



Examensarbete för kandidatexamen i strategisk kommunikation

The communicative role when establishing core values as motivators for employee engagement

A case study of Tetra Pak

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Abstract • Sammanfattning

Today's marketplace is increasingly growing more competitive as production accelerates and products multiply. Therefore, competing organizations have shifted their focus from solely developing the best product, to building value and competitiveness into the employees. As a result, the concept 'Employee Engagement' has received a lot of attention during the 21st century. However there still remain many concerns regarding *how* to generate employee engagement. The connection between core values and employee engagement has been highlighted by researchers before but foremost indirectly and in a mix of other related concepts. However, in this thesis we have concentrated on the direct relation between the two concepts. Substantiated from qualitative interviews with employees at Tetra Pak Lund, Sweden, this thesis highlights the use of organizational core values in generating employee engagement from a communicative perspective. The results of this study supply an understanding of the importance of the use of internal communication in order to create and shape the employee's perception and commitment toward core values. Four points of focus in this managerial process proved to be the importance of educating employees in the purpose of core values, the manager's communication skills, regarding communication of core values as a process and using coherent communication. This research has through an employee's point of view empathized on what many researches stress on; the managers communicative skills.

Konkurrensen i dagens affärsmarknader stiger kraftigt i takt med att produktionen och utbudet av varor och tjänster accelerera. På grund av detta har företag drivits till att hitta nya vägar till att bygga upp en konkurrenskraft. Istället för att endast utveckla bästsäljande produkter och tjänster, inriktar sig många företag att utveckla sitt varumärke och konkurrenskraft med hjälp av sina anställda. Som ett resultat av detta har konceptet "medarbetarengagemang" fått mycket uppmärksamhet under 2000-talet. Relationen mellan kärnvärden och medarbetarengagemang har noterats och undersökts förr, men framförallt i indirekta sammanhang och i en mix av andra liknande begrepp. Denna studie har däremot lyft upp den direkta kopplingen mellan kärnvärden och medarbetarengagemang. Genom kvalitativa intervjuer med anställda på Tetra Pak, i Lund Sverige, utforskar denna studie hur kommunikationen av kärnvärden inom ett företag kan generera medarbetarengagemang.

Resultatet indikerar att en förståelse för den interna kommunikationens betydelse i processen av att skapa och forma medarbetarens uppfattning och tillhörighetskänsla gentemot kärnvärden är viktig. Fyra punkter att se till i denna process visade studien vara betydelsen av att utbilda medarbetare i syftet med kärnvärden, den verkställande chefens kommunikationsskickligheter, uppfattningen och närma sig kommunikation som en process och följdriktig kommunikation. Denna studie har genom medarbetarnas perspektiv granskat och belyst ledarnas roll i att påverka internkommunikationen.

Keywords: core values, internal communication, employee engagement, employee's perspective

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APPENDIX 1 – INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem Discussion

The competition in today's marketplace is increasingly difficult as new innovations stream in from everywhere. New industrial technology has increased the speed of which products are created - resulting in products that lose their originality quickly. Therefore, competing organizations have shifted their focus from developing the best product, to building value and competitiveness into the employees (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). Bakker and Leiter emphasise how advantages in the marketplace today occur through new ideas extracted from *within* organizations. Along this competitive and dynamic business environment, researcher and practitioners are constantly in search of something more profound to differentiate them from their competitors (Ind, 2007). The importance of the human capital has been constantly growing throughout the 21st century, and its full capacity proves to bring profit and competitiveness to any business that can develop it effectively (Livingstone, 1997). In order to use the full capacity of human capital, strategic communication has become an important management aspect. Still, many organizations have not acknowledged this, or simply have not put the development of human capital into practice.

As an effect of this relatively new business approach of maximizing the human capital, employee engagement has received a lot of attention. In fact, only during the past five to ten years has it become a commonly discussed topic. Awareness of this topic is crucial of one is to understand how organizations in the 21st century need to engage employees in order to stay competitive and improve profit (Albrecht, 2010). However, there still remain many concerns regarding *how* to generate employee engagement (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). Though there are many ways to do this, the following thesis will highlight the use of organizational core values in generating employee engagement. The connection between core values and employee engagement has been highlighted by researchers before but foremost indirectly and in a mix of other related concepts. We have discovered that there seems to be a knowledge gap in the direct discussion between the two.

Core values form the foundation on which employees perform work and conduct themselves (Ind, 2007). We reason that, due to their influence on the human capital, core values are crucial *motivators* in the process of generating employee engagement. A global survey

conducted by Right Management (2009) emphasis this argument by presenting the commitment to core values as one of five drivers for engagement. However, core values are not drivers or motivators automatically. As Ind (2007) argues, they cannot stand for themselves: meaning must be built into them. This leads us to the focus of this thesis. We will address the challenges of managing core values, in order to be used as motivators for employee engagement. Specifically, we focus on the communicative challenges of this process.

One organization that focuses on how core values can become motivators for employee engagement is Tetra Pak. Two years ago, they launched the most important communication program they have ever rolled out, namely *LiVE Tetra Pak*. This program aimed to generate employee engagement among all 21,000 employees by communicating the newly revitalize organizational core values (Tetra Pak, internal document).

The communicative challenges faced at Tetra Pak that will be addressed in this thesis are separated into two forms of internal communication. The first, central communication faces the challenge of *creating* the core values. While the second, cascade communication, functions as the *delivery agent* of the core values.

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

Our purpose is to explore how the internal communication can be managed in order to shape the core values into motivators for employee engagement. By exploring how employees experience the process of committing to the core values, we want to create an understanding of how the communication of core values best can be managed. Additionally, we want to describe how core values intentionally can be used as motivators for employee engagement, and within that underline the importance of strategic communication.

1. How can the internal communication of core values affect employee's perception of core values?
2. How can the internal communication of core values increase employee's commitment toward the core values?

3. How can the communication of core values be managed in order to increase employee engagement?

4. How can the employee's perception of core values affect the core values abilities to be motivators for employee engagement?

1.3 Choice of case study

1.3.1 Company introduction

Entrepreneurs Ruben Rausing and Erik Wallenberg founded Tetra Pak in 1951. Since that day the company, located in Lund, Sweden, has grown into operating in more than 170 markets and having over 21,000 employees world-wide. Tetra Pak is a family owned business that is committed to providing processing and packaging solutions for food. The hierarchical structure of Tetra Pak consists of the executive management department followed by a level of senior managers, and finally the employees (Andrén, 2006).

The Technical Service Department of Tetra Pak, which is the platform of where this study has evolved from, is described by the Communication Director in the following words. "The Technical Service Department within Tetra Pak develops, sells, and delivers global service products and solutions to their customers. They provide knowledge, technical competence development, spare parts, tools and methodologies to design, manufacture and support Tetra Pak products. There are 3,400 employees working in the Technical Service Department worldwide, and more than 300 of those are based in Lund." (Lefdal, 2011).

1.3.2 LiVE Tetra Pak

In end of 2008 Tetra Pak introduced a communication program called *LiVE Tetra Pak*. This was a unique opportunity for the organization's 21,000 employees across the globe to participate in the building of a shared vision and direction for the future of the business (Tetra Pak, internal document). Tetra Pak announced the purpose of launching *LiVE Tetra Pak* was to create an appreciation for their strategy, core values and brand throughout the entire organization. Furthermore, the communication program was used to strengthen their position

in an increasingly competitive global market. Tetra Pak themselves describe *LiVE Tetra Pak* as the most important communication program they have ever designed.

LiVE Tetra Pak was launched coinciding with the renewal of their core values. Internally, it was seen as a communication program introducing their new core values and assuring that everyone understood them. Within the *LiVE Tetra Pak* communication program, the employees were able to play games relating to the core values, listen to stories about Tetra Pak, and share experiences during a period of four hours.

In relation to the *LiVE Tetra Pak*, a core team was formed to coordinate the event. Every subdivision of Tetra Pak was sent a *LiVE Tetra Pak* manual, including a very detailed informational package concerning the initiative. Thereafter, at varying times and dates, *LiVE Tetra Pak* communication program was carried out within every department of the organization. Introducing this experience, Tetra Pak organized post-event activities as well as a commercial that would engage the employees' attention (Tetra Pak internal document).

1.3.3 Tetra Pak's core values

In order to deeper connect with the following analysis where we reflect upon the empirical material and embed it with theory, we choose to present the core values of Tetra Pak below.

- **Customer focus and Long-term view** - We ensure we add value and inspire our customers because we recognize that they come to us by choice. We dare to lead with a focus beyond tomorrow and take opportunities to learn and grow.
- **Quality and Innovation** - We do not compromise on quality. We relentlessly drive for better, fit-for-purpose solutions and breakthrough innovations.
- **Freedom and Responsibility**- We have the freedom to take initiative and act decisively in the best interests of Tetra Pak and our customers. We take responsibility for our actions and contribute to the communities in which we operate.
- **Partnership & Fun** - We respect and rely on one another and all our stakeholders for exceptional results. We enjoy working together and celebrating our achievements.

1.4 Delimitation

Tetra Pak is a company that has employees spread across the world. Therefore, the internal communication faces complex challenges in order to be managed strategically. We have chosen to conduct our study at Tetra Pak because they represent these challenges, and Tetra

Pak is a company that has proved to view core values as motivators for employee engagement. The selections of our interview participants are delimited to employees without personnel managerial roles. This is important since we seek to address this subject from an employee's perspective. Furthermore, all our empirical studies are conducted with employees at the department of Technical Service at Tetra Pak in Lund, since this is the department where our contact person at Tetra Pak could give us access to arrange interviews.

2. Theoretical framework

The initial part of this theory section will focus on explaining the concepts of *employee engagement* and *core values*. Thereafter, a section will be focusing on illuminating the communicational challenges when establishing core values as motivators for employee engagement. After this section, the role of *internal communication* will be highlighted. Lastly, the process of establishing core values in order to generate employee engagement will be examined and separated into two communicative challenges: to *create* and to *deliver* the core values.

2.1 Defining the concepts

2.1.2 Employee Engagement

For one to understand the value of *employee engagement* it is important to first understand the value of an organization's *human capital*. The human capital is the combined knowledge, skills, innovativeness, and ability of the company's individual employees to meet the task at hand (Ind, 2007). The core thesis of human capital is that peoples' learning capacities are comparable with other resources in the production process. Therefore, when the human capital is effectively used, the results are profitable for the organization (Livingstone, 1997). In the 21st century the human capital is becoming more and more the organization's collective workforce and resource worth to invest in (Ind, 2003). The urge for organizations to nurture and to use their employee's full capacity is increasingly growing stronger in order to stay competitive in the marketplace today (Ind, 2007).

There is a value to employee engagement as it proves to be an essential part of the process of maximizing the human capital. For example, when the employees are engaged they generate

new ways of working, share knowledge, stimulate innovation and help building brands (Ind, 2007). According to Bakker and Leiter (2010) and Albecht (2010), among others, almost all major human resource departments and consultancy firms are today working with improving the level of employee engagement within organizations. The reason to that is that they all claim that employee engagement increases sales, customer satisfaction and profitability through higher levels of productivity (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). Bakker and Leiter (2010) state that the message is clear: increasing employee engagement pays off.

Employee engagement is now a popular term within businesses, consultancy and academia (Leiter, 2010). Some may have heard of “work engagement” rather than “employee engagement”, but in this thesis we chose to use the latter since it not only refers to the employee’s relationship with one’s work, but also with the organization it self.

Employee engagement has gotten several different definitions during the years of study. The first scholar to conceptualize engagement at work was Kahn (1990). He describes it as being fully physically, cognitively, and emotionally connected with the work role in question (Albecht, 2010) and says it is about “harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles” (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). Kahn considered engagement to be the manifestation of psychological presence that in turn produces positive outcomes for both the individual in question, as well as for the organization (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). In the beginning the 21st century, the most commonly used definition today of employee engagement was defined as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption” (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). This is also the definition that we will use as we proceed through this thesis. A few years later, in 2006, they argued that engagement is not a momentarily state but a more persistent cognitive state, that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual or behaviour (Albrecht, 2010). Common for these definitions and many other is that employee engagement is a positive psychological state that often is explained through words like enthusiasm, energy, passion and vigour. It is described as a genuine willingness toward the work itself and the organization (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008).

When researchers and practitioners discuss engagement it often happens that they refer to different meanings. Inceoglu and Fleck clarifies this confusion by stating that being motivated by something is called *motivators*, while the actual feeling of being motivated is *engagement*, and the effort employees put into their work is called *motivated behaviour* (Albrecht 2010).

On the critical point of view, some researchers argue that the concept of employee engagement is something of “old wine, new bottle” or “same girl, different dress” (Albrecht, 2010). This problem occurs around the differing concept of employee engagement from other more traditional concepts (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). Depending on the researcher, the literature gives us many different variations on these traditional and competing concepts, while they try to locate the empirical overlaps of the concepts in question. To mention a few, Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006) argue for how employee engagement, job involvement and organizational commitment were to be best considered as distinct yet related constructs. Inceoglu and Fleck (Albrecht, 2010) had a theory arguing that job satisfaction, job commitment and employee engagement are located in different areas of well-established theoretical models of job-related affect. They argue that the two are characterized by different feelings. Engagement is characterized by activated, high-arousal and positive feelings at work. While job satisfaction and organizational commitment are less activated positive feelings such as contentment and comfort (Albrecht, 2010). The theory describes an obvious empirical overlap between these concepts, although all of them are argued to each represent one distinct area. Another difficulty in the definition of engagement, which also affects the construction of research methods, is that there are different theories and thoughts on whether engagement is something stable or fluctuating. Some believes that the feelings of engagement are a mix of stable and fluctuating feelings. Within that opinion, there are different theories surrounding which of them that is supposed to fluctuate and which are constant. If engagement or the significant feeling of engagement is something that fluctuates researches needs to be done over time, to reach an over-all level of engagement. In that type of research it's important to separate the short-term “flow” with persistent long-term engagement (Albrecht, 2010). However, it is important that these different ways of defining engagement find a common path, so that the measurements of engagement reflects the core of the construct, and nothing else (Bakker & Leiter, 2010).

2.1.3 Core Values

As Rockeach (1973) stated “values are conceptualized as fundamental beliefs and unwritten standards that guide behavior and judgments across situations”. Organizational core values are explained as those values that an organization holds which form the foundation on which

they perform work and conduct themselves (Chatman, 1991). They have been characterized as the most defining characteristic of an institution. Researchers have questioned if it is possible for organizations to distinguish themselves from other companies without stated core values (Ravlin, 1998). Many would argue that it is impossible. Having established values within organizations have helped to set the tone for the environment and to produce a culture that facilitates work toward common goal. It has also showed to improve the organizational effectiveness (Williams, 2002). The purpose of having values within organizations is to create a framework of standards that should underlie in their work, how they interact with each other and customers (Williams, 2002).

One challenge that arises is the difficulty of establishing core values that also represent the many, differing viewpoints of individuals throughout the organization (Morgan, 2006). There are two perspectives that are commonly held when approaching this issue. The first is the unitary perspective; the view that all individuals within an organization are synonymous with each other, and their united viewpoints can be directed to fall under the umbrella of the organization's core-value (Morgan, 2006). The second is the pluralistic perspective; the view that emphasizes the diversity of the individual's' interests and allows for different interpretations of various core-values (Morgan, 2006). Obviously, a pluralistic perspective potentially challenges the fundamental purpose of core values. The question that comes up with this perspective is whether it is possible to create collective beliefs. An organization that is managed based on this point of view, do not prioritize the work of establishing core values, and rather see it as something that looks good from outside. Ind (2003) describes this attitude "Organizations are driven by bottom line performance and talk of values and visions may be useful to include in the annual reports, but otherwise seems rather woolly. "

For a business to use core values is viewed as a part of *value-based management strategy*, Value-based management has been suggested to be one of the key drivers for high growth and excellent individual performance (Anderson, 1997) and two factors that enables economic advantages. According to Blanchard and O'Connor (1997) value-based management occurs when leaders shape the values of their employees by setting an example of how they relate and embrace the organizational values (Blanchard and O'Connor, 1997). In addition, this philosophy requires managers with high strategic communication skills. For example, they have to be willing to empower the employees and be perceived as they view themselves as equal to the employees and see the potential in others. Marlier and Leiter (2009) states that

leadership cannot be separated from strategy, if the goal is to sustain a competitiveness in the marketplace.

2.2 Internal communication

Traditionally, internal communication focus on the mass distribution of the management's conclusion and announcements to the rest of the employees. The function of internal communication was viewed as a one-way communication channel (Quirke, 2008). Today, corporations are realizing that in order for the company to survive and thrive, an effective internal communication is essential. An effective internal communication strategy according to Wright (2009) includes collecting in ideas sideways and bottom-up in the organization. Spitzer and Swider (2003) suggest that effective internal communication should also have three basic objectives. (1) "the information that is communicated to the employees is understood and accepted with the respect to the content, relevance and merit of the message." (2) "the goals of the communication with regard to motivating, directing and informing to the employees are achieved among the majority of them." (3) the end result of the improved internal dialogue is achieving improvements in one or more of the core successes components.

As an effect of this, internal communication has shifted from being viewed as a "process of deliver of distribution, to using it as a process of conversion." (Quirke, 2008) Dolphin (2005) explains the role of internal communications "as building and nourishing employee relations, establishing trust, providing reliable and accurate information and thereby providing to the general motivation." Quirke (2008) continues to explain, "internal communication is to illuminate the connections between different pieces of information" and it is vital for success as well enabling business to engage their employees efforts and scouring knowledge within the company. There are many definitions of what internal communication is but Kalla (2005) summarizes what many researches agree with. "Internal communication is all formal and informal taking place internally in all levels of an organization." (Kalla, 2005) As many definitions there are on internal communication, the same amount of ways to entitle the different forms that internal communication is composed of, there are. Different researchers choose to entitle the functions in various ways. Smith and Mounter (2008) use three forms to

divide the different functions of internal communication: *central communication*, *cascade communication* and *lateral communication*. It is the definition that Smith and Mounter provide that we will be using.

Central communication is about the creation of messages, and is often distributed by a central department, usually the communication department or top management department. It functions facilitative manner rather than as a delivery agent (Smith & Mounter, 2008). Cascade communication however, is the delivery agent. It is the communication that starts at the top of the organization and gets passed down the chain. There is no official person that carries this message to the employees in question, though senior managers are often the critical players. The third form, the lateral communication, describes the informational transmission of communication between employees regardless of their position in the hierarchy or division, commonly referred to as the ‘office grapevine’ (Smith & Mounter, 2008). This is the most powerful of the three forms of internal communication in convincing skeptics, because information from peers is most likely to be remembered and to influence the decisions and actions of individuals (Smith & Mounter, 2008). However, lateral communication is difficult to control and thus many times approached as a result of the central and cascade communication.

2.2.1 The communicative challenges

According to the earlier mentioned global survey conducted by the consulting firm Right Management (2009), feeling committed to the core values is one of five global *drivers*, defined as factors that can enhance engagement. However, we will in this thesis use the term *motivator* while referring to what factors that may enhance employee engagement. In other words, when having embraced and put core values into practice the employee will feel more engaged. However, the crucial component of this equation is how the employees connect with the core values. Ind (2007) claims that it is “when the values create meaning and become both credible and motivating to the employees so that it starts to enrich their level of engagement” This statement that Ind (2007) makes underlines the communicational requirements that need to be fulfilled in order for the core values to become motivators for employee engagement.

There are two communicational challenges here. The first challenge is for the central

communication that needs to facilitate core values that bring business benefits and employee benefits (Ind, 2007). And to some degree *create* the organizational core values in order for them to become motivators. The second challenge is for the cascade communication to *deliver* the core values effectively internally (Smith & Mounter, 2008). Spitzer & Swider (2003) state that effective internal communication helps the employees recognize the message, which in this case the organizational core values and understand what they represent. Due to the fact that having established well performing internal communication, employees feel as an important asset of the organization, they are also regularly provided with up to date organizational information and have a good understanding of the organizational culture and objectives.

The third form, lateral communication, is perhaps the most influential form the three, but it is also a result of the other two forms of communication (Smith & Mounter, 2008). Therefore, managing central and cascade communication will be crucial for the outcomes of the internal communication.

2.3 Central Communication

As stated earlier, the central communication is a crucial part of the internal communication. It is where the messages are strategically *created* to effectively reach the employees (Smith & Mounter, 2008). The creation of these strategic messages often takes place higher up in the organizational hierarchy but is distributed through the communication department. The creation of core values as motivators will in this thesis be directed to take place within top management, since they are components that often are used as parts of *value-based management*, a customer focus strategy that is build upon shared principles and core values (Anderson, 1997)

2.3.1 The challenge to create compelling core values

Core values cannot stand for themselves. Ind (2007) argues that it is vital that organizations build meaning into the values so that employees can genuinely engage in them. For the central

communication, this translates into coming up with a strategy to formulate values that the employees genuinely can engage in. In order to do this, the messages that, in this case are the core values, need to be both *intellectually compelling* and *emotionally engaging* (Marlier & Parker, 2009). Intellectually compelling refers to what is rationally convincing, while the latter is what will rouse employees from indifference and generate vigour into their work and intentions (Marlier & Parker 2009). In the creation of core values this means to formulate words that are valuable and brings profit both for the organization itself and for the employee as a person (Ind, 2007).

In the best case, the employees embrace the organizational core values. But this does not come without a challenge. Employees are people. In order to create core values for a collection of people, and later ask them to embrace and put them into practice, it is important to understand where personal values come from. Personal values are developed through a combination of personal experience and social systems (Ravlin, 1998). They are both learned and regulated by social institutions such as family, community and work organization (Chatman, 1991). As people, we search for meaning and identification in everything we do. We need a sense of direction and comprehension of why we are doing what we are doing (Gärdenfors, 2009).

Additionally, the core values are made to be acted upon. The famous psychologist Abraham Maslow claimed that people act on behalf of our needs (Maslow, 1998). The process of doing something valuable and of contributing something worthwhile motivates individuals: it is the reason why the strategy behind creating core values must consider the employee's needs (Ind, 2007). Maslow explains how people have stages of psychological needs of for example self-actualization and socialization (Maslow, 1998). Self-actualization, which can be translated into "what a man can be, he must be", is based on Maslow's theories that people have a desire to reach their full potential, even so when we fail (Maslow, 1998). One of the important factors for people to reach self-actualization, however, is creativity. Gordon Mackenzie of Hallmark Cards worked for 30 years as a Creative Director says that creativity is about challenging norms and finding new and original ways of doing things (Ind, 2007) When we move from the question of "why do we work?" to "why do we choose to work where we do" the need of fulfillment becomes more dominant (Ind, 2007). In those situations where we have the choice, we opt to work for organizations and environments that provide the opportunity to nurture our creativity (Ind, 2007). Secondly, human beings have a need for

socialization. An expression of this can be explored through the statement of “I need we to be fully I” (Maslow, 1998). One of the reasons why people go to work is because of the opportunity to socialize (Ind, 2007).

2.3.2. Facilitating the communication of core values

With a two-ways communication approach, communication is viewed as a process that constantly is under development. People are neither expected to interpret the message sent as intended but to interpret it and make sense of it, in their own way (Burton & Dimpleby, 2007). As the central communication is also about facilitating the core values in an effective way, it is important to take in consideration what Burton and Dimpleby explain that people interpret messages. Therefore, when the core values reach the employees, they are going to be interpreted and reconstructed in their minds. How they are interpreted and reconstructed depends on people’s reference frame (Burton, Dimpleby, 2007). Therefore, it is about distributing the messages through communication channels that encourages a two-ways communication (Quirke, 2008), In order to minimize the possibilities for misinterpretations. In addition, the managing of central communication also needs to address the concern of distributing too many strategic messages. The concept of *information overload* defines the difficulty of processing messages in the presence of excessive information (Gross, 1964).

2.4 Cascade Communication

As the central communication stands for the creation and facilitation of the organizational strategic messages, the cascade communication is the delivery agent of the messaged conducted by the central communication (Smith & Mounter, 2008). Therefore, the cascade communication’s role is to carry out these strategic messages throughout the organization. When top management formulates a strategy through planned and designed efforts, “that formulation will not materialized into a real strategy unless the employees act in accordance with it and make sense of their actions in line with the strategy” (Sandberg & Taragama, 2007). One way for this formulation to reach the employees is through the managers. The

cascade communication in this thesis includes the communication attached to managers that have a directing role to carry out the core values.

The task of generating employee engagement demands strategic leadership (Marlier & Parker, 2009). Ind (2003) points out that it may seem simple, but that is far from the true. It is in fact hard to achieve in practice since it cannot be controlled or ordered (Ind, 2007). Although more research in the area is needed before any conclusions can be made, the current research indicates that managers influence the level of employee engagement (Albrecht, 2010). However, many questions and concerns remain over *how* this is supposed to be achieved. Albrecht, (2010) argues that the answer is not to develop leaders, but to develop leadership. In other words, the challenge of leading an organization is not only about the person leading and his or her abilities, but about the organization itself and its members. There exists many different models that explain to us how employee engagement is created in an organization, but what they all seem to have in common is that they start “top-down” with an engaging leadership style (Albrecht, 2010).

2.4.1 Creating an engaging work environment

Albrecht (2010) states that through creating an engaging work environment for the employees, leaders can increase employee engagement directly. As of environment we refer to the resources and demands that an employee surrounds itself of at work. On hand this might not seem to connect with the cascade communication of core values, but it does. The resources refer to the material of information that is provided by the manager regarding core values. The demands are the feeling of responsibility and need to embrace and practice these values. The work environment plays a critical role in determining an employee’s feelings of engagement. Kahn (1990) says is “organizational contexts that enhance or undermine people’s motivation and sense of meaning at work.” An Australian multilevel study researched how a number of fire bridge captains operated in an environment where the job conditions in terms of demands and resources where optimized (Tucker & Thorne, Gurd, 2009). The result showed how the employee’s levels of vigor, dedication and absorption increased. As a conclusion of this, Tucker et al. (2009) notes that job complexity (cognitive

demands) and job control (cognitive resources) activate the employees' potential and engagement.

2.4.2 Showing individual consideration

Albrecht argues that different types of *positive* leadership styles are the ones succeeding when it comes to creating and sustaining employee engagement (Albrecht, 2010). In a second analysis of the Belgian study previously mentioned, one specific aspect of positive leadership was being especially noticeable, namely *individual consideration*. Examples of how individual consideration can be used in styles of leadership, is shown in supportive leadership where emotional support gives the employees better listening skills, they care more about their work and show sympathy for others (Albrecht, 2010). Another example is developmental leadership where career counseling and careful observation of the staff have similar effects (Albrecht, 2010). According to the study, leadership that practice individual consideration as a part of their leadership approach proves to increase the levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption among the employees. In other words, individual consideration was proven to increase the level of employee engagement (Albrecht, 2010).

2.4.3 The leadership approach of communication efforts

In *directive leadership* the manager has a dominant role next to the team or department in question. There is little or none communication from the bottom and up (L. Albrecht, 2010). Marlier and Parker translated this leadership style into action and calls that type of communication effort for "the one man show" (Marlier & Parker 2009). They claim it is beneficial in crisis where there is no room for discussion, but bad in situations where the employees are seeking meaning or in situations where the organizational goal is to achieve any kind of attitude change (Marlier & Parker 2009). By basis of a cross-sectional Belgian study presented by Segers et al. (2009) Albrecht (2010) argues that directive leadership proves to decrease the employee level of hope and optimism, and generates a lower quality of the relation between employer and employee. This has according to Albrecht a direct negative

effect on the employee engagement, since he argues that the level of engagement depend on the levels of hope and optimism (Albrecht, 2010)

Marlier and Parker presents another leadership approach when it comes to creating employee engagement, which is “the listen-to-me show” (Marlier & Parker, 2009). This “show” takes place in situations when organizations put on a show where the message is to include the employees by making them feel as an essential part of the organization, but where the message is not actually put into action. Marlier and Parker (2009) describe it as a show with power point presentations, slideshows, the top management is on stage, the mood is comfortable and intellectual and there is often a short Q&A session at the end. They argue that this engagement method is good in crisis and unprepared challenges, but not when it comes to increasing the level of engagement.

Finally, Marlier and Parker present “the leadership engagement process”. It contains a fundamentally different leadership approach than of the ones above, in which the leader acts to co-create and the messages of engagement are not only communicated but also brought into practice. These messages are for example that the top management is interested in the employees’ questions and concerns, their creativity and ideas, and that their full engagement is needed in the organization (Marlier & Parker, 2009). What makes this last leadership approach more suitable for increasing employee engagement is primarily how the communication effort is viewed upon as a process, and not a one or two time event. Second, it is not a show by any means; it is about creating an engaging work environment. They continue arguing that the process of accomplishing employee engagement is, in fact, a process and has to be built on a long-term and purposeful agenda. They claim that investing in a well-done leader engagement process equals to successfully implement “sustainable change” and create a direction within the company (Marlier & Parker, 2009).

2.4.4 Creating a common understanding

One of the manager’s challenges when carrying out the core values to their employees is to create a common understanding. The creation of a common understanding can be viewed as something that arises through dialogues. Where the purpose of the dialogue is not to win an argument but to reach a deeper understanding of the subject in matter (Sandberg & Taragama,

2007). Managers are expected to formulate the organizations ideas and values in a way that employees themselves can commit. Sandberg & Taragama (2007) claim, “management is essentially an ongoing dialogue between managers and staff with the aim of developing a shared understanding of how to best run the business.” Wright (2009) says that managers are a key player in both establishing the organizational climate and ‘do’s and don’ts’. He continues explaining “ just as a parent or a teacher can make a trip or a lesson interesting and inspiring, so can the manager do on a business climate. Depending on what they say, what they do and how they do it (...) what managers actually do confirms what they believe.” (Wright, 2009)

Since the managers have the role as the delivery agent, it is crucial that the understanding of what management requires today, also is practiced. Without this insight and the willingness to embrace the demands, shaping core values into motivators for employee engagement is extremely difficult. All business strategies such as vision, values and mission, none of these strategically messages can be implemented in the organization and have any influence in the business, until the employees accept and embrace them (Sandberg & Taragama, 2007). Since people’s behavior is confined to their understanding of structure and systems that affects their work. The employees understanding of the core value is what is going to guide them through different work task. The organizational core values might state one value, but how that value is perceived depends on what meaning that is built into it, which lays much in the hand of the manager and the employees (Sandberg & Taragama, 2007).

2.4.5 The bonding and bridging mechanism

The expression “bonding versus bridging” was coined by London Business School’s Professor Lynda Gratton (Marlier & Parker, 2009). It describes social phenomena in the context of territory and change. The bonding mechanism is meant to symbolize how humans as social animals look for protection in the past and create the opinion of how everything was better before. In other words, we get attached to what resembles ourselves and our way of thinking, and commonly try to eliminate everything that contradicts it. This mobilizes people against a common enemy, and is therefore called “bonding”. Applying this to an organizational situation, that enemy could easily result in being the top management, since

they partially manage the work environment; try to influence the employees and initiate changes. This bonding mechanism is described as a natural and human response to change, and brings us to the next step: the bridging. The bridging mechanism is what managers have to create. It is the opposite of building walls between the employees and the managers. Bridging is about reaching over the wall, having people trusting each other and being willing to take chances. Marlier and Parker (2009) argues that to create this bridging effect the managers “create an emotional anchor about the future” in order to get them engaged in the future. To create this “anchor” it is important to keep the tension alive, and like they use cliffhangers in the end of television-series, they need to create the same feeling of hope and excitement toward the organization’s future. Marlier and Parker indicates that this “cliffhanger-feeling” might be the route of creative input from the employees, and be a part of what creates engagement. The needs that may drive the employees need to be considered while the managers metaphorically paints a picture of the organization’s and the employee’s future. This needs to be done in a both emotional engaging and intellectually compelling way (Marlier & Parker, 2009).

3. Method

This thesis is based on an interpretive perspective. With this supposition, organizations are viewed as a socially constructed unit. All individuals within the organization are active participants and by- producers of the social reality. The communication that occurs in the organization is viewed as the motor which produces the organization, and where the shared meanings are brought forth (Heide & Johnsson, Simonsson, 2005)

3.1 Research method

Throughout this thesis we have taken an abductive approach. The interview guide is based on a theoretical framework of the subject in matter. Therefore not completely inductive, but neither completely deductive either since we have not set up any hypothesis of what the

results will display. Instead, we have aimed to conduct the interview sessions as open-minded and with as little preconceived ideas as possible.

3.2 Choice of method

We have chosen to conduct this study from a qualitative approach, due to its ability to obtain a first hand description (Bryman, 2002) of employees' experiences connected with the communication programme: *LiVE Tetra Pak* and their perception of the organizational core values. As we are exploring how the internal communication can be managed in order to shape the core values into motivators for employee engagement. We are examining the attitudes, thoughts, and opinions that the employees convey towards their work and organization rather than data. With a qualitative method this is obtainable as it examines phenomenon on a micro-level and enables the researcher to dig deeper into the thoughts of the participant (Bryman, 2002).

Interviews were found to be the most effective method for our purpose. Interviews have an explorative nature and allow us to take part of what is said, how it is expressed, and which attitudes were attached to certain expressions (Thomson, 2002). Interviews are also a favorable method since it gives us the ability to seek clarification of what is expressed, as well as let us pick up interesting comments and continue to ask sequential questions (Thomson, 2002). The interviews lasted for 30- 45 minutes and six of them were conducted in a conference room at Tetra Pak in Lund. Additionally, two of the interviews were made over the phone.

We used a semi-structured interview guide with the purpose of keeping a distinct focus and consistency throughout the interviews and ensuring that the questions asked were relevant with our research questions. A semi-structured interview guide provides a guideline for the interviewer, while giving the participant enough freedom to speak freely about the question posed (Bryman, 2002). The semi-structured interview guide were successful method for our study. As we are fairly new interviews it provided us with central questions that we knew we wanted to cover. At the same time, as we could be flexible and add questions without disturbing the order of the originally structure.

3.3 The Interview Guide

The interview guide consists of four themes: engagement, core values, LiVE Tetra Pak, core value and management. Out of these themes we have created questions that were posed to the eight interview participants. We tried to keep our questions open and flexible depending on how the participant would respond.

We have in the first theme chosen to ask questions that indirectly had to do with the definition of the feelings of engagement: absorption, dedication and vigor. We have chosen to ask the participant's questions related to feelings of engagement, and therefore addressed the employee's perception of their own creativity, adaptability, and persistence toward organizational goals. The purpose of posing these questions was to get a feeling of how the engagement is displayed at the moment, and if the participants gave any indication that this is due to their perception of the organizational core values.

The second theme was core values. The purpose of asking these questions was to get some background information. Firstly, of how much the participants knew about the concept of core values. Secondly, of how much they knew about Tetra Pak's core values. Thirdly, how the information about the core value was received. This information was necessary in order to reflect on why some communicational efforts of the core values did or did not succeed. Additionally the purpose of this theme was also to get a better understanding of which factors that need to be taken in consideration when creating and facilitating the core values, in order for the employees to commit and embrace them.

The third theme included questions about LiVE Tetra Pak. In this theme we aimed to listen to the employees' perceptions of the communication program, and explore whether it had made an impact on their understanding of the core values or not. .

The fourth theme aimed to ask questions concerning core values and management. The purpose of asking these types of questions was to create an understanding of how the employees perceive that the managers embed the core values in their work.

3.4 Selection of participants

Tetra Pak fits perfectly into our study of research. It is a global company, with approximately 21 000 employees in total, which makes the communication processes more complex. Additionally, they are in the process of communicating and establishing core values throughout the company.

We chose to interview participants working for the department of Technical Service at Tetra Pak, Sweden and that have worked there for at least three years, in order to guarantee that they attended LiVE Tetra Pak. We chose to interview participants within the department of Technical Service, simply because our Tetra Pak contact person works in that department. The contact person agreed to help us contact possible interview participants, but could only do so within her department.

The interview participants represented a wide range of positions within the Technical Service department, in order to get a general perspective of our subject in matter. Additionally, this study focuses only on the employee perspective. Interviews were done solely with employees that do not have any responsibilities to direct other employees. We have chosen this perspective in order to focus on the effects of the communicational efforts that have been put into practice. Since the aim with the effects of the communication efforts is to shape the core value into motivators for employee engagement through communication. By exploring these efforts from an employee's perspective, we get a first- hand description of how the communicational efforts have meet its purpose or not.

3.5 Data collection

With the help of our contact person at Tetra Pak in Lund, we arranged eight interviews in total. Six were conducted at Tetra Pak in Lund and two were phone interviews. The interview participants determined the time and meeting place. The six interviews were held in a conference room at Tetra Pak in Lund, and the phone-interview participants were either at home or in their office. The conference room was separated from the office landscape and was quiet, calm, and sound proof. The environment for the first phone interview was also quite and calm. The second phone interview, however, the participant informed us that she

was at home in care of a sick child and therefore was excused if there were other demands on her attention.

Both of us participated in the interviews that were conducted at Tetra Pak in Lund. One led the interview while the other one listened, observed, and added other questions when necessary. The observer can focus more on how the participant answered the questions, and the general feeling he or she carried throughout the interview, which also Thomson (2002) states of being the benefits of having two interviewers. The two phone interviews, however, were made by only one of us since it could confuse the participant to have two voices on the same line.

Before meeting our interview participants, our contact person at Tetra Pak had given them some information concerning our purpose, as Lantz (1997) purpose to do before entering the interview session. By doing so, the interview participants are aware of the situation and can decide if they want to participate or not. However, per our request, the participants were not informed in detail about the topic of the interview in order to limit the possibilities for the participants to prepare themselves. Before each interview we explained our purpose of conducting these interviews, informed them that they were going to appear anonymous in our study, and that we would record the interview in order to avoid being distracted by taking notes during the interview (Kvale, 2002). Afterwards, we transcribed all interviews word for word in a manner to most accurately reflect what was said during the interview.

3.6 Critical aspects of the research

In this section we aim to discuss some critical aspects of our study, which could have affected the results of our empirical material.

3.6.1 Phone Interviews

When choosing interviews as a qualitative method in gathering data, it is optimal to meet interview participants in person. However, this was not possible in two of our cases. Due to this, there is the possibility that it affected our results. The phone interviews complicated the

collection of data in two aspects. First, it was difficult to get an overall impression of the participant's non-verbal language; laughter was the only non-verbal language that could be distinguished. Second, it was also difficult to determine when the participants had finished the sentence. At various times, interviewer and the participant talked at the same time. This leaves us open to the possibility that we might have misjudged what the participant really tried to express. We have made our best efforts to try and prevent this by repeating what was said. In the cases where we were hesitant, we made sure to ask - "have I interpreted you correctly?" Before doing the phone interviews we also had completed several face-to-face interviews and were thus more aware of possible misunderstandings.

3.6.2 Selection of participants

The various departments in Tetra Pak are different from each other. This also applies to the conditions of how the different departments received the central information. The department of Technical Service at Tetra Pak in Sweden is geographically situated close to the center of the company, which facilitates the communication between top management and employees. Additionally, the department handles technical services, which requires a lot of interaction through the web and work hours in front of the computer. This can contribute to the fact that these employees have greater access of, and are more exposed to, the intranet. Delimitation to solely one department of Tetra Pak was to create a platform for the study where the concerned employees belonged to the same organizational culture, had been reached with some central information, and had equal conditions while participating in *LiVE Tetra Pak*.

The participants had worked at Tetra Pak for different amount of years. Some had been there three years, and some had been there for 23 years. It feels accurate to suggest that the differences of experiences within the company could have affected the participant's level of motivation and perhaps willingness to accept new core value. Additionally, it can also have affected their relationship with their managers, the top management, and the organization itself. This would have been an aspect that would have great significance in a quantitative study. However, in this qualitative study, we can be considerate of the differences and take them into account, while analyzing the empirical material. Additionally, the participants' time at Tetra Pak does not always match the time working within the department of Technical

Service. Since experiences from working within other departments can affect how the employees respond, we decided to let the interview questions cover experiences that the employee might have gained throughout all their years with the company. Although being open to experiences outside of Technical Service, our participants have been working a minimum of two years within the department and therefore were well established within the department.

Another aspect that might have affected our selection of participants is that our contact person at Technical Service was the one arranging the interviews. Even though the contact person was given guidelines, her knowledge of the purpose of this thesis and the level of organizational commitment might have affected her choice of participants.

3.6.3 Alternative research methods

We are aware that alternative methods could be added to this study. Foremost, the manager's perspective of this subject in matter would have been an interesting perspective to add. It would be interesting to compare the results on the same subject in matter from an employee's perspective and a manager's perspective. In order to enrich the knowledge of how to communicate the core values effectively to shape them into motivators for employee engagement. In addition, it can also add an extra strength if observations were made of the launching of communication efforts - from the strategic planning to the end result. Our study is relatively small due to the time frame. But with additional time and resources a quantitative research method, such as a survey could become useful in identifying differing groups. The interviews could in this way be used as an additional tool, in order to understand why the groups differ.

4. Analysis

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how the internal communication can be managed in order to shape the core values into motivators for employee engagement. Therefore, we have studied how the two forms of internal communication: central and cascade communication

have been perceived in the process of communicating core values, and in which ways it might have affected the employee's engagement. To be able to *describe* and *interpret* this process, we have gathered empirical material from Tetra Pak. The empirical material consists of interviews, from which we have obtained material regarding the employee's perception of the cascade communication of core values and their perceptions of the communication program, *LiVE Tetra Pak*. Additionally, we have also taken part of the central communications of core values, such as internal documents, which explains the strategic planning behind *LiVE Tetra Pak*.

During this process, we have identified two groups of participants. A first group of participants who seemed to have a good understanding of the concept of core values, and a second group of participants that seems to have little or no knowledge about the concept of core values. The first group will be referred to the *aware participants* throughout the analysis. The second group will be referred to the *unaware participants*.

4.1 Why some core values are more compelling than others

Since the creation of core values is a part of the strategic communication used in order to generate employee engagement, there is an importance in founding core values that people are willing to embrace (Ind, 2007). This is the central communication challenge. Additionally, Ind (2007) explains that the core values cannot stand for themselves, which refers to the cascade communication that, as a delivery agent, has to build meaning into them. The interview material indicates that there seems to be some core values that are more compelling to the employees than others.

We reason that core values which are connected to the human needs (self-actualization and socialization) (Maslow, 1998) are a factor that can affect whether the core values become perceived as compelling or not.

Throughout the study, the core value of freedom and responsibility significantly stood out among the rest of the core values. The participants understood them better and made more references to them than to any others. One employee commented the following:

“...and then freedom and responsibility, this is my favorite, not job related but from personal point of view. I think if every person in world had these values, it world would be a much better place. Like I say, I value freedom very much so the other side of the coin is of course responsibility. If not freedom can be pretty harmful but if they’re together I think only this value can be enough to make the world a better place.”

The core value of Freedom and Responsibility might be appealing, due to the fact that they seem to promote a sense of trust. We reason that this core value declares to its employees that the company trusts its employees to make decisions. As described in the theory section, Maslow (1998) claims that people strive for self-actualization. We think that freedom enables self-actualization because it provides people with possibilities.

Partnership and Fun are well functioning core values since they also seem to tap into the human need for socialization (Maslow, 1998) therefore they provide people with opportunities to socialize externally with customers and internally with colleagues. Additionally, Ind (2007) states that ultimately “socialization is one of the reasons we go to work”. The value of fun is also appealing since it is directly connected to the well being of the employees. As one employee notes:

“I think there is an attitude within the company that states that it is important to take the time to have fun while you work, regardless of how stressful the situation is.”

As our interviews illustrated, the core values of ‘Customer Focus and Long-Term View’, and ‘Quality and Innovation’ seem to be less compelling to the employees. We believe that it is possible that they seem less compelling since they do not connect directly with the human needs of self-actualization and socialization. They seem to be perceived as connected with tasks that relate to the organizational goals rather than personal goals. For example, one employee describes how the core value; ‘Customer Focus and Long-Term View’, relates to her work with the following words:

“Customer focus, well, in our department we have got these product owners and we work with the products in order to create these projects in e-training of service products, and then it is also products that in the end are supposed to be

sold to costumers. So I agree with that. And long term view, we are working with the 2020 strategy and I'm not highly involved in that but (...) I know where it is if I want to enhance my knowledge (...)."

However, it is possible to discuss that these core values are instead indirectly connected with the human needs. For example, we reason that they could in fact lead to satisfying the need of self-actualization. As explained in the theory section of 'Central Communication', self-actualization can be translated into "what a man can be, he must be", and is based on Maslow's theories that people have a desire to reach their full potential (Maslow, 1998). Possibly, these core values are less compelling since they refer more to what has to be done *in order to* satisfy the human needs, instead of being directly connected with them.

4.2 The understanding of how the core value fit together as a set

As the interview participants stated, the core values of 'Freedom and Responsibility' and 'Partnership and Fun' seem to be perceived as more compelling than the other two sets; 'Costumer Focus' and 'Long-Term View and Quality and Innovation'. Additionally, we think that the fact that the employees' perception of some core values are more compelling, has to do with their understanding of how the core values fit together as a set.

The empirical material shows that the core values that seemed to be less compelling to the participants were often discussed separately when we asked them to describe how the sets of core values could be reflected in their work. However, the more compelling sets of core values were described with the participants underlining the meaning of the core values as a whole.

The participants had no difficulties understanding how the words contained in the core value of 'Freedom and Responsibility' related to each other. Everyone agreed that they fit together. One of the employees noted that "with freedom comes responsibility." Another said, "In order for freedom to have an impact, everyone must of course take responsibility too."

The other set of core values, 'Partnership and Fun', were at times discussed separately. The unaware participants found it difficult to understand the meaning of the word "partnership". A common response when partnership was mentioned was "Partnership with whom?" Here we

see that there is a lack of relevancy between the words. As mentioned, this core value is one of the two that the participants seemed to recall the most. However, one observation indicated that due to a confusion of the concept of 'Partnership and Fun', a few of the employees continuously referred to the core value as "commitment and fun", which is the former version of the core value. These employees expressed that they could not understand the meaning of 'Partnership' in the context that it was put in, which might be the reason as to why they referred to the old core value instead of the new one.

The core values of 'Quality and Innovation' and 'Customer Focus and Long-Term View' were also often discussed separately, not as a set of core value. For example, we asked one employee to describe how the core value of 'Quality and Innovation' appealed to one's work:

"Quality is like very important to have and has also been very highly prioritized by Tetra Pak in the last two years. Everything you do is about quality, it's either about the quality of your own work or the quality of what you deliver."

The employee clearly had understood why quality should be reflected in one's work. The employee was reminded about the other part of the core value and continued explaining:

"Innovation is very important. Although I can't say that I feel it in my work, innovation, well it might be that I sometimes take own initiatives how the work situation is to be developed. But when I think about innovation I think about the development of what we are selling to the costumers (...)"

The employee seemed to understand the meaning of 'Innovation' and is able to relate it to the individual work place. However, the employees did not seem to connect the values into one shared value where 'Quality and Innovation' are related and depending on each other.

4.3 The core value linked to Employee Engagement

Marlier and Parker's (2009) theory states that messages need to be both intellectually compelling, and emotionally engaging, in order to appeal to employee engagement. We reason thus that the central communication of core values should be built on the same preferences. By exploring the core values of Tetra Pak, it seems clear that their core values have to some degree been put together in a set, which appeals to the employees in both an emotional engaging way, as well as in an intellectually compelling way. For example, when employees considered the core value of 'Freedom and Responsibility', they seemed to perceive freedom as something positive and empowering; while responsibility was explained to be a logical consequence of freedom. Here, the word freedom seemed to be emotionally engaging and with the word responsibility attached, it seemed to be more intellectually compelling. Another example refers to the core value of 'Quality and Innovation'. Quality was explained to be an organizational goal for profit, which seems to appeal to the employee's intellect rather than emotions, while 'Innovation' by some participants spoke to their personal creativity that seemed to be more emotional based.

4.4 The manager's role of building meaning into the core values

Since core values cannot stand for themselves, it is therefore vital for organizations to build meaning into the values so that employees can embrace them (Ind, 2007). Based on this statement, central communication needs to be strategic when formulating core values. One approach to identify the effectiveness of having compelling core values may be to assess a company's cascade communication and the managers' role in conveying the core values to employees to create a shared understanding. This approach appears to be similar with employees who stated that they found the core values of 'Freedom and Responsibility' and 'Partnership and Fun' more personally compelling. This seemed to correlate with the core values the managers were reported to focus on more. During our interviews we came across this tendency when we asked how well they think their closest manager worked with the core values.

"I don't know really, I don't think he is too good with that.
Well, he definitely embeds the core values freedom and

responsibility. He gives you freedom to take responsibility of certain tasks, we can see that indeed.”

When we continued asking about the remaining core values, most of them seemed more hesitant about how their managers implemented those core values in their work. Since the core value of ‘Freedom and Responsibility’ seems to be the value that the managers actively focus on, we believe that the managers’ communication of the core values can affect their attractiveness. Managers transform the central messages into practical examples (Quirke, 2008) and should direct the organizational cascade communication. It is perhaps no surprise that ‘Freedom and Responsibility’ is the core value that employees find both most memorable and most compelling, given that it is the core value that appears to be put into practice the most. There are reasons to believe that how well the management team embraces the organizational core values in their own work influences the employees’ perceptions of the core values and which ones they perceive as more compelling.

In conclusion, we contend that it is possible that the central communication in the choice of values that the organization chooses to represent, the formulation of the values and how they are paired together will have an impact on the employees perception of whether the core values are compelling or not. Furthermore, through cascade communication we believe that managers can have an influence on how the employees perceive the core values. Employees’ perception of the core values will be influenced by how well managers build meaning into the words as a pair and by how well they embed each core value in their work and management.

4.5 How core values are practiced by managers

From the empirical study of interviews with employees at Tetra Pak Technical Service in Sweden, we could build a picture of how the *cascade* communication of core values was practiced by their closest managers. In this section we stress the significance of the manager’s role as the *delivery agent* of the core values.

Most of the interview participants were unsure about how their managers embrace the core values in their work. However, the aware group seemed able to make some connections. For example, one employee talked about how one manager embraces the value of ‘Customer Focus’ by expressing that the manager “focuses on the customers a lot and that definitely

permeates through his work, his priorities and the discussions that we have”. Another employee, while talking about the value of freedom, expressed, “I definitely feel like my manager provides me with freedom, in the sense that I feel like I am trusted and have responsibilities.” In contrast, the unaware group answered negatively when questioned on whether their closest manager embraces the core values in their work. “No, I have a hard time seeing how my manager does that.” They also had difficulty seeing how their manager practiced the set of core values as values that should be connected to each other. For example, one employee expressed how the value ‘Innovation’ sometimes harms the value of ‘Quality’.

“Well it should probably fit together more than it actually does. Sometimes you get the feeling that things are invented just for the sake of innovation. (...) Yes from the top-management department. It’s more time pressured, and things needs to be done quickly which means that sometimes you don’t have time to give the last quality touch.”

According to Blanchard and O’Connor’s (1997) theory about value-based management, it occurs when leaders shape the values of their employees by setting an example of how they relate and embrace the organizational values. Further, as Sandberg and Taragama (2007) state, “Leaders have the power to shape and create a common understanding.” The empirical study appears to suggest that some employees lack understanding of how managers embrace the core values in their work. Though some employees did understand, no one could mention how all of the core values are embedded in the managers’ work. We reason that this can complicate the process of the cascade communication of the core values, since the managers are the delivery agents of messages and also those who should initiate and co-create the meaning of the messages together with the employees. If there is a lack of participation from the managers, the meaning of core values risks losing its meaning as the employees do not know how to embed them in their work or communication efforts. One employee expressed the frustration associated with the absence of communication efforts in the following way,

“I would like to be given some more practical examples of how the core values can be demonstrated in the things that I do. Because, it can be difficult to understand how I should embed the core value customer focus for example in my daily tasks when I never meet any customers.”

Additionally, one of the unaware participants noted, “ I really don’t think my manager knows the core values better than I do.” Both observations take into consideration how the managers’

role influences the employees understanding and knowledge about the core values. In this case, one can think that is presumably due to the fact that the managers are not that concerned about the core values and it reflects on the employees' perception of core values.

The employees expressed that they never sit and talk with their managers about the core values specifically. However, participants from both the aware and unaware groups of employees thought that their managers communicated the core values indirectly in ways that they could not articulate. Initially, when we asked these participants about whether, in their experience, the information of the core values was enough, regarding both the facilitation and presentation of core values - none of them mentioned the role of the manager and how he or she should communicate the core values toward the employees.

In the theory section about strategic leadership, Marlier and Parker (2009) argue that leaders need to understand the different needs of their followers so that they can adjust to their needs of management. Albrecht states that different types of *positive* leadership styles are the ones succeeding when it comes to creating and sustaining employee engagement (Albrecht, 2010). Individual consideration is viewed as one specific aspect of positive leadership that increases the levels of vigor, dedication and absorption (which defines the feelings of employee engagement) among the employees. Albrecht (2010) explains how this partly can be displayed in a developmental leadership, which by a few references from the empirical study seem to appear within the communication of core values at the department of Technical Service. For example, while talking about the core value of 'Customer Focus and Long-Term View', one employee explained how their manager was actively trying to provide opportunities for the employees to meet the customers in order for them to become better at satisfying customer needs. We view this as an example of a developmental leadership effort in order to deliver the core value in question and motivate the employee.

As we have already mentioned, the empirical material indicates a strong emphasis on the core value - 'Freedom and Responsibility'. At one point, one participant said that "you don't ask for permission, then it's better to say sorry", and another one expressed it as:

"Well there's no one looking over my shoulder to make sure that I do my job. It's more like I know what (have) has to be done and when and if it's not done on time I suffer the consequences".

It seems as if the cascade communication of core values is built on a great amount of trust at the department of Technical Services in Sweden. The relationships between the managers and the employees in this case seems to be less about ensuring everyone is following the core values, and more about providing an environment where it feels natural to embrace them. This goes back to what Ind (2007) addressed concerning creating an open, honest and participated-in environment where employees feel that they are a part of the process and an important asset to the company. As a contrast to this, a directive leadership would use the authority of the manager's role to singlehandedly decide how and when the core values should be put into action. As described in the theory section, this type of management is not suitable for attitude or behavioral change. However, due to the trust the employees have for their managers that we claim to have discovered, this does not seem to be the case at the department of Technical Service in Sweden.

Through the process of analyzing how the core values have been practiced at Tetra Pak and the department of Technical Service in Sweden, we found one factor that could have been complicating this. This factor is what Bertham Gross (1964) has defined as *information overload*. Judging by the impressions from our visits at Technical Service in Sweden, conversations with our contact person at Tetra Pak, and from the participants' confusion of the core values of Tetra Pak, we question whether the communication of core values might be affected by surrounding communication of additional strategic messages. For example, during the interviews we asked if the participants could name Tetra Pak's core values. When answering, many mentioned the old core values and one participant kept repeating 'environment' which, it in fact, is another strategic message communicated to the employees at Tetra Pak. If the employee's perception of the core values is being affected negatively by an overload of information of strategic messages at Tetra Pak, we also want to address the manager's role of the situation. Managers must be consistent in their behaviour, and as Marlier and Parker (2009) describe it "they simply learn a new language and behavior, and speak or act accordingly in order to connect with their people." To be consistent as a delivery agent of the central communication in this matter would be difficult. This significantly refers to the importance of coherent communication of core values, as managers can very simply confuse the messages in their communication toward the employees. As mentioned above, some of the participants referred to an old set of core values instead of the current set. We

think that this might be an effect of how their manager in charge could have confused them as a result of the central and cascade communication of core values being incoherent.

4.6 Approaching communication as a process

Burton and Dimpleby (2007) explain that it is important to view the organizational communication as a two-way communication between manager and employee in order for the employee to make sense of the messages. In addition, Marlier and Parker (2009) propose that an engaging leadership is best viewed as a process rather than a one-time effort where the messages are perceived to be co-created. In other words, the communication of core values is best when it is a continuous dialogue with the employees. Based on these arguments, we discuss whether employees' perception of core values are affected by the whether or not the communication is being viewed as a process or a one-time effort.

When we discussed *LiVE Tetra Pak* with the interview participants, one referred to it as a *show*. Additionally, even though the other participants did not use the word *show*, they seemed to describe it as a one-time effort, similar to what might be called a *show*. We see signs of similarities with what Marlier and Parker (2009) call the “the listen to me show”. This is a communication effort where organizations aim to deliver messages by making the employees feel like an essential part of the organization through co-creation, but where that strategy is not actually put into action. One employee expressed that:

“LiVE Tetra Pak became too much of an activity that was going to be ticked off from a ‘to-do list’ almost, when people had to be chased into the meetings (...) It lost its purpose. And in my opinion, there are better, more cost effective ways to organize this type of events.”

Marlier and Parker give examples of what a “listen to me show” would look like, with power point presentations, the managers on stage, and a question and answer session. This description seems to have many similarities to how *LiVE Tetra Pak* was executed. Additionally, Marlier and Parker (2009) present “the engaging leadership process”. This leadership approach views the communication of strategic messages both as a process, and as a way to generate employee engagement, by addressing the employees' questions and concerns, their creativity and ideas, and emphasizing that their full engagement is needed in

the organization. The distinct difference between “the listen to me show” and “the engaging leadership process” seem to be that the latter views the communication as a process, whereas the messages need to be perceived as co-created. However, judging by the participant’s perception of *LiVE Tetra Pak*, the program seem to be more comparable with a “listen to me show”. Additionally, many of the participants brought up their concerns regarding a lack of follow up actions after *LiVE Tetra Pak*. They expressed that the communicational effort of *LiVE Tetra Pak* in itself would not be enough for them to fully understand and embrace the core values. In other words, they expressed how they would need the communication of core values to be more consistent.

Continuously, we suggest that the choice and use of communication channels might affect the communication of core values ability to be perceived either as a process or a one time effort. All of the participants answered affirmatively when asked if they had been given any information about Tetra Pak’s core values. They mentioned that they were informed during *LiVE Tetra Pak*, and some added that they also received the information when they began their employment at Tetra Pak. Most of the participants also added that the core values could be found in the intranet, and on bulletin walls around the office. It seems clear that the participants had been exposed to informative material of the core values in one way or another. However, the perception of whether enough communicational effort is made in establishing the core values was markedly different. Some employees expressed how their work consistently reflects and is inspired by the core values, while a few others had the opposite perception and indicated there to be a lack of communicational efforts surrounding the core values. We reason that the differences in these perceptions could depend on the choice and use of the communication channels. For example, a few participants reasoned that the employees whose work roles include a lot of work on the computer have better access to the intranet than others. Therefore, even though the communication of core values is meant to reach out to the all of the employees in their day-to-day work, it might not.

“I mean there are people that work in the store office and those people may not have the same opportunity to get the information about the core values, like us who sit in front of the computer all day. The intranet is a great way to communicate Tetra Pak’s core values.”

4.7 Signs of how the Cascade Communication of core values aims to generate Employee Engagement

By exploring the internal documents of the planning of *LiVE Tetra Pak*, we noticed signs of the strategic central communication. In an example, the material explains how a questions-and-answers-session (Q&A-session) was planned to be included in the communication program of *LiVE Tetra Pak*. Additionally, the interviewed employees mentioned the session when asked to describe the activities during *LiVE Tetra Pak*. This indicates an example of how signs of generating employee engagement can be displayed in the central communication of core values at Tetra Pak. By offering the employees emotional support through opportunities to vent and question, this approaches a use of individual consideration through a supportive leadership. As explained in the theory section of cascade communication, the individual consideration increases employee engagement, and can be reflected in a supportive leadership (Albrecht, 2010). Based on the empirical material above, it seems clear that the central communication of core values has taken a supportive leadership style into consideration when planning *LiVE Tetra Pak*.

Additional signs of individual consideration of the central communication can be found in the planning of follow-up sessions after the four hours of activities during *LiVE Tetra Pak*. As the theory confirms, individual consideration should not only be reflected in supportive leadership but also developmental leadership. This leadership refers to what we will call follow-up, a careful and continuous observation of the staff and their relationship with the core values.

4.8 Some reflections regarding the results of our study

During the interviews, we encountered some employees who expressed that they think that some of the previous sets of core values were better than the new ones. They expressed that the old ones were better phrased and more descriptive. One employee expressed special irritation about the fact that the top-management department felt the need to reformulate the core values and confuse the meaning of the words. The employee noted, “To be honest, I like our old core values better (...) they actually represent the same meaning but I still think the old ones were more descriptive.”

This opinion that ‘it was better before’ was something that Marlier and Leiter (2009) describe as a known sign for the bonding mechanism. The bonding mechanism symbolizes how people look for protection in the past and create the opinions of how everything was ‘better before’. This mechanism occurs when people attach themselves, and the people around them, with things in the past, instead of embracing new ideas and changes. This observation causes us to suggest that the interview participants expressed a resistance toward the renewal of the core values due to a psychological process of the so-called ‘bonding mechanism’.

We contend that this psychological process has a different time aspect varying from one person to another. To some, the bonding mechanism has a longer durability while to others, the bonding mechanism quickly changes appearance becoming the bridging mechanism—the point at which people start trusting that there is a purpose to the change and are willing to embrace it (Marlier & Parker, 2009). Since our interviews took place about two years after that the new core values had been launched. One can argue that it can be due to the fact that the process of moving from the bonding toward the bridging mechanism may take less time for some people, which can be an explanation as to why some employees seemed to have embraced the core values better than others. In other words, those who seemed resistant to the core values might still have been in the transition phase and, therefore, they still shared the view that ‘it was better before’.

Another discussion that can be raised from the results of our study is, whether there is a connection between the employee’s ability to recall the core values by heart and their commitment towards the core values. From the interviews, we found that few of the participants could recall the core values without any assistance from the interviewer. Still, some of them expressed great feelings of commitment toward the core values. They said that the core values are embedded in the atmosphere at Tetra Pak. One employee described the value of innovation as “something that just is in my spine”. Another said, “Quality should be a part of our DNA”. Therefore, it is possible that asking the employees directly how they practice each core value, might not be the correct way to address the issue, since they might not have reflected about that question upon until then. We conclude that the answers such as “the core values are embedded in the atmosphere” can be a better indication that they have embraced the core values, rather than if they are able to recall the core values by heart.

4.9 The significance of intellectually compelling communication

Throughout this analysis we have separated the participants of our study into two groups: *aware* and *unaware* participants. What separates them is their knowledge of the concept of core values. This separation was interesting to consider due to how the responses between the groups proved to be significantly different. Up until this point in the analysis section we have described the differences between the two groups' perceptions of the communication of Tetra Pak's core values. For example, we have presented their different perceptions regarding whether the core values were compelling or not, how well they perceived their managers communication of the core values to be, and how well they could explain the purpose of *LIVE Tetra Pak*. However, we have not yet addressed *why* these perceptions may differ depending on which group the participants belong to.

Marlier and Parker (2009) propose that the organizational communication effort need to be intellectually compelling. We reason that this approach might not only refer to the symbolism of the words themselves and their reflections of the organization (as we discuss in part 2), but to the process of *educating* the employees about the concept of core values. The fact that humans need to make sense out of their surroundings (Gärdenfors, 2009) could be the crucial part of constructing messages in an intellectually compelling way. In this case, it is the concept of core values that need to make sense to the employees. They might need to understand the purpose of embracing core values in order to be able to actually embrace them. This view demonstrates what the results of our study indicate; that the employees' perception of core values may depend on their knowledge of the concept.

We reason that it is important for a manager, as a delivery agent of the core values, to appeal to the employees' intellects. They need to express that they do not consider the employees clueless of the intentions of strategic messages. We deduce that if the central and cascade communication of core values leave out information regarding *why* it is important for them to listen to, and embrace, the core values, it might harm the employees' perception of the core values. The argument here is that this knowledge gap can be the critical factor when it comes to how well the employees are able to embrace the core values.

5. Conclusion

This thesis has brought light that employee's perception of organizational core values can be used as motivators for employee engagement. This statement is developed through the context of that the process of generating employee engagement is affected by the employees' perception of core values. In order to address this subject we have examined the role and use of internal communication. Furthermore the aim of this study is to describe and interpret this process by addressing an employee's perspective. In order to do so the research questions used are the following:

- 1. How can the internal communication of core values affect employee's perception of core values?*
- 2. How can the internal communication of core values increase employee's commitment toward the core values?*
- 3. How can the communication of core values be managed in order to increase employee engagement?*
- 4. How can the employee's perception of core values affect the core values abilities to be motivators for employee engagement?*

Through the analysis of the empirical material and how it applies to the theories, we have found four points that respond to our research questions. These four points are:

- 'aware' employees
- the manager's role to communicate
- a coherent internal communication
- approaching communication as a process

Through the gathering of empirical material we have discovered that the employees first need to *understand* the concept and its purpose of establishing core values within an organization. It was evident that those employees who had knowledge of the concept of organizational core values, who in our words were 'aware', where those who seemed to be able to relate to the organizational core values better. Thus, we believe that educating the employees about the concept of core values and its purpose; will lay ground for how receptive the employees are

towards communication efforts concerning core values. After educating the employees about the concept and the purpose of establishing organizational core values, we have also observed the importance of communicating the *meaning* of each core value. In Tetra Pak case, we have noticed that it is significant to understand how each value fit together as a set, in order to fully embrace them. As Gärdenfors (2007) states that people need to make sense of their surrounding, people have the same urge to make sense and interpret of what is being communicated to them. Therefore, core values that are not easily understood, risk losing its purpose.

The second point that we found being significant to our study, is the manager's role in the communication process of core values. From our interviews we have observed that the core values the employees perceive as most compelling, are those core values the managers put into practice in their management at most. This has led us to suggest that there is an urge for manager's management to "walk the talk". In other words, embrace and put into practice what the organization says that it represents and hold dear. Additionally, another aspect to this point is the manager's role of creating a common understanding of the core values as Sandberg & Taragama (2007) suggest. Managers can *activate* the core values by setting examples. As the concept of value-based management proposes, managers today have a role to inspire and act as a leading example (Anderson, 1997). Depending how well the managers are able to build meaning into the core values essentially can have an impact on the employee's commitment towards the core values. Therefore, we believe that the manager's role to build meaning into the core values has a critical role in the process of shaping core values into motivators for employee engagement.

The third point that we found being significant to our study is the importance of having coherent and clear internal communication. From our interviews we noticed that there were some confusion among the employees about which core values were the accurate ones. Many times the employees referred to the former set of core values. In our analysis part we have deliberated on the reasons to this and thus noticed the importance that the management communication is aligned with the central communication. We think that it can add confusion if the central communication chooses one-way to address the core values and the management communication another. We reason that mixed messages can weaken the employees understanding of the core values and thus affect their commitment to the core values. A large company as Tetra Pak also has a bigger challenge when ensuring that their internal

communication is coherent. Due to the fact that the company has many strategic messages that circle within the organization it can be difficult to separate core values from other organizational strategic messages. Therefore it is essential to be clear in your communication and to avoid a situation of ‘information overload’.

The forth point that we have found being significant to our study in terms of viewing the communication efforts regarding the core values as a process. In order to shape the core values into motivators for employee engagement, the communication process has to be viewed as a process rather than a one-time effort. As our study indicated, the employees want to be reminded about the core values. The core values need to be perceived as *present* in the work environment, in order for the employees to make the effort to embrace them. Additionally, the importance of dialogues cannot either be taken lightly. Through dialogues the creation of a common understanding of the core values takes place, which repeatedly have been observed as a key factor in the process of shaping core values into motivators for employee engagement. We have observed how co-creating a meaning into the core values affects the employees understanding and perception of them. It can be explained as Marlier & Parker (2009) states it that through initiating dialogues the employees process the information received, and feel as if they participate in the creation of core values. Furthermore, as Burton & Dimpleby (2007) states, a two-way communication shapes the meaning of the subject in matter and helps both the sender and receiver of the messages to reach a better understanding of the message sent. As we have remarked through our analysis of empirical material, the employees understanding of the organizational core values have a crucial role in how well they are able to embrace the core values. Another aspect to viewing communication of the core values as a process is the importance of follow-ups, especially when companies launch ‘communication programs.’ Without follow-ups the communication effort can easily become viewed as a show. When this occurs, we have observed through our interviews that the employees are less likely to remember both the contents and purpose of the communication effort.

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APPENDIX 1 – INTERVIEW GUIDE

Presentation

Vi kommer från Lunds universitet, går sista terminen på kandidatprogrammet i strategisk kommunikation. Vi gör vårt examensarbete nu i vår och har fått kontakt med Tetra Pak genom Emma Lefdal, kommunikations direktör.

Vi är här för att göra intervjuer med några av de anställda inom Technical Service, och kommer använda det materialet i vårt examensarbete, ni kommer dock vara helt anonym.

Vi kommer börja med att ställa lite frågor om dig, och sen är intervjun indelad i fyra delar.

Bakgrund

- Hur länge har du arbetet på Tetra Pak Technical Service?
- Vad jobbar du som?

Kärnvärden och kommunikation

- Har du fått ta del av någon information om Tetra Pak kärnvärden?
- Hur fick du den informationen? I vilken form? Från vem?
- Hur ofta påminns du om kärnvärdena?
- Kan du förklara för mig med dina egna ord vad ett kärnvärde är?
- Tycker du att det är viktigt för en organisation att ha kärnvärden?
- Varför tror du att Tetra Pak arbetar med kärnvärden?

Kärnvärden och engagemang

Kreativitet

- Känner du att ditt arbete tillåter dig att vara kreativ?
- JA: I vilka typer av arbetsituationer känner du dig kreativ?
- Vad tror du att du behöver för att kunna vara mer kreativ i ditt arbete? (tydligare info, mer frihet, mer uppmuntran, verktyg etc.)

Anpassbarhet

- Om du kan försöka utvärdera dig själv, hur tror du att du klarar av förändringar på arbetsplatsen eller i ditt eget arbete? (hur anpassbar)
- RQ3 Vad tror du skulle kunna få dig att känna dig mer säker under förändringar, eller bli mer villig till att anpassa dig utefter förändringar?

Mot mål

- Skulle du kunna försöka förklara vad det betyder för dig att göra ett “bra jobb”? (göra allt chefen säger, vara innovativa, göra kunderna nöjda, gå hem nöjd)
- Känner du dig motiverad till att göra ett bra jobb?
- Om du kan nämna de tre främsta anledningarna för dig att göra ett bra jobb, vilka skulle de vara?
- Vad tror du är nödvändigt för dig att ha för att kunna göra ett bra jobb?

Entusiasm

- Tycker du att kärnvärden tilltalar dig?

Ledarskap och kärnvärden

- Tycker du att din närmaste chef representera kärnvärdena i sitt arbete/ledarskap?
 - Hur syns det/ hur syns det inte?
 - I vilka situationer pratar du och din närmaste chef om kärnvärdena?
 - Upplever du att din närmaste chef skapar en miljö/möjligheter för dig att praktisera kärnvärden i dina arbetsuppgifter?
-
- Känner du att dina chefer är intresserade av dina idéer?
 - Känner du att du får feedback på ditt arbete? Från vem? På vilket sätt? Hur ofta?
 - Känner du att ditt arbete uppmärksammas?
 - Känner du att ditt engagemang på arbetet behövs och är åtråvärt?
 - Tycker du att du får tillgång till “känslig” information om företaget, så som brister och misstag?

Live Tetra Pak

- På vilket sätt medverkade du under LiVE?
- Varför tror du att Tetra Pak valde att genomföra LiVE?
- Tycker du att de uppfyllde det målet?
- Lyckades de berika din kunskap kring Tetra Paks kärnvärden?