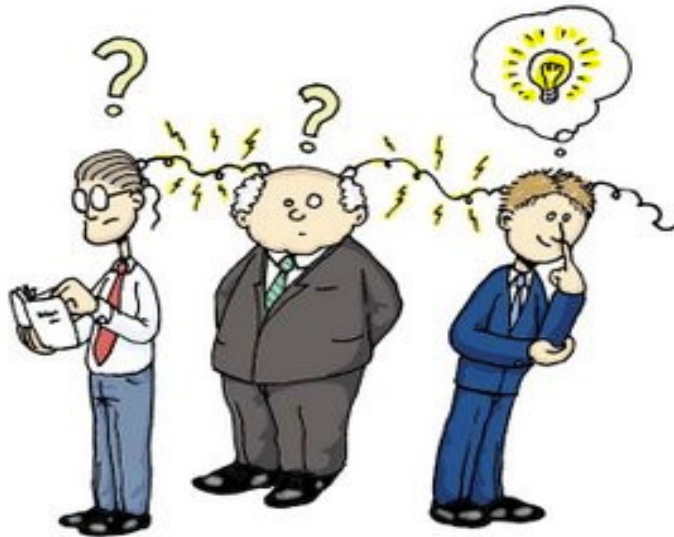




LUND UNIVERSITY
School of Economics and Management

Building Bridges

The Case of Implement - Knowledge Sharing in a
management-consulting firm with a bold growth strategy



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ABSTRACT

Title:	Building Bridges The case of Implement - Knowledge Sharing in a management-consulting firm with a bold growth strategy
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Key Words:	Knowledge Management, Knowledge Sharing, Culture, Knowledge Intensive Firm, Management-consultant firm, Contextual factors
Thesis Purpose:	The main purpose of this study is to examine how Knowledge Management is conducted in a practical setting.
Methodology:	This research concerns a single case study conducted from an interpretative, qualitative perspective.
Theoretical Perspective:	Contextual factors on Knowledge Management forms the theoretical framework backed up with research on knowledge and Knowledge Intensive Firms.
Empirical Foundation:	The empirical base is a single case study of a management-consulting firm consisting of nine interviews with employees.
Analysis:	The analysis and the empirical findings are presented under the same chapter. The analysis of the empirical material is divided into twelve sections, each representing one contextual factor.
Conclusion:	Our research suggests that there is a possibility to manage knowledge in this specific context. For this to be possible we have identified that six out of twelve contextual factors are critical.

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Enjoy your reading!

Sofia Delin Svensson

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce our field of study. First, we will present our research object - the management-consulting firm Implement Consulting Group and the research topic - Knowledge Management, where Knowledge Sharing is a strong element. We are going to argue why Knowledge Management is important to consider for Implement. Lastly, we will outline the purpose of the thesis.

The Journey of Implement

The journey of Implement Consulting Group's (Implement) creation started as a dream of two established entrepreneurial Danish consultants in 1996. The business has grown rapidly since, and Implement is now the largest independent consultancy firm in Denmark owned by its partners. The head office is located in Hørsholm, Denmark. Implement is marketing, selling and providing consultancy services aimed at developing companies in the private and public sectors. One overarching goal within the organization is to be the best within their field by having the best relevant competence and knowledge. Thus, the knowledge of the employees is the core resource of the company.



Following a quick domestic expansion in Denmark, Implement has recently decided to expand internationally, starting with the Scandinavian markets. Starting out as a loosely shaped venture, the goal to expand has been formalized through Project Viking. Four new offices have been launched in Malmö, Stockholm, Bergen and Oslo. This has raised the subject of Knowledge Management, and more specifically Knowledge Sharing as the core factor of the Knowledge Management at Implement. Implement has identified Knowledge Sharing as a crucial element to take into account when it comes to the challenge of keeping the company together during this bold growth strategy. Growing from one office in Hørsholm, where employees can meet on a daily basis to share their knowledge with colleagues, to four geographically dispersed offices, Implement is now facing a challenge regarding how to maintain effective Knowledge Sharing among all employees. This thesis

will therefore try to provide an insightful description of how a Knowledge Intensive Firm with an expansion strategy, like Implement, handles Knowledge Management.

Background

At a societal level there is a development moving towards treating knowledge as the defining factor of our time, developing the notion of an information society. The argument is that the information society has extended into a knowledge economy (Creplet et. al., 2001). As a result, Knowledge Intensive Firms, particularly Professional Service Firms like Implement, are on the rise (Grant, 1996; Alvesson, 2009). The consultancy industry has therefore had an explosive growth (Sturdy, 2011) and the awareness of knowledge as a valuable organizational asset has due to this increased (Sveiby, 1996). Nonaka (2008) argue that knowledge can be the key for achieving competitive advantages for companies in today's market. Davenport & Prusak (1998) state that knowledge constructs an advantage, impossible for competitors to imitate, due to the fact that knowledge can be imbedded in an organization's human relations and working processes. This is why knowledge can be seen as a competitive advantage if managed well. Therefore, an increased interest in how to manage knowledge within an organization has been created.

Management-consulting firms, like Implement, are mainly offering intangible knowledge-based services to clients in an objective and independent manner (Creplet et. al., 2001; Alvesson, 2009). This makes knowledge the defining factor for the actual service that management-consulting firms are offering their clients (Creplet et. al., 2001). Or in other words, Professional Service Firms sells knowledge. Therefore, it is not wrong to assume that efficient management of knowledge is a critical success factor for management-consulting firms in order to compete with competitors. The management of knowledge is encompassed within the field of Knowledge Management.

Knowledge Management can be defined as the process where an organization aims to manage the way knowledge is shared between organizational members. This can be utilized through the use of technological systems, through the interaction between employees or through a combination of both (Alvesson, 2009; Newell et. al., 2009; Creplet et. al., 2001). However, well functioning and efficient Knowledge Management might be challenging to achieve and some authors even question the manageability of knowledge (Alvesson, 2009).

Historically the predominant view on knowledge has been rationalistic, treating it as a commodity and a resource as any other within the firm (Sandberg & Targama, 2007). Recently more critical

theories have criticised this view as being too optimistic and rather encourages a more ambiguous nature of knowledge (Alvesson, 2009). We believe that the critical theories tend to focus on the ends rather than the means, resulting in how they offer little when it comes to practical implications like in the context of this case study of Implement. On the other hand, the more rationalistic theories, that state that if you perform action A, it will automatically lead to result B, is too naïve in this context.

The majority of the existing theories, within the field of Knowledge Management, are rather rationalistic and are built on rational assumptions regarding what is possible to achieve by the use of different models (Sandberg & Targama, 2007). The rationalistic theories are based on the fact that action and reaction can be controlled by external measures (ibid). We argue that the problem with the rationalistic view presented, is that organizations and their employees do not really work/act like this in reality. We feel that the existing literature ignores the flesh and blood and only focuses on the skeleton of an organization. We therefore claim that there are a lot of contextual factors, like organizational culture and incentives, influencing the concept of managing knowledge that needs to be taken into consideration. In other words, we question the rationalistic perspective's instrumentality. We mean that by studying the irrationalities within an organization there is an opportunity to explore and draw new concepts for how Knowledge Management occurs in a practical setting. By focusing on the irrationalities we hope to contribute to the understanding of how Knowledge Sharing can work in a practical setting.

Research Purpose

We have two aims with this thesis, one practical and one theoretical;

1. Our aim is to provide an insightful description of the Knowledge Management at a Knowledge Intensive firm, more precisely a management-consulting firm, with an expansion strategy. By doing this we:
2. Aim to contribute to the literature in the field of Knowledge Management when it comes to understanding what contextual factors to consider in an organization.

Chapter 2 - Methodology

In this chapter we will present our methodological choices, from both a philosophical and a practical point of view. First, we outline our general method approach. Second, we explain our data collection and interview techniques and lastly, we discuss our researches in terms of source criticism.

Considerations

Methodology concerns questions regarding how to conduct research, through quantitative research or qualitative research (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Methodology also takes into account the effects the conduct of the research might have on the illustration and the subjectivity of the research (Bryman, 1989).

Bryman (2008) raises the question whether social entities should be considered as objective entities that have an external reality outside social actors, or whether social entities should be considered as social constructions, created from the perception and actions of social actors. Our understanding of reality is that peoples pre-understanding, depending on prior experiences, potentially influences all data (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). We share this opinion of how the data in itself, and our understanding of reality, is socially constructed. To be able to take this into account in our research we will take an interpretative perspective. An interpretative perspective seeks to explain how people act by seeing past people's understanding of reality and how that understanding forms how they act in organizations (Sandberg & Targama, 2007). In contrast to a positivistic perspective, and in line with an interpretative perspective, we aim to understand how the world is perceived and understood by our respondents. Or in other words, understand how our respondent's understands reality.

Research Design

An interpretative approach involves working with an iterative process between the theory and the empirical material, continuously moving back and forth between different stages of the research (Alvehus & Kärreman, 2007). This creates an opportunity to take both the interviewers and the interviewees pre-understanding into consideration (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). This research has been conducted in an interpretative matter and the research method has been qualitative. As mentioned by Bryman (2008) there are many ways to conduct and design qualitative research. Our research design consists of observations, interviews and collection of secondary data. The interviews are very central in the research. They were used to gain insight regarding the existing ways to share and handle knowledge at and between the different offices at Implement. In line with the

interpretative paradigm of our study, semi-structured interviews were used to allow more open questions. These questions were modified as the research process evolved, and we got a better understanding of the subject (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1982). This also provided the interviews with a higher flexibility in terms of questions asked and answers given (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Instead of the interview being a monologue, it is possible, at any time, to engage in it to steer the conversation towards a specific topic. Additionally, an instant reaction on the answer is possible and further questioning can be employed. The answers that are being received will probably be more instinctive and individualistic as well as it will provide more accurate data than a structured interview could (ibid).

Themes addressed during the interviews were divided into four categories; culture, process, tools and future (How does the process of sharing knowledge work? What is the reason for sharing knowledge this way? What tools do you use to share this knowledge? Do you have any suggestions for improvements?). When we formulated the questions we tried to avoid the generation of double-barrelled questions as well as questions that would reveal the authors values and attitudes. Our intention was to have as neutral approach as possible towards the interviewees and their answers. (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

By asking questions in a certain way we might have subscribed a need of sharing knowledge in a certain way that did not exist prior to the interviews. This was avoided by not having a specific goal with the interviews in the opening phase and by not studying connecting literature until the first round of interviews was completed. That way we could avoid to unconsciously looking for specific answers during the interviews and ignoring other important facts, to get the whole picture.

Observations were uncategorized and mostly contributed to corroborate more subtle and nuanced findings. The interviewees spoke three different languages during the interviews; Danish, Norwegian and Swedish. This limited our ability to understand every exact word and observe how employees at Implement acted in their working environment. Despite this a thorough impression of the company, the working environment and the organizational values was given due to several visits to three out of five existing offices and long interviews with employees from four different offices and from all three different countries.

The secondary material (power point presentations, code of conduct, company homepage, internal documents) was mostly used to confirm the understanding of data during the interviews and from the observations.

As outlined in the introduction chapter, the purpose of this study is to provide an description of how Implement handle Knowledge Management and to make a contribution to existing literature within the Knowledge Management field. In order to achieve the purpose we have used the empirical material gathered during the interviews as a foundation in order to categorise what contextual factors that needs to be taken into consideration when handling Knowledge Management. Or in other words, our empirical material has provided the possibility for theoretical development.

Research Process

The nine interviews were between 45 minutes to one hour and 30 minutes long, with an average of one hour. The majority of the interviews were conducted with three interviewers and one interviewee present. Two of the interviews were conducted with only one interviewer and one interviewee present. The fact that there was three of us present during most of the interviews instead of just one was a great asset for this research. It resulted in more effective interviews with more relevant insight from the researchers.

Showing interest in the interviewees is according to Bryman & Bell (2007) very important when interviewing. We have taken this into account by having one of us as responsible for leading the interview showing interest by, for example, asking personal questions and keeping eye contact. The two other interviewers took notes and were silent until the end of the interview when relevant follow-up questions were asked. This resulted in more intimate and less scattered interviews, where we had a stronger possibility to pick up on important information. This contributed to getting the most important and relevant information and minimized the need for further information from that respondent at a later stage of the research process.

A total of nine interviews were conducted, all in a face-to-face setting. Our intention was to record and transcribe all nine interviews to use as empirical material. However, due to technical malfunction one interview was not recorded and could therefore not be transcribed. To complement recordings we took notes during the interviews and during the one were we could not record, these notes were very extensive.

Alvesson (2003) argue that a romantic approach in an interview situation implies genuine interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee and that this contributes to trust and commitment during the interview. Therefore, we tried to conduct the interviews in a friendly, relaxed and informal almost “chit chatty” atmosphere. The interviews took place on site at Implements offices in Stockholm, Malmö and Hørsholm, in small conference rooms creating a safe and private setting. We perceived that the interviewees were generally open and honest during the interviews. However, as the interviews were conducted at corporate offices there is a risk that we got more restricted answers compared to if the interviews had been held in a more neutral setting, where the connection to work and work life would have been weaker. As mentioned above, the interviewees spoke three different languages during the interviews; Danish, Norwegian and Swedish. Some of the interviews were subscribed by more than one researcher, which contributed to more accurate translations of citations since it often was from Danish to English, and Danish not being our first language. The citations used throughout the analysis are thereby our translation of what the interviewees said. Moreover, the citations have been sent to the respondents for validation of translation to reduce the problem of inaccurate translations.

By trying to interview representatives from all parts of the company, we hoped to create a broad and overall picture of the company’s perspective of knowledge and Knowledge Sharing. Our respondents do not, however, necessarily represent the whole company’s view of Knowledge Sharing but we believe that we have gotten enough empirical material to be able to draw conclusions. Both genders were represented among the interviewees as well as a variety in terms of age, time at the company, responsibilities at the company and positions/titles. Which can be illustrated by the fact that two out of nine were women, one of the founders of the company were interviewed, two partners who has been in the organization for more than ten years as well as consultants who has been in the organization for less than two years were represented.

Case Study

There are two main reasons why we chose Implement as the organization for our case study. The first reason was because Implements relevant connection to the purpose of this study. The second reason was the accessibility to the company and the openness among employees when it came to handing out information regarding the organization. These two matters are according to Yin (2009) the two most important questions to judge and consider before performing a single case study.

A single case study, like in this research, can be more suitable than multiple case studies if the single case study is critical, unique, typical, revealing or longitudinal (Yin, 2009). In this case there are probably other management-consulting firms than Implement that has offices in three Scandinavian countries or are performing a very bold growth strategy or that mostly employs experienced consultants. It is when you combine all these characteristics in one organization, like in Implement, that it creates a unique context for investigating Knowledge Management and the challenges for Knowledge Sharing. The use of a single case study has its limitations regarding what generalizations that can be made. Conducting a comparable case study or a more longitudinal study would have led to greater generalizations of our results (Yin, 2009). However, this has never been our goal, rather we aim to look at Knowledge Management at a more conceptual level.

The design type of this single case study is the holistic case study design, which focuses on the organization as a whole. This is favourable since a focus on subunits in the organization can distract attention from holistic aspects (Yin, 2009). Even so, the greatest advantage of the use of case study, and the main reason why it was chosen for this research, is that it, in line with our interpretative paradigm, gives us as researchers the opportunity to investigate and understand social situations at Implement that are too complex to understand by using surveys (Yin, 2009).

Source criticism

To be able to evaluate and assess the trustworthiness of a research it is important to consider source criticism. Consequently, source criticism tries to answer the question: are we really studying what we claim to be studying? (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). Alvesson & Sköldbberg (2009) outlines four source-critical elements that need to be considered during a research process; “*criticism of authenticity*”, “*criticism of bias*”, “*criticism of distance*” and “*criticism of dependence*”. The criterions mentioned above have guided us during our entire research process and will be used to confirm the credibility of our research.

“*Criticism of authenticity*” questions if the source, in our research the interviewees, has an interest in manipulating the shared information. Even though we have trust in our respondent’s stories, we realize that they might have given nuanced and political answers (Alvesson, 2003). To reduce the risk of manipulating information the respondent’s was given the possibility to be anonymous. Moreover, another factor to consider is the possibility that the interviewees gave the answers they thought was appropriate for the context of our thesis. Or in other words, there is a risk that they said what they thought we wanted to hear.

“*Criticism of bias*” questions the researcher’s possible bias and how this is influencing interpretations (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). We tried to be aware of our biases, shortcomings and assumptions during the research process, by applying a critical stance and reflect upon our interpretation. We explored and considered various ways to interpret the data. During the research process we discovered that three researchers contributed to the interpretative approach of the research, since our different underlying values and pre-understandings were questioned to a greater extend giving the research greater validity. Despite this, it is likely that our pre-understandings and perceptions still limited the research in some ways. Since all three of us researchers grew up in Sweden and we are researching Knowledge Sharing in a growing company placed in Denmark, Sweden and Norway it is possible that we unconsciously side with the offices in Sweden. It might be influenced by language barriers and/or that we experience the Swedish way as “the right way of sharing knowledge” due to the fact that that way is perhaps more familiar to us.

“*Criticism of distance*” questions the space- and timeframe (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). We do not consider that this have had any impact on our respondent’s stories, due to the fact that the respondent’s is working at Implement and on a daily basis works with Implements Knowledge Sharing. However, what might have impacted the respondent’s answer is the time they spent working at Implement and if they have grown custom to the company’s way of sharing knowledge or not.

“*Criticism of dependence*” question whether the source, in our research the interviewees, have listened to other stories which might influence and have impact on our source (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). We realize that the respondent’s probably have been discussing Knowledge Management before and might therefore have been influenced by other people’s opinions regarding the subject. The fact that the interviewees’ opinion might not be their own has therefore been taken into account in our analysis.

Chapter 3 - Literature Review

In this chapter we will present theories and theoretical concepts related to our study. The theoretical framework provides a basic understanding in the field of knowledge and strategies of Knowledge Sharing, and serves as a basis for the development of our own model presenting the contextual factors of Knowledge Management.

Definition of Knowledge

In order to be able to research how to manage knowledge we first need to discuss and reach a definition of what knowledge means in the context for this essay. Traditionally knowledge has been portrayed as a functional resource, being objective and representing the truth (Alvesson, 2009; Newell et. al., 2009). However, this perspective on knowledge has been questioned (Alvesson, 2009). Rather, we appreciate knowledge as a multifaceted, broad and complex concept and its definition as unambiguous (Scarborough & Burrell, 1996). There are various ways of defining the concept and character of knowledge (e.g. Nonaka, 1994; Kalling & Styhre, 2003) but a common denominator is how Knowledge is context-specific, and that each individual interpret knowledge differently based on personal beliefs and earlier experiences. Therefore, knowledge is about creating meaning and understanding. (Kalling & Styhre, 2003; Awad & Ghaziri, 2004). Below we will outline how knowledge will be treated and used in the context of this thesis.

In conjunction with knowledge, the terms information and data are used interchangeably in ways that overlap and mix. In academia these terms are separated (Kalling & Styhre, 2003; Awad & Ghaziri, 2004; Alvesson, 2009; Newell et. al., 2009) and the interrelationship between data, information and knowledge can be described by how with refinement, understanding in a specific context, data becomes information and information in turn becomes knowledge. We question this instrumentality and choose to treat data, information and knowledge as interchangeable. We chose not to separate these three terms due to the fact that no distinction and order of relevance is made at Implement, regarding the three terms.

Another common way to look at knowledge is to divide it into tacit and explicit (Nonaka, 1994). The explicit form of knowledge is knowledge that can easily be codified, documented and stored (ibid). Examples of explicit knowledge are manuals, databases and formulas that can be transmitted between people with ease. Codification implies that the knowledge is objective and impersonal (Nonaka, 1994). Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that knowledge cannot be reduced to a possession

and rather means how knowledge is something inherent in individuals and expressed through social interaction, much in line with how Nonaka (1994) describes tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is dynamic, intangible and context-dependent. This type of knowledge is rooted in individuals' actions, procedures, ideas, values and their own ideals (Nonaka, 1994). Moreover, Sveiby (1996) states that tacit knowledge is taught by the concept “learning-by-doing”, through identification and imitation. Therefore, the characteristics of knowledge can be regarded as subjective and personal. Thus, it makes the tacit knowledge inaccessible and complex to transfer via communication (von Krogh et al., 2000). We, much like Alvesson (2009), find this distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge as somewhat simplistic and dichotomised. However, we believe that making the distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge can be fruitful in the sense that it opens up for the interpretation of the ambiguity of knowledge. Or in other words, it provides a good basis for how to relate to knowledge. As with the relationship between knowledge, information and data, we find it redundant to keep these two perspectives separated and rather treat them as complementary to each other.

Closely related to knowledge is the term competence (Sahlqvist & Jernhall, 1996). Competence is a concept that includes, in addition to knowledge, more practical features such as experience, network, management and coordination. This implies that the competence one possesses is related to the ability of doing something particular and oriented to a goal (Alvesson, 2009). As many of these factors are used interchangeably with knowledge at Implement, we chose to regard these elements as part of knowledge within this thesis.

According to Alvesson (2009) there is a risk of working with a too broad definition of knowledge, as everything then can be regarded as knowledge. We share this concern but we believe that it only applies at a more general and academic level. As the paradigm for this thesis is interpretative, it is how Implement understands knowledge that becomes central. Therefore we consider it to be unwise to try and make any form of delimitation of knowledge, instead rather work with Implements definition of knowledge.

On management-consulting firms

Today, we are living in an information age with knowledge being more and more important for almost every industry (Sandberg & Targama, 2007). As a result, Knowledge Intensive Firms are on the rise (Grant, 1996; Alvesson, 2009). There are a number of sub-types of companies within the broader umbrella term Knowledge Intensive Firms, one of them being Professional Service Firms such as management-consulting firms (Alvesson, 2009). Along with the boom among Knowledge

Intensive Firms the management-consultancy industry has had an explosive growth (Sturdy, 2011). There are a wide variety of different approaches and methods within the field of management consulting, but a common denominator is their knowledge intensiveness and having knowledge as their main asset (Creplet et. al., 2001). Management-consulting firms are offering intangible and value adding knowledge-based advises, in an objective, independent and autonomic manner, to client organizations (Alvesson, 2009).

Knowledge Intensive Firms, and management-consulting firms, aim to employ individuals who fulfil the organization's particular requirements such as having a specific educational background, belonging to a predefined age group and are willing to identify with the profession (Alvesson, 2009). In general, knowledge workers in management-consulting firms go through intensive training on knowledge and professional behaviour to ensure they will fit into the categories the clients are expecting to buy into. Moreover, management-consulting firms generally exhibit a project-oriented and ad-hoc organizational structure. This type of organizational structure often struggle to systematically integrate knowledge and experience from earlier cases into the organization's overall knowledge base (Thiry & Deguire, 2007; Schindler & Eppler, 2003).

Knowledge Management

As knowledge is such a major part of Knowledge Intensive Firms, and the service that is provided to their clients, management of knowledge has drawn a lot of attention from researchers and companies alike. In today's competitive environment Knowledge Management is seen as a key factor for success and a way to stay alive for an organization (Bose, 2004). Historically, theory concerning Knowledge Management has relied on knowledge as a commodity that can be easily managed through instrumental measurements (Alvesson, 2009; Sandberg & Targama, 2007). This view is still predominant today and Knowledge Management can be defined as a systematic process of collecting, organizing and communicating the corporate knowledge to the organization's members (Bose, 2004). Newell et. al. (2009) describe how a Knowledge Management System assumes a possession/structural view on knowledge, where a Knowledge Management System primarily use technological infrastructure to store and share knowledge. The knowledge of the employees is the resource and the aim is to transfer that resource from the individual into the company itself, making it accessible for everyone. The fundamental idea of Knowledge Management is to enhance the organizational performance and add value (Bose, 2004). Furthermore, Knowledge Management is supposed to generate novel knowledge and enhancing the skill level of employees (Bose, 2004; Alavi & Leidner, 2001).

Davenport & Prusak (1998) state that efficient Knowledge Management require that all organizational members engage in the Knowledge Sharing process. However, Alvesson & Kärreman (2001) claims that Knowledge Management cannot be forced; it must conform to the prevailing culture and social practice within the company. Hence, it is not possible to apply best practice models of Knowledge Management Systems. An organization must consider many factors when planning their Knowledge Management. Most importantly, an organization must know what they want to achieve regarding Knowledge Management and what is most essential and then match it with their organizational culture. The process of reaching the goals and the practical Knowledge Management together composes a Knowledge Management System (Bose, 2004). According to Bose (2004, p. 458) “A *Knowledge Management System facilitates Knowledge Management by ensuring knowledge flow from the person(s) who know(s) to the person(s) who need(s) to know throughout the organization*”. Thus, we argue that Knowledge Management can be described as almost everything that facilitates Knowledge Sharing. Therefore we believe that it becomes vital to look at the context, setting and reality of knowledge sharing, where and how it takes place, moving away from a more rationalistic stance.

Implementing a Knowledge Management System is often associated with significant organizational challenges (Alvehus & Kärreman, 2007; Bose, 2004). Alvesson & Kärreman (2001) claim that there is a contradiction in terms of knowledge and the management of it. The very characteristics that constitute knowledge are fluid, complex and ambiguous and are in reality very hard to manage and control. Thus, the idea of the manageability and control of knowledge is problematic (ibid). Moreover, technological, social and personal challenges add to the complexity of managing knowledge (McDermott & O’Dell, 2001). There are however some established principles and strategies for Knowledge Management.

Depending on the type of knowledge, different Knowledge Sharing processes, systems and tactics are used. One way to make this division is to divide knowledge into formal and informal Knowledge Sharing processes. The formal is associated with explicit knowledge and the informal with tacit knowledge. Formal Knowledge Sharing is facilitated through institutionalized routines and activities directed towards that the participants exchange knowledge with each other (Storey & Kahn, 2010). Informal Knowledge Sharing takes place without any form of management parallel with the institutionalized sharing. As with the formal Knowledge Sharing, it includes activities that facilitate Knowledge Sharing, but they are not necessarily designed for that purpose. (Taminiou et. al., 2009).

A second way to look at Knowledge Sharing is through codification and personalization. Tacit knowledge is connected with a personalization strategy and explicit knowledge with codification strategy (Alvesson, 2009; Hansen et. al., 1999). Both ways (formal/informal and personalization/codification) to divide knowledge are very similar to one another; as such we will only make one distinction henceforth. We combine informal Knowledge Sharing with personalization and formal knowledge sharing with codification. Knowledge Sharing through personalization and codification will be elaborated on below.

Codification Strategy

The codification strategy focuses on making knowledge explicit by collecting and codifying knowledge (Hansen et. al., 1999). By storing knowledge in an electronic library or a virtual knowledge database a reduced dependence on individuals is achieved (Alvehus & Kärreman, 2007). Storey & Kahn (2010) claims that the focus is to transfer knowledge with the help of technological infrastructure. All organizational members should have access to the knowledge whenever and wherever. The stored knowledge should be codified in a way that everyone understands and can make use of the knowledge. Grabher (2004) states due to the time pressure, that there is a risk that management consultants treat the maintenance and update the knowledge in a database with low priority.

Personalization strategy

Personalization relies on the existence of tacit knowledge and the inability to codify all knowledge (Alvesson, 2009). This leads to how a personalization strategy implies Knowledge Sharing through face-to-face interaction (Storey & Kahn, 2010). The complexity of knowledge is accounted for and organization facilitates Knowledge Sharing through social interaction. Kalling & Styhre (2003) promotes the use of feelings, emotions, storytelling, analogies and metaphors for successful Knowledge Sharing. Moreover there is a broad agreement that the most efficient way for Knowledge Sharing is to combine different practices, tailored to the organization (Storey & Kahn, 2010; Alvesson, 2009; Newell et. al., 2009)

A personalization strategy emphasizes interaction and dialogue between individuals in order to develop trust and internal networks (Taminiou et. al., 2009). A management consultant is dependent on the knowledge he/she possesses and therefore employees primarily share that knowledge with individuals they have a good relationship with, those they trust (Alvesson, 2009). DeLong (2004) stresses the importance of unofficial channels as running at the gym or having a coffee break. In

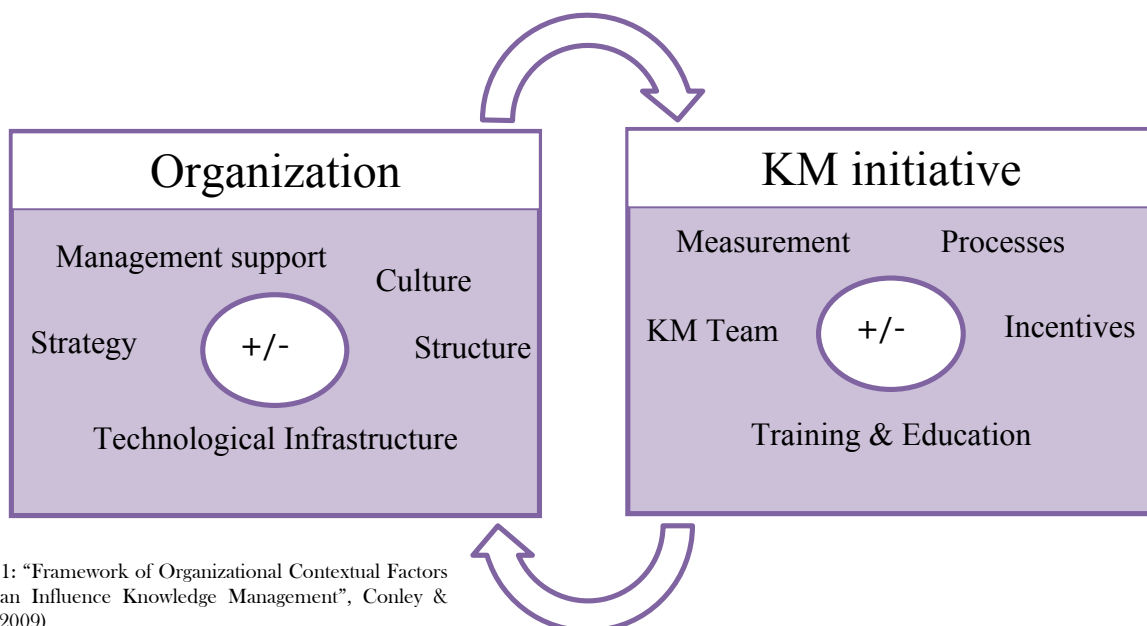
these scenarios there is no intention of sharing knowledge, rather it is fortuitous and implies that the Knowledge Sharing needs to be done at multidimensional levels. Davenport & Prusak (1998) suggestion is to hire smart people and let them talk to one another in order to share tacit knowledge.

Moving towards a working model

So far, we have outlined the general research stems in the field of knowledge, Knowledge Intensive Firms and Knowledge Management. Now we will move towards a more specific application of Knowledge Management. Deng (2008) defines four questions that needs to be consider when working with knowledge and Knowledge Management:

- (1) **What:** What kind of knowledge is to be shared?
- (2) **How:** How is this knowledge going to be shared?
- (3) **Who:** Who should be involved in the process?
- (4) **Why:** How is knowledge sharing justified?

By answering these questions, a more specific Knowledge Management System can be developed. However, we believe that the questions focus on managerial efforts and knowledge in itself and fail to encompass several contextual factors. Conley & Zheng (2009) presents a Knowledge Management framework (figure 1) that involves more factors that a company might consider when they are about to implement a Knowledge Management System. These factors are thematised into two overall categories; organizational factors and elements concerning the implementation of a Knowledge



(Figure 1: “Framework of Organizational Contextual Factors That Can Influence Knowledge Management”, Conley & Zheng, 2009)

Management System.

Conley & Zhengs (2009) model provides an excellent entry point to further elaborate on a context specific framework. Moving away from the abstract concepts of knowledge we will use the model as a foundation, in order to reach a higher level of practical implication. We will expand it to incorporate a wider range of theories more suiting to the context of this thesis.

Organizational Culture

One of the most important factors to consider is the organizational culture. Nonaka (2008) claims that an organizational culture permeates the entire organization and creates work practices and attitudes regarding the Knowledge Management efforts within the organization. The prevailing culture needs to encourage Knowledge Sharing between organizational members and support the knowledge structure (Wong, 2005). An organizational culture that encourages Knowledge Sharing is critical to successful Knowledge Management. Several cultural elements have been identified as critical to Knowledge Management success; trust, proactiveness and high priority of knowledge (Conley & Zheng, 2009). Bartholomew (2008) states that effective Knowledge Sharing occurs when individuals within an organization have confidence in each other.

Management Support

A critical factor that needs to be considered within Knowledge Management is managerial support (Conley & Zheng, 2009). Engagement from management is important when an organization introduce a change initiative, that effects organizational processes and employee behaviour. Support from the management includes "[...] that they need to be visible in terms of providing resources, engaging employees, and demonstrating the relevance of a new KM initiative" (Conley & Zheng, 2009, p. 337).

Strategy

First, a Knowledge Management System needs to align and support the organizational overall corporate strategy. Second, Knowledge Management in itself needs to have a strategic plan (Wong, 2005). Wong (2005) claims that the most important factor to consider when a company is choosing Knowledge Management strategy is the fit with the organizational overall strategy. A company needs to have a clear intention with the Knowledge Management and the Knowledge Management strategy needs to be communicated to the employees (Conley & Zheng, 2009).

Organizational Structure

An organization's structure affects how people interact and perform their duties (Rapert & Wren, 1998). Flexible, informal and ad-hoc structures facilitate a Knowledge Management System based on personalization better than a more rigid organizational structure (Alvesson, 2009). Thus, the more flexible an organization is, the more focus a company should have on a personalization strategy and vice versa. A project and team based structure supports learning and Knowledge Sharing by combining individuals from several areas (Sandberg & Targama, 2007). However, this way of organizing is also difficult to sustain in the long run as the company grows (Alvesson, 2009). As an adhocracy grows there is a need to find new ways of influencing knowledge work and workers. Moreover, project and team based structure often leads to difficulties to systematically integrate knowledge and experience from projects with the organization's overall knowledge base (Thiry & Deguire, 2007). Moreover, networking is usually an integrated part of organizational structures within Knowledge Intensive Firms and especially Professional Service Firms (Newell et. al., 2009). Internal networks grow and evolve organically and spontaneously over time, as people within a firm interact with each other.

Technological Infrastructure

Technological infrastructure, such as electronic libraries or virtual competence database, is often a major part of a Knowledge Management System. The benefits of a well-developed technological infrastructure gives all organizational members access to knowledge whenever and wherever they are (Vendelø, 2009). There is a broad agreement that many companies put too much emphasize on technical infrastructure, which can be a disadvantage for the overall effect of Knowledge Management. However, it is important to enable and facilitate the technical infrastructure. (Davenport & et. al., 1998; Wong, 2005). An organization's technical infrastructure should be seen as a tool to support the Knowledge Management initiative and does not constitute the basis for a Knowledge Management initiative. The primary focus for the ones responsible for Knowledge Management is to facilitate collaborative interaction and the knowledge flow, rather than to put too much emphasize on the technology itself (Conley & Zheng, 2009). Davenport et. al. (1998) state that the best chance for success is when an organization's technology infrastructure is established and stabile, as well as enough diversified in order to handle all different needs within the organization.

Process

In order to facilitate the construction and dissemination of organizational knowledge, there is a need for supporting organizational processes (Davenport et. al., 1998). These processes have to support

the organization's general Knowledge Management strategy (Conley & Zheng, 2009). However, Davenport et. al. (1998) argues that an excessive emphasis on the development of complex processes are not preferable and that the most important processes are those that (1) prevent replication of staff efforts and (2) explains for organizational members what kind of knowledge they are expected to share. We find that the theory gives little guidance regarding practical processes. Moreover, there seems to be a strong reliance on managerial lead and executed processes.

Training and Education

Continuous training and education activities are according to Conley & Zheng (2009) claimed to be important in order to succeed with a Knowledge Management implementation. Even though most of the employees have a basic understanding of Knowledge Management it is important to explain; why the company works with Knowledge Management and the benefits of Knowledge Management, as well as how the organizational members are going to use it and contribute to it (Conley & Zheng, 2009; Wong, 2005).

Measurement

When a company is implementing a Knowledge Management System, there is according to Bose (2004) a need for measurement in order to evaluate the impact of the initiative. Wong (2005) points out that Knowledge Management have a tendency to be considered as a management fad with subsequent inertia. Management has to overcome this by showing the value Knowledge Management brings to the organization. However, it is difficult to derive a Knowledge Management initiative to specific outcomes (for example a return on investment). Hence, the measurements should be developed to illustrate the correlation between the Knowledge Management initiative and the beneficial results over time (Wong, 2005). However, as managers often are driven by performance there is according to Newell et. al. (2009, p. 136) a risk for managers to pay too much *“attention on measurable but short-term, financial targets than to the long run value of human capital”*.

Incentives

A key component within Knowledge Management is to get the employees motivated to share knowledge. In order to create a Knowledge Sharing culture an important step is to encouraging organizational members to take part of and contribute to the Knowledge Management System. Both financial and non-financial rewards are important tools to achieve this object (Davenport et. al., 1998; Wong, 2005). Davenport et. al. (1998) claims that offering shared group incentives is an important element. Moreover, the autonomy and intangible output within a management-consulting firm

reduces the impact of financial rewards linked to organizational performance in terms of better quality of projects delivered to clients (Newell et. al., 2009).

Knowledge Management Team

In order for a Knowledge Management initiative to be successful, it requires involvement and commitment from all organizational members. However, it is important to organize a team, consisting of experts in Knowledge Management and members from the management, who are primary responsible for the implementation and follow-up work (Davenport et. al., 1998). Within the factor of Knowledge Management Team the most important thing to note is to create an experienced team who are working full time with the Knowledge Management initiative.

Our model - Contextual factors of Knowledge Management

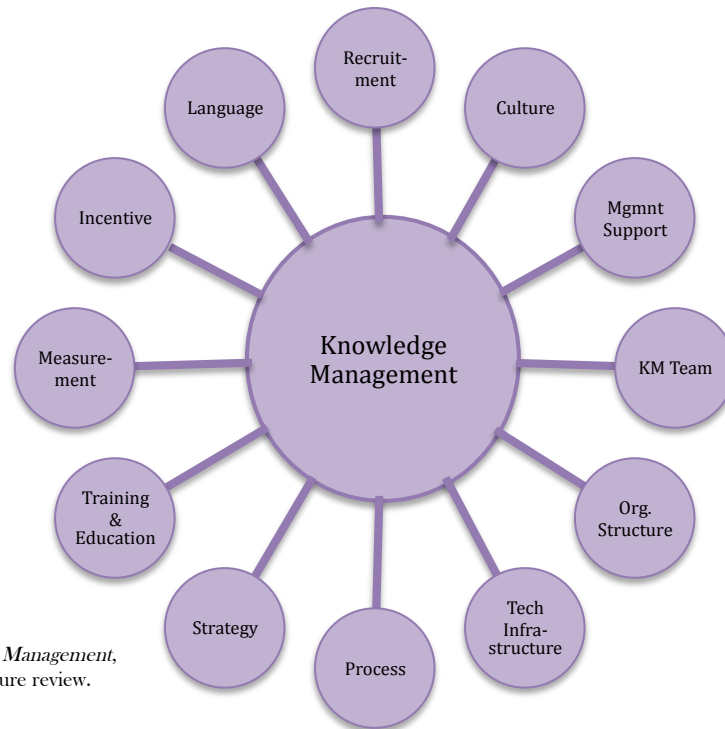


Figure 2, *Contextual factors of Knowledge Management*, Created by the authors based on the literature review.

In the literature review we present Conley & Zhengs (2009) “*Framework of Organizational Contextual Factors That Can Influence Knowledge Management*”. This is a framework, consisting of ten contextual factors in Knowledge Management, which we believe suits well with our empirical findings. However, we have added two contextual factors, recruitment and language, as these are themes we have identified during the collection of the empirical material for this thesis. By adding two factors we make the existing literature more contexts bound for this thesis. As the case of Implement has no expressed Knowledge Management initiative we make no distinction between the two major sub-groups (Organizational and Knowledge Management initiative factors) like Conley & Zheng (2009) does. Moreover, we do not make any theoretical discrepancy between their interdependency.

As the illustration above shows (figure 2) Knowledge Management is at the heart of our model. The Knowledge Management is then influenced by the contextual factors, which are; Culture, Management support, Knowledge Management Team, Organizational Structure, Technological infrastructure, Process, Strategy, Training & Education, Measurements, Incentives, Language and Recruitment.

Chapter 4 - The Story of Implement

In this chapter we will outline our empirical findings and discuss and analyse them through our working model (figure 2) for Knowledge Management. We would like to present a story where we start by describing the company Implement and why Knowledge Management has become a practical problem and what Implement wants to achieve with Knowledge Management in the future. We will then outline the concept of their current Knowledge Management through the contextual factors presented in our theoretical framework.

Setting the scene

Implements head-office is located in a rural area outside of Hørsholm, a town 30 kilometers north of Copenhagen. The office is situated in a business park with lush green areas and with out door furnish such as benches and tables surround the buildings. The business park can easily be reached by car and public transport. We pictured the office to be located in a more urban environment closer to Copenhagen's city center, close to its customers and daily business. However, Implements office is far away from the hectic environment we expected to find.

The indoor decor is, compared to the outdated exterior from the late 60's, contemporary and pleasant. The office consists of two floors with reception, dining hall and meeting rooms being located at the entry level, giving the visitor a welcoming feeling. There are several cultural symbols and artifacts at the office that portrays Implement as driven by research, competence and knowledge. All meeting rooms are named after famous business scholars and with a brief description of their work, like John Kotter and Henry Mintzberg. Moreover, books published by Implement co-workers are up for display at the reception, the dining halls and several other locations. The dining hall serves as an informal meeting room, a site for networking over a coffee and the place where you in a hurry grab something to eat.

Implement

Implement has been an extremely successful company from the start. Growing out of a single office, the company has today got 250 employees and had during the fiscal year 2010-2011 57 MDKK in profit. Implement is characterised by typical characteristics of a Professional Service Firm (Alvesson, 2001). Implement pride themselves by being very knowledgeable, its structure is a flat adhocracy, employees work in loosely assembled teams in projects with clients, and there is little direct managerial control. Rather, we identify normative control as the predominant control mechanism

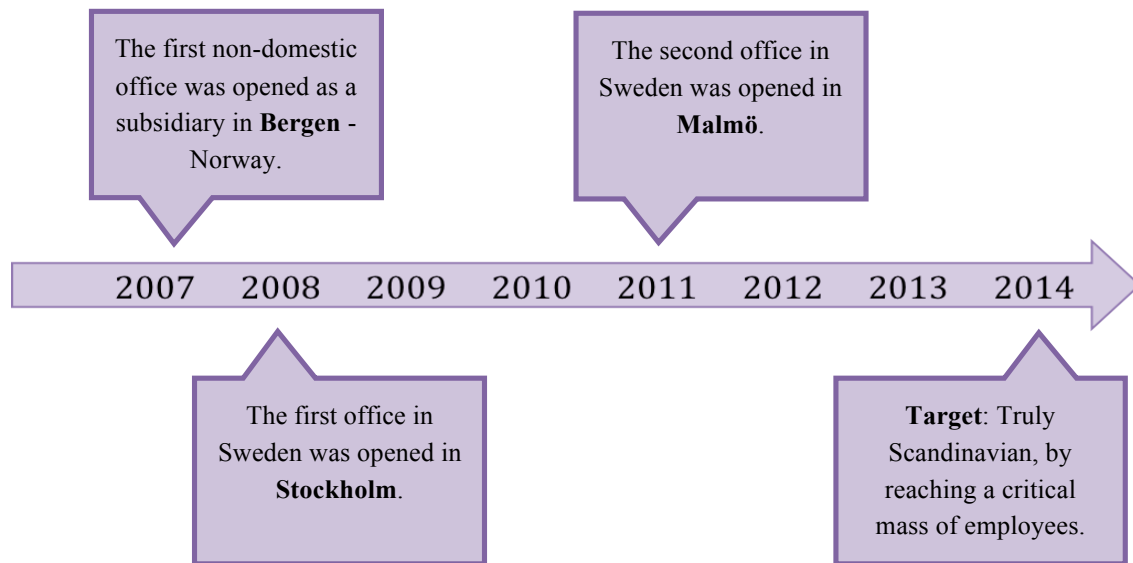
within the company. There are several reasons for this statement. Those we have interviewed at the company describe how the company is run in an entrepreneurial spirit with heavy reliance on coordination through interpersonal contacts, through face-to-face meetings, and with a strong corporate culture as the glue that keeps the company together. Moreover, the strategical development within the firms has been closely related to a continuous organic development rather than lead by strategic planning.

As of today, Implement is moving towards a tipping point where the coordination between Knowledge Management and corporate strategy becomes a vital part for the future of the company. This stems from how, with the growth of the company, the inherent normative control can no longer support the size and structure of the company. We identify Implement as an organization that is becoming increasingly fragmented, and where previous coordination mechanisms seems to fail to meet new conditions within the company. These new circumstances are closely related to an expansion strategy called Project Viking, a first step towards a more international profile and organization. Below we will outline the growth strategy and its consequences at Implement. After that we will try to provide a collective image of how the coordination and management of knowledge is done today.

Project Viking

In the middle of the 00's Implement started to consider the option to expand internationally and export their successful business model. Starting with the Scandinavian markets, an objective of becoming truly Scandinavian was formalized through Project Viking. The project implies both a geographical presence and a Scandinavian mindset. The mindset means being able to deliver the same quality and an Implement feeling everywhere.

As planning went to action, the first non-domestic office was opened in 2007 as a subsidiary in Norway, followed by Sweden in 2008. The expansion was interrupted by the emergent financial crisis in 2008. This put a strain on Project Viking, forcing Implement to slowing down the expansion. During the following years, as the market started to regenerate, Implement resumed their expansion.



Project Viking represents the strategy for Implements establishment on the Scandinavian market. In order to become a Scandinavian consulting firm Implement wants to grow either organically or via mergers or through a combination of both. The project has an attentive selection of potential merger companies suggesting that even though there is a deadline for the project, the expansion of the company is not to be stressed. We identify how this exhibits a great belief in core company values and reliance in, and preservation of, a corporate culture.

“We want to merge rather than acquire. We are looking for a consultancy firm with supplementary and/or same competencies and skills and who share the same Scandinavian vision as Implement.”
(Jens)

A Danish partner mentions how *“It is impossible to only export our business concept and culture to Stockholm, Malmö and Norway”* (Henrik). Thus, there seems to be an awareness that the expansion of Implement is far from straight forward. Having outlined the development of Project Viking and its content as well as the general idea behind it we will now look at its consequences for Knowledge Management at Implement.

The expansion inherent in Project Viking has introduced several problematic situations and challenges. One, the company has become geographically dispersed and can no longer only rely on the face-to-face meetings at the head office to facilitate Knowledge Sharing. Two, Cultural differences

and the problems to resolve these, can result in a negative effect on the knowledge dispersion to the new offices. As a consequence of these two factors, among others, the Implement culture has not reached the new offices. It is described by an employee how the gravity of Hørsholm does not reach the newly opened offices. Thus, the growth strategy has accentuated the importance of knowledge. This is perhaps the most important consequence of Project Viking. It has raised awareness for how Knowledge is Implements primary asset and that it is their knowledge and expertise that is delivered to their clients and how knowledge has been their previous key to success. Since Project Viking is the first step in a plan to become more international, we interpret the development of, and course for, Project Viking as a major divider and benchmark for the future of Implement. We mean that; either the offices within Project Viking are supposed to be run as detached enterprises, much like a franchise, or; be run as an integrated part of Implement. Taking several factors into considerations, such as the desire to spread the Implement way of doing projects and deliver the same quality regardless of location and that there is an expressed need for more access to Implements knowledge at the new offices the first alternative of detached enterprises seems contra productive and frankly wrong. It is then motivated to look at how Knowledge Management can help integration and coordination within the company.

Above we have outlined how the difficulties with integration and coordination within Implement have resulted in how we perceive Implement as being fragmented, with little coherency between the different offices. However, what comes through is how knowledge and Knowledge Management can be the key to keep Implement together as one cohesive organization despite the challenges mentioned above. Next we will analyze and discuss Knowledge and Knowledge Management at Implement today.

Knowledge and Knowledge Management at Implement

Knowledge

At Implement, we have found that very little knowledge is explicit and codified even if explicit knowledge exists. Instead knowledge at Implement is intangible and bound to each individual. This seems to be very established and agreed upon within the company. Employees at Implement describe knowledge as “*being too complex with too many nuances for it to be codified and shared through an IT-system*” (Hans Christian) and how knowledge instead is “*latent, intangible, and inside the people’s heads*” (Henrik).

Knowledge Management and Knowledge Sharing

As we have seen in our theoretical framework, Knowledge Management can be divided in two strategies codification strategy and personalization strategy. The codification strategy implies to collect, codify and store knowledge in an electronic library or a virtual knowledge database (Storey & Kahn, 2010). A personalization strategy implies Knowledge Sharing through face-to-face interaction (ibid). As the bulk of knowledge within Implement is intangible and tacit, there should be a strong reliance on a personalization strategy to manage Knowledge Sharing at Implement, and this is indeed the case. Knowledge Sharing at Implement is person-dependent.

We have found three institutionalized components for Knowledge Management at Implement. When combined, we interpret these three as Implements Knowledge Management System. Keeping in mind how a Knowledge Management System ensures “*knowledge flow from the person(s) who know(s) to the person(s) who need(s) to know throughout the organization*” (Bose 2004, p. 458). Below we will outline these three components.

The first component we have identified is networking. A personalization strategy emphasizes networks to enable Knowledge Sharing and networks play a crucial role for Knowledge Sharing within Implement (Newell et. al., 2009). If someone wants to access knowledge within the firm, one has to know *who* has the knowledge, or might know someone else who does. One employee links the nature of knowledge at Implement with how he shares knowledge.

*“In my opinion, it’s all about knowing where you can get access to the knowledge, I have to know; **who** knows it. There are so many nuances in knowledge that you have to get the information directly from another person.” (Hans Christian)*

Much in line with our theoretical framework, networking at Implement, as a part of a personalization strategy, rely on a lot of intercommunication, trust and collaboration between their personnel. Networking is supported by managerial efforts such as education, conferences and the team-based projects.

The second component that constitutes the Knowledge Management System at Implement is an elaborated use of company wide e-mails. These e-mails are informal but supported by management at Implement. The e-mails are used to share, and get access to knowledge beyond personal networks. If someone needs to get hold of specific knowledge or information that cannot be

acquired through his or her network, he or she sends out a question regarding the subject. These e-mails are sent company wide, addressed to every single employee. This is an established channel for knowledge transfer at Implement and within fifteen minutes one has received several qualitative responds.

"The mail correspondence is something I am impressed by here at Implement. Every day there are people who are sending emails, partners and consultants alike, asking: Is there someone who knows something about this specific topic? And out of the 200+ consultants there are several people answering, giving very qualitative answers." (Paolo)

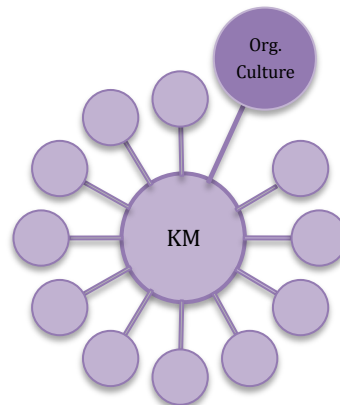
These e-mail synergise well with the company structure and culture within the company. It is a very simple and pragmatic process that has the possibility to connect both local and remote employees as well as promoting interaction.

The third component we have identified is an IT-system called "I-drive". Despite the dependency on informal processes for Knowledge Sharing at Implement, codification and externalization is not completely overlooked. Today, the knowledge that is codified is stored inside this system. The I-drive is an internal map-system that can be reached from every personnel's computer via external access.

Having outlined the general Knowledge Management at Implement today, we will now, in line with the purpose of the thesis, through an analysis of the contextual factors presented in our model, *Contextual factors of Knowledge Management*, provide a more nuanced and rich analysis of the Knowledge Management at Implement.

Contextual Factors

Organizational culture



In the following section we will analyze how Implements culture influences Knowledge Sharing within the company. First the culture at Implement will be outlined and second we will discuss and analyze its effects. In general, we have found a culture at Implement with strong elements that support the Knowledge Management within Implement outlined above. However, we have also found contradicting elements within the Implement culture that works in the opposite direction.

Nonaka (2008) claims that an organizational culture permeates the entire organization and creates work practices and attitudes regarding the Knowledge Management efforts within the organization. Or in other words, the culture of the company must support Knowledge Sharing. Alvesson & Kärreman (2009) describe culture as the most important factor to consider when implementing a Knowledge Management System.

During the research we have encountered a very open and contributing culture. Our first impression of the culture was how at Implement there was a sense of grandness and positive spirit, as well as hectic and stressful environment. Much is “*about conveying a sense that we at Implement create something amazing. As an example, there were real camels in the reception before we went to Morocco for a strategy trip*” (Hans Christian). Moreover, at Implement it is described how colleagues, despite time pressure, always take time to help co-workers out. On several occasions it is described how the sharing and contributing culture at Implement is what distinguishes Implement from other consultancy firms.

“What I believe is unique for our organization is how everyone has an interest in other people, and this is why it works. Everyone takes the time to do it, you are curious and you share. I believe in maintaining this culture rather than mapping our competencies through documents.” (Henrik)

Another example of this open and sharing culture is given by Paolo;

“A couple of months ago I had a long phone call with a Danish colleague who’s working with SAP, which is pretty far away from my area of expertise [which is leadership]. He is studying for an MBA and he’s writing a thesis about leadership. We met at a hot-dog stand during the strategy trip to Island, but we didn’t know each other. However, we talked over the phone until 10 pm about his thesis. I believe it was very rewarding for both of us.” (Paolo)

In general, employees at Implement seem to consider it favorable to helping a colleague out, compared to not to. We identify how sharing and trust seem to be status symbols within the company.

“If Erik asks me to talk with you, I do it without asking questions. No matter how much I have planned. One day I am in need of help.” (Henriette)

“You will be more successful and appreciated if you share your knowledge rather than keeping it to yourself. I believe that is one of the keys to Implements success.” (Paolo)

We interpret Implements culture to be the fundamental reason for people to share their knowledge. It derives from the idea that the entire business seems to be based on employees sharing their knowledge with colleagues. This is corroborated by how it is described at Implement *“you are not an island, you are a community that must work accordingly” (Hans Christian)* and *“when you ask, everyone contributes and that works fantastically well here. You get great help. Everyone has been in a critical help-situation and knows what that feels like, therefore everyone is quick to help you out.” (Henriette)*

This sharing and contributing culture is however not consistently portrayed. Rather, we interpret it as incoherent and inconsistent, with some employees describing how it only works for those who have an interest in sharing, and that far from everyone has. It seems that for some, the Implement culture is nothing for them. One colleague describes how *“Implement needs to be more team oriented and*

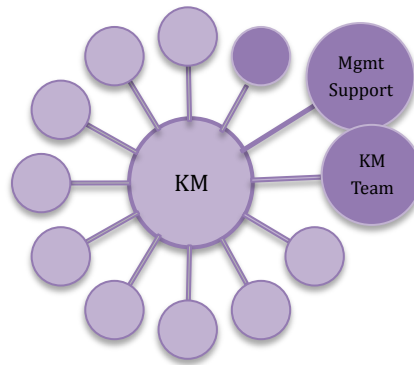
less individual... it's a very individualistic culture" (Trond). Despite the supportive culture at Implement it seems to be up to the individual to decide if he/she want to share knowledge or not. Other employees claim that there are reasons to keep one's knowledge for oneself, even at Implement.

"There is always protectionism in the consulting business and this goes for Implement as well."
(Emma)

This fragmented picture of the culture at Implement give rise to some considerations regarding how dispersed the actual culture to share knowledge is, how strong its influence is. These considerations leads us to wonder what consequences this have for Knowledge Sharing?

As there is such a strong reliance on informal channels for Knowledge Sharing everyone has to be on board, working towards the same direction, we believe that Knowledge Sharing can suffer if some employees chose not to buy in to the Implement culture. What we believe to be the way to manage this situation is to continue to support trust-building activities. Both theory and our empirical material give us support on this matter. Erik says, *"consulting is a trust business even within the company you work for. You share information with those you trust. No one would ever share valuable information to people they do not trust"* (Erik) and this is supported by how trust is one of the major elements to build in order to achieve a sharing culture (Bartholomew (2008)). Moreover, we believe that the comparison between Implement and previous experienced cultures play a crucial role in the appreciation of the culture.

Management and Support/ Knowledge Management team



Below we will discuss if and how the management at Implement supports Knowledge Sharing within the company. Within our model “Management Support” and “Knowledge Management team” are treated as two separate contextual factors. As both general managerial efforts and Knowledge Management efforts are conducted by the same group of people at Implement, we treat the theory regarding them as interchangeable and discuss and analyze them under the same topic. To be able to present the whole picture we first look at the general support within Implement and then move on to discuss the support within Project Viking. This due to how Project Viking is such a major factor in the future of the coordination of the company.

A lot of responsibility is put on management to ensure successful Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Management. First, management and support is extremely important when implementing and maintaining a Knowledge Management initiative, especially when this initiative affects organizational processes and employee behaviour (Conley & Zheng, 2009). Second, the support for the initiative should be visible regarding provision of resources as well as engagement and involvement in both processes and employees. Doing this will highlight the relevance of the Knowledge Management initiative and get everyone on board and working in the same direction (Conley & Zheng, 2009), further accentuating the need to dedicate resources and time. Third, top management and leaders within the organization must convey a sense of urgency of the Knowledge Management initiative for it to be supported throughout the whole organization.

Historically, before the emergence of Project Viking, we interpret how operations concerning Knowledge Management were smooth sailing for management with very little time and resources dedicated to it. The processes and practices for Knowledge Sharing mentioned above seems to have evolved naturally with little resistance and few complications. With the advent of Project Viking a lot of pressure, that did not exist earlier, combined with their successful track record, management

seems to have been taken off guard. Project Viking has introduced many things that affect organizational processes and employee behaviour. It has introduced new people to the organization, expanded their geographical reach, et cetera. As Conley & Zheng (2009) outlines management need to provide resources and engage employees in order to resolve whatever problems this might have introduced.

Our impression is that there is a lack of time and resources dedicated to the project. The management team responsible for Project Viking is supposed to dedicate roughly 30 percent of their work on Project Viking, or in other words six days per month. However in reality, roughly 2 days per month are dedicated to the project, one third of intended time. This leads us to suggest that Project Viking is managed somewhat as a hobby, and not given the proper attention. We question the possibility to get truly involved in the project in order to be able to manage it properly. Our impression is confirmed through how the management of Project Viking is mainly concerned about strict financial follow-up. Other important factors identified in the literature and our empirical material, such as problem solving, longitudinal support and conveying urgency and the importance of the project, seems to have been given little attention.

“You have to calculate that it will take X amount of quarters before you’re running at full speed, and during this time we [at newly opened offices] must spend time on sales and networking and working out our daily operations. We haven’t done this investment. Instead, since day one there has been evaluation of what we produce in revenue.” (Emma)

We believe that this approach has lead to a scattered view of what direction the project and those involved should move, adding to the sense of a fragmented organization. By not providing adequate time and resources there is an immediate risk of losing control over the project and not getting everyone to pull in the same direction (Conley & Zheng, 2009). Everyone involved in Project Viking have different opinions and understandings about how Project Viking should be run and coordinated.

“Denmark’s ambition is that Implement should be truly Scandinavian, but they have not thought the cooperation through. Malmö is building the region of Malmö. Stockholm is building the region of Stockholm. Instead it should be about building Implement.” (Emma)

Adding to the sense of fragmentation within the company, we perceive how Sweden and Norway seems to be treated as a separate entity within the firm. Our impression is that there is little to no consensus on how (and even if) the different offices should collaborate and communicate within Project Viking, and in turn also how knowledge should be shared within Project Viking. When asked how Implement can make sure to involve the employees from Sweden and Norway more in the daily activities at Hørsholm one employee answers;

“There is a barrier, resistance to change is extremely high in this house. If you are going to do something, it needs to be super precise. What we need to do is to get the culture down here [Denmark] up there [Sweden].” (Hans Christian)

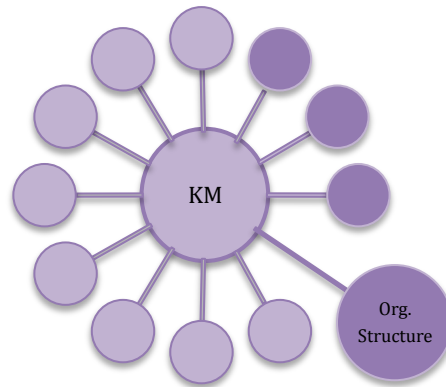
We perceive that there seems to be a gap between the experiences and the reality of the consultants involved in the project on one side and the top management on the other. This leads to a reverse situation to how Conley & Zheng (2009) describes how management must convey a sense of urgency. As top management does not seem to understand the Knowledge Sharing problems within Project Viking, there has risen no need to engage an initiative to try and resolve these problems. Rather top management seems to have a strong reliance in the structure of the company and how, by growing organically, there should be no problems with the expansion of the company.

“We do not think about countries here [in project Viking], we are focusing on our practices cross borders.” (Jens)

We believe, that by dedicating more time to the project, top management would have better understanding of these problems and could work to solve them. Moreover, we believe that if cultural integration would have had a greater focus in Project Viking, much of the segregation could have been eliminated.

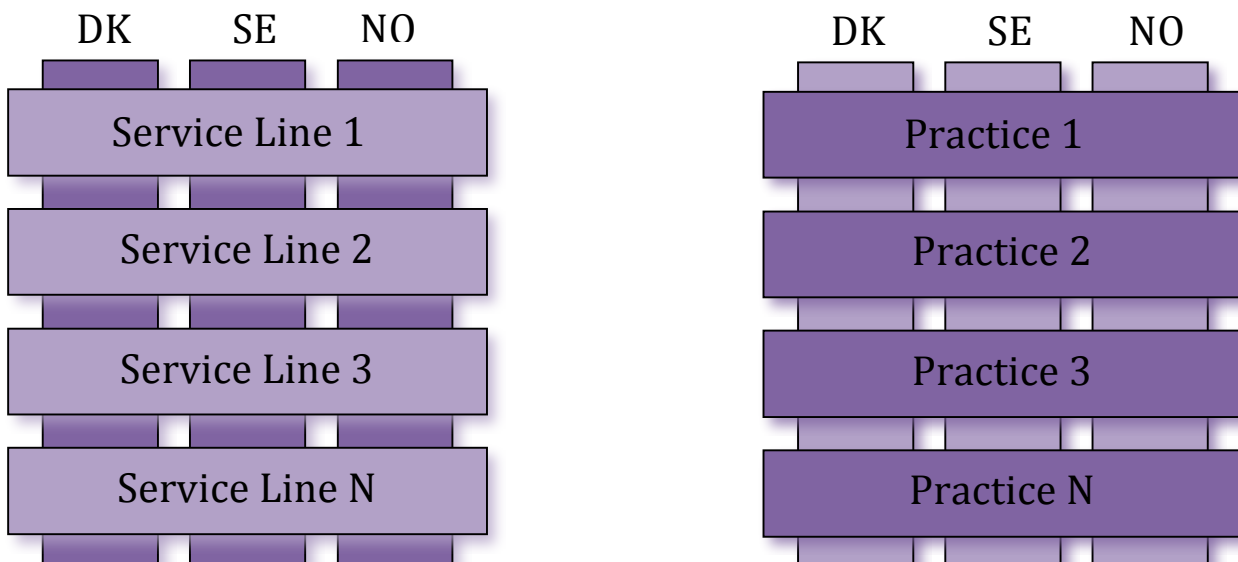
We believe that the gap mentioned above is one of the major reasons why the Implement sharing model does not work within Project Viking. As there is very little intracommunication within the project, Knowledge Sharing is confined to traditional channels of communication within Implement. As we will outline below, the personnel at the new offices have a hard time getting involved in these processes it is not very fruitful.

Organizational Structure



Below we will first outline the organizational structure at Implement and then move forward and elaborate on what consequences this have on Knowledge Management at Implement. In general we have found a flat adhocracy reliant on interpersonal networks, which has resulted in a low level of manageability.

Deviating from the consultancy industry, where most companies have a pyramid structure, Implement is shaped like a diamond. Due to their recruitment there are few junior consultants, many senior consultants and few partners. Each consultant is assigned to a specific practice and service line, resulting in the formation of a cross-functional organization. For example one consultant can work with SAP (Service line) within Operational Excellence (practice),



Working in projects and with clients is described as fluid with no fixed teams or arrangements. Rather than delegation of teams and project through a formal structure at Implement, a consultant who gets a project assembles his or her own team, and as a result the structure of the company is very person-dependent. This combination of recruitment, structure and projects has resulted in a

fragmented adhocracy held together by interpersonal connections, rather than through bureaucratic management.

These interpersonal connections are the informal personal networks described above. This puts a lot of pressure on consultants to build an internal network within Implement in order to get access to other projects than their own. As a consequence, Knowledge Sharing on a daily basis is dependent on the closeness and strength of each persons network. Historically these networks have worked very well when working out of a single office. One employee at Implement describes the importance of the networks for him;

“The network is the people you know, and have established relationships with, and most of what I’ve learned [at Implement] is through these people.” (Hans Christian)

Throughout the interviews it is expressed how corporate events are a very good way to start new relations and getting introduced to new people in the organization. These events are part of a set of annual events and activities initiated by Implement. These events take place throughout the year and focus on both socialization and education and development. However, the hub for the network systems, and where most of the knowledge is shared, is at the head-office in Hørsholm. Everyone we talked to mentions Hørsholm as being very important for Implement, and that there is a need for being on site.

“It’s here [at Hørsholm] everything happens. It’s here everyone meet and everything is dealt with. It is where you get into other projects and sell your own projects, where you get to know what’s going on and meet face-to-face.” (Erik)

“It is important to know, if you want to be a success here at Implement, it is important to build a big network, you have to come to Hørsholm and meet everyone.” (Henrik)

As networks are such a major part of the work life at Implement it is important to analyse how they affect the structure at Implement and in the long run Knowledge Sharing (Rapert & Wren, 1998). What we can read from the above is how the networks form a structure within Implement that helps to create many informal channels for Knowledge Sharing. Moreover it corroborates what the theory says about Knowledge Sharing through a personalization strategy (Storey & Kahn, 2010). It links people together in an informal way, allowing the creation of strong bonds, dialogue and the

development of trust. Combined with the project-based structure of the company, lessons learned and knowledge acquired in projects has the possibility to be diffused in the company (Newell et. al., 2009).

At first glance, Implement seems to be a textbook example of how a Knowledge Sharing management-consulting firm should look like. They carry every characteristic mention by Thiry & Deguire (2007): They are flexible, project based, have great internal communication and have many informal and formal channels to meet face-to-face to exchange knowledge. We believe that this is a major explanation for their successful track record. However, with the launch of Project Viking Implements structure has been put to the test and in some ways it fails to provide the same facilitation of Knowledge Sharing within the new offices. Employees at the new offices describe, *“how the force of gravity [from Hørsholm] doesn’t reach the other offices”* (Erik) and how hard it is to scale the structure to the new offices.

“To survive at Implement it is all about attending social contexts like Friday meetings and strategy tours. This means efficient personal dependence for better or for worse. It is only optimized for one office.” (Erik)

We have found how the geographical distance and a strong pressure to generate revenue to become profitable are the two main reasons for this problem of scalability, as these two factors are prioritized over building internal networks. Or in other words, there is a clash between building a network by going to Hørsholm and attending corporate events on the one side, and the daily activities of being a consultant and the pressure to generate revenue, on the other.

“I try to prioritize the Friday meetings, but there are other formal and social arrangements and meetings that I cannot always attend to because I’m traveling a lot to meet clients all over Norway. Of course this inhibits networking, but you have to meet with clients and sell projects.” (Trond)

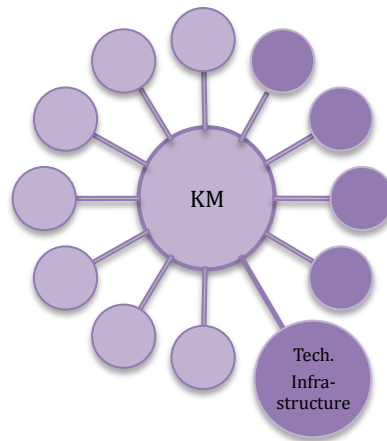
The employees from the remote offices try to be at the office in Hørsholm during every monthly meeting, even if it is a long trip for some, to make sure that they do not get overlooked when planning projects or miss important networking with colleagues. We believe that without any interference from top management at Implement these issues are not going to be resolved. Rather, on the contrary it is going to get even worse, where one employee mentions;

“With every new recruitment (in Project Viking) the complexity becomes bigger. It becomes harder to know what people are doing and harder to share your knowledge.”

This leads us to wonder if, and how, Implement is going to be able to manage knowledge as their company grows. A lot of faith is put in the hands of each consultant and little control can be exercised. When talking to one of the partners in consulting practices, Henrik, he mentions that the structure of Implement reduces this problem. The combination of culture, recruitment and networking creates a flat organization where you can get access to what you need. And since everyone is highly competent there are very few key individuals within the company. Rather everyone is on the same level. However, we are sceptical to this approach. As we have seen above, the benefits of the company structure do not seem to have permeated Project Viking. Henriette, a Danish partner gives a possible solution to overcome this:

“I think that Erik and Paolo are great at building their own network but that takes time. There may be a good idea to rotate those who have been here for along time, to move me, Henriette, for 1 year to Stockholm. We might not have done so because of the fact that relations are everything. If you move me to Stockholm for a year my network in Denmark dies. I think that in Project Viking they might think that it is too expensive to move me Henriette due to my network. But you can still tactically and strategically choose to do so.” (Henriette)

Technological infrastructure



As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, Implements technological infrastructure consists of a knowledge repository called I-drive. In the following section we will give a further description as well as discuss and analyse how it affects Knowledge Management within the company.

Implements codified knowledge is stored inside an IT-system called ‘the I-drive’. The I-drive is an internal map-system that can be reached from every personnel’s computer via external access. The description of how the IT-system works is unanimous. It is described as a haywire, being slow and poorly updated, making it hard to find what you are looking for and not working intentionally. It is seen as a barrier rather than acts as an enabler for Knowledge Sharing within Implement. It fails to provide access to knowledge whenever and wherever, one of the most fundamental functions of a technological infrastructure (Vendelø, 2009).

“It’s hard to find relevant information in the I-drive, there are so much things that are put in [the I-drive] without any structure, making most of the content out-dated. There is no structure or search function and you hardly ever find anything you need.” (Hans Christian)

“As soon as you’re remote from the office, It’s like you’ve poured 4 litres of syrup in the machine... nothing happens. It’s physically impossible to use and a logical nightmare. That is the reason why we use Dropbox at our office [in Malmö].” (Erik)

Much in Grabher’s (2004) line of thought, the IT-system at Implement has become an inconvenience due to low maintenance and poor usage due to lack of time and interest. Because, adding to the poor structural qualities of the system, there seems to be general resistance towards

knowledge repositories at Implement. We find the causes for this as twofold. The first is, as we have described earlier, how knowledge at Implement is mainly tacit, making it hard to translate into an IT-system. The attitude is that Implements knowledge is too complex and tied to individuals and clients rendering it impossible to be codified. Moreover, some interviewees points out that lack of institutionalized knowledge has created Implements previous success. The Second is, due to how many of Implements employees have got previous experiences from other companies and their Knowledge Management Systems, that there seems to be scepticisms towards knowledge repositories.

“If I’m honest I do not believe in Knowledge Management Systems. Not within our organization. The development of knowledge happens when you are at the customer site and get restored within yourself. Systems that customers have tried only work in the beginning and then it gets to old anyway. Somebody have to update it all the time and that doesn’t work.” (Henrik)

We found a multi-faceted picture whether Implement is in need of a Knowledge Management System or not. Some see it as a potential complement in their daily routines and despite the skepticism we identify how there is a need for some sort of IT-system.

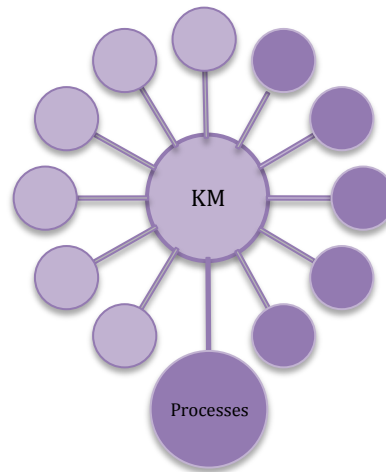
“It would be stupid to say that you don’t need some kind of IT-system to run this business efficiently. The consulting business is very “here and now” and you do need access to some information quickly in order to be as relevant as possible for your clients - and as effective as possible internally. In general we tend to re-invent the wheel too often when it comes to creating client-material and presentation... Any “system” (or process) that makes this more effective is welcome.” (Paolo)

“If we are to scale our operations and have hundred employees in both Sweden and Norway, and they are supposed to work cross functional. How am I supposed to find a power point? You can’t today, so we need a repository. We need a system that includes every power point and excel in our projects, as well as standard documents.” (Erik)

As so, we interpret how there is a gap between what is demanded from an IT-system and the system that is employed today. We believe that an updated and simplified IT-system would be a very good way to complement the daily activities for the consultants at Implement. The primary focus should be to facilitate interaction and knowledge flow (Conley & Zheng, 2009), rather than putting too much

focus on the technical element. If a well functioning IT-system would be implemented, Implement could benefit from what Alvesson and Kärreman (2009) links with codification of knowledge, namely that the power relation could be shifted from the individual's to the company, making Implement less affected by staff turnover.

Processes



In the following section we will take a closer look at what processes that exists that have an influence on the Knowledge Management at Implement. The main process we have found is an elaborated use of company wide e-mails.

The general idea is that in order to facilitate the construction and dissemination of knowledge, different organizational processes are needed (Davenport et. al., 1998). These processes are often linked to managerial efforts and technological infrastructure, where the focus often tends to be the process itself rather than content of the process (Newell et. al., 2009). As with other factors within the study, at Implement the reality is the reverse of what is suggested by our theoretical framework. At Implement the processes that facilitate Knowledge Sharing have evolved naturally with little to no interference from management.

The company wide e-mails mentioned in the beginning of this chapter is perhaps the most explicit process for Knowledge Sharing we have identified at Implement. It is an informal process aimed at sharing knowledge beyond ones personal network. A quick repetition of the practical process is how: if someone needs to get a hold of specific knowledge or information that can't be acquired through his or her network, he or she sends out a company wide question regarding the subject. These e-mails are sent company wide, addressed to every single employee. This is an established, and appreciated, channel for knowledge transfer at Implement, as within fifteen minutes he or she has received several qualitative responds.

The e-mail process is a major strength for Implement as we identify how it synergises well with the company structure and culture within the company. It is a very simple and pragmatic process that

connects both local and remote employees and promotes interaction. As we described above, the technological infrastructure at Implement has failed to provide the benefit of giving all organizational member access to knowledge wherever and whenever (Vendelø, 2009). We mean that these e-mails work as a great substitute to the poor technological infrastructure. Moreover it is simple to use and supplements the organizational structure and way of sharing knowledge at Implement well, attributing further to the synergy effects.

However, this process is not without its flaws. Some consultants treat the company wide e-mails as a distraction. Throughout our interviews it is explained how one can receive up to 30 e-mails during one day and that this is clogging up the inbox, and the e-mails become an inconvenience. On this subject there is a fragmentation between the Danes on the one hand and the Swedes and Norwegians on the other. The Danish co-workers almost unitary only have positive feedback on the e-mail system, where as the other colleagues describe it as somewhat problematic and that they have not established e-mails as a part of their routine. Erik gives a typical explanation for why it can be a source of frustration:

“First, you only send them when it is super important, and you only get to see the question, not the answer, so you don’t learn anything from it. Second, it is sent to my personal inbox with all my other important e-mails, and this is very irritating for me. Compare it to a system like Yammer, that is a separate line of communications and you can go back to look at the conversations.” (Erik)

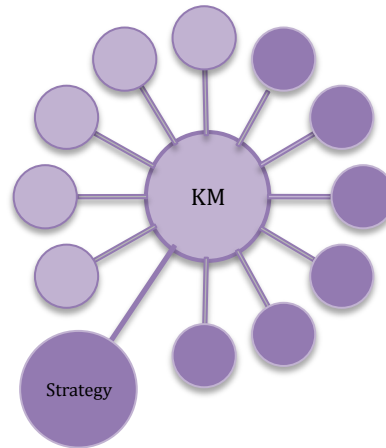
As it almost exclusively is non-Danish co-workers that puts forth critique against the system leads us to believe how the inertia towards the e-mail system is linked to many of the other problems identified within Project Viking. The institutionalized nature and the relevance of the process do not seem to have spread to these employees. Something we find corroborated during our interviews.

“The Danes are very good at utilizing e-mails... ..It is a culture that works well for them. Ulrich [a Swedish co-worker] tried it once and he got ten really qualitative answers, not just polite ones. There are so many competent people in this firm, so when you get an answer it is always a good answer. However, I cannot agree that we [at our office] have gotten into it.” (Emma)

With greater dialogue and internal information we believe that much of the situation could be resolved. However, some important considerations are raised regarding the inefficiency of the process. We believe that the basic foundations and principles for the e-mails are of great advantage at

Implement. However, the process could use some refinement and become more efficient in order to be fruitful within Implement and Project Viking. One way could be to allow both questions and answers to be available to everyone through a separate channel, much like the recommendations made by Erik. However, one has to be aware that by increasing the complexity of the process could lead to frustration and reduced usage (Conley & Zheng, 2009; Davenport et. al., 1998). Instead of making radical changes, Implement has to tread lightly and adapt the process to the changing environment within the company.

Strategy

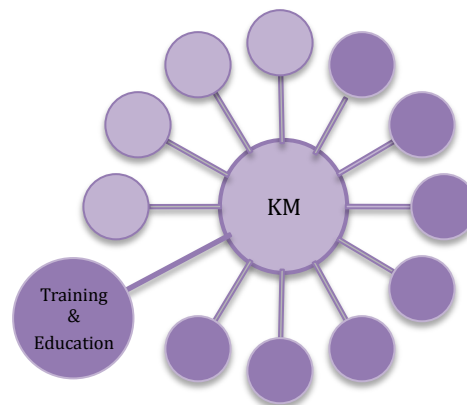


In this section we will take a closer look at strategy within Implement. We have found an almost non-existent strategy when it comes to Knowledge Management.

Within our theoretical framework the importance of both corporate and Knowledge Management strategies are emphasised as the major factor for successful Knowledge Sharing (Newell et. al., 2009; Conley & Zheng, 2009; Wong, 2005). We were therefore surprised to find out how little Implement actively works with strategy. Rather, at Implement we get the impression that there is a happy-go-lucky attitude towards strategy and corporate and Knowledge Management strategies seem to develop through need rather than planning.

According to Wong (2005) the general idea is that strategy, if aligned with a Knowledge Management System, will grant control of the organizational resources, enhance organizational performance and most importantly enhance Knowledge Sharing (Bose, 2004). This implies a strong reliance on strategic planning and strategic execution. We perceive the reliance on an articulated strategy as a bit naïve, and instead we propose how culture and processes can substitute much of the benefits ascribed to strategy. As we have seen with the Implement case, where there is no accentuated and articulated Knowledge Management strategy, as well as little managerial interference, Knowledge Sharing has been very prosperous. As a result, the argument of an alignment between corporate strategy and Knowledge Management gives little guidance in a more practical setting and we find it somewhat self-evident. The lesson we can learn is that strategy's role and impact on Knowledge Sharing needs to be down-played in favour for other elements, such as culture. Moreover, we identify the problems with Knowledge Sharing that has occurred through Project Viking as more relatable to other contextual factors, such as management support.

Training and Education



In the following section we will start by outlining Implements educational and training efforts and link it to the literature. We will then proceed with a more general discussion how it affects Knowledge Management within the company.

To continuously develop the competencies of their employees, Implement arrange several annual activities aimed at training and education of their personnel. These activities range from an annual corporate wide strategy trip to several themed educational days per year. These activities aim at developing general consultancy skills and deepening business and theoretical knowledge.

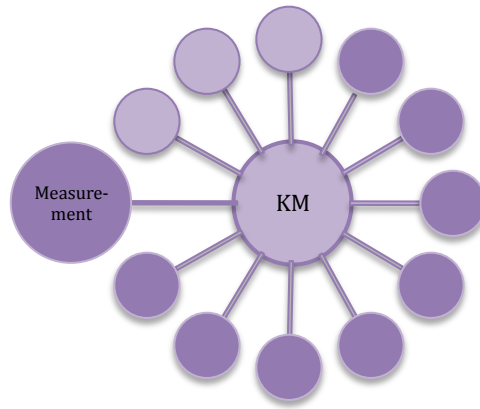
"At Implement we develop competencies at two levels. First, as a consultant you should always become better and better within your practice and second there is the knowledge that everyone needs, regardless of practice and tools." (Henrik)

This training and education are generally considered as something rewarding and good for personal development. Much in line with what Newell et. al., (2009) found in their study of SciencoCo, training and education helps the consultants at Implement to be at the top in their field. Aside from the knowledge acquired through formal training, and what we find even more important for Knowledge Sharing, is how our interviewees describe these educational activities as a great source for networking. It provides formal and informal occasions for personnel to meet and exchange knowledge.

As many of these training and educational events are mandatory we believe how the events can be a great opportunity to manage the Knowledge Sharing processes within Implement. We believe how management can have the possibility to make employees more aware of what Knowledge Sharing is

all about at Implement, and why it is important. Moreover, we believe that Implement would benefit from a more out spoken strategy when it comes to how knowledge should be shared during training and education as well as what kind of knowledge and between whom. By working consciously with the questions presented, by Deng (2008); What kind of knowledge to share? How is this knowledge going to be shared? Who should be involved in the process? How is Knowledge Sharing justified?, we believe that this can be achieved. We find the contrasting image presented by Wong (2005), that if the management just justify the use of Knowledge Sharing in the employees daily work they will willingly contribute to the organizations knowledge structure, as naïve and not very applicable in Implements case. We believe that this gives very little awareness of the importance of knowledge.

Measurement



In the following section we will examine Implement's efforts to measure and evaluate Knowledge Sharing within the company and what potential benefits the company can draw from it.

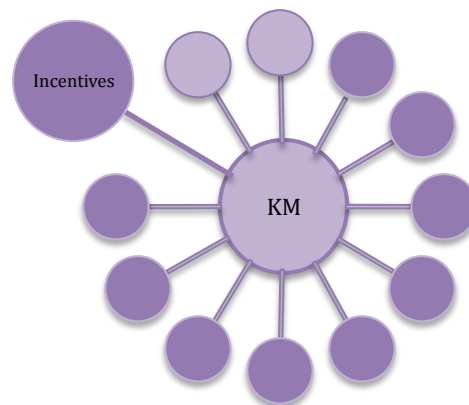
One way of demonstrating the value of Knowledge Management is to try to measure its effect in the daily activities (Wong, 2005; Bose, 2004). We estimate that these tasks are not top priority within Implement due to several reasons. First, measurement and follow-up is closely related to managerial control (Alvesson, 2009; Newell et al., 2009), something that we perceive is very downplayed at Implement. Second, measuring knowledge and its outcome are extremely challenging (ibid). We believe that, as Implement is a very flat and dispersed adhocracy with little managerial interference, the topic of measurement is not a high priority and in combination with the complexity of measurement and evaluation, measurement is rejected. Moreover, we derive this conclusion because as of today, no such activity seems to occur at Implement and measurement seems to be overlooked.

We believe that even if Knowledge Sharing is difficult to measure at Implement, measurement can help to illuminate and communicate the importance of Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Management. We argue that this could be a good way for management to communicate the importance of knowledge in a subtle but effective way. Measurement can then give management insight into what systems and processes are working for their employees, and bring justification to the subject of Knowledge Sharing within the organisation. It can also send out a clear message to the employees that Knowledge Management is important for Implement.

Another subject related to measurement, but decoupled from the measurement of Knowledge Sharing, is the extended measurement of revenue and profitability within Project Viking. We believe that this is indirectly affecting Knowledge Sharing negatively. As we have discussed above, during the section of management support, we believe how it can be dangerous to focus too much on revenue

in the beginning of the implementation of this growth strategy. The stress of constantly needing to debit might rob the employees in Sweden and Norway of all their scheduled time at work, leaving no time to soak up the Implement culture or sharing their pre-existing knowledge as new employees.

Incentives



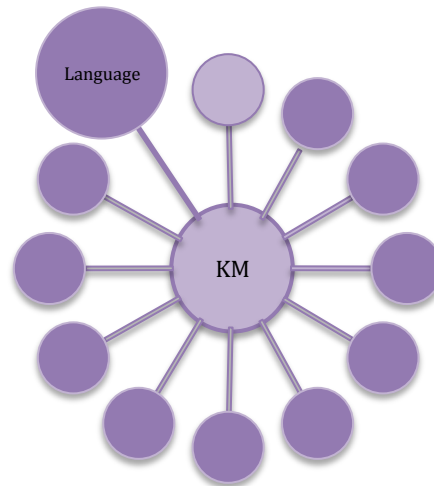
Below we will outline the general incentives for employees to share their knowledge at Implement. What we have found corroborates the image of a segregated organizational culture and that the incentives for sharing knowledge is very person-dependent.

An argument for attempting to measure Knowledge Sharing could be to create motivational factors to employees for engaging in Knowledge Sharing at a high/higher level. Both Davenport et. al. (1998) and Wong (2005) state that both financial and non-financial rewards are important to use in order to create Knowledge Sharing among organizational members.

During the interviews employees at Implement state that it would be destructive to set monetary rewards on employee values and efforts to share knowledge, as it ultimately it is about being generous and to be open. The employees also mention that it is about personal values and not a controlled behavior. Instead many employees believe in recruiting people with the right behavior from the beginning. As such, we perceive how the importance of monetary incentives as very low when it comes to ones willingness to share knowledge. Instead, we perceive that major motivational factors to share knowledge as embedded in the organisational culture and employee's state that the culture at Implement encourages employees to share their knowledge. However, as we have identified the organizational culture as somewhat fragmented there is a need to look a bit closer at what it is in the culture that would promote this behaviour. One general notion for sharing knowledge seems to be that employees share knowledge because they expect others to share as well, and return the favour. This can be interpreted as you pat my back I pat yours' and that colleagues share their knowledge in a pre-emptive manner to make sure that they have colleagues to turn to for help in the future. One can only speculate whether this behaviour is selfish, smart or generous. Never the less, the underlying incentive seems to be that colleagues are more likely to return a favour.

We believe that it is very important to prevent the possible creation of incentives to not share knowledge among employees. It is important that Implement keep the existing attitude that it is better to share the knowledge than to keep it to your self, regardless if the motivation is selfish or generous. The incentive for sharing knowledge has to stay higher than the incentive of keeping the knowledge to your self. We believe that Implement should be careful to reward individual knowledge with higher pay or more interesting or longer projects as this would probably undermine the existing sharing culture.

Language



During the research our respondents brought up the topic of language, and what problems the different languages spoken at Implement brings to the process of Knowledge Management. As we have found no relevant link in our literature review between language and how it affects Knowledge Management, we will outline it below in the context of Implement.

One major reason for the problems related to language is how Project Viking has incorporated several languages to Implement's daily activities. Danish has historically been predominant and the language of use and with the advent of Project Viking the circumstances have changed, and will continue to change, with the employment of personnel with different maiden languages. We identify how this has caused confusion regarding the corporate language and effectively Knowledge Management.

Today, the official language at Implement is English. At all formal occasions English is supposed to be spoken. However, this seems to be more talk than walk and we interpret how many of the Danish employees probably think that Danish still is the corporate language. Because of this, Danish is still widely spoken at corporate events. A general opinion between the Danes seems to be that how it at corporate events is easier to speak Swedish and Danish rather than English. A couple of Swedish and Norwegian employees state how the use of Danish poses as a language barrier and that they have a hard time understanding Danish. Because of this, some employees tend to exclude going to meetings held in Danish.

A second explanation for why language is an issue is more subtle and related to attitude and culture, rather than language in itself. Employees mention that it is far more of a cultural matter and that the language barrier is just a part of the cultural differences between the different Scandinavian countries.

“It’s more about the culture. Danes and Swedes are different. It can’t be solved by talking the same language.” (Hans Christian)

Our collective image is that the language problems accentuate the cultural differences between the countries. However, there seems to be a willingness to overcome these cultural differences.

“My personal opinion is that we should be able to communicate with each other in Scandinavia, without using English. But some of my Swedish colleagues don’t understand a word. I had actually problems myself once in a meeting in Stockholm.” (Jens)

“We have said that we will speak English when he [Paolo] is here, and we absolutely will. End of story. Most of my work is in English so it’s cool. No barriers.” (Henriette)

We identify how the language barrier is a major impediment for effective Knowledge Sharing and has resulted in reduced synergy between the offices. Instead of being able to tap into previous experiences and material the new offices has to constantly produce new material instead of reusing old material. As an example, one of the consultants stated that most of her clients wanted all material, like power points and guidance, to be in Swedish. Hence, she is compelled to rework all material from Danish to Swedish or from English to Swedish. The language barrier then results in a greater workload for the Swedish and Norwegian offices than the Danish since they have to translate most of the material. One of the employees in Sweden states that this creates a problem for her since it tends to take up a lot of her time in a project, and that this is time that she often cannot debit the customers. Another employee highlights the problematic situation and lack of synergy;

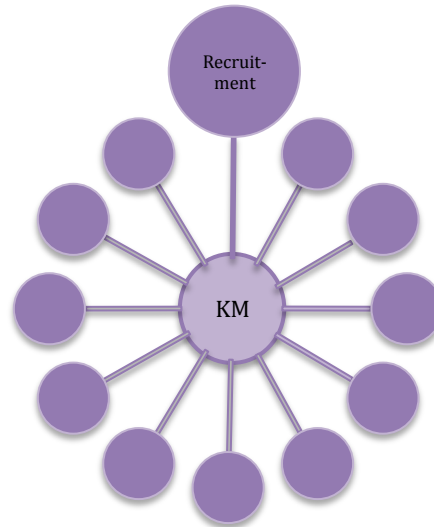
“We have a challenge at Implement that needs attention and that is that 99% of all the material is in Danish. Which is useless here. We want the proposal and standard documents to be in English. But it’s a long journey before we’re there, to get a majority of the Danes to do so.” (Paolo)

Implement would most likely benefit from an articulated stance regarding shared corporate language and as of today idea and practice does not match, where the idea is to speak English but in practice everyone still speaks Danish. There needs to be a clear communication of what language is actually going to be spoken. Either everyone has to speak English or Implement has to abandon English as corporate language, because the middle road that exists today leads to confusion and divergence. A

shared language needs to be stressed in order to reach effective Knowledge Sharing at Implement. Whether they succeed to a 100% or not is not relevant. We identify that what is important is that different spoken languages within an organization does not stand in the way of employees understanding and interacting with each other, as this inhibits Knowledge Sharing. However, we raise the question whether the use of a shared corporate language is manageable at all. Instead it is proposed how these issues will be resolved over time as Implement hires more Swedes and Norwegians. As there will be a more even distribution of Danes, Swedes and Norwegians the language issues will be resolved naturally. Moreover, the HR-director Henrik highlights how Implement will have learned its lessons for the future;

“These 3-4 years that we have been trying to make it in Stockholm have not been that successful but I believe that we can make it now. We have gotten use to the fact that Paolo doesn’t speak Danish and stuff like that. But it will require a big effort and investment before we reach our goal that’s for sure.” (Henrik)

Recruitment



As mentioned in the theory section we have identified how recruitment can affect the possibility to manage the process of Knowledge Sharing. We believe that Knowledge Sharing could potentially be managed through the recruitment of employees that are known to easily share their knowledge and recruitment of employees that speak the corporate language in order to make the Knowledge Sharing process smooth. Moreover the recruitment process affects many of the other contextual factors. Below we will outline the impact recruitment have on Knowledge Management at Implement.

At Implement, the aim to be the best in their disciplines has resulted in the recruitment of mainly senior and established professionals from different fields and this is why Implement is structured as a diamond. Valuing a diverse background, Implement recruits from an array of specializations and have recently hired a midwife. However, the majority of the employees have a background in engineering and business. These senior recruitments, in contrast to junior recruitments, bring with them an intellectual luggage, broad experience and an extensive network of potential clients that Implement can benefit from. Thus they bring with them much potential knowledge that Implement can make use of. However, as these recruits are established professionals they are more autonomous, have a higher need for discretion, reducing the possibility of extensive management control (Alvesson, 2009). This leads to a problematic situation where there is a risk that knowledge within the company remains tied within individuals at Implement and that specific knowledge would leave the organization if the employee decides to leave (ibid). In this sense, the recruitment at Implement is a two-edged blade. On the one hand there is the potential to tap into an enormous amount of knowledge while at the same time, if not managed well, knowledge becomes tied to individuals and not dispersed in the company. Today, Implement tries to tap into this knowledge

through their extensive training and education and the following is found on their recruitment website.

“We believe that our success depends on our ability to attract, develop and retain the most competent consultants in Scandinavia. Therefore, we spend 15% of our turnover on development, and it is our aim to work with the best in the world within selected competence areas.” (Implement, 2012)

This vision is widespread within the organization, being expressed by both the employees we have talked to as well as official statements such as the recruitment part of Implements website. Characteristics Implement is looking for when recruiting are humbleness and people who fit into Implements culture and way of organizing. The aim is to hire “*den rigtige menneske*” (The right human) characterized by being knowledgeable, helpful and sharing, those who are true, honest and fair.

Even if the recruitment of the right human exists in the recruitment process, it is hard to execute it in reality. The responsible for project Viking mentions that it is harder to recruit in Sweden and Norway than in Denmark. This because of the fact that they have a well-established good reputation in Denmark but in Sweden and Norway no one knows anything about Implement. This might be one additional reason why employees in Sweden and Norway differ as much in personalities.

Our collective image is that recruitment has a major impact on both corporate structure and organizational culture, which in turn have a major impact on the Knowledge Management at Implement. Therefore we argue that the influence of recruitment on a company’s Knowledge Management needs further attention among scholars.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

In this chapter we will present the main findings of this research in line with both the practical and the theoretical purpose. This will involve a presentation of the most critical contextual factors for Knowledge Management at Implement as well as recommendations on how Implement can improve their Knowledge Management. Lastly we will discuss the theoretical significance and further research within the field of Knowledge Management.

Following a quick domestic expansion in Denmark, our case-company, Implement has recently decided to expand into the Scandinavian markets. This has raised an awareness of an increased need for coordination within the company and knowledge has been identified as a possible solution. Therefore, Implement has suited to be a very good company to analyse in order to understand how Knowledge Management works at a practical level. Through the use of our theoretical framework we have been able to corroborate how Knowledge Management is very nuanced and how irrational behaviour play a crucial part in how knowledge is shared. Below we will outline the major findings of our study.

Critical factors

After the analysis of the empirical material through the twelve contextual factors, we have identified six as critical for Implement. We find these six factors as the ones that affect Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Management the most. We consider this as one of our main findings and will outline this further below. The six critical contextual factors are; Culture, Management Support, Management Team, Structure, Language and Recruitment (figure 3).

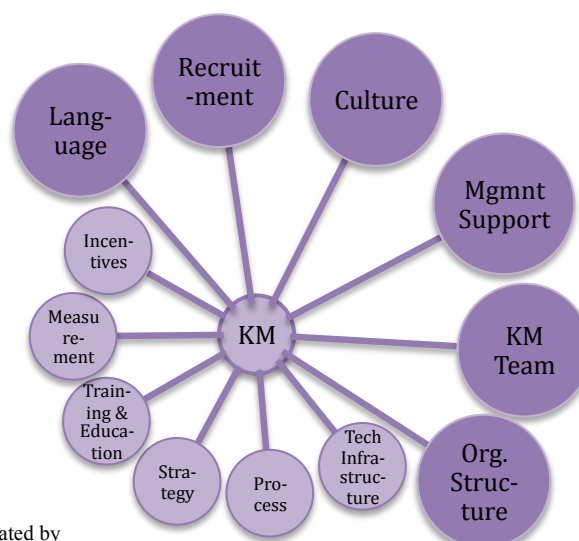


Figure 3: Critical contextual factors, created by the authors

Culture

We identify how Implement is very reliant on its corporate culture for the facilitation of Knowledge Sharing. The culture is sharing and open and we identify how sharing and trust seem to be status symbols within the company. On several occasions it is described how the sharing and contributing culture at Implement is what distinguishes Implement from other consultancy firms. However, there is a great fragmentation where we identify how the sharing culture has not spread to the new offices. We believe that there is a great benefit to try and preserve, and extend, the sharing organizational culture at Implement as we identify how it has contributed to Implements historical success. We note that fragmentation of the culture is not tied to the culture itself. Rather the fragmentation has occurred due to other contextual factors, mainly organizational structure and management support.

Management Support & Knowledge Management Team

With the advent of Project Viking a lot of pressure, that did not exist earlier, seem to have taken management off guard, resulting in very little management support. We believe that this has lead to a scattered view of what direction the project and those involved should move, adding to the sense of a fragmented organization. We have identified how the current lack of leadership and clear direction has lead to inconsistency and confusion within the company on how to relate to Knowledge Management. Many of the issues we have discussed and analysed, boil down to how there is a lack of communication from management and general management support.

Structure

Implement is a flat adhocracy reliant on internal networks. At first glance, Implement seems to be a textbook example of how management-consultancy firms should facilitate Knowledge Sharing. However, we have identified that Implements structure has failed to scale to the new offices. This due to how networks are dependent on face-to-face meetings to build trust and maintain interpersonal relationships. We have identified how geographical distance combined with a strong pressure to generate revenue has resulted in how building networking have become suffering. These we believe are the two main reasons for why the structure has failed to scale to the new offices.

Language

With the advent of Project Viking several new languages have been introduced to the organization, causing language barriers. Tied to the language barriers are cultural differences, attitudes and perceptions, not just the language itself. We identify how the language barriers are a major impediment for effective Knowledge Sharing and have resulted in reduced synergy between the

offices. We want to stress the importance for Implement to follow through the decision of what the corporate language should be.

Recruitment

At Implement, the aim to be the best in their disciplines has resulted in the recruitment of mainly senior and established professionals. This is why Implement is structured as a diamond. The reason for hiring mainly senior professionals is due to their extensive experience and knowledge base. We have identified that Knowledge Sharing is very person dependant at Implement. For this reason, if Implement is to access, and utilize, the personalized knowledge within their employees, and diffuse it throughout the whole organization, it is important that Implement aim to recruit sharing employees, “den riktige mensken”.

Below (figure 4) is a visual representation of the six critical factors and how they are characterized today.

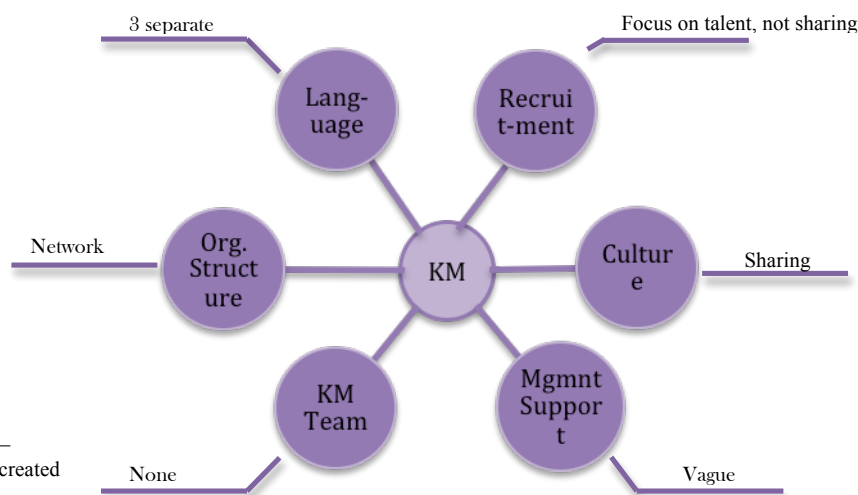


Figure 4: Implement today – Critical contextual factors, created by the authors

We identify how Implement has a unique Knowledge Management System that historically has worked very well. However, due to the problems that have evolved with Project Viking we identify how the Knowledge Management is only optimized for one office. This citation from Erik is a good representation of the combined impact of the six critical contextual factors represented above, and represent what we identify is the overarching shortcoming with the Knowledge Management at Implement.

“The force of gravity [from Hørsholm] doesn’t reach the other offices.” (Erik)

Manageability of Knowledge

Our analysis has led us to a conclusion that there is a strong possibility to use Knowledge Management as a tool for coordination within the context of Implement. We argue that the analysis through the twelve contextual factors can help to identify what factors that are in need of most attention, in order to improve the Knowledge Management. Implement has come to a tipping point where Knowledge Management has to be considered. Therefore we suggest that the goal should be to:

“Scale the current Knowledge Management System to reach the new offices”.

The benefits would then be:

- To reach coordination between all four offices
- To achieve higher efficiency through increased dispersion of knowledge
- Strengthen competencies among employees through the use of Knowledge Sharing

This could possibly be achieved through following recommendations, divided into the categories: Culture, Processes and Tools.

Culture

- Stronger management of Knowledge Management. Make an effort to manage *what* knowledge to be shared, *how* to share that knowledge and to *whom*. The lack of management of Knowledge Sharing today creates dispersion of separate Knowledge Management Systems at the four different offices, the possible synergy then gets lost.
- Establish a Knowledge Management Team responsible for the Knowledge Management at Implement. The Knowledge Management Team should identify the existing ways of sharing knowledge and evaluate the efficiency of the components as well as communicate throughout the organization which components that are available for sharing knowledge. Existing ways to share knowledge at Implement identified by us are presented in figure 5. We also recommend the Knowledge Management Team to raise the subject of Knowledge Management to convey a sense of urgency. This would raise awareness for everyone in the organization of the current challenges with sharing knowledge as the company is expanding.
- To agree on a corporate language and integrate the use of this language through out the whole organization; meetings, document and a requirement when recruiting new employees.

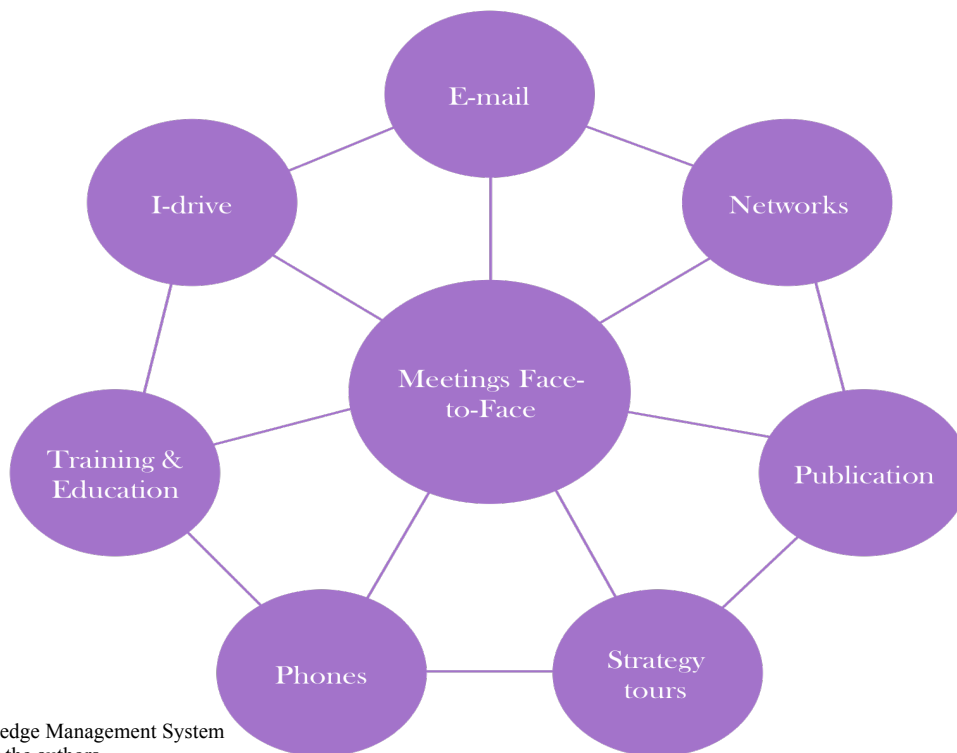


Figure 5: Current Knowledge Management System at Implement, created by the authors

Process

- Make the information presented during the monthly meetings accessible to those who cannot attend. Make the agenda of every meeting in all practices and service lines accessible for all employees, through the intranet or through a newsletter.

Tools

- The I-drive: Formalise and add a search function. It is not necessary to upload all documents ever used in the I-drive. It is important to have clear guidance on what to upload, how and in what format. The focus should be to share generic material and not complex knowledge.
- Install technology for videoconferences at all four offices to reduce the dependency on face-to-face meetings.
- Create a basic CRM-system, making information regarding previous projects and clients for new and existing employees.

One of the employees at Implement concludes what we believe is one of the reasons why implement has not focused on Knowledge Management;

“Implement is too good. We have too much success to bother and it’s dangerous. We have to high self-esteem.”

We would therefore like to stress that the attitude expressed in the citation above needs to change, now more than ever. The time for change is now. Implement needs to take action when it comes to clear direction on how to facilitate Knowledge Management and Knowledge Sharing before the new offices develop their own scattered Knowledge Management Systems.

Theoretical Significance and Future Research

For this study we have taken an interpretative approach to Knowledge Management in order to answer our research purpose. Through a critical approach we aimed to pick up on the irrationalities within an organization, in order to give a deeper understanding of how Knowledge Management works in a practical setting. The empirical content of this thesis has offered an array of practical problems and complex relationships. Many of which have been very subtle and hard to pinpoint, expressed indirectly through perceptions and expressions rather than explicit statements and concrete examples. We believe that by departing from Conley & Zheng's (2009) model we have been able to produce an applicable tool that has the possibility to catch up on the contradicting images portrayed in our empirical material. However, for the case of Implement additional factors played a crucial role for Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Management, resulting in the addition of Language and Recruitment as contextual factors. For future research we believe that the use of contextual factors are a very good way to approach the complexity of Knowledge Management and we believe that a more longitudinal study could be used to corroborate our findings and further extend the understanding of Knowledge Management.

The unique setting of our case study has led us to consider how it can provide further contributions to the understanding of Knowledge Management. The case provides a possibility to analyse how the same Knowledge Management works in two different settings, one prior to and one post, Project Viking. We believe that the comparison between the two different settings through our contextual factors have revealed both practical and theoretical benefits and challenges with Knowledge Management within a management-consulting firm. As an example it has shown how geographical dispersion and language barriers can have a profound impact on the dispersion of organizational culture. Moreover we have seen how un-management of knowledge has historically been a fruitful way for Implement to manage knowledge, but as the situation has changed a need for more management has risen. We believe that future research of this comparable kind could open up for the understanding of when companies reach this tipping point.

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Appendix

Interview Guide

Below we will present the guideline of questions we asked during the interviews. These questions were not strictly followed.

- Introduction of ourselves and the purpose of the research
- Approach of the interview
- Citation and anonymity

The Respondent's Background

- Educational background
- Previous work experience
- When and why did you start at Implement
- Current position at Implement

Culture

- Describe the culture at Implement connected to knowledge.
- Describe your communication/Knowledge Sharing with your colleagues.
- When, Where, How, Why and What?
- Your office vs. employees in other countries
- Formal occasions (meetings, educational situations) / informal occasions (after work, trips)
- From whom do you get information/knowledge? Why?

Tools

- How and where is Implements knowledge stored?
- Do you have access to the information/knowledge you need in your daily work?
- Are you missing any information/knowledge?
- Knowledge Library - Do you use it? How? When?

Process

- Have you received any guidance on how Implement deals with Knowledge Management
- Do you have contact with the employees working in the other countries?
- How often and in what way?
- Are the different offices dependent on each other? In what way?
- Have you contributed to Knowledge Sharing?
- How do you share your knowledge?
- Are the reasons for colleagues to keep their own knowledge?

Future

- Do you consider Knowledge Sharing as important? In what way?
- Do you want to change the Knowledge Sharing at Implement?
- Suggestions for improvements? Culture, processes and tools.

Interview objects

Hørsholm

- Jens Vasehus - jv@implement.dk
Founder of Implement Consulting Group. Jens has a multifaceted work description; Chairman, Partner, Consultant and responsible for Project Viking.
- Henrik Horn Andersen - hha@implement.dk
Consultant and HR-developer.
- Hans Christian Ove - hco@implement.dk
Consultant.
- Henriette Divert-Hendricks - hda@implement.dk
The first female partner. Consultant.

Stockholm

- Paolo De Mora - pdm@implement.eu
Started-up Implement in Sweden. Partner at the Stockholm office and consultant.
- Rickard Åkesson - raa@implement.eu
Partner and consultant.

Malmö

- Erik Kayser - eka@implement.dk
Started-up Implement in southern Sweden. Partner at the Malmö office and consultant.
- Emma Stèen - est@implement.eu
Consultant.

Bergen

- Trond Wincentzen - twi@implement.no
Partner at the Bergen office and consultant