictive and political elements in authorship that simply cannot be avoided as, "researchers must actively work with language and texts that have an ambiguous relation to significations and meanings [as they manifest] their local, contextual and arbitrary nature." In walking this narrow line between minimizing authority while still producing some valid meaning, an attempt was made in this study both to provide empirical material in a way that leaves the reader to make interpretation, while still suggesting some meaningful observations for readers to consider.

Further addressing aspects of power in research, Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000, 180) suggest, "according to Parker (1992), modernism is characterized by a belief in the possibility of communicating the results of investigations to other rational beings, whereas postmodernism sees this as a type of intellectual imperialism, ignoring 'the fundamental uncontrollability of meaning.' If we were to take this seriously, there would be no point in writing articles or books and sending them to scientific journals or publishers." In conclusion, they

concede postmodernist writers generally “trust their reviewers and readers to be reasonably rational and...they seek to control their own meanings,” which seems to align with ‘modernistic’ principles (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000, 181). These sentiments are of course necessary in conveying meaning in a sense that people conventionally are accustomed to. Though a less conventional manner of meaning making may be possible, the effectiveness and acceptance of such a method is questionable and therefore, a ‘fundamentalist’ postmodernist portrayal is not used in this case study.

While one of the benefits to postmodernist-poststructuralist studies is the exposition of peripheral or marginal findings often brushed over or slipping by more generalizing types of study, use of such knowledge is often difficult to apply on a large scale, due to the contextuality that comes along with peripheral and marginal studies. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) explain, overly context dependent studies, limit comments and analysis to the specific context in relation to the origin of the texts. This means that insights of broader interest are hardly possible to accomplish and do not easily contribute anything of general theoretical value. This particular study presents some unique scenarios with informative responses from various organizational members. Specific observations must be compared carefully in any application to other contexts.

Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) also remark on the overly polemic attacking of modernism, charging that there is more interest in pure polemics than elucidating exactly what the other view might consist of. They furthermore suggest that this often leads to an overly simplified description of the standpoint opposed. To exemplify this, they explain that postmodernism and post-structuralism is criticised for accusing positivists of mirroring reality, when in fact, they only intend to make predictions that lead to successful action. In response to this, the positivist standpoint is not challenged. Instead, a more in-

depth view of the inter-social, humanistic responses to organizational events is sought—a view that would not be realized in a more generalizing positivist study.

The overly fundamentalist nature of some writers becomes apparent in Alvesson and Sköldberg's (2000) account of Sokal and Bricmont's (1998) publication, inviting any social constructionist to jump out his twelfth-story office window, criticizing the postmodernist poststructuralist frame of reference entailing reality is nothing but a social construction. Other events are brought to the attention of the reader such as Baudrillard's suggestion that atrocious events in Bosnia as well as the Gulf War could be merely media-fabricated, constructed events. The Swedish concept of 'lagom' comes to mind considering these various portrayals and is the applied value in considering the theoretical frame of reference used in this study. Lagom, meaning not too much, not too little, but just right is applied in that the researchers in this context acknowledge and are open to the existence of realist concepts, but for this particular study, the constructionist concepts works exceedingly well for achieving the goals of this study. This especially should be taken into account, considering the non-totalizing nature of postmodernism and post-structuralism as the attractive qualities of this frame of reference includes a pluralist voice, where positivist suggestions should be offered and considered as well as those of the constructionist.

3.7 Conclusion

Despite the limitations inherent in qualitative research, the various constructed realities of organizational members were allowed to emerge for examination and comparison with one-another as well as with samples of official discursive texts. Within the expressed limitations of this study, knowledge can

be taken into account, reflected upon and intelligently reapplied in future scenarios.

4 Empirical Material

In this chapter, a presentation of empirical material is made according to the following structure. A sampling of available discourses from sources of both private media and corporate communications will help to illustrate how these two sources depict the airline industry, challenges specific to the success of SAS and the organization's strategy—what has been done what is being done and what is planned for the future. Following the presentation of these discourses, summaries of interviews with SGS employees at Malmö-Sturup Airport will be given. Presenting discourses circulated by the independent media and corporate discourses circulated by corporate allows for clear comparison with the understandings portrayed in the summaries of employee interviews.

4.1 From the Independent Media

In order to give a clear description of the type of information made available from the independent media, several articles have been compiled with accounts of the airline industry, the impact on airlines as well as SAS specifically. This compilation includes media releases between 10 September 2007 and 4 May 2008—the time of the interviews associated with this study.

4.1.1 Economic Business Cycle

A January 2008 Air Transport World Magazine article entitled '2008 Forecast: Will the Luck Hold?' by Flint (2008) begins by describing 2007 as a peak year for current airline earnings cycle, noting that barring catastrophe, the industry would enjoy a second year of profitability in 2008, though not as strong as 2007. Higher than expected oil prices blamed on high demand in China, and the faltering US economy, mostly credited to the collapse of the sub-prime mortgage market, are described as creating obstacles to a good business cycle in 2008. As a result of these factors, the article predicts a slowed travel demand due to the mentioned 'cooling' economy.

The article turns to the European business cycle specifically with the heading, "Soft Landings in Europe," reporting that airlines in Europe should do

well in 2008 according to the International Air Transport Association and the Association of European Airlines. According to the article, the two associations report that they didn't see obvious impacts of the credit crunch and describes the geographic competitive advantage European carriers have with a closer proximity to Asia and the Middle East when compared to US carriers. The article also reports a lower exposure to fuel price increases due to the strong Euro, as compared to the weakening US Dollar. The article reports a more immediate threat to European carriers might be the 'green movement,' where airlines report feeling targeted for changes to a more environmentally friendly operation.

A different picture is painted in a 4 May 2008 article from Aviation Week, entitled 'European Airlines see First-Quarter Downturn' by Wall (2008), as the first line reads, "the blood letting among European airlines may be about to start as carriers realize they can no longer ward off the economic headwind wrought by high fuel prices, competitive pressures and over-capacity." The article begins by remarking, similar to cautioning nature of the previous article, on the challenge of increased fuel prices, designating this as the cause for poor performance among several European carriers in 2008's first quarter. Examples include Finnair's downturn in pre-tax profit of forty percent, slumped earnings from SAS as well as Norwegian Airlines' loss of over 240 million Swedish Kronor loss during the first quarter of 2008. A second challenge, also noted in the earlier article, is the economic slow-down in the US, which SAS Chief Financial Officer reports as suggestive of noted signs of slow-down in business travel. Lufthansa's Chief Financial Officer, on the other hand reports strong bookings thus far, that will meet his airline's 2008 target for positive traffic development, however he too concedes that guidance would only be met if the market environment doesn't weaken further, which would result in the need for further cost-cutting.

Further financial concerns are raised as the article discloses Standards and Poor's placement of SAS on credit watch, reflecting concerns for deterioration of underlying trading conditions. Adding to this, the article reports, Finnair

president and CEO notes, if the present state of affairs continues, he believes bankruptcies and mergers are likely. The article closes in underlining airlines' hope that increased ticket prices will help to offset the described increased costs. In addressing this, the article notes affected passenger loads resulting from Finnair's fare hikes. The article also notes British Airways and Air France's increase in fuel surcharges as well as Ryanair's increased charges in other areas, such as charges for checked luggage.

4.1.2 Challenges to SAS Group

An April 2008 article from Air Transport World Magazine entitled 'SAS Alone' by Flint (2008) provides an overview of challenges that face SAS' economic viability specifically. The article begins by describing some of the challenges that SAS CEO Mats Jansson faced immediately upon starting in his current position with the company 1 January 2007.

One such challenge, was a series of aircraft incidents referred to as the Q400 crisis, which involved three landing incidents over a six-week time period of the same Q400 aircraft type, resulting in the immediate withdrawal of the entire aircraft type fleet (27 aircraft) due to eroded public confidence as well as allegation of a general flaw in aircraft design. This accounted for 32 percent of Danish departures and 17 percent of Swedish departures and required the immediate wet lease of available jets to continue service. The cost of this 'crisis' was 700 million Swedish Kronor in the fourth quarter of 2007 and between 700 and 800 million Swedish Kronor over the following year.

Another of these challenges included a Danish and Swedish cabin crew walkout, costing the company 265 million Swedish Kronor in the second quarter of 2007. The article further describes trade union-management relations, referring to the 100 strikes endured by the organization over the past 10 years—70 of which were said to be illegal. The article explains Executive Vice President of HR, Henrietta Fenger Ellekrog's impression of union-management relations as she explains their inability to speak or negotiate with one another. Furthermore,

it's explained that the organization negotiates with 30 different unions, more specifically, ten unions, but across three different countries.

When comparing SAS with another Nordic carrier, Finnair, the article reports that the carrier is simply not competitive on long-haul flights on two fronts. First off, what is described as a numbers game, the costs on SAS long-haul flying is 17 percent too high due to more expensive and less efficient flight crew pay and work rules. Second, unlike Finnair, SAS hub airports are far enough from Asian airports that they are not able to fly these routes with just one aircraft in a 24-hour time period. This leaves SAS to rely on its Star Alliance members to carry passengers to many of its passengers' further destinations. Flottau's (2007) article 'Grow or Else' reports that SAS Deputy CEO, John Dueholms admits to difficulty in profitable long-haul business, due to the small long-haul fleet of only 11 aircraft and its spread over three bases of operation—Oslo, Copenhagen and Stockholm, stating that concerns over Finnair taking business from Stockholm prevents SAS from centralizing too much in Copenhagen. The article by Flint (2008) marks the position of SAS Group on the European airline stage as problematic, pointing out the company's sixth place ranking in terms of passengers, trailing behind EasyJet and Ryanair, which are more profitable and also behind Air France/KLM, British Airways and Lufthansa, which far surpass SAS on its intercontinental network.

4.1.3 SAS Group Strategy

The aforementioned poor economic environment along with the various challenges the SAS Group faces in its own operation, have culminated in the advent of a new strategic plan for the organization. Flint's (2008) article describes the economic history of SAS since 2001 that has led up to the company's current standing, beginning with a loss of six billion Swedish Kronor between 2001 and 2005. The 'Turnaround 2005' program managed to cut costs by 16 billion Swedish Kronor and managed a profit in 2006 of 1.28 billion Swedish Kronor. The article further reports a profit of 1.24 billion Swedish Kronor in 2007 despite losses from the earlier described 'Q400 crisis.' The article

reports that these earnings are not sufficient to put the company on track for its 2011 20 percent passenger growth goal. SAS CEO, Jansson also is cited as remarking that current profits are not sustainable for the airline, suggesting that consolidation is a possible reality and that the company will not maintain its independence in the future if this continues.

The article by Flottau (2007) notes Deputy CEO John Dueholms assertion that the organization is not currently interested in consolidation. Fighting this apparent possibility, Flint (2008) describes CEO Jansson's strategy, citing his affirmation that in order to achieve the previously mentioned goal in passenger growth, a seven percent pre-tax margin, granting an equivalent of a four billion Swedish Kronor bottom line would be necessary. In order to achieve this economic objective, an all-encompassing restructuring program, called Strategy 2011 would be needed. The article outlines tactics for this program, including the divestment of non-core assets, such as its Spanish-based wholly owned subsidiary, Spanair, as well as the company's holdings in Air Greenland and British Midlands Airlines, focusing on core business of Nordic-based air transport. The article also lists 2.8 billion Swedish crowns in cost savings for 2009 and finally, a fundamental change to the strike culture, characteristic of past union-management relations, which Jansson claims will help lead the company to become a 'customer centric' organization.

Wall (2008) reports on recent amendments in SAS strategy for attempted recovery in shortcomings in achieving profit goals, referring to the poor performance in the first quarter of 2008, where the company's earnings dropped to a loss of 973 million Swedish Kronor. The plan was for a re-emphasis on the restructuring plan with a cut of 1000 full-time positions, a fleet reduction of 11 aircraft and delay of delivery on one long-haul wide-body jet. The article noted that it expected other carriers to follow a similar strategy should oil prices continue to be high.

Further touching on the previously mentioned divestments SAS intends to make in order to focus on Nordic air travel, Flottau (2008) explains the company

plans to sell parts of the business not associated with airline travel. Among these non-airline asset divestments, Flint (2008) reports that it was the intention of Jansson to sell the SAS Ground Service business unit. "Amid strong indications that the unions would strike to prevent a sale or spin-off, a clearly frustrated Jansson said SGS would remain a subsidiary providing it could reach quality and profitability targets within 18 months, including 400 million Swedish Kronor improvement in costs" (Flint 2008). The article reports similar union opposition with selling off SAS technical services, which resulted in the company's resolution to outsource just a small part of its maintenance of its 737 'Classic' aircraft type rather than the entire aircraft maintenance business unit. The article further points to the inability of the organization to resolve these issues as putting SAS behind its cost-saving schedule.

Flint (2008) also remarks on SAS Group's necessity for a fleet-increase of 15 to 20 aircraft (beyond its current fleet replacement needs) in order to handle the five percent annual passenger growth included in the S11 strategy. Further discussion of aircraft fleet strategy at SAS is brought up by Flottau (2007), offering Deputy CEO Dueholm's discussion on growth, which he explains is based on the current fleet, and that the picture could be completely different pointing to new aircraft such as Boeing's 787 or Airbus' A350, which we says would be well suited for SAS growth plans.

Reporting on the union-management relations refers Flint (2008) to a recent four-day meeting between the two groups regarding challenges that lay ahead for the company, which resulted in a framework of understanding between them. It is stated that all organizational members agree the business environment has changed, however there is a difference in understanding of what consequences this will have on SAS specifically. In closing, the article presents a quote by SAS CEO, "No doubt about it," says Jansson. "Can we handle the downturn? Yes we can, if we solve the culture problem. Can we handle the fuel price? Yes, if we can solve the culture problem. Can we fulfill the cost-cutting program? Yes, if we can solve the culture problem" (Flint 2008, 26).

4.2 From SAS Corporate

The following is a review of SAS Group and SAS Ground Service corporate communications. Included in this review of official statements are press releases and brochures downloaded from the SAS corporate website as well as internal corporate periodical releases such as the SAS Ground Service *On Ground* magazine and SAS Group *Inside* newspaper, both collected from the local station at Malmö-Sturup Airport.

4.2.1 Description of the Corporate Communications

Inside is a newsprint publication described as a newspaper for all employed in the SAS Group. These words are in fact printed at the top of the front page just under the publication's title. The newspaper features articles on airline industry news, SAS Group news, performance and industry statistics, stories on different projects and achievements by individuals as well as companies within the SAS Group.

Another piece of company material from SAS Ground Service called *On Ground* is self-described as publication for SAS Ground Service Sweden and similar to the inside magazine is noted as such just under the headline on the front page. The publication was made available in April 2008 and was the most recent issue at the time of the interviews for this study. The cover of the publication shows the start line of a sprint race with runners pictured in a blur as they jump from the starting blocks. At the bottom of the cover in white letters, the words Challenge-09 are spelled out. Throughout the publications of a road, a stop watch, another photo of a track starting block with a sprint runner ready to jump off the blocks, as well as a picture of a dartboard with a dart in the bull's eye of the target and a clock and a silhouetted runner in front of a giant clock. Also included are pictures of the Stockholm Airport aircraft tarmac and pictures of various employees.

A brochure published in June of 2007 entitled 'Our Challenge!' is available from the SAS corporate website and summarizes the Strategy 2011 program.

Unlike the *Inside* and *On Ground* publications, 'Our Challenge!' is readily available to the public. The front page of the publication features a two-thirds page picture of a SAS 737 aircraft pointed nose-first at the reader. Beneath the photo are printed in relatively large letters, 'Our Challenge!' The SAS Group logo can be found printed at the bottom right-hand corner of the page. The publication features pictures of flight crew and passenger service agents smiling while working as well as a passenger using a self-service check-in computer. Pictures take up about a quarter to a third of the entire document, and many diagrams and large print are used throughout.

4.2.2 Economic Business Cycle

The 17 April 2008 edition of SAS Group *Inside* newspaper features a letter from SAS Group CEO Mats Jansson, complete with profile picture and signature at the bottom. The title of his letter is "more breaks than gas." In the opening statement of his letter, Jansson likens the aviation industry to a car rally driver, in that in both situations one must be able to quickly hit the gas or hit the brakes in response to internal and external conditions. He further explains that over the last few months, we have unfortunately seen the beginning of a dramatic development in the American economy that infects itself into the entire world that will hit the banks, stock exchange, real estate prices and consumer demand.

Further expanding upon his description of the economic environment, Jansson, in his letter, explains that in the first quarter, fuel prices were 70 percent over what they were the previous year and that the effects are now being seen in the aviation industry. He notes that several of the smaller American airlines are going bankrupt, while in Europe, Alitalia is on its knees and EasyJet, Ryanair and Finnair, among others, have earnings warnings. Other companies, he says, are identifying and carrying out so-called 'Profit Protection Programs' to meet upcoming situations. He continues in saying, "Unfortunately, it's the same thing with us, which I last referred to in my company update." He notes that the same trend has continued through January, February and March. Record-high fuel prices, falling yield and over capacity with us ourselves and competition make

us now hesitant to fend off the developments to right the situation and land in an all too hard situation.

The article of the cover page in the same *Inside* newspaper by Annica Ahlberg-Valdna entitled 'From Anxiety to Power to Act,' through a question-and-answer format gives a further depiction of Mats Jansson's account of the economic environment. The article refers to the 2007 results meeting, where the article notes the multiple occasions on which Jansson says he is worried, asking what he meant by that. He explains that the company has gone between a strenuous time and profit of a billion crowns, which he explains is insufficient. "We should be up to four billion crowns in order to invest in a new fleet and in worker development, while not dropping the initiative in all product offerings" (Ahlberg-Valdna 2008, 2). He continues by stating that figures for the fourth quarter were not good. "We must perform better, hold together profitability in all group companies," Jansson explains (Ahlberg-Valdna 2008, 2).

The article continues, asking what Jansson foresees in the business cycle, whether it will face a lower demand and what that means for SAS. "The market outlook is a horror. The housing loan crisis in the US is not an isolated phenomenon. Banks have been too generous with their loans and we consume too much" (Ahlberg-Valdna 2008, 2). He explains that this alone can lead to a consumption crisis that will also influence Europe and "for this reason, we must change ourselves" (Ahlberg-Valdna, 2008, 2).

An article in *Inside* newspaper entitled 'Aviation Goes in to a Time of Tough Turbulence' by Stefan Lönnqvist provides the International Air Transportation Agency's (IATA) 2008 economic outlook for the aviation industry. The article begins by describing a "gloomy outlook on 2008 for the airline industry, suggesting the year "could be grounds for the need of intensive care" for the industry (Lönnqvist 2008, 5). The article further explains that aviation has enjoyed a period of great demand in the market; meaning companies could fill airplanes better. At the same time, companies worked hard to bring down costs. Now they are absorbing increasing fuel costs while the previous demand begins

to disappear. The article lists several factors IATA uses to describe the current aviation industry:

- In February the largest decrease in cabin factor in 4 years with the largest decrease in Europe, which the article describes as a turning point.
- There is further growth, but the pace has slowed
- Since 2001 the industry has become 64 percent more productive and costs (disregarding fuel costs) has shrunk more than 18 percent. Now it's much harder to be more cost-effective.
- Global yield is expected to sink by four percent per year after a 3.2 percent reduction in 2007.
- 20 percent more new airplane deliveries this year compared with last.
- 'Open Skies' discussion between the EU and US led to a powerful increase in capacity over the Atlantic with already an estimated 11 percent increase in April compared with the previous year.
- The airline industry continues to work in a more global and deregulated market

Stefan Lönnqvist's article 'Expensive Oil Snaps Company' in *Inside Newspaper*, notes weekly profit warnings. The article further tells of several large airlines that have gone on a profit warning—among them British Airways and even to Ryanair and EasyJet, who's numbers speak of a dampened future tone. The article also underlines the fact that in a short time, six companies have thrown in the towel resulting in thousands of lost jobs.

A later article entitled 'Competition' also by Lönnqvist gives an overview of the competition with insight on the standings of British Airways, KLM and Finnair. For each airline, the article gives an account of position and strategy,

business and results, strengths, challenges, and investments and outlook. The article says that British Airways calls it-self 'the world's favorite airline,' noting its large presence at London's Heathrow Airport, the world's largest international airport. The article also remarks on KLM's ability to 'suck up demand in Scandinavia, explaining that the company feeds traffic from six Nordic countries cities to Amsterdam. The article notes Finnair's increase in Asian flight, calling attention to the company's increase from 9 to 59 weekly flights to Asia.

4.2.3 Challenges to the SAS Group

In the previously mentioned article entitled 'From Anxiety to Power to Act' in *Inside* newspaper by Ahlberg-Valdna (2008), Jansson lists the various problem areas for SAS. There is too much capacity in the market, prices increase and passenger loads decrease, we notice already a changed mix onboard. Explaining this further, he notes that a percent lower yield and a percent lower passenger load impacts directly on results in the amount of a billion Swedish Kronor, showing the vulnerability of the work environment.

A separate article in the *Inside* newspaper entitled 'Weak Yield, but Demand Still Stable' lists the overall standings for SAS Group. The article explains that the combination of lower yield and higher fuel prices has a moderating effect on earnings, resulting in a negative first quarter and meaning a measurement program is on the way. The article also explains that underlying traffic development is positive, but thought of competition and over capacity rises. Also noted negative effects of the Q400 aircraft incidents, on first quarter earnings, resulting in costs of 400 million Swedish Kronor.

A separate article by Ahlberg-Valdna in *Inside* newspaper, entitled 'SAS Must Choose a Way' portrays a compilation of material from an airline consultant, which gives an analysis of the industry and how SAS fits into this environment. The article explains that the biggest trouble for SAS is that growth in the market over the last year has meant the devouring of companies like Norwegian and KLM. Several points are given, such as the judgment that if SAS

does not succeed at reducing costs at the same level as European competition, the future will be greatly problematic.

On the topic of cost reduction, the article charges that SAS must reduce wage levels, but notes that this is the most difficult sector in which to reduce costs due to the powerful union representation. It describes SAS as resembling the middle child in a crowded family with an indistinctive middle position, explaining that the company is not large enough to take advantage of the ‘oldest sibling’ advantages, and not small enough to take privileges of the smallest child. The article says that it is SEB analysts’ opinion that the key to gain in profitability is for the company to continue to carry out strategies that lie in S11, but if profits don’t increase, it will be difficult to finance the future aircraft replacement and retain the 45 percent market position in Scandinavia. On this topic, the article says the analysts don’t believe that SAS will be able to change its fleet by borrowing money—“there is no alternative for SAS if the credit rating doesn’t strengthen” (Ahlberg-Valdna 2008, 5).

The article reports that in comparing SAS with EU competition, “Monday morning, SAS is far behind as it pertains to increasing efficiency and cost reduction,” noting British Airways and KLM’s tough and effective cuts in cost (Ahlberg-Valdna 2008, 5). Referring to the title of the article, criticism is drawn over SAS’ indecision over competing with big companies like British Airways and KLM or low cost carriers, stating the company must choose. According to the article, SEB analysts’ conclusion is that if SAS isn’t capable of growth, they predict the highest market share for SAS by 2020 will be 26 percent in Scandinavia, contrasting with the current 45 percent.

4.2.4 SAS Group Strategy

The original press release outlining the preliminary details of the S11 program came on 13 June 2007. The header of the press release reads, “New Direction will ensure SAS’s Future.” The press release noted goals of strengthening the SAS Group’s position as Northern Europe’s leading airline, explaining that the company should focus on its core business—flying to, from

and within Northern Europe, explaining that this is the home market for the company's most important customer groups and where SAS' market position is the strongest. The release further states that units that do not belong to the core business would be sold in order to create future capital expenditure and development. In noting that the airline market is rapidly changing the press release emphasizes its desire to give customers the best service and most attractive fares and explains that to do this between then and 2011, the company must increase pre-tax profit to about four billion Swedish Kronor, while lowering costs by 2.8 billion Swedish Kronor. The press release points out the need for a new cooperation model with the unions and create a new customer-oriented business culture. The release points out that achieving these goals will ensure a strong future and independent airline, granting the opportunity to involve employees in the value that is created through profit sharing and part ownership.

The release continues by explaining the challenging competition that exists in the industry, stating SAS will offer the best value products with customer relations, punctuality and regularity will be among the best in the industry. Furthermore, the press release points to increased departures, new concepts in leisure travel and preconditions for growth in all markets, increasing the number passengers by a total of 20 percent.

The press release notes that holdings in Spanair, BMI and Air Greenland would be sold out, while future structure and rolls of other operations, such as SAS Ground Service (SGS), SAS Technical Service (STS) and Spirit Cargo Handling would be evaluated with the purpose of determining which parts of its operations SAS should continue to operate on its own and which parts should be operated by other players. It is explained that evaluations of these business units would occur over the autumn in consultation with affected employees and other stakeholders.

The previously described 'Our Challenge!' brochure, published in June of 2007, opens with a letter from Mats Jansson, explaining that in 2006, a profit of just over one billion Swedish Kronor was posted, which he notes is far from

sufficient for long-term forward movement. The letter further explains, since 2001, SAS has lost nearly six billion Swedish Kronor and that the company has survived thanks to the sale of assets along with implementation of tough cost-cutting measures. “Now the business must stand on its own legs,” he states (SAS Group 2007, ‘Our Challenge!’). He continues in saying that its necessary to focus on growth where the company is profitable and that all must dare to change, pulling in the same direction, safeguarding the trust of customers. He remarks on the relatively strong position of SAS in comparison to other large European airlines who have filed for bankruptcy or been acquired in merger. He says since he took over he’s talked with more than 2000 employees and interviewed about 100 managers, board members and union representatives in depth, granting him a clear picture of the challenges the company faces. He closes in saying he is convinced they will succeed and that the new strategy is the start of a demonstration of strength.

Following the letter, the first page introducing the S11 program, describes SAS as the leading airline group in Northern Europe and one of the leading companies in Europe, flying 40 million passengers each year to 164 destinations in 42 countries, but that the company faces major challenges in the future in order to survive as an independent company. The introduction also states “we need to start from the inside beginning with our own culture” (SAS Group 2007 ‘Our Challenge!’ 4).

Throughout the brochure, a more explicit description of the change program is given, outlining the strategy for the program. To summarize, it notes, for instance, the company will have to start from the inside, working on cultural change, that the organization should focus on what its best at, it should provide better service for more savvy customers. It explains, also, how higher profitability should ensure the company’s future and how the company will use that profitability to leverage growth, which will ensure continued independence. An outline of the program lists five points for its new strategy:

- Cultural turnaround through customer orientation and greater commitment
- Focus on airline operations
- Concentration on Northern Europe
- Harmonization and development of customer offerings
- Competitiveness in all parts of the business, laying the foundation for profitable growth

Several press releases outline the decision making process of the three companies the organization felt needed further analysis regarding their future affiliation with the group. As was noted in the original 13 June 2007 press release, there was question as to whether SGS would remain within the SAS Group or be divested. In a 17 December 2007 press release, a delay on the divestment decision on SGS, explaining that a disagreement between management and trade unions regarding SGS exists and that the control group had not been successful in determining a joint recommendation. The release mentions the importance of the issues as they affect many employees that significantly affect the ability to maintain commitment to customers and that group management found it best to allow more time for analysis of structural alternatives. It concludes by saying, the future role of SGS would be based on S11's push for reduced complexity, and a concentration on the core business—passenger traffic in Northern Europe.

The final decision on the future role of SGS came on 5 February 2008, stating until further notice SGS would remain an independent subsidiary of the SAS group—provided the company can improve quality and profitability targets agreed on by management and trade unions within 18 months. Improvements in costs were specified as reduction of 400 million Swedish Kronor. It is further explained that the decision would require SGS to meet goals within 18 months or an external solution would be on the cards such as bringing on part-owner with operations in the ground-handling industry through outsourcing. Jansson notes

in closing, “we have taken too long and used too many resources in this structural decision.” He also notes that there were perceived threats of unlawful action, showing very clearly that SAS still has a long way to go before it has a corporate culture in place that is adapted to the competitive situation.

The front-page article of the April 2008 *Inside* newspaper features the headline, “Dialogue Shows the Way to Change” by Ahlberg-Valdna with pictures of HR director, Henriette Fenger Ellekrog. A caption next to the picture reveals that Ellekrog, in the situation pictured, is explaining the concept of cultural turnaround. In another picture, two employees are shown with a caption explaining that they are SAS Sweden employees discussing service and culture. A caption below the title explains that during the month of March, group leadership offered co-workers a dialogue meeting, explaining what has happened and which questions are of interest just now. It continues by saying dialogue gives understanding to the need of change and now the work goes further. Group Director, Mats Jansson opened the meeting with a look back on what he called a dramatic year, with Q400 aircraft accidents, ‘knife-sharp’ competition, a changed market outlook, higher fuel prices, weaker business cycle and developments with S11. The article noted some of the questions at Arlanda, such as how the atmosphere between leadership and workers could improve, as well as whether the company’s extra demands on workers must be combined with encouragement. Jansson pointed out the anxiety he too feels towards the future, which he notes must be over-turned through the power to act.

The article questions, what he means by “we will all change ourselves.” He explains that enacting an agreed upon action plan balanced with coming out of the downward trend will allow the company to stand up and develop concepts and products. Adding to this, the article asks whether this means a new expense program, which he explains “we have to secure the 2.8 billion crowns already decided upon in S11,” pressing that “we have to see that goal through to 2009 (Ahlberg-Valdna 2008, 3). He continues, saying because of this, it is likely they will need increased cost reduction and moreover, they have to work with

capacity and look over the structure. “A billion crowns in profit last year showed that we are on the right track, but it’s not enough. “We’re not making enough money,” he presses, “I want to raise to life the power to act as ripened during this year of crisis, though we succeeded in reducing our costs by more than 14 billion crowns, I know that there is strength left in the organization” (Ahlberg-Valdna 2008, 3).

The article further asks what the developments are in S11. Jansson replies that strategy comes from employees, unions and the market. He adds that what makes him worried is that the company is late in showing fundamental respect for the program and that costs must be reduced for the results to be carried out and to not carry out agreed upon initiatives, will affect everyone. He explains further that “our past profits must be improved upon” and this is “life-dependent for the future of SAS and its independence” (Ahlberg-Valdna 2008, 3). Turning to SGS, he continues by saying the agreement for this business unit is a reduction of 400 million [crowns] within 18 months while delivering an increased quality and “if the company reaches this goal, then, yes, they will have a continued part in SAS” (Ahlberg-Valdna 2008, 3). He concludes by saying, “we have to increase the tempo to hold the time schedule in the S11 work” Ahlberg-Valdna 2008, 3).

The same article, SAS Group HR Director Henriette Fenger Ellekrog, speaks to the topic of organizational culture and cultural turnaround. She explains at the dialogue meetings how group leadership looks to work with cultural turnaround, stating, “if we aren’t together, a strong, positive culture will not be created and then the strategies cannot be carried out” (Ahlberg-Valdna 2008, 3). She explains the S11 strategy further, stating, “We will take away what is not necessary and urge an increased tempo in the strategy” (Ahlberg-Valdna 2008, 3). Discussing the culture throughout the SAS Group, she says culture is not clear or similar in the various countries and also dissimilar in the various companies of SAS. The author of the article infers further that there is a need of a local culture in the various daughter companies, in the different work functions,

“but this we must unify on and understand that there is a comprehensive goal” (Ahlberg-Valdna 2008, 3). Continuing on the topic of service, she points to the goal of a service oriented organization regardless of what level and which company one works for, referring to faster resolution processing without conflict and strikes.

She explains that all changes start at the top with leadership, (including union leadership as well as managerial leadership) in order to create engagement in the organization. She says, “As a private co-worker, I also have to understand my colleagues’ conditions in order to finish their work to achieve the goal, but that requires dialogue, conversation, discussion and respect for each other” (Ahlberg-Valdna 2008, 3). She concludes by saying, “I am completely convinced that the organization is in a condition to achieve the goal. Together, we are strong” (Ahlberg-Valdna 2008, 3).

A separate article from *Inside*, entitled “All Can Participate to Make SAS More Profitable” presents a question and answer session with SAS Sweden flight attendant, Victoria Granström. The article includes a large color photo of the young and attractive Granström smiling at the foot of a SAS aircraft on a sunny day in her flight attendant uniform. The first question in the article asks why she understands CEO Jansson to be worried, to which she replies that he has a large responsibility together with his coworkers to save six billion crowns in three years. She explains, “if I were in his clothes, I would have a hard time sleeping at night” (SAS Group 2008, *Inside*, 6). She continues by saying, “we must all have understanding because it demands more saving if SAS on the whole will remain in the future (SAS Group 2008, *Inside*, 6).

She notes that there has been a very bad relationship between management and workers for a long time, and further explains this as two camps that fight against each other instead of helping one. She says that in order to work for a common goal, its necessary to have a good relationship and understanding for each other. In explaining the need for leadership to understand its workers, she says, “we want for management to stand on our side” and “we need more

positive information and feedback, I think there is lots! We are really good!” (SAS Group 2008, *Inside*, 6). In noting this need for management to consider the perspective of its employees, she further notes, “we as workers also need to consider the anxiety of management” and have understanding for them and give them encouragement (SAS Group 2008, *Inside*, 6).

The second question asks, “what can you as a worker do to for a more profitable SAS?” (SAS Group 2008, *Inside*, 6). She responds by saying, I as a flight attendant can’t participate in the large decisions, Mats Jansson with the SAS board can do that,” “but to venture energy on what you can change is fruitful for both you and your company” (SAS Group 2008, *Inside*, 6). She notes a prayer for peace, “give me sensible peace to accept what I can’t change, courage to change what I can change and understanding to realize change” (SAS Group 2008, *Inside*, 6).

In her account of helping to make SAS a profitable carrier, she explains that “we can all participate to make SAS a profitable carrier in our workplace as we are today,” noting things to be improved in the areas of customer interaction, positive work culture, improved information transfer and makes suggestions for coping tactics with the media (SAS Group 2008, *Inside*, 6).

The April 2008 SAS Ground Service *On Ground* internal corporate publication begins with a letter from Olof Bärve, Managing Director of SAS Ground Service, Sweden, which begins by stating, ‘you know more than I about challenges that this work environment has given us in the past years. When I, as relatively new in SGS Sweden look back, I can establish that you have handled many challenges and done very well. In this short time, the work environment has undergone corporatization, adaptation to tough competition in the market and become much more efficient. Noting the demands from SAS Group are viable, he further explains in his letter, “We... have a rather good look on how we will go about it. I say rather because I want for you as workers in SGS Sweden to ponder how your daily work can improve or simplify.” “I am

convinced that there are many good ideas within the organization that are just waiting to be turned over to practical use.”

In another piece of the publication, a title reads, ‘Good Ideas Come from Management, as they have the Best View.’ The beginning of the text is bolded and says, [if you] “believe in the statement above, you can stop reading now. If you however, like us, believe in the driving force in a good idea irrespective of where it comes, you need to give these lines a little attention. The article further states that, “because you as have the best insight about what can be improved in the daily work, we at SGS Sweden want to be better about safeguarding your ideas. Its management’s duty to listen to proposals, to value ideas and, together with those that bring ideas, reflect on how we can best come to put these into the work-process.” The article further notes that shortly an idea workshop will be put into effect at SGS Sweden, stating that the program has already been put into effect at Arlanda.

Page three of *On Ground* magazine features a description of a new program, entitled, ‘What is Challenge-09?’ In the introduction paragraph, the text notes that the 5th of February, SAS Group board of directors came to the decision that SGS would continue to be an independent company in SAS Group, assuming that we before the end of 2009 fulfill timely goals for the respective SGS companies concerning profitability, security, punctuality and baggage quality. The article further has the headline of “how Challenge-09 will be reached and when. Specific goals for SGS Sweden are listed in a separate box on the page, and include specific profitability, punctuality, safety and luggage statistical goals.

Other stories feature initiatives and good efforts, including a new check-in system, discussing how two employees were assigned to introduce it a new check-in system. Another article commends an employee for, last December, sitting five hours in the middle of the night, in the cold waiting for a late aircraft and having a good sense of humor about the situation. A third piece commends an employee, (an aircraft loader at Stockholm, Arlanda) for working out a better

system for invoice records in the computer system for a more effective method of handling this task. The final page points out SGS Sweden's areas of concern for performance and notes areas that the group has done well on its goals.

4.3 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with employees from various parts of the SGS business unit at Malmö Airport. These interviews were conducted in English and in private with the understanding that their names would not be revealed. In order to add significance, however, their positions are noted. Interviews were conducted over a two-week time period in early May.

4.3.1 Passenger Service Manager

The Deputy Station Manager for passenger service has been working in his current position at Malmö for one year, before which, he was the duty station manager at the Karlstad station. In total, he says he has been with the company for eleven years. He describes his responsibility as caring about the passenger service staff, daily service around departures and check-in and gate as well as sending in monthly or weekly reports about punctuality and quality of the operation to headquarters in Stockholm.

In describing the S11 program, he explained that it's the situation they are in right now and that it is necessary and very important for survival. As he describes the situation of the airline referring to high fuel costs, he acknowledges the need to concentrate this year on reducing costs in order to become more cost efficient. He further explained that these are tough times right now for every airline. Referring specifically to SAS, he opined that they need to update the fleet, as it's quite old.

"Other airlines have new, nice aircrafts...better for the environment.

When we have the new Airbus 330 and 340, it's very nice. When the

Boeing 737s arrived with the TVs in the seat, it's a very good image."

Further discussing his interpretation of the S11 program, he noted that they have just one and a half years in which to achieve this, stating that this is not a

great deal of time and they will need to hurry up. He explains that they have to go on working on the organization and “at the end of this 18 months, see what the decision is and hopefully, it will be OK and we can go on with SAS Ground Services.” He noted that in this process of reorganization, some stations will probably have to close as they will not be meeting the profit goals, which he believed would depend on having opportunities for ground handling contracts with other carriers outside of SAS, cargo handling and also, whether passengers were paying for business or economy. He further suggested that, for stations that provide only three flights a day, it is difficult to make it good for passengers.

He also noted the importance of improving the overall operational service, noting that at Malmö, they are delivering good work, but there are big problems at the hub stations. Related to this, he noted that the Malmö stations has already cut staff, but this hasn't been the case at the Copenhagen station. Arlanda on the other hand, he noted, has done some reorganization for the better. In comparing activity of Arlanda and Copenhagen, he explained that they are more familiar with Arlanda even though Copenhagen is just next-door and that SGS Denmark is a different company with a different culture. When asked whether much attention is paid to Norway, he says not that much, but that he thinks Norway is quite good, but the biggest problem is to “make Copenhagen to deliver a good quality and in an economic way.”

In continuing his interpretations of SGS' progress, he said the line stations are making a good profit and that Arlanda began doing well last year and that this year, they must use more personnel to improve the quality, thereby increasing costs, but in the end it will be better. Even so, he noted that Malmö should continue to look for ways to improve, noting a good service, which he defines as on-time departures, a low missed-bag ratio, and no aircraft damage.

He described how he sees the program affecting his employees, explaining that he doesn't foresee any more cuts in staff at the Malmö station—even with the foreseen reduction in flight schedule. He noted, however, that “maybe they are worried...[that]...they are concerned in [the] airline SAS and what is

happening. It doesn't matter if we are doing good quality...if there's problems with the other stations."

The station manager explained some of the ways by which information is shared among employees, including the corporate intranet, corporate internal magazine called *Inside*, home mailings, and also station meetings. At station meetings, he explained that they discuss what is going to happen with the company in the future, as well as updates with what is happening at Arlanda and Gothenburg and what they are doing to achieve performance goals, and then what can be done at line stations. He noted that the format of the meetings is not only to give information, but also to allow for discussions. He also remarked that employees seldom come to talk with him one-on-one, but rather they are more likely to talk about things over a cup of coffee. In explaining the best type of communication, he opined that it depends on the kind of information—if its bigger changes than the station, such as new routines, it is necessary to talk about it in a special way, but if its about the whole concern, they can read about it on the Intranet and the *Inside* magazine.

He expressed his feeling that his employees are indeed motivated for the change program, but they think about "when will it go the other way?"

"Its very much negative information, so it's very important to tell them when we have done a good work," he stated. He attested that he himself sees a value in SGS remaining part of the SAS Group as they have a higher service level than the airline paying for it and that if they outsource SGS and use a different handling company, they will see the difference. "We have so much routine in what we are doing that we can make a little extra for the SAS Passengers," explaining

"I don't think it will be better. Maybe not, but yah, I think we have so many years of routine to care about SAS passengers and we know

how to do...how to use the SAS programs and procedures. Everything is very...we know about everything. It would be different, I think.” “We know how to send message to the other stations about late passengers, or if they need some extra help, or something like that to fix with—when there’s problems with the aircraft with technical problems, we are working to solve problems with the passengers. Those are things that SAS will see a difference if they are using a different company.”

4.3.2 Ramp service manager

The ramp service manager, officially titled Deputy Station Manager for ramp service, introduces himself, saying he began work 1 September 2001 as a coordinator in passenger service, reminiscing that the first couple of months were quite turbulent and interesting illustrating the impact of the terrorist attacks in the US that same month even in Europe. He explains that following a downsizing in staff of between 40 and 50 percent that same year, his job was eliminated, leaving him to look for work elsewhere in the company. He was able to secure a position as deputy station manager at Ronneby, where he began in September 2003. After working there for one and a half years, he transferred to the same position at Malmö Airport. After he and the regional manager determined there could be a profitable business in expanding ground handling at Malmö Airport, the number of staff increased a great deal, eliciting a need for dividing his position into ramp service management duties and passenger service management duties separately. In closing, he seemed to come to the realization that he had been working in this line of business, including his experience working for an independent ground handling company prior to starting with SAS, for 17 years. “That’s a long time,” he exclaims, further stating, “I like it very much because one day is not like the others.”

In explaining his interpretation of the S11 program, he stated that “for me, it’s a way to get a good business and...all the SAS companies are involved.” “And for us, for SGS, it’s [to] make it profitable, make a good quality and so on.” In saying so, he noted, “we” (referring to line stations, which are all stations in Sweden with exception of Arlanda and Gothenburg) “already deliver to quality levels.” He stated that “for us here, it’s not that big deal. It’s business as usual...I think.” Despite saying this, he noted, “We actually do lots of things to make a better deal to all customers,” describing how they, for instance, are currently in the process of renegotiating contracts with companies for which they currently provide ground service. He explained, “It could happen that the customer said that we won’t pay what you want, so then we cut them out, because it’s not good business.” “Every customer should bear itself,” he explained, but before, we didn’t have that strategy, so that’s one in S-elva, or S-eleven.”

He described the impact he foresees for the program on his employee group (ramp service employees), “I don’t think it’s...a big deal, because they are very new in the company, so, they haven’t known anything else. . .It’s another business in here,” referring to the passenger service employee group. “Most of the employees here have lots—about 30 or 40 years of experience in the company, so they have another history behind them, but my employees don’t have that history, so its easy for me to present, like an S-elva deal...they don’t think it’s a big deal because they’re not used to anything else. That’s what I think.” Referring to the Challenge ’09 SGS program, he explained that his employees don’t necessarily know the program by name, but that they know there is an initiative to have better performance and achieve profitability goals.

Like the Passenger Service Manager, he described the different ways employees are informed of the program, explaining that employees get most of their information from the corporate intranet and corporate publications. He also

reported that he usually holds a weekly meeting every Friday and that if it isn't possible one week, then he sends out a special e-mail with information and minutes from this meeting are e-mailed out as well. Furthermore, there is a station meeting held every second or third month for which employees are paid over-time for attending. He opined, "the best way [to communicate] is to have a meeting because then you can have a dialogue, [because] mail is actually a one-way communication." Exhibiting some frustration over the ability to communicate with his group via e-mail, he said,

"its up to you to read your mail and I know that some of them are very not good [with] reading mail. I say that to them every time at least one time of your workday, you should read your mail, because I send mail every day and...mail is good and bad, but for a quite big group, you have to send mail. You can't collect everybody once a week to have a meeting. It's impossible."

Acknowledging how employees feel about the S11 program, he said, "I think they think [its necessary] because if they don't do it, they maybe don't have any work, so I think they understand that," but "I don't think they think much about it as fear." "They think that uff, we're still in the business for another 18 months." He continues in saying one of the primary values his employee group sees in continuing to work as SGS is the ID travel—airline employee discount travel. He further explained, if they worked for a ground handling company such as Novair, they would lose that benefit. "They can fly all around the world for cheap," he said, "so, that's a big deal and I can understand that." He expressed his personal position on the situation, stating, "no matter what happens, there is always one place for me somewhere. The business will always be here...if it's called SGS or something else." "With my experience, I'm not that worried," but he also confessed, "I like everybody else, I also like this ID travel,

because it's a good benefit. It's not a big deal to go to Beijing. You can do that on a weekend!"

4.3.3 Union Representative Interview

The chairman of the local union at Malmö Airport is also in people logistics for all the Swedish line stations (all stations in Sweden, but Stockholm and Gothenburg) at SGS. Her previous position was passenger service. In total, as of May 2008, she has worked at SAS for 43 years.

Her depiction of S11 listed a number of potential objectives, including saving money, achieving profit, and a change in staff behavior. She described this change in behavior in a few different ways, for instance, how you talk to each other, how you work, better communication. In the end, she noted the program's increased focus on change. She compared management's understanding with that of employees, stating, "They have a different idea. I think they think that they can do it. I don't think we'll manage this." "We do all possible every day and its not enough—for the boss." She further clarifies, "not the station manager, the station's boss." The following dialogue gives insight into how grounded she feels upper management is in the reality of the stations level.

Interviewer: Are they in touch with what happens at the station level?

Union Rep: Yes, oh yes.

Interviewer: But they still think that they can do more?

Union Rep: They think we can do more.

She continued, "Do the same with less employees. Today we are four people on a shift normally. Last year, we were six or seven. It keeps going down and down." She noted the impact on passenger service employees and on customer service, "They are stressed. We can't serve them as we want to serve them."

Regarding her perception of what brought about the need for such a program, she noted that the company had three bad months, attributable to fuel prices, low passenger loads, low ticket prices, overabundance of operators at the

station and the problem with the Dash Aircraft (According to a January 25, 2008 article from Aviation Week, with this aircraft type, also called Q400, SAS last year suffered three accidents, prompting management to cease operating the aircraft) (Wall, 2008). As a result, according to the union representative, larger aircraft were used on the routes previously flown by this smaller aircraft, which meant more open seats and more station personnel, and therefore more man-hours.

Like the managers, the union representative listed the company's intranet system (portalen), the passenger service manager's monthly meetings as principal sources of employee information. She said, "Otherwise, you have to look yourself in this 'Portalen' if you are interested. "Asked whether people more often seek out information from other sources or if they would rather wait for the monthly meeting, she replied, "They just wait. They just wait."

She noted the significant time pressure employees are currently experiencing, noting, "you know we have 18 months to fix the...Scandinavian Ground Service. Yes, we have only 18 months, so we have to make it until June '09," referring to the challenge '09 program associated with S11 that requires the company meet certain profitability and performance goals else the business unit will be sold off to another company. "They will sell us," she stated. She also referred to "the latest challenge," entitled Profit '08, or P08, which according to her requires a reduction in costs by three million Swedish Crowns system wide. She remarked, "With these, you have to make immediately, so they will reduce flights. They will ground eleven aircraft."

She emphasized the importance of the program by stating, "If we don't make it, I don't think SAS will be as a company anymore. We need to get the money we need to get new aircraft." Turning to employees, she noted some of the implications on employees, "If you have a work and you knew that something is happening, you would like to have a decision. What will happen if we don't make it...what will happen with me?" In response to a question of whether she would consider this fear, she responded, "I think so, because I think

that you have noticed, we are not young here. We are around fifty-five, or around that. How do you find a job if you are 55 or 60? It's not easy."

4.3.4 Employee 1

The first employee, when asked how long she has been working here, immediately responded by saying too long! After which, she explained that she's been with the company for 36 years. She noted that she has worked in a few different positions in passenger service, including working at the hovercraft and boat terminal in Malmö, which offered connections to Copenhagen Airport, as well as the Malmö city ticket office as well as spending some time on the switch board call center, remarking, "I've done most of it."

In explaining the S11 program, she says, "Ugh...the first thing I think of is OK, lesser staff. That's the first that gets into my mind." She continued, "Perhaps I don't have a work in one year...we have to show in 18 months that we can do this...to the satisfaction of SAS Airlines and if we can't, perhaps they can take another handling agent. I think that's the right reality...yes, I think so. Everything is about money today."

She listed her information sources as the intranet system called 'Portalen,' internal newspapers, and special mailings to the home and monthly station meetings. She added the trade union, noting that there is a difference in the information that comes from the union as opposed to management. She contended that there are more questions when it's coming from the union, as in, "Is this really right?" When it comes from SAS, the message is, "This is what you do." She further explained that outside of the company, there is information in the newspaper, and that when her mother sees things, she lets her know as well as her daughter, who reads things on the Internet and lets her know as well. "And of course we discuss it when we are in private, when I see my colleagues in Copenhagen or wherever they work today." She noted as well, "I think sometimes...I think too much information, so I don't read it, but, eh, I like to look for information when I have a question or something—like I can ask [my manager], I can ask the union, I can go to the portal to see the latest info that's

about S11 or P08.” She also said that her best friend is the chairman of the trade union, so, she said they get a different dialogue when they talk.

In describing her feelings regarding the situation, she said, “I don’t give up. I don’t give up on my work or resign, whatever I do it won’t work, because I don’t think that’s the right approach to it. I still want to do a very good job—even a better job to really show we can do this and we are going to fight to the last day.” Reverting back to a previous statement, she restated, “It’s just the money this time. It’s more the systems. Everything you have to report, they don’t listen when I say why do it that way, it’s much easier to do it that way.”

She noted that this is the third or fourth time she’s been through “this sort of thing,” and referred to Jan Carlzon. “You know him as well as the rest of the world, yes, and he made something different.” He said to me, you. You fix this. You take your own positions and that...I felt very good about that and I think that they have to think something more about this stuff. That’s the bottom line. If they can’t get along with the staff, they can’t do anything.”

Referring back to a previous comment, where she offered her opinion that the company doesn’t listen to front line employees, she said again, “They don’t listen when I say why do it that way, it’s much easier to do it that way.” “It’s about the system where you are checking in. We can’t understand why they are doing this. The result will be the same if we do it another way. We say that from the beginning. Why put the Internet kiosk [self-service check in] here because they won’t use it. Passengers won’t use it. They come to us and were we right, or weren’t we? That’s money to be saved. That’s money to be saved. Yah.” Further, she described the over complexity of passenger processing, saying “It’s so complicated to get one passenger from there [pointing to the ticket lobby] on board [the aircraft]. Really, it is.”

Responding to a question about whether she thinks the company is on the right track, she says the program is “absolutely necessary. SAS have too many administration. Too much administration. That could be done much more easily.” Providing an example of how the company could make improvements

in organization to improve efficiency, she also described an administrative process of entering data into the computer system, explaining that there are seven stations in the region and that one person could provide this function for all stations, however instead, some stations send these to Stockholm or to Copenhagen for entry. “So, there is more to be efficient, I think. I think because it’s an old company and you build up administration year after year after year.”

In response to the strategy of the program, she said, “Of course it could be better. They should listen to the employees more because we have good ideas sometimes. Yah, sometimes, yah they won’t listen.” Responding to a question about whether she feels people have been involved in the process, she says, “No, I don’t think so, absolutely not. They just get it. Do like this. Yah.” She suggests the company have some sort of forum to talk to, “because I think we have got bright ideas what we do every day, we can see what is simpler to do. Yah, I think so.”

In closing, she said, “I can just tell you I love my work and I don’t...I come to work every day and I’m going to do a good job, yah and I feel that...I participate in it. I feel responsible for my work. Yes, I do. I think most of us do. It’s our second home. Yah. After 36 years, I think so.” She describes the “very good network” she has developed from working at the company for so long, which permits her to solve most of it by all the contacts. She says, “the problems I have in my daily work, I can solve by making a phone call or sending an e-mail.”

4.3.5 Employee 2

Employee 2 has noted that the week of this interview marked his fortieths year with SAS and that he had always worked in passenger service, although he had been a team leader before, which he described as second in command to the station manager. In discussing the S11 program, he noted that he really did not know so much about it, but that the program hadn’t really begun yet—that it was still in the beginning stages, but that it is about saving money and improving efficiency. He continued listing the places he gets information on the

program, including the company intranet system, 'Portalen,' monthly station meetings, the newspaper (both from the SGS business unit and from the SAS group respectively). He also noted that a person must be active and interested in order to get the information, mostly, and this is of his or her own accord. In explaining the situation surrounding the company and the S11 program, he said that the company is in a big problem, in that it is too complex. He suggested that the company should be restructured from the ground-up, noting that there are many redundancies in job function across the SAS Group organization. In closing, he explained that SGS has been given an ultimatum, referring to the Challenge '09 program, but that the Malmö-Sturup station is doing well and is "in the plus. "

4.3.6 Employee 3

Employee 3, a passenger service employee, explained the duties of her position as checking in people, taking care of the aircraft when it arrives and sending it away. She also assists passengers with lost luggage and working in the booking office, making reservations. Twenty years ago, she was only working in reservations. She worked for eight years at the SAS ferry connection in the center of Malmö that shuttled passengers to Copenhagen Airport. Her total time with the company is 38 years.

When asked what she knew about S11, she replied, "Actually, not so much," admitting that earlier when she had been asked if she would be able to interview, that she had to ask her colleague in the office what this S11 was. In responding to whether she has heard of Challenge '09, she replied, "I have heard, but not so much." She indicated that she has not received much information about the program.. Affirming that they have station meetings, she says it hasn't been discussed there either, but then acknowledged that she hadn't attended the last two meetings, but added, "I want to know what it is now." One thing that she did stress as significant is what one can assume is the Profit '08 (P08) program, stating, "OK, something is on now, you have read the newspapers

here, no, that 1000 is leaving the company, then we discuss that in the coffee hours.”

She explained the various ways the company communicates with employees; like others, she listed the company intranet and e-mail. She said that during work hours, they don't discuss things like this very often—that they generally are discussing what's happening during the flight instead. She also noted, “When we have friends, we don't talk about our works,” explaining “They say why are you not leaving and why are you relying on that. That's like a doctor. I don't want to talk about illness.”

She expressed as a frustration about the company in her feeling that front-line employees are not given the opportunity to participate in organizational development, stating, “As you say, we are on the low, we have always good ideas and we know when we meet the passengers, we know how to do, but those chiefs up there, they don't listen so much to us sometimes. We have so many ideas and we send them further sometimes.” She explained, “Before, we had what you called ‘försäljning’...those that are out to customers—special people working with ideas, we send it to them and we have in town, I think its about five that we can talk to and say that our passengers they want to have that and that. Can you take it further when you are at a meeting in Stockholm?” She said, “Now, I think they have given up.”

She expressed further concern for the strategy of the company, stating, “But now all is about money. Earlier it was just to see for the best for the passenger...but I think money is more today.” She explained that she had observed this more now than a year ago. She also conveyed dissatisfaction with the service the company is providing now, noting the airline no longer offers food on flights after 9:00am and asserting that passengers complain and that Malmö Aviation continues to provide food on all their flights. She also noted, premium-paying passengers are no longer granted the extra legroom on flights that they used to enjoy.

“You read about that we don’t have so much money. So, I think when we got back to that, then there is much more to do to take...the good service back. For instance, to have meat, or...coffee free. To start with coffee or cake or something.”

She also admitted to recognizing that if they get more flights, the company doesn’t add staff. “We are the same and we have to do more all the time.”

5 Analysis

Empirical material from corporate communication, interviews from local management, union representation, and workers are examined, compared and contrasted to find answers to the research questions posed in this thesis. Concepts will be applied to theoretical analysis of what constructed realities exist among SGS employees at Malmö-Sturup Airport with regard to the S11 program. Each of these themes emerges as a manifestation of the social construction of meaning by SAS/SGS employees.

5.1 Review of Theory and its Applicability to Answering the Research Questions

Analysis of the collection of empirical material is based on the theoretical concepts described in chapter two of this thesis. Three themes provide a scaffold for the analysis—discourses, understandings, and identity. Shedding some light on the application of such theories, a literature review is made of documents supporting and exemplifying the use of this theory in organizational change and development as it relates to the airline industry.

Drawing on the first half of the theoretical literature review from chapter two, which discusses approaches to change, the importance of considering the effect of discourse on change is highlighted and exemplified. More importantly, it offers insight on beneficial possibilities of managing discourse as method for managing change as it influences the understanding of organizational members. The second half of the literature review investigates how people experience change, encouraging sensitivity to this matter and how it has an important impact both on organizational success and well being of the individual during change. The research questions attempt to address these concepts, asking:

- What are the various discourses that influence employee's understanding of the organization's change program and what is the resulting range of understandings?

- How do their various understandings of the change program affect their ability to identify with and embrace the program?

In so doing, an exploration of the possible effects of discourse is made as they are used to manage understanding through discourse, while paying attention to the individual and how they are experiencing the S11 change process.

5.2 Discourses and Resulting Understandings

Referring to Sandberg and Targama's (2007) phenomenological view of understanding—that there could be a qualitative variation among people's ways of understanding their reality, this becomes evident in the various remarks made by members of the organization. In reviewing the samples of corporate and independent communications, certain discourses and understandings became evident. Discourses and understandings of the S11 program were found to revolve around the following topics:

- Aircraft Purchase
- Inefficiency in Administration
- Time
- Culture
- Industry Status
- Employee Participation in Organizational Development
- Changes in Customer Service
- S11 as a Money-Saver
- Staffing Reductions

A comparison of these discourses to employee understandings reveals variation in the ability of the organization to influence employees to a particular intended result. Though these discourses seem clear, understandings by employees do not necessarily manifest consistent meaning. The theory of social construction posits that consistent meaning and understanding are not so easy to achieve. Rather, as Sandberg and Targama (2007) point out, people make interpretations of given

discourses grounded in their own unique experiences. Furthermore, organizations cannot control *what* discourses are presented to employees or the extent to which employees attend to the discourses.

5.2.1 Need for New Aircraft Fleet

Jansson, in an *Inside* newspaper article, indicates the need for fleet renewal, stressing that the company should be up to four billion Swedish Kronor in order to invest in a new fleet. Flottau (2007) also notes Deputy CEO, Dueholm's statement that it is hard to have a profitable long-haul operation with only eleven aircraft. Flint's (2008) article explains the importance of new aircraft. Relating to Jansson's assertion that without S11, profits will not sustain fleet replacement, which he says will erode the foundation necessary to fend off a take-over of SAS. The article furthermore reports that in 2008, SAS will be making a decision on fleet renewal inferring the replacement 85 aircraft in the fleet on top of a fleet increase of 15-20 aircraft, required to sustain a five percent annual passenger growth. *Inside* further reports that business analysts don't believe SAS would be able to borrow money to change the fleet due to current credit strength at SAS.

These various discourses coordinate with some employees' interpretations. The passenger service manager, for instance, listed this as one of the initiatives of the S11 program, stating, "We have to change the fleet as it's going to be quite old." He furthermore explained that having new aircraft with a good environmental record and cutting edge amenities is important to creating future market demand, strengthening this statement by highlighting positive response from past purchases in both the long haul and domestic fleet. The union representative also points out her view "We need to get the money; we need to get new aircraft."

5.2.2 Too Much Administration

The 'Our Challenge!' corporate brochure acknowledged the need for trimming administration. In describing some of the cost cutting the company will be making in order to achieve profit, it explained that a cut in central administration was to be made in the amount of 300-400 million Swedish Kronor.

Wall's (2008) article raised the recent shortcomings in the achievement of profit goals in the first quarter of 2008 mostly attributed to high fuel prices, which resulted in a re-emphasis in S11 profit recovery through an aggressive restructuring plan termed Profit 2008 (P08), which includes a fleet reduction of eleven aircraft as well as the postponement of one long-haul aircraft as well as elimination of 1000 full-time positions. Jansson explained that these measures are important to keep S11 on track to make SAS into a stronger, more competitive airline.

Employee 1 and Employee 2 both noted the over-sized and inefficient administration. Employee 1, for instance, stated "SAS [has] too much administration. That could be done much more easily." She explained further, "because it's an old company and you build up administration year after year after year." She furthermore gave suggestions of how administration could be cut down further, such as administrative functions that she does at Malmö airport, but that other stations send to Stockholm corporate to be accomplished, explaining these functions can more easily be accomplished by staff at the local airports. Referring to a report on the P08 initiative in a recent newspaper, she acknowledged the reduction of staff by 1000 employees, saying most of these would be cabin and flight deck positions, but some of the positions to be looked into would be administrative. Employee 2 gave a similar account, explaining that the company is too complex and has many redundancies in job function across the group of companies, suggesting it be restructured from the ground up.

5.2.3 Time

A variety of discourses portray time-sensitive nature of this program. The names of the program and its 'sub-programs' denote time and a deadline as they incorporate dates into their names, such as Strategy 2011 (S11), Challenge 2009 (Challenge '09), and Profit 2008 (P08). The SAS Group also sent out a significant discourse in the original press release of the S11 program, when it announced the possibility of divesting SGS from the group of organizations. The later decision of setting a deadline for the organization to meet profitability and performance

goals else be divested, further supports this discourse of urgency and time. The *SGS On Ground* magazine presents reactionary and appropriately themed discourse with powerful images of urgency and time. This begins with the front cover's picture of a race start with sprinters in blurred movement launching off the starting block. The theme is carried on throughout the magazine, with other images related to speed, time and racing such as stop watches, clocks and more racers. In the previously mentioned 5 February 2008 press release declaring SAS Group's intention to give SGS the opportunity to achieve the previously mentioned goals, the following closing statement demonstrates tension expressed from the corporate level over keeping up the pace of the program:

"The Board takes a serious view of the long decision-making processes and the threat of action delaying important elements of S11. The strategy will ensure a profitable and competitive SAS," says Egil Myklebust, Chairman of SAS AB."

Mats Jansson's statement, "We have to increase the tempo to hold the time schedule in the S11 work" (Ahlberg-Valdna 2008, 3) makes the same impression.

Several statements by employees suggest that a feeling of urgency and importance to meet set goals has been achieved. However, a secondary effect is an understandable anxiety over job security. The passenger service manager makes known the urgency for achieving the goals set forth for the group, stating, "We just have one and a half year. It's a short time, so, yah. That's the biggest problem. We have to hurry up." Employee 1's sentiments portray a seemingly coherent and legitimate reason for concern, putting forward, "We are SAS Ground Services. We are not sold out. We have to show in 18 months that we can do this...eh...to the satisfaction of SAS Airlines and if we can't, perhaps, they take another handling agent." Similarities in evidence of concern over job security and uncertainty for the future are distributed unevenly across the local group at Malmö. The passenger service manager suggests, "I think maybe they are worried." Explaining further, he suggests, "They are concerned in the airline SAS and what is happening." The union representative's comments support

what the passenger service manager says, stating, “If we don’t make it, I don’t think SAS will be as a company anymore.” She gives further insight into what she believes the reality of the employee group is, explaining, “If you have a work and you knew that something is happening, you would like to have a decision. What will happen if we don’t make it?” She continues by saying, I think you have noticed we are not young here. We are around 55...how do you find a job if you are 55 or 60. It’s not easy.” Employee 1’s response described earlier confirms the concerns voiced by the passenger service manager and union representative while other responses do not necessarily correspond.

The ramp service manager gives a mixed portrayal for himself and his employee group as to work security anxiety. In response to whether his employee group feels the S11 program is necessary, he says, “Yah, of course. I think they think that, because if they don’t do it they maybe don’t have any work, so I think they understand that.” The portrayal he gives of his feelings personally toward the situation as an employee of the company, he states, “I think like this, that no matter what happens, there is always one place for me somewhere. The business will always be here and if it’s called SGS or something else...with my experience, I’m not worried.” Explaining his perception of his employees understanding, the ramp service manager inferred, “I don’t think they know because it’s quite far away and they’re very young, so I don’t think they think about much beyond.” “Most of my employees are under 30 years and some of them are under 25, so they don’t think much about...much of the future or tomorrow.” He followed by pointing to a part of the operation that he feels *does* have significant meaning to his employee group—staff travel benefits, explaining further that “all the employee have ID travels. That would be discount travel and that’s a big deal. They can fly all around the world for cheap. So, that’s a big deal and I can understand that.” Clarifying that if they worked for a ground handling company independent of an airline, such as their local competitor, Novair, they would not have this benefit, he admitted, “I, like everybody else, I also like this ID travel because it’s a good benefit.” These

statements simply suggests that the discourse of time is greatly overshadowed by a highly valued benefit.

5.2.4 Culture

Jansson, in an Air Transport World Magazine Article noted that the biggest challenge is culture change, stating, "Can we handle the downturn? Yes we can, if we solve the culture problem. Can we handle the fuel price? Yes, if we can solve the culture problem. Can we fulfill the cost-cutting program? Yes, if we can solve the culture problem" (Flint 2008). Cultural turnaround through customer orientation and greater commitment is listed first under the initiatives of the S11 program in the 'Our Challenge!' corporate brochure. The front page of *Inside* corporate publication featuring HR Director, Ellekrog's speaking at one of six company dialogues at the Stockholm-Arlanda station about cultural change at the company also drew attention to this discourse. Her acknowledgement of the unclear and dissimilar culture across the three Scandinavian cultures followed by her statement, "if we aren't together, a strong, positive culture will not be created and then the strategies cannot be carried out" (Ahlberg-Valdna 2008, 3), further supports the disbursement of ideas regarding importance of culture in multiple sources.

Contrasting these discourses, management at the station did not discuss aspects of culture as important aspects of the program. The passenger service manager did, however, discuss the awareness of a separate culture at Copenhagen in comparing the progress on Challenge '09 with Swedish stations, as when noting concerns over what he believed to be lacking progress at Copenhagen, he explained, "That's another company. It's SGS Denmark and they have...in some ways, they are working in another...they have a different culture." Both the ramp and passenger service managers furthermore shared impressions of SGS Norway as well as SGS Sweden when they made generalizations about the quality of service at those two companies. This distinction coincides with Ellekrog's previously mentioned splintering of culture across the various Scandinavian companies.

On the same topic, employees didn't make any remarks on this account. The only interview to relate culture specifically related to the change program was the union representative, who discussed this in rather non-specific terms, saying:

- Union Representative: We have to focus more on the challenge that's security, how we behave.
- Interviewer 1: What do you mean, 'how we behave'?
- Union Representative: How you talk to each other, eh...how you work.
- Interviewer 1: How you talk to each other?
- Union Representative: Let's see...in the morning, you say, Hello. How are you?
- Interviewer 2: More friendly?
- Union Representative: Yes, more friendly to each other.
- Interviewer 1: Do you think before it was unfriendly, or?
- Union Representative: Not unfriendly, but you could be more...at five o'clock in the morning, it's hard to be...Yah, OK, well, friendly is the wrong word, but I, you understand what I mean, yes?
- Interviewer 1: Yah, better communication?
- Union Representative: Yes, communicating to each other.

Though few employees expressed sentiments specifically regarding organizational culture, the ramp and passenger service managers as well as Employee 2 made comments about the high standard of service, and efficiency to which the Malmö-Sturup station exhibits, possibly exhibiting an affiliation and pride in the local culture at their station.

This lack of portrayed understanding leads one to believe that the culture turnaround, suggested to be quite important according to the prominent position

in organizational discourse, does not seem to have influenced employee understanding at Malmö Airport.

5.2.5 State of the Industry

A great deal of material, both corporate and private media in origin, provides a vivid depiction of the state of the airline industry. Articles, such as ‘Aviation Goes into a Time of Tough Turbulence,’ and ‘Expensive Oil Snaps Companies’ from *Inside* corporate newspaper, or ‘European Airlines see First-Quarter Downturn’ with statements like “The bloodletting among European airlines may be about to start” from an independent magazine highlighting high fuel prices, softening economy, weakening demand and increased competition, among other things, describe a markedly oppressive business cycle for 2008. Other problems impacting SAS directly such as the Q400 aircraft crisis, strike action by unions, limiting factors in long-haul competitive possibility due to geography and employee contracts, and SAS’ unique positioning in the European airline industry as the ‘middle child’ are furthermore documented examples of portrayed challenges that face the company. Addressing daunting reported about the airline industry, an article, ‘All Can Participate to make SAS Profitable,’ interviewing the flight attendant from *Inside* newspaper features a paragraph on dealing with the media. It stated, “We must appear in the media with positive news!” and continued in stating, “We have had extremely bad luck, but some time, the luck must turn and to get there, we all have to hold the flame with life and spread good news.” The article continued in listing things employees should feel positive about.

At Malmö-Sturup, the union representative discussed industrial matters most extensively when talking about SGS progress on Challenge ’09. “We have [had] three bad months.” “It’s not a good start,” she said, noting that fuel is a problem, fewer passengers, and low fares, competition from too many operators (noting the three carriers that operate between Stockholm and Malmö) and the Q400 problems (which resulted in larger aircrafts being placed on the same routes, meaning an overcapacity and more SGS workers needed to service the

large aircraft). The passenger service manager also acknowledged the type of rhetoric that is made available to employees as well, stating, “There is very much negative information, so it’s very important to tell them when we have done a good work.” Employee 3 commented, “When we have friends, we don’t talk about our [work]...that’s like a doctor. I don’t want to talk about illness.” This suggests an understanding of problems with the industry, where her reaction in dealing with this is to avoid discussing it. There were no *specific* references to the state of the industry from passenger service workers, however, resulting in an inconclusive finding of whether an awareness of the industrial environment grants them much of an understanding or awareness of this matter as it relates to S11

5.2.6 Employee Participation in Organizational Change

One can find stark contrast between messages in corporate communications and understandings revealed by employees as two employee interviews underline the lack in participation among front-line employees and the negative effect they perceived from not listening or seeking advice from this employee group. For instance, in an issue of Inside magazine, Jansson noted that strategy comes from employees, unions and the market. Another article entitled ‘All can Participate to Make SAS Profitable’ from the same periodical supported this concept as well, offering tips on “what I as a worker can do for a more profitable SAS.” The article is in an interview question and answer format. The flight attendant made suggestions on how to help in providing better customer service, creating a positive work environment and better communicating with colleagues. Supporting this, SAS Ground Service corporate periodical features a letter from SGS director, Olof Bärve, where he notes, “I am convinced that there are many good ideas within the organization that are just waiting to be turned over to practical use.” Also on page 2 is an article explains, “Because you as have the best insight about what can be improved in the daily work, we at SGS Sweden want to be better about safeguarding your ideas. It’s management’s duty to

listen to proposals, to value ideas and together with idea-bringers, reflect on how we can best come to put these into the work-process.”

Employee understanding shows something different, however. Employee 1 remarked, “They don’t listen when I say why do it that way, it’s much easier to do it that way” and in explaining how the program could run better, she says, “They should listen to the employees more, because we have good ideas sometimes. Yah, sometimes, yah, they won’t listen.” Employee 3 supported these sentiments as well, noting, “We have always good ideas and we know when we meet the passengers, we know how to do, but those chiefs up there, they don’t listen, so much to us sometimes. We have so many ideas and we send them further sometimes.” The conversation continued:

Interviewer: If you have an idea, what would you do?

Employee 3: Before, we had...special people working with ideas, we send it to them and we have in town, we have, I think it’s about five that we can talk to and say that our passengers, they want to have that and that. Can you take it further when you are at a meeting in Stockholm?

Interviewer: Is it still available? Are you still able to do that now?

Employee 3: No, I think they have given up.

She later noted, “Sometimes I do, but not so much. It’s always like that, I think—when we are in connection with the passenger, we know more than those who are sitting behind.”

The contrast between corporate communications and employee-depicted realities reveals systems are either not effective, not existent, or simply not made explicit to employees despite the relatively great number of corporate references made to the value and possibility of capitalizing off employee participation. Whether employee ideas are being collected and not acknowledged, or if the communications in corporate texts are simply lip-service rhetoric, employees do not seem universally under the impression that their ideas count or are heard.

5.2.7 Improved Customer service

The original 13 June 2008 press release about S11 emphasized its desire to give customers the best service. This idea is recreated in the corporate brochure 'Our Challenge' outlining S11 also stated strategy should provide better service for more savvy customers. HR Director, Ellekrog also points to the goal of a service-minded organization.

The union representative, for instance, inferred a certain concern over reduced service standards, referring to a decreased staff. "They [passenger service agents] are stressed. We can't serve them as we want to serve them." Employee 3's statements also support the understanding of a reduced standard of service, explaining, "Earlier, it was just to see the best for the passenger...I think it's more today than it was for one year." She continued in listing a number of products and services that had changed, such as reduced legroom for premium-paying passengers, having meat, cakes or coffee available for free onboard flights. She also noted the company no longer serves breakfast on flights after 9.00am, comparing to Malmö Aviation, who serves food on all flights regardless of the time of day.

In contrast the idea of service is seen in a different light by other organizational members. Both ramp and passenger service managers listed operational objectives such as on-time departures missed luggage ratio and aircraft damage as service standards rather than the various amenities available to passengers. In these accounts, both managers expressed opinions that their station provides a good service, as does Employee 2. This may relate to the difference in whom one considers to be the primary customer. For management, perhaps, SAS Airlines is considered to be their customer, while with passenger service agents are thinking more about the passengers themselves as the primary customer.

5.2.8 S11 Strictly a Money Saver?

Corporate communications describe S11 as an all-encompassing program. Jansson, in the opening letter of the April edition of *Inside* newspaper specifically

says, “S11 doesn’t just contain cost-reductions,” listing growth, development and stability among other things (SAS Group 2008, *Inside*, 2). A SAS Group publication further described the various aspects of the program as including, a cultural turnaround through customer orientation and greater commitment, a focus on airline operations, concentration on Northern Europe, harmonization and development of customer offerings and competitiveness in all parts of the business.

Some reported interpretations of the program contradicted these corporate depictions, however, denoting the program strictly as a money saving program. For instance, Employee 1 and 2 made the note that the current strategy is all about money. Employee 1, in comparing S11 to the turnaround program under Jan Carlzon, said this program is “just the money this time.” Employee 3 makes a similar assertion, “Earlier, it was just to see for the best for the passenger...but if you choose by them, I think money is more today.” This is furthermore supported by multiple comments from the union representative about the importance of saving money.

5.2.9 Fewer Workers

No corporate communications were found that explicitly said the airline would be operating with fewer employees. However, statements of employees suggested this understanding derives from observed changes at the operational level, comparing the current situation to ‘how it was before.’ Employee 1, for instance, in referring to her understanding of S11, said “...the first thing I think of is, OK, lesser staff.” Employee 3 echoed this, saying, “...if we have, for instance, more flights, they don’t take more people to work here. It’s the same. We are the same and we have to do more all the time.” The union representative made a similar observation, “Do the same with less employees. Today we are four people on a shift normally. Last year, we were six or seven. It keeps going down and down.”

5.2.10 Variation in Exposure to Discourse

Aside from the various discourses, a look at how employees expose themselves to discourses presents interesting considerations. A direct contrast became apparent in how much and what discourses employees reported electing to expose themselves to. Interviews revealed differences in understanding resulting from this inconsistent exposure. Employee 1, noted the avid exchange of discourse regarding the organization and also the program listing not only the sources of corporate information in common among all interviewees (corporate periodicals, corporate intranet 'Portalen,' and station meetings), but several other sources as well both at work and away from work. She noted discussing these matters with her union representative at work, as well as in private as she explained that they are best friends, which grants them a 'special dialogue.' She also said that she reads newspapers with articles about SAS, her mother calls and she discusses things with her daughter as well. In contrast, employee 3 stated that she has not received information regarding the program and that she doesn't discuss such things in the coffee room during work, or at home either. She explained, "When we have friends, we don't talk about our works...that's like a doctor. I don't want to talk about illness."

A possible explanation of this comes from Employee 2's comment that in order for company discourse to serve its purpose, employees must take initiative and have an interest in seeking that information, painting a picture of a non-compulsory nature of exposure to such discourses. The union representative appeared to agree with him, explaining, "You have to look for it yourself in this portal if you are interested. It's up to me..." The union representative made an interesting comment along these lines as well, stating, "...it's very difficult to do. You get a lot of paper. You have to do this. You have to save money. You have to do *that*, you have to do *that*. It's too much."

Looking at what might be considered a more active or engaging form of discourse, the ramp service manager explained, "It's the best way to have a meeting, because then you can have a dialogue." Even this, however, does not

guarantee an engagement in exposure to information and discourses as Employee 3 noted that she really didn't know so much about the program and in fact had to ask her colleague what it was the interviewers were talking about when she was asked if she would be willing to interview about S11. The ramp service manager noted his frustrations about circulation information uniformly as well, saying, "It's up to you to read your [e-]mail and some are not so good with reading mail. I say to them every time, at least one time for your work day, you should read your mail."

A stark contrast is found in comparing Employee 3's portrayed knowledge about the program to that of Employee 1, as Employee 1 without hesitating was able to remark on several points of the program and to perhaps a slightly lesser degree Employee 2. A few possible reasons for this are offered, beginning with a comment by Employee 1, who talked about the amount of information made available to employees. She said, "I think sometimes...I think [it's] too much information, so I don't read it." The union representative also made a similar comment, stating, "It's very difficult to do. You get a lot of paper. You read all this. You have to save money, you have to do *that*, you have to do *that*. It's too much."

This second comment could be understood not only as an indicator of an overabundance of discourses, but perhaps also the perceived negative nature of discourses. This is consistent with the notation of a flight attendant from the SAS Group *Inside* newspaper article, where she states, "We would like to feel that management stands on our side. We need more positive information and feedback" (SAS Group 2008, *Inside*, 6). The passenger service manager also supported this sentiment, stating, "but of course, they are thinking about when...when will it go the other way—every year. We need...I think we need to send out information when we have done the good things. When we have earned money and when we have delivered a good quality, so I think that's very important to cut down in the station...it is very much negative information, so it's very important to tell them when we have done a good work."

5.2.11 Conclusive Remarks on Discourse and Understanding

Corporate media mass media and interpersonal exchange represent examples of discourses available to employees. Inconsistencies and ambiguities in the organization's ability to influence employees' understandings are strongly exemplified through the inconsistent understandings employees come to. In some cases, such as time pressure, and to a lesser degree, issues over negative press releases in relation to the state of the industry result in congruent understandings among employees. Some discourses, however, produce secondary meanings, considering employees' understanding of job insecurities stemming from time pressures of change. It was also found in some cases, that responses regarding culture, for instance, produced marginal understandings if any at all among employees. In other cases, employee understandings were completely contradictory to samples of discourse, considering how some employees see S11 as a money saving endeavor, where corporate discourses insist that it is more than this. Also, the stark contrast in corporate materials insisting that employees should be engaged in organizational development, while some employees criticized at length the organization's exclusion of front line employee ideas and insights. Finally, understandings in some cases are developed independently of intentional discourse as employees see the program as meaning reduced work staff for the same amount of work. Possibly further hampering the organization's ability to influence the understandings of its employees is the inconsistent nature in to which members selectively expose themselves to available discourses.

In summary, the access to discourses by employees is reminiscent of the fable of The Blind Man and the elephant in that employees vary which discourses they have engaged. Further, each has brought prior knowledge, experience, and perspective that influence their interpretations of those discourses. Hence, meanings are constructed inconsistently. These variations in discourse and understanding are likely to influence identity.

5.3 Understanding Results in Ability of Employees to Identify with the S11 Program

Sandberg and Targama (2007, 116) explain:

“Understanding is not only something we do, but is also something we are. It therefore forms a fundamental part of our whole way of being. This means that our identity is intimately related to how we understand phenomena in the world.”

Following this segue from understanding to identity, we refer to Alvesson’s (2004, 190) account of identity, implying “a certain form of subjectivity, and thereby ‘ties’ a person’s feelings, thinking and valuing in a particular direction” and is best understood as “constructed, multiple and varying, rather than fixed, monolithic and robust.” It is in this spirit that exploration is made of employees’ ability to *identify with* the S11 program and strategy. Three observations are made in answering this question:

- Identification with the need for change
- Feasibility of change
- Ability to identify with product and service

5.3.1 The Need for Change and the Reasoning Behind It

HR Director Ellekrog notes that employees and unions “understand that the business environment has changed considerably for airlines... Where they might differ in opinion is on the consequences that will have on SAS.” Considering the consequences as needed modifications to SAS as an organization, this statement can be congruent with organizational members’ interpretation for reasoning behind the need for change. Within the context of Ellekrog’s statement, although interviews universally suggest there is a need for change, subjects provided a variety of understood interpretations behind the need for organizational change, including:

- Job Security
- Inefficient, oversized administration
- Sustainability of airline due to an aging aircraft fleet.

- Inadequate product and service
- Inadequate incorporation of ideas from employees

These five understandings are not commonly noted among all employee interviews, but rather employees report attributing just one or two of these four understandings in identifying with the need for organizational change, further supporting theoretical discussion of constructed realities—that employees construct realities in their own ways. This account is based only on what employees directly reported attributing to the need for change. If they noted this as an understanding of the situation, they did not necessarily say that this understanding was a rationale for change.

One of the two most common understandings attributed to the need for organizational change, was job security. Employee 1's, statement, "If we don't make it, I don't think SAS will be as a company anymore," expresses this concern. The ramp service manager makes the congruent statement that his employee group sees this as important because they think if they don't do it, it's possible they won't have a job in the future, explaining that the employee travel benefit makes working for SGS quite important to them—and that it is in fact an attractive perk for himself as well. The union representative also makes a direct correlation between job security and the need for change, voicing her concerns that SAS Group in total (including SGS) "won't be as a company anymore" if changes are not achieved.

The other most common rationale behind the need for change is the importance of new aircraft. While this is mentioned by the passenger service manager, the union representative and Employee 1, reasoning is made most explicit by the passenger service manager, with his more in-depth explanation of how a renewed and enlarged fleet would improve the long-term sustainability of SAS.

Two employees note the oversized and ineffective nature of organizational administration. Employee 1, for instance, gives her interpretation of the

company, explaining that it is an old company and in her view, it has built up administration over the year, following this up by noting ways that, that in her view, the company could reduce administrative staff. In explaining why she thinks the program is necessary, she says the company is in a big problem, that it is too complex and that there are many redundancies in the organization. Though several employees deemed decreases in service quality as problematic, only Employee 3 pointed directly to this as reasoning behind necessity for organizational change, stating that if she were CEO, she would look to improve service and amenity standards on flights. While both Employee 1 and Employee 3 criticized the organization for not more readily incorporating ideas from front-line employees, Employee 3 notes that this is specifically a problem with SAS strategy that should be addressed. Looking at the various subjective views of employees, despite their universal agreement that change is necessary, it is possible to see that they all arrive at this common conclusion for different reasons and from different points of departure.

5.3.2 Difficulty in Identifying with the Ability to Make Prescribed Changes

Despite the common understanding that there is a need to change, questions remained in the minds of some organizational members as to whether the objectives of the program are achievable considering their various understandings of the organization and strategy. Corporate communications addressed this fear in SAS Group *Inside* newspaper. HR Director, Ellekrog explains, “Changes start at the top with leadership, including union leadership as well as managerial leadership, in order to create engagement in the organization [and] I am completely convinced that the organization is in a condition to achieve our goal” (Ahlberg-Valdna 2008, 3). She furthermore asserted that union leadership is necessary for a success in the endeavors of this program.

Turning to the union representative’s interpretation of the situation, “I think they think that they can do it. I don’t think we’ll manage this.” In reference to the time frame and goals of Challenge ’09, she says, “They will sell

us. We have just 18 months to fix...Scandinavian Ground Service and we have [had] three bad months.” She says this, pointing to poor performance in the first quarter of 2008, which she relates to a myriad of internal and external variables impacting profitability of the operation. The passenger service manager eluded to his awareness of the doubtful feelings he perceives his employees having, stating “We have to go on working and we’ll see if it’s enough when this 18 months [is up]... Hopefully it will be OK and we can go on with SAS Ground Service.” Further indicating a feeling of incomplete control over the situation, he noted, “It doesn’t matter if we are doing good quality...if there’s problems with the other stations.” Employee 1 similarly eludes to having doubt towards the program, stating, “perhaps I don’t have a work in one year...I think that’s the right reality.” Despite doubtful remarks, she attests that she is motivated to try non-the-less. “Well, I don’t give up. I don’t give up on my work or resign, whatever I do. It won’t work, because I don’t think that’s the right approach to it. I still want to do a very good job—even a better job to really show we can do this and we are going to fight to the last day.”

The impending deadline of Challenge ’09 might compare with a feeling of biblical ‘judgment day’ for employees as is illustrated by the passenger service manager and Employee 1. They relate this uncertainty with the time deadline understanding previously explained. The union representative connects her understanding of this time scale to her understanding of the challenging business cycle as well. The overriding message from employees is the lack of faith that success is possible. Not only is this a question on the lips of employees, but also on that of leadership on the side of both management and union and is supported further in discourses portraying CEO Jansson as being worried considering the events and position of SAS. Morgan and Rachid’s (2003), suggesting any organizational change affects trust, underlines the importance of interpersonal trust for sustaining individual and organizational effectiveness in such situations. Linking Morgan and Rachid’s concepts to the uncertainty

portrayed in so many different parts of the organization, this trust issue deserves recognition.

5.3.3 Identification with the Product

There are clues that point to some employees' difficulty in identifying with the service or product of the airline. The union representative first explained the decrease in staffing from the previous years to the current, preventing employees from providing service quality they identify with. The union representative noted the change in staffing levels, "Today we are four people on a shift normally. Last year, we were six or seven." In describing the change in service, she said, "They [passenger service employees] are stressed. We can't serve [passengers] as we want to serve them." Also, Employee 3 commented on reductions in airline customer offerings, such as meal service reductions and elimination of premium passenger seating (with greater legroom). Employee 3 responded to what she sees as sub-standard service, stating "Well, today, it's very difficult as you read about that we don't have so much money. So, I think when we got back to that, then there is much more to do to take the...good service back, for instance. To have meat, or for instance coffee free."

Employees' noted change in service when comparing the current situation to how it was one or more years ago, suggests an inability to identify with the change in service—that they identify with a previous service standard the airline no longer offers. This suggests that various discourses of the airline have not been successful in changing their understanding and identity of what is the current service standard of the airline should be. HR Director Ellekrog's assertion in *Inside* newspaper that a cultural turnaround towards service at all levels of the company addresses this, however as our account compared discourse and understanding showed, an understanding of *culture* as part of the S11 program was not found among interview subjects.

5.3.4 Conclusion on Identification with S11

Not all understandings explicitly influence how employees identify with the change program. Connections between understandings and identity that were supported by subjects' comments brought about three conclusions:

- Though employees may come to a similar conclusion, this study's results exemplify the unique way by which people come to this conclusion.
- A lack of faith in the possibility of achieving the goals set in the time period given leaves question for organizational effectiveness under such a work milieu.
- An inability of some employees to identify with current product and service brings to light the hermeneutic concept of understanding, where employees still base new understandings on old ones, which interferes with their ability to identify as the organization changes.

5.4 Conclusion

In this discussion, an attempt is made to draw a direct line from discourse, through the hermeneutic comparative nature of understanding and on to construction of identity. When presenting this in theoretical form, it was suggested that such a simple model, though understandable, is self-described as providing ambiguous results and, when compared with actual attempts of use in a practical setting, exemplified even further this challenge. Observations of discursive action at SAS stays true to form as is evidenced in the dissected building of constructed realities by the various subjects of this study. When comparing understandings to samples of discourse, variability in understanding can be observed, such as secondary meanings, no meaning, contradictory meanings or meanings completely independent of 'official' corporate or media discourses. When linking meanings to understandings, it is recognized that employees come to identify with a cause in unique ways and for unique reasons.

Finally, based on the lack of apparent faith in achieving ascribed results of the program, the possibility of importance in building mutual organizational trust is suggested for achieving successful change.

Based on evidence, which suggests that the organization's 'official discourses' presented have varying degrees of impact on people's understanding and ability to identify with the program, we explore the concept of hermeneutics further. The hermeneutic nature of understanding, means that people are operating on discourses specific to this company from their entire life experience. Four of the six subjects of this study had between 35 and 45 years of employment with the company, meaning they build understanding based on 35-45 years worth of discursive exposure specific to this organization and in many cases the same position. With so much history, new discourses logically would seem marginal to the vast history of experience. The union representative herself, with forty-plus years of company experience supports this conclusion. In the following discussion, the interviewer asks whether employees are readily seeking information, or if employees are more passive in this respect.

Interviewer: So, they're not watching every week or every day?

Union Rep: No, they are not. No, no.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Union Rep: They have been working so long with SAS and so, they knew it. I think they probably do.

Comments from Employee 1 also support this conclusion, as she describes an interaction she had with previous SAS CEO Jan Carlzon during the 1980s turnaround program, saying, "You know him as well as the rest of the world, yes and he made something different. He said to me, you. You fix this. You take your own positions and that, I felt very good about...and I think that they have to think something more about this stuff." Employee 3 as well, in her critique of product offerings at SAS, says, "There is much more to do to take...the good service back, for instance, to have meat, or for instance coffee free."

This suggests that there may be an increased challenge in attempting to achieve identification with a program for employees with a greater history than those with a shorter history, as is supported by the ramp service manager's sentiments. According to him, the ramp service employee group generally has just over one year of company seniority. The ramp service manager, who previously was passenger service manager at Malmö-Sturup, makes this observation:

“Actually, for my employees, my group out there, I don't think its...a big deal, because they are very new in the company, so they haven't known anything else, if you know what I mean. Its another business in here [referring to the passenger service employee group]. Most of the employees here have lots—about 30 or 40 years of experience in the company so they have another history behind them. But my employees don't have that history, so its easy for me to present, like an S-elva deal...”

Drawing a straight line from discourse through to identity is less simple with such an employee with so much history in the same company and in the same position.

- As there are so many previous understandings that impact meaning from current discourses, it may be hard to decipher the impact of the discourse in the final identity and ability to identify with the program.
- As the union representative suggests, if employees have so much understanding of the company and industry already, they perhaps are less likely to seek out as many current discourses, resulting in an insulation effect from the impact of new discourse.

In the end, findings suggest that in this situation, the ability to help employees with a longer company history to embrace and identify with changes bring an even greater challenge.

As was discussed in the theoretical literature review, there are benefits in approaching change management from a humanistic, interpretive standpoint. In

the theoretical literature review, United Airlines as well as Continental Airline, like SAS in this study, reported both challenges and benefits in achieving desired understandings in discourse. The portrayal of understandings by employees, and their apparent origins in comparison to intended meanings by organizational leadership as described above, illustrates the difficulty in successfully leading a group by interpretive means.

6 Conclusion

In this section, we first review the findings of the study, discuss its implications for the organization and finally discuss various possibilities for future study.

6.1 Summary of Findings

As described in the introduction of this thesis, the airline industry is an exceedingly volatile and dynamic work environment. It was established that just as organisms must react and evolve to their environments, so must organizations, which is particularly true for airlines considering the nature of their environment. Through a literature review of human resource management practices in situations of organizational change with regard to the airline industry, it is suggested that workers in this industry call for interpretive style of management. Examples are given for airlines' practice in this style of management, finding in these situations variation in success. It is established in the theoretical explanation of interpretive management through understanding that it is difficult to lead an organization in this style of management. What is supported in the practical review of theoretical literature is that negligence to do so can have negative implications for both the organization and its employees, however attempts to attain a desired effect are not a sure thing as attempts to influence understanding prove to be quite ambiguous.

As the importance of this study is established, so too is a gap in research. Specific to the airline industry, no studies are found detailing the employee perspective of organizational change. In taking this perspective, an attempt has been made to portray the understandings of how members of SAS Ground Service employees, through exposure to various discourses understand and identify with the change program. The ambiguities described and supported in the theoretical portion of this thesis are furthermore exemplified in this study's empirical findings.

Findings of this study revolved around two research questions that attempt to portray the constructed realities of employees with regard to their work environment and a specific organizational change initiative. First was to explore understandings employees have developed of their program, drawing connection to examples of corporate and independent media communications. The second was to find how employees identified, in a subjective manner, with the program, based on the understandings developed by employees. The results of the findings portrayed the following:

- In depicting the understandings employees have developed regarding change strategy of their organization, a comparison is made between organizational discourses and employee understandings.

Five observations were made:

- Congruencies were found in comparing to some discourses and understandings
 - Secondary understandings were found when comparing to some discourses
 - Marginal or absence of understanding were found to result from some discourses
 - Stark contradictions were found comparing corporate discourses to employee understandings
 - Understandings developed independent of discourse examples
- When illustrating employee's ability to identify with the program, understandings were connected to employee evaluations of the organizational initiatives. Three observations were made regarding this focus:

- Though people may come to similar or same conclusions, the unique way people come to this conclusion is vividly portrayed
- An apparent lack of faith in the possibility for a successful outcome of the program is apparent, cautioning a hindrance to worker effectiveness as related to an inability to identify and align with the company
- Based on a hermeneutic perspective of understanding, challenges come to light in leading change with employees who have a long history of previous understandings with regard to their organization.

By integrating theory and practice, the chaotic and unique way by which people construct their own personal reality is portrayed through a dissection of their construction of meaning. As is shown by practical example, managers find it both necessary and chaotic to be mindful of this perspective. With the frequency and degree of change often necessary in the airline industry, this problem can be seen as even more severe and is apparent in the portrayal of realities in this study.

6.2 Implications

SAS faces a challenge in helping over 21,700 employees system-wide to identify with and embrace the initiatives of Strategy 2011 in order to achieve a sustainable business. As is described in the review of media and corporate depictions of the business environment and initiatives, in such an environment, not even the change strategy remains static as new developments such as increased oil prices, or technical problems as experienced by SAS present new obstacles to achieving goals. Despite the previously suggested difficulties in

achieving desired results, SAS must continue to lead its group through the ever-changing path towards its goals.

Applying this scenario to findings of this study, the challenge is magnified by the unique understandings that come about—not necessarily congruently with discourses portrayed. These sentiments are echoed in Sandberg and Targama's (2007, 178) discussion on managing understanding in organizations, suggesting, "leaders tend to think they are controlling the process, but in truth they are only controlling the instruments that are supposed to have an impact on people's behavior." This leaves leadership to feel rather powerless in the face of attempting to guide a group with such implications. Maintaining sensitivity to the fact that employees do not follow a common logic, Sandberg and Targama (2007, 178) further suggest, "Managers can use their formal power to create arenas for discussion and encourage people to participate in certain activities that can provoke reflection and a questioning of one's own understanding." They further explain that following this practice will set an agenda for formulating the problem, effectively preparing the group to defend the position with good arguments. They warn that not following rules of a genuine dialogue will destroy the climate of openness and respect, which they mark as "fundamental for developing and transforming understanding effectively.

This sentiment is further carried over by Alvesson (2004) to address identity in organizations. He states, "Identities cannot be directly controlled, but various means of management can provide input to and guide identity constructions" (Alvesson 2004, 118). He further posits, "Making employees identify with the firm and seeing themselves partly through being connected with the organization means a much deeper, genuine and less financially costly form of loyalty" (Alvesson 2004, 120). As is seen in the findings of this study, though employees identify with the need for change, the overall goal of organizational and program identity has not been universally achieved. Employees don't necessarily believe the goals are achievable, which is recognized by management and with such a long organizational history, some employees are still identifying

with how the organization was one or more years ago. Alvesson (2004) points to strategy of employing young graduates as a way to facilitate an easier development of organizational member identity. The situation at SAS, however prevents this strategy as the company has faced a series of large-scale layoffs over the past decade in the amount of 40 to 50 percent in the case of Malmö-Sturup airport, according to one of the station manager's interviews. This reduction of workforce has left the group with little or no recruiting need and therefore no opportunity to have a more 'moldable' employee subject. This notion is also supported by the ramp service manager, whose ramp service employee group has just one or two years of experience with the organization. Having previously managed the passenger service group and comparing to the ramp service he manages now, he describes this same observation.

6.3 Further study

Although it was never the intention for this thesis to make a generalizing study, but rather to collect some of the more marginal findings that would likely be lost in a more quantitative study, the sample pool was relatively small. A larger study may bring more concrete and more significant findings. On the same account the study provided some interesting findings that could be targeted in a larger study that might find the extent to which these findings exist in this organization or others.

One of the strikingly significant features of this particular group is the extremely high seniority of workers interviewed, many of whom had between 35 and 45 years of employment with the organization and in many cases in the same or similar position. This presents a unique opportunity to examine how one can tackle the challenge of managing such a group through understanding considering the implications (according to theory and supported by the experience of management) of managing a group of such tenure.

Directly along side this group of great tenure, ramp service employees present a robustly contrasting group with between one and two years of

experience in the company. Comparing the two groups would present some interesting comparisons in how they construct their realities and how they see the situation. This may shed light on how organizational seniority affects member understanding and identity.

In addition, this study focused on employees of a subsidiary, SGS, of the parent company, who face the potential of being sold off. A study comparing the ability to identify with the change initiative among these employees and the ability of employees of another subsidiary of the group on in danger of sale, might reveal some new insights into the influence of various discourses on identity.

Finally, as this study presented only a snap-shot of a particular point in time during organizational change, follow-up studies might be effective in following how organizational members' understanding and identity changes during the course of the program. This may also provide indications of which organizational development initiatives are most successful as well as showing the degree of success organizational leadership has in managing the understandings and identities of employees.

6.4 Conclusion

The findings in this study embody the challenges management faces in leading a group in the dynamic business environment characteristic to the airline industry. The value in managing employees in an interpretive manner, through a sensitivity to employee understanding is clear, however the capacity to do so is limited. Though it is not stated in management's account of working through this program with employees, a potential feeling of powerlessness of management to lead their employees is suggested in some literature and is understandable. The tenure of this employee group adds an additional dimension to management complexities as in managing understanding, current discourses are competing for recognition among employees with thirty-five-plus years of previous discourse, which it is found employees continue to hold onto.

Though the task seems daunting, literature suggests that following this prescribed manner of leadership presents the best possible outcome and is supported by the outcomes of past change programs that represent both positive and negative outcomes of discursive management with sensitivity to construction of understanding and the elements that influence it and subsequent ability to identify with the organization.

7 Appendix

7.1 Interview Guides

7.1.1 Management Interview Guide

Interview Management

Interviewer Name:

Interviewee Name:

Date/Time:

Introduction

Briefing:

We are looking to study how members of the SAS Ground Service understand their organization S11 program and what it means to members of the organization.

Will begin with some basic questions about you, and your professional background and then continue with some more open-ended questions to understand how you see your organization.

Ask for permission to use tape recorder

Ask if any questions regarding the study

Face Sheet

Sex

Position

Function

Previous positions within the SAS group

Previous work experience in general

Time in position

Total time with the company

08-10-14

—

7-122

General Question

What do you do at SAS?

Understanding

Can you explain to me what S11 and Challenge '09 are?

What do these change programs mean for your employees?

Discourse

Describe the different ways employees are informed about S11 and Challenge '09.

Which method is most commonly used?

Which method do you feel is most effective and why?

Identity

How necessary do employees feel these programs are?

Probing questions:

(D) What would you say about the amount of communication there is on S11 and Challenge '09?

(D) How effectively do you feel SAS has been at communicating about S11 and Challenge '09?

(I) How important do employees feel change is at SAS and why?

(D) How good of an understanding do you feel employees have of S11 and Challenge '09?

(U) What would employees tell me about S11?

(U) What would employees tell me about Challenge '09?

(D) How often do you think employees discuss S11 and Challenge '09?

(U) What impact does S11 and Challenge '09 have on employees now?

(U) How do you see S11 and Challenge '09 having an impact on employees in the future?

Debriefing

Review the main points of the interview

Allow interviewee to make comments on the review

Ask if there is anything else the interviewee would like to discuss

Would we be able to contact you in the future should we have any follow-up questions? Yes __ No __

If yes, contact info:

e-mail: _____

phone number: _____

If you would like to add any further thoughts or have any questions, don't hesitate to contact us:

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'Mukit' Abdul-Al Mukit

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7.1.2 Union Representative Interview Guide

Interview Guide/Union

Interviewer Name:

Interviewee Name:

Date/Time:

Introduction

Briefing:

We are looking to study how members of the SAS Ground Service understand their organization S11 program and what it means to members of the organization.

Will begin with some basic questions about you, and your professional background and then continue with some more open-ended questions to understand how you see your organization.

Ask for permission to use tape recorder

Ask if any questions regarding the study

Face Sheet

Sex

Position

Previous positions within the SAS group

Previous work experience in general

Time in position

Total time with the company

General Question

What is the role of the trade unions at SAS?

What is your role?

Understanding

What do you know about S11 and Challenge '09?

How would you compare management's understanding of S11 and Challenge '09 with that of employees'?

Discourse

How are employees informed about S11 and Challenge '09?

Identity

How important does management feel the S11 and Challenge '09 programs are and why?

How important do employees think these programs are and why?

Probing questions

(U) What do these programs mean to employees?

(U) What impact does S11 and Challenge '09 have on employees now?

(U) How do you see S11 and Challenge '09 impacting employees in the future?

(D) Where does the majority of communications about S11 and Challenge '09 to employees come from?

(D) How would you describe the quality of communication between employees and management at SAS?

(D) What would you say about the amount of communication there is on S11 and Challenge '09?

Debriefing

Review the main points of the interview

Allow interviewee to make comments on the review

Ask if there is anything else the interviewee would like to discuss

Would we be able to contact you in the future should we have any follow-up questions? Yes __ No __

If yes, contact info:

e-mail: _____

phone number: _____

If you would like to add any further thoughts or have any questions, don't hesitate to contact us:

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7.1.3 Worker Interview Guide

Interview Guide/Worker

Interviewer Name:

Interviewee Name:

Date/Time:

Introduction

Briefing:

We are looking to study how members of the SAS Ground Service understand their organization S11 program and what it means to members of the organization.

Will begin with some basic questions about you, and your professional background and then continue with some more open-ended questions to understand how you see your organization.

Ask for permission to use tape recorder

Ask if any questions regarding the study

Face Sheet

Sex

Position

Function

Previous positions within the SAS group

Previous work experience in general

Time in position

Total time with the company

08-10-14

—

7-132

General

What do you do at SAS?

Understanding

Can you explain to me what S11 and Challenge '09 are?

Discourse

How do you learn about S11 and Challenge '09 come from?

Identity

What do you think about these programs?

Possible probing questions:

(U) What impact does S11 and Challenge '09 have on you now?

(U) How do you see S11 and Challenge '09 having an impact on you in the future?

(I) Why do you think these programs came about?

(I) If you were in charge, would you do things differently? How?

Debriefing

Review the main points of the interview

Allow interviewee to make comments on the review

Ask if there is anything else the interviewee would like to discuss

Would we be able to contact you in the future should we have any follow-up questions? Yes __ No __

If yes, contact info:

e-mail: _____

phone number: _____

If you would like to add any further thoughts or have any questions, don't hesitate to contact us:

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