Master Thesis

The Impact of Strategic Alignment on Business Process Management

A Study of Employee Perception of Strategic Alignment and its Impact on Employee Willingness and Ability to Conduct BPM

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Abstract

Strategic alignment has been identified as the overarching philosophy that aligns Business Process Management (BPM) to organisational strategy, but often a gap appears between organisational strategy and operational issues. Willingness and ability to contribute to BPM have been identified as two major operational issues when achieving strategic alignment of BPM. Hence, this thesis aims to close the gap between organisational strategy and these two operational issues through the analysis of the employee perceptions of strategic alignment of BPM initiatives in order to understand their willingness and ability to contribute to BPM.

A qualitative research method was used, taking a constructionist approach to ontology with a hermeneutics epistemology. This thesis is based on a snapshot case study at a British, traditional, made-to-order manufacturer, "TradMan" (pseudonym), which has recently started two BPM initiatives. The empirical material consisted of sixteen semi-structured interviews with employees from TradMan and one with an external consultant who was utilised to help guide one of the initiatives, as well as secondary data in the form of employee newsletters. The theoretical foundation was formulated from previous research in the field of BPM, strategy and alignment, which was then used to analyse and make sense of the collected empirical material.

From this thesis, it is possible to conclude that the perceived strategic misalignments of BPM initiatives and the structures surrounding their implementation, such as silos and a perceived lack of training, can impact the employees willingness and ability to conduct BPM. Furthermore, it is concluded that the perceived strategic alignments of BPM initiatives can be understood to increase willingness and ability because ideas are perceived to be listened to and implemented. This research adds value to the work of existing scholars through showing the importance of the inclusion of the human aspects in research of implementation of BPM initiatives by taking it into account when trying to understand willingness and ability, and contributes to research that this can affect the success of said initiatives.

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Finally, we would like to thank Rebecka and Marie for your unwavering emotional support throughout the thesis and also Felix, Hanna and Annabel for your superb proofreading ability. Tusen tack till er alla!

Happy reading!

Definitions

Initiatives   "Specific projects or programs undertaken to achieve specific objectives in the near-term, such as to reduce costs, increase efficiency, and improve sales performance." (BusinessDictionary, n.d.)

Methodology   "A system of ways of doing, teaching, or studying something." (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.a) "[M]ethodology is defined as a collection of problem-solving methods governed by a set of principles and a common philosophy for solving targeted problems" (Checkland 1981 cited in Kettinger, Teng & Guha, 1997, p.58).

Method   "A particular way of doing something" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.b)

Technique   "A way of doing an activity that needs skill" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.c) "Technique is defined [...] as a set of precisely described procedures for achieving a standard task." (Kettinger, Teng & Guha, 1997, p.58)

System   "a set of connected things or devices that operate together, a set of computer equipment and programs used together for a particular purpose" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.d)

Tool   "In this study, tool is defined as a computer software package to support one or more techniques." (Palvia and Nosek, 1993, cited in Kettinger, Teng & Guha, 1997, p.58)

Abbreviations

BP   Business Process
BPI   Business Process Improvement
BPM   Business Process Management
BPP   Business Process Procedure
BPR   Business Process Reengineering
ERP   Engineering Resource Planner
OTD   On time delivery

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Business Process Management (BPM) is a rapidly growing, important concept that is becoming increasingly relevant for companies that want to become flexible or transform their business models (Mendling & vom Brocke, 2018). BPM relies on the integration of organisational capabilities, such as strategic alignment and people, to create process evolution and revolution (Mendling & vom Brocke, 2018) and companies implementing BPM have experienced a variety of positive results, such as overcoming complexities and increasing transparency (Reisert, Zelt & Wacker, 2018). The implementation of such initiatives have been proven to be difficult due to the gap that so often appears between the organisational strategy and operational issues (Rosemann & vom Brocke, 2010).

It is necessary to understand what a business process (BP) is if one is to understand BPM (Kirchmer, 2017). In the case of BPM, a business process is a prescribed sequence of functions that creates and delivers value for internal or external stakeholders (employees, customers, computer systems, other business processes etc.), provides a focus on the interplay between them, and has a definite beginning and an end (Kirchmer, 2017; Lusk, Paley & Spanyi, 2005; Pastinen, 2010; Smith & Fingar, 2003). This thesis emphasises a variety of stakeholders throughout and therefore this definition is important to note when contemplating BPs in regards to BPM.

Business Process Improvement (BPI), Business Process Reengineering (BPR) and Business Process Management (BPM) are schools of thought: BPI came first in the 1970s, then BPR reared its head in the 1990s and finally in the 2000s, BPM ideas and methodologies began to surface as the progressive school of thought (Lusk, Paley & Spanyi, 2005). BPM is the next step in the evolution of business process improvement; it provides the glue that holds BPI initiatives to BPR initiatives, and gives it direction according to an organisation's strategy (Lusk, Paley & Spanyi, 2005). While it is the next step, it should not be regarded as revolutionary, but an evolutionary and holistic view of the organisation (Harmon, 2010).

Harmon (2010) describes BPM as a culmination of three traditions: First, the Work Simplification / Quality Control Tradition, which links Taylor's (1911) scientific management principle of making the lives of workers simpler, to the focus on quality

improvement pioneered by Deming (1982), culminating in the combination of Lean (reduction of waste) and Six Sigma (reduction in component defects) into Lean Six Sigma (Conger, 2010), which has become increasingly used since 2000 (Harmon, 2010). Second, the Business Management Tradition focuses on strategy; specifically "organising and managing employees to achieve corporate goals" (Harmon, 2010, p.43). Third, and finally, the Information Technology Tradition serves to automate process work; becoming more of an integral component of BPM, rather than operating independently as a service to the main organisation (Harmon, 2010). Harmon (2010) notes "that practitioners in one field often choose to ignore the efforts of those working in other traditions" (p.38). This thesis focuses on the interplay between the Work Simplification/Quality Control Tradition and the Business Management Tradition, highlighting the organisational strategy for BPM and the human perspective on BPM in order to shine a light on "the growth and contraction of relationships among them" (Smith & Fingar, 2003, p.773).

"BPM is now proposed as the spanning discipline that largely integrates and completes what previous disciplines have achieved" (vom Brocke & Rosemann, 2010a) and BPI initiatives are still heavily featured in many organisations (Burlton, 2010). What Management expects of these initiatives and what they can actually provide can be vastly different things and therefore ensuring that expectations are aligned with capabilities, both vertically (through the hierarchical levels) and horizontally (between departments and/or between BPM initiatives), is essential (Burlton, 2010). It is important to consider both vertical and horizontal alignment in order to take into account both the "hierarchical managerial authority" and the "considerable lateral coordination across units" (p.202) that is required during the management of BPM initiatives (Jacobson & Markus, 2010).

"The challenge is to create a system that aligns the measures from the top to the bottom of the organisation" (Harmon, 2010, p.66) and a variety of authors repeatedly highlight two important factors for personnel from all hierarchical levels in a business when trying to establish BPM: Firstly, **willingness**, which is "a key prerequisite for change [that] is deeply encoded in the corporate culture" (Dumas et al. 2018), and is required from senior management to "lead, take responsibility, and be accountable for business processes" (Rosemann & vom Brocke, 2010, p.119). Furthermore, it is required from personnel lower down the hierarchy to "question existing BPM practices in the light of potential process improvements [and] captures actual process-related behavior" (Rosemann & vom Brocke,

2010, p.119). All personnel must "be willing to accept change" (Hammer, 2010). Secondly, **ability**, which for the senior management within the organisation refers to "who can make which decision" (Rosemann & vom Brocke, 2010, p.116), their efficiency and effectiveness in decision making, and their influence over resource allocation (Rosemann & vom Brocke, 2010; Dumas et al. 2018). In addition, for personnel lower down the hierarchy, it refers to their response to process change, which requires strategic alignment with governance processes such that people can act "in the best interest of the process" (Rosemann & vom Brocke, 2010, p.119).

Achieving strategic alignment for business process management has been identified as an obstacle (Lusk, Paley & Spanyi, 2005). Although there exists some research on the influence that strategic alignment of BPM has on the BPM itself, a gap opens up where little research exists on the impact of strategic alignment of BPM on employees' willingness and ability to carry out BPM processes. Therefore, this thesis attempts to fill this gap, providing the employees' perspectives on what impact the strategic alignment of BPM has on their willingness and ability to conduct BPM that is in line with the organisational strategy for BPM.

Figure 1 illustrates the three main components, highlighting their interconnectedness and interdependence, that will be analysed through this study; the alignment of strategy, processes, and people, in order to better understand the effects that strategic alignment of BPM has on employees' willingness and ability to perform BPM.
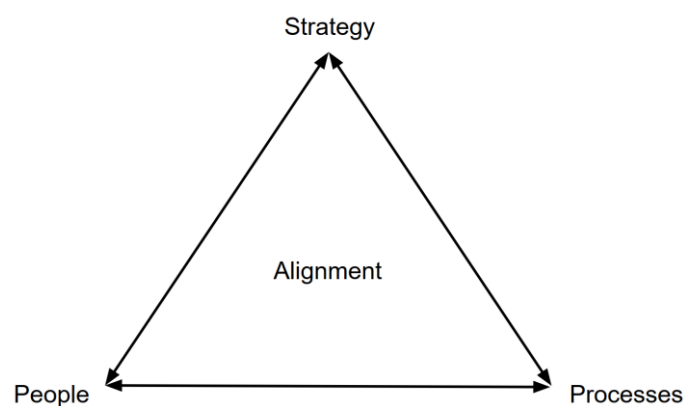

Figure 1 The Three Main Components of Alignment

1.2. Research Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to develop an understanding of how employees perceive the influence of strategic alignment and what obstacles and alignments they can identify among initiatives that incorporate both uncontrolled and formalised activities. Accordingly, this thesis aims to highlight not only the barriers and tensions, but also the potential alignments that can occur, both vertically and horizontally, between organisational strategy for BPM, the BPM initiatives, and the employees' willingness and ability to carry out BPM. Therefore, this study emphasises how these obstacles and alignments are perceived by employees within a company carrying out a variety of BPM initiatives. Therefore, the following two research questions were proposed to understand the employees' perspectives of BPM:

1. How do employees perceive the vertical and horizontal alignment of different BPM initiatives with organisational strategy?
2. What impact, if any, does the different levels of perceived BPM alignment with organisational strategy have on employee willingness and ability to conduct BPM?

This thesis, therefore, compiles information not just from theory, but from employees and managers involved in the BPM process, and BPM practitioners that guide its implementation. This thesis aims to contribute new insights into how managerial activities affect, or not affect, employees and their willingness and ability to conduct BPM, providing more details for what this means in practice, research and education.

1.3. Thesis outline

Theoretical Foundation - The previous chapter has detailed the history of BPM and how this thesis aims to contribute to the human aspects of BPM. This chapter serves to provide a platform from which to base the investigation; beginning with developing an understanding of strategy in BPM; then it will go on to describe how this thesis defines alignment and then; strategic alignment. Finally, this chapter will explain how various theories of strategic alignment within BPM, and indicators of such, are to be utilised during the investigation.

Methodology - This chapter describes the chosen research approach, research design, collection of data, and the relevance of each to the study. It then moves onto a discussion of the data analysis methodology and finally discusses the ethical considerations and what was done in order to mitigate any potential issues that may arise.

Findings and Interpretations - This chapter explores the perceptions of alignment within BPM at TradMan. Utilising the four themes identified in Chapter 2, the chapter shows how BPM is currently perceived at the company, delving into recommendations for improvement to identify missing components of the current process, exploring feelings and emotions surrounding it, and taking a vertical and horizontal view of each process.

Discussion - This chapter takes the main aspects of the findings and discusses them with the information laid out in the theoretical background. It will look at employees' perceptions of alignment and opportunities that can be interpreted from theory. It will evaluate whether certain alignments exist because of an initiative, or its method of implementation. Finally, the chapter delves into perceived barriers and tensions, and will look at the effects of these on the employees perceived ability and willingness to conduct BPM.

Conclusion - This section comprises the main conclusions of the study and how the research purpose and questions have been fulfilled by the findings and discussion. Implications for practitioners research and education are then presented and finally the possibilities for future research that have been identified from the findings.

2. Theoretical Foundation

The previous chapter has detailed the history of BPM and how this thesis aims to contribute to the human aspects of BPM. This chapter serves to provide a platform from which to base the investigation, beginning with developing an understanding of strategy in BPM. Then it will go on to describe how this thesis defines alignment and then strategic alignment. Finally, this chapter will explain how various theories of strategic alignment within BPM, and indicators of such, are to be utilised during the investigation.

2.1. The Six Core Concepts of BPM - Strategy in BPM

As mentioned above, BPM is an overarching philosophy that "integrates and completes" the achievements of previous disciplines (vom Broke & Rosemann, 2010a) and Burlton (2010) states that

> the prime role of Business Process Management (BPM) [...] is to ensure that the various developed capabilities are aligned with one another and together they deliver traceable process performance back to the stated strategic goals and objectives of the 'Organization-in-Focus'. (p.6)

BPM is consistently referred to as having six core concepts that must not be neglected: strategic alignment, governance, methods, information technology, people and culture (Rosemann & vom Brocke, 2010a; Dumas, La Rosa, Mendling & Reijers, 2018). The authors cite Luftman (2003) as a source and it is possible to see that the six have been adapted to suit a more managerial perspective from Luftman's (2003) study that involves looking at alignment from purely an IT perspective.

Rosemann and vom Brocke (2010a) refer to the "bidirectional linkage between strategy and business processes" (p.114) (i.e. the strategy is both influencer and influencee), and there is an expressed need for "appropriate and transparent accountability in terms of roles and responsibilities for different levels of BPM" (p.116). The authors refer to the capability of stakeholders to share "explicit and tacit knowledge of BPM principles" (p.118) in order to produce results from processes and this is agreed upon by Dumas et al. (2018) and Luftman (2003). Furthermore Luftman (2003) discusses trust and confidence through social interaction at unit, corporate and partner level to show alignment maturity. Although Luftman (2003) goes on to create an interesting approach to understand how Human Resources practices can be mature enough to align BPs with a strategy for BPM, there is no mention in theory of how different levels of BPM strategy alignment impacts employee willingness, ability or involvement in the management of BPs.

2.2. Strategy in BPM

Strategy is what ties every part of BPM together (Lusk, Paley & Spanyi, 2005). The link between BPM and the corporate strategy is that "BPM is recognized as a means to enforce corporate policy" (Sadiq & Governatori, 2010, p.163) and BPs are designed to fit the corporate strategy (Smith & Fingar, 2003). BPM can also be seen as the enabler for the implementation of a company's strategy (Trkman, 2010).

Successful Business Process Management is tightly tied to strategy and the alignment between the different stakeholders within the company (Smith & Fingar (2003); Harmon (2010) and Pastinen (2010)). To bring everyone on the same page about planned changes and processes, employees need to get a good business process training (Kirchmer 2017). Within this training, the employees will understand why and how to use enablers and tools. The better the training, the greater the performance and business enhancements become in the long run (Kirchmer 2017).

> Ultimately, process practitioners must not be so concerned with decomposing and analyzing, although those skills are very important, but the process practitioner must be a holist who works to synthesize and assure that the performance of the whole organization is optimized to achieve its strategic goals. (Harmon, 2010, p. 79)

In addition to the statement by Harmon above, it is also of utmost importance that processes are simplified because "the more complex you make the process, the less it will get used, and the less strategic alignment it will deliver" (Vagadia, 2014, p.79).

2.3. Alignment

At this point, it is necessary to introduce an interpretation of alignment as the definitions of alignment in the majority of Business Process Management and Business literature in general focus heavily on the alignment of strategies, business objectives, processes and culture within a company [van der Stede, 2009; Sadiq & Governatori 2010]. This alignment is important in our case company. However, for this study the alignment of the understanding and execution of the company BPM strategy across departments (horizontal) and hierarchical levels (vertical) is the focus.

Reisert, Zelt and Wacker (2018) identify strategic alignment as one of the aspects that facilitates successful BPM. Similarly, Czarnecki (2018) discusses how introducing a select team to the strategy centralises responsibility for processes, and thus aligns the team to the strategy. The author then points out that this team then spreads the strategy through the company, which makes processes and alignment successful. When looking at the Six BPM Core Elements by Rosemann & vom Brocke (2010a), alignment is part of every stage of Business Process Management.

As said previously, this study focuses on the people aspect of alignment which can be located within the implementation level of BPM, where IT (tools) and HR come together and processes are standardised (Hammer, 2010). Vagadia (2014) discusses how horizontal and vertical alignment pertains to the fundamental requirement that "operational layers within the organisation are constantly aligned with strategic intent" (p.2). The author elaborates on alignment to include the consideration of "a shared vision, to a common strategy, and to consistent and coherent personal goals" (p.13), which is especially important as BPM generates constant change and other developments within the company. The author concludes that "aligned organisations are happy organisations and through positive images of current

and future environments, seek to eliminate noise while creating conditions in which stakeholders can deliver." (p.13)

Burlton (2010) explains that because a lot of companies are "very wary of strategic planning" (p.7), there is no connection between practical and strategic tasks, which then produces misalignment and unnecessary work. Furthermore, Rosemann and vom Brocke (2010) discuss that communication between individual stakeholders and groups can help to achieve these desired strategic tasks, so long as the "related process knowledge is discovered, explored and disseminated" (p.119) correctly. In addition, Vagadia states that "every stakeholder has a different perspective on where the organisation should be going" (p.26) and describes how it is necessary to create buy-in for the organisational strategy from all parties such that no individual is left ignorant, which could be detrimental to the organisational strategy.

2.3.1. Horizontal Alignment

Horizontal alignment can be understood through the concept of silos, as described by Gleeson (2017). Horizontal alignment is the alignment of the understanding of each and everyone (in the different departments or silos) of the processes and procedures and the collaboration and communication between them for a shared goal which should always be in line with the BPM strategy goal. With regards to process improvement initiatives, horizontal alignment concerns the alignment of people working from multiple departments within an initiative. However, it also has an additional component that refers to the quality of the communication from people operating within an initiative, to people operating outside of an initiative, whether they are from the same department or not. (Gleeson, 2017)

2.3.2. Vertical Alignment

Vertical alignment has the meaning of the alignment of the execution and understanding of BPM between the employees, working on the different hierarchical levels - from the trainees up to the CEO.

> The process collaboration and communication area focuses on the way individuals and groups interact in order to achieve desired process outcomes in a collaborative manner. This area relates to the formal channels that are used in the communication between process stakeholders, such as process participants and process owners, for example, in terms of meetings and briefings that take place. From a more informal perspective, it is important to understand whether people are able to communicate in terms of concepts that make sense in a BPM context: Do they use terms such as 'processes', 'cases', and 'triggers' in a consistent

way? A final element worth mentioning is the infrastructure that is available to foster collaboration and communication, such as an intranet or messaging tools. (Dumas et al. 2018, p.487)

Dumas et al. point out a method for understanding alignment through looking at common definitions of specifics in theory. For instance, where people refer to terms as having a meaning consistent with that of the CEO and other senior staff, they can be considered to understand the topic and what it entails in the specific business context. (Dumas et al. 2018)

The research conducted for this theoretical foundation has provided a plethora of different definitions of alignment, helping to lead to a variety of indicators for alignment.

2.4. Indicators of Alignment within BPM

"Responsiveness" and "true commitment" (p.488) have been identified as critical success factors for BPM by Brocke & Rosemann (2010). Creating a "process culture" (Brocke & Rosemann, 2010, p.488) sets the stage for the process changes to come, which then enables "evolutionary, continuous change rather than driving revolutionary change" (p.488). To successfully change processes, Brocke & Rosemann (2010) identify two important factors: Firstly, **the "need for clarity about today's situation in connection with [...] the target situation"** (p.493) and secondly, making sure that everyone is on the same page with regards to their expectations, that everyone understands the new structures (through **"continuous education"** (p.493)) and that all of that is executed through good communication, as agreed by Hammer & Champy (1993), who state that **the re-engineered corporation has moved "from training to education"** (p.71).

In addition to the above, seven indicators for alignment have been identified, which will be explained after they are outlined in

Table 1.

Table 1 Indicators for Alignment

Indicators for Alignment
Project Learning Loop
Consistent use of vocabulary
Similarity between Personal BPM and Organisational BPM Strategy
Usage of the same tools
IT and HR Systems in place
The organisational structure on site
Recommendations

Statements made by the interviewees which can be placed in one of the three levels (project, process and organisation) of the **Project Learning Loop,** Figure 2, were identified as the first indicator.
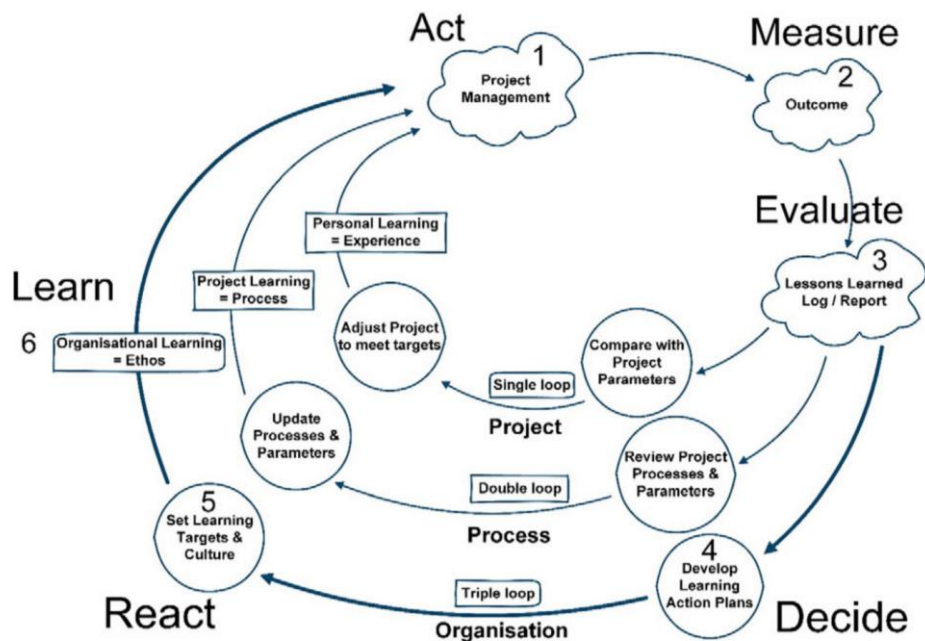
Figure 2 Project Learning Loop
(McClory, Read & Labib, 2017)

In the single loop, the focus lies on the learning and improvement within the project itself, evaluating continuously how it is going to being able to steer it in the right direction. It is about measuring the project itself. The double-loop includes hard data and soft values; for instance how the employees perceive the process. In the double loop, not only the project goals but also the goals of the company are taken into account when making decisions.

"Action is taken to change project-level parameters and update organisations policies where necessary." (p.1332) "The third learning loop […] includes the organisation's cultural values and goals in terms of a learning organisation." (p.1332) Changes of the organisational culture and instilling new values into the employees' minds is a step in the third learning loop and results in learnings on an organisational all-encompassing level. The authors see also the need for continuous Senior Management support for BPM when attempting to achieve Organisational Learning. (McClory, Read & Labib, 2017)

The second indicator for alignment is **consistent use of vocabulary.** Harmon (2010) declares that a standard vocabulary has been important to align processes between different companies. In the case of this study, this statement can be adapted to inner-company alignment between and within processes. The more consistent the use of vocabulary is between hierarchical levels, between different departments and from inside to outside initiatives, the greater the potential alignment.

Berg (2015) summarises that "personal purpose and goals do appear to play a role in a symbiotic relationship with a company vision and one's articulation of how they are motivated and engaged. [...] When alignment was felt through the organization's support of one's personal goals, there was a great sense of commitment, but a clear delineation between work and life ambitions." (p.72) Therefore, it can be stated that employees feeling supported in their work and feeling an alignment of the company's general processes' and the personal/departmental processes' goals are more motivated and engaged in the company's processes. Therefore, another indicator for alignment is the similarity between **Personal BPM and Organisational BPM Strategy; i**f the strategy of the company, and thus the stated strategic processes and actions by the CEO, is the same as what individual employees have as a goal, it can be considered as strategic alignment to a certain degree.

The fourth indicator is the **usage of the same tools**: If everyone is using the same tools, alignment is thought to be higher as everyone knows through which enablers, strategies and procedures the goals are reached and thus are on the same page. In addition, using different tools and enablers makes it difficult to understand the business processes of other departments or teams.

Having **IT and HR systems in place** is the fifth indicator:

> Performers need to be supported by **IT and HR** systems if they are to discharge process responsibilities. Functionally fragmented information systems do not support integrated processes, and conventional HR systems (training, compensation, and career, etc.) reinforce fragmented job perspectives. Integrated systems (such as ERP systems and results-based compensation systems) are needed for integrated processes. (Hammer, 2010, p.9)

The HR and IT dimensions can also be intertwined with the learning loops, as they facilitate an aligned improvement of processes throughout the company.

The organisational structure on site (physical barriers e.g.) is the sixth indicator. Gleeson (2017) describes how vertical and horizontal silos can exist simultaneously. Vertical silos occur when senior leaders don't have access to important information from employees lower down the hierarchy, while business strategies and other "information gets lost in translation on its way down" (Gleeson, 2017) the hierarchy. Gleeson explains that vertical alignment of the strategy and corporate goals can be fine, "while horizontal alignment across silos is lacking. The sub-cultures and ideas on how to achieve the goal may vary which leads to these departments, divisions or "cross-functional" teams to actually work against each other in many ways" (Gleeson, 2017). As communication is essential to be able to get aligned, easy communication flows between hierarchical levels and departments is of great importance for strong alignment. Finally, Gleeson (2017) airs on the side of caution to those who want to completely break traditional hierarchies and instead suggests that "a bit of both can bring stability and collaboration at the same time". Therefore, if silos are present, there should be sufficient communication between them in order to stay aligned (Gleeson 2017).

This thesis assumes that **recommendations** stated by employees indicates misalignment in parts of the company or in certain processes.

3. Methodology

Firstly, this chapter will begin by describing our chosen research approach, research design, how we collected our data, and the relevance of each to the study. We will then move onto a discussion of our data analysis methodology. Finally, we discuss ethical considerations for the study and what we did to mitigate any potential issues where they may arise.

3.1. Research Approach

The purpose of this study was to develop a deeper understanding for how alignment of BPM initiatives with organisational strategy can impact the employees' willingness and ability to

conduct BPM. We chose a qualitative research approach as it allowed us to interpret and gain a deeper understanding of the employees' thoughts and reflections on strategic alignment of BPM at the company and how that impacts their willingness and ability to carry out BPM.

Ontology refers to how humans understand and consider social actors and their perceptions as a representation of reality (Bryman, 2016). There are two main strands within ontology, objectivism and constructionism, the latter consider the reality as socially constructed by social actors and their personal perceptions. Furthermore, the way knowledge is assumed to be achieved is grounded in different epistemological approaches, which further concerns what is seen as "acceptable knowledge" (Bryman, 2008, p.13). One epistemological strand is the interpretivist, which focuses on the individual as different from objects and make researchers focus on the subjective meaning inherent in social science. Within interpretivism, hermeneutics highlights the importance of understanding underlying meanings in texts and languages rather than explaining it (Bryman, 2016), which is relevant to our study because we aim to interpret how employees perceive their situation, rather than taking literal responses.

Bryman and Bell (2011) refer to reflexivity in case studies, where qualitative data is analysed through semi-structured interviews, as a postmodernist approach. The authors discuss how "knowledge of the social world is relative" (p.697), since any observer in the specific context would provide their own interpretation of the situation based upon their own narrative, which is constructed through said observer's past experiences and their own current reality. It is for this reason that this thesis is based upon the researchers' own interpretations of the participants' responses to interview and follow-up questions and intuition during the interviews. (Bryman & Bell, 2011)

As a direct result of this reflexive approach, issues arise with trustworthiness and authenticity that must be taken into account for this thesis. Throughout this research we took a constructivist approach to ontological considerations, since we focused on reality as socially constructed. We took an interpretive, hermeneutic approach, as it allowed us to recognise that participants interpret interview questions from their own context. We understand that the phenomena we experienced during this research is subjective and revolving around the company's current social reality and thus this is not a generalisable study looking for universal truth. Therefore, the knowledge gained must be viewed as indeterminate and specific to the company. Parallels can be drawn between individual experiences of this

company and others, but the similarities must be assumed to end there. In order to maintain a constructionist philosophy through this research, research questions have been formulated in order to stress the tenuous objectivity of organisation and culture. (Bryman, 2016)

3.2. Research Design

During our study, we have worked with a qualitative and abductive research approach. An abductive approach implies that there is no strict line between theoretical understanding and impressions from reality. According to Bryman (2016), a qualitative study is usually connected to an inductive research approach, something that implies that the research has to approach the reality with a neutral mind. However, as a researcher it is very difficult to ignore pre-understandings and interpretations, something which would be obligatory in an inductive approach. Instead, by using an abductive approach, we have worked our way between reality and theory in order to make sense of the empirical material.

3.2.1. Case study design

We have based this research on a case organisation. Yin (2018) describes that a case study is suitable to managerial and organisational phenomena when the purpose of the study is to develop a deeper understanding of said phenomena through different peoples' experiences and contexts. Hence, because our aim was to deepen our understanding of how the willingness and ability of employees to carry out BPM initiatives are affected by alignment of BPM with corporate strategy, we interviewed employees from various departments and levels of hierarchy in one case organisation.

The criteria for the case study company was to be a company that had recently started a BPM initiative that is in line with its strategy and had some kind of hierarchical structure, as this would allow us to make connections between the interviewees from different hierarchical levels to assess perceived vertical alignment. In addition, it should be divided into departments to allow us to assess the perceived horizontal alignment. Thus, the case company used to provide empirical material to our discussion is a British, traditional, knowledge-intensive, made-to-order manufacturer. No further company specific details can be provided, so as to preserve anonymity. The new CEO has implemented two new strategies for BPM, which is the reason this specific company has been chosen to represent this phenomenon. Firstly, the company began introducing a structured, top-down, On Time Delivery (OTD)

Sprint initiative in September 2017, which is a cycled development procedure (Duelli, Keller, Manderscheid, Manntz, Röglinger & Schmidt, 2018) with the strategic goal of improving on time delivery. Secondly, the company began introducing a structured, top-down, Lean Six Sigma initiative, which is conducted on the business process level (Burlton, 2010) in order to improve customer satisfaction through performance-related customer requirements (Andersson, Eriksson & Torstensson, 2006), and was set up to achieve the strategic goal of a culture change. The employees are close to the new initiative and are involved in the practice of it, which is why this company is ideal for this analysis. This initiative is in place in order to drive the company strategy, which is to improve on time delivery, and it relies upon involvement from cross-functional, interdepartmental teams spanning all layers of hierarchy. This information was made available to us by the company prior to conducting our research and the initiative enables us, as researchers and through analysis, to assess the vertical and horizontal alignment of people involved in BPM at the company. The analysis on this initiative will be conducted in addition to other pre-existing initiatives at the company in an effort to understand the effects of this alignment on the employees and their willingness and ability to carry out BPM at the company. Throughout this thesis, it will be referred to as *TradMan*, in order to preserve the organisation's and employees' anonymity. Because there has recently been a change in CEO at TradMan, it is important to note that "a change of a CEO often will have significant impact on the popularity (or not) of BPM even if the official strategy remains the same" (Rosemann & vom Brocke, 2010a, p.115).

3.2.2. Interviews

When conducting our case study, we collected the empirical material through semi-structured interviews. Kvale (1996), describes a semi-structured interview as "*an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to the interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena*" (pp.5-6). Kvale's (1996) description is very closely connected to how we conducted our interviews. Furthermore, before conducting the interviews with employees at TradMan, we created an interview guide that consisted of a number of themes and open questions that were intentionally left open to interpretation to the interviewee. These themes were based upon our pre-understanding of relevant theory and we asked follow-up questions based upon employee thoughts, understandings and reflections that would often deviate from the script. This structure provides a greater amount of flexibility

than a structured interview as the researcher can keep an open mind and follow the interviewee as the character of the interview develops (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Bryman (2016) points out that researchers should try to anticipate possible participant interpretations. As above, based upon our understanding of the theory, we chose to investigate through the use of pre-decided themes that would cover all bases and tried to anticipate follow-up questions to each that would allow interviewees to further develop their own reflections on the situation. Discussion around different concepts of BPM produced five predetermined themes: **Experience**, which is used for understanding how an individual employee perceives their own contribution to and role in BPM; **Communication**, which aims to comprehend how BPM is communicated throughout the organisation by establishing an understanding of how new or updated processes are shared through the hierarchy (vertically) and within and between departments, and within and between initiatives (horizontally); **Expectations**, which aims to understand what employees expect to gain from current and future BPM initiatives; **Recommendations**, since a recommendation can be assumed to provide detail into what an employee perceives is missing; and **Feelings**, in order to establish an understanding of how the different initiatives within the organisation affect the employees on an emotional level. Together, these five themes should help to steer the interviews in such a way that they paint a comprehensive picture of the employees' perceptions of strategic alignment of BPM in the company, showcasing their willingness and ability to perform BPM.

In the beginning of each interview, we chose to ask some easy-to-answer, warm-up questions in an attempt, as Bryman (2016) describes, to create a relaxed atmosphere. Both researchers were present in each interview where one of us was in charge of leading the conversation, and the other researcher could concentrate on taking notes about interesting reflections and asking follow-up questions. The reason for this was as we wanted to ensure that we did not miss any interesting thoughts or reflections during the interviews.

All interviews used for this study were conducted on site at TradMan's headquarters. We chose to travel to England and conduct the interviews face-to-face. Bryman (2016) argues how being able to conduct interviews in person usually create a richer material as the researcher is able to see facial expressions, interpret silence and body language to a larger extent. Further, we conducted in total 17 interviews which all lasted between 45-60 minutes. We found that the interviews indeed produced extraordinarily rich data, where the interviewees elaborated on their answers, helping us to grasp a deeper understanding of the

barriers, tensions and alignments that can occur between organisational strategy for BPM, the sporadic and formalised BPM initiatives, and the employees' willingness and ability to carry out BPM.

One of the researchers has a history of working within the case company, something which arguably was important to take into account during the interviews as interpretations can be coloured by the pre-understanding of the research-object. Arguably, it is of importance to be aware of any biased thoughts or reflections during the interviews. However, we noticed that having additional knowledge about TradMan was an advantage, as some interviewees discussed how they would not have wanted to talk about this topic with someone, for them, unknown. In addition, having a researcher present that does not have a history of working within the company helped to provide an additional neutral perspective on the topic. Finally, Bryman (2016) argues how having a history with the research object does not necessarily be a negative thing, but it is of importance to be aware of biased thoughts or reflections. As researchers, we did not experienced any difficulties, however, we tried to be aware of any preconceptions.

3.2.3. Sampling

When choosing our interviewees, we used both a convenience and a purposive sampling. It was a convenience sample in the sense that we had already decided one week we were going to the office, and thereafter selected interviewees who were available during this period of time. Furthermore, we used a purposive sampling as all participants had to have some kind of involvement in the BPM initiatives, whether that be on an internal consultancy basis, an active process improver or a managerial position did not matter.

All participants had different positions and the goal of choosing a such diverse target group enabled the study to be the most accurate possible. The 16 people selected for interview were selected to maximise variety of longevity, position in the hierarchy and across departments, in order to create a picture of alignment, both vertically and horizontally. However no further detail about the specific job titles will be provided as we promised all interviewees anonymity. Instead, a table is presented below that outlines the respective departments (Horizontal, listed A - G) and hierarchies (vertical), where levels 1 and 2 are low in the hierarchy, level 3 is middle management and levels 4 and 5 are the senior management team, within the organisation. The employees have been provided with new names in order to

preserve anonymity but also to ensure the thesis remains an easy read. Clearly, from Table 1, vertical alignment can be tested in columns A & B, and horizontal alignment in levels 1 - 4 with a possibility to compare and contrast two employees in cells A4, B1 & B2.

Table 2 Organisational Structure and Interviewee organisation (own creation)

Hierarchy	Dept. A	Dept. B	Dept. C	Dept. D	Dept. E	Dept. F	Dept. G
Level 5	Harry						
Level 4	Isabel, Franz			Olly	Per		
Level 3		Luke			Astrid	Günther	
Level 2	Klaus	Barry, Emma					
Level 1	Casper	Michael, Nils	Jan				Davina
External Consultant	Mr X						

There exists a multitude of perspectives as to whether interview questions should be sent out prior to interview, including ensuring interviewees are comfortable (Sekaran & Bougie 2016). However, we desired to gain gut-reactions to the topic, including emotional responses in order to understand the effects of alignment and misalignment on employee sensibilities through their opinions on process improvement and management at the company.

Finally, because we took a snapshot of the organisation in order to understand the phenomenon, we wanted to gain an additional, external perspective of the situation. Therefore, we enlisted the assistance of an external consultant, referred to as Mr X for the sake of anonymity, who was brought in to help establish the Lean Six Sigma initiative and to align the process and people involved with the organisational strategy.

3.3. Analysis of Data

3.3.1. Analysis of Interviews

After collecting our empirical material, we began the analysis process by transcribing all interviews because transcribing is a good way of ensuring that the empirical material is analysed in a reliable way but also to prevent interesting thoughts and reflections from being missed (Bryman, 2016). As mentioned above, our study took an abductive research approach, hence there was no linear way to combine the interviews with previous research. Instead we

constantly moved between our data and previous literature in order to make sense of what had been said during the interviews.

After transcribing all interviews, we had a large amount of data available for our analysis. One way to make sense of a large amount of material is through categorization (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). The authors argue how sorting and categorizing the material into themes, makes it is easier for the researcher to make sense of all data and further to create a richer and more in-depth analysis. The themes identified in Chapter 3.2.2. helped us create the structure of the analysis.

3.3.2. Document Analysis

In addition to the analysis of primary data as above, we collected supporting information in the form of official company newsletters, organisational charts, external consultancy reports, and others pertaining to strategy. Bryman & Bell (2011) discuss how the usage of these documents helps to contextualise the organisation and its history, and also to gain some insight into past managerial decisions. The authors state that "such information can be very important for researchers conducting case studies of organisations using [...] qualitative interviews" (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.550), as is the case with this study. Only the company newsletters are publicly available and thus were the only documents present in the document analysis. One issue that is present is that organisational documents cannot be guaranteed to be free from error and influence from personal biases, therefore the documents must support or be supported by other sources of data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In this thesis, the document analysis was utilised to support the semi-structured interviews in such a way that helps to show the level of alignment with the company strategy.

3.4. Ethical Implications

When conducting research, there are always ethical implications to take into consideration, especially so in the relationship between the researcher and participants. These ethical implications are important to consider in order to prevent harming the participants.

For our study, we considered a few ethical implications which were of importance. Firstly, we clearly communicated that all participation was voluntary and the participants knew they had the option to drop out at any time. Secondly, we informed all participants about the purpose of the study and ensured them that the material is only going to be used for this

thesis. Thirdly, we ensured the company and all participants anonymity, both externally and internally towards each other. Lastly, we signed a privacy agreement with the company in order to make sure all sensitive information pertaining to TradMan was left out.

4. Findings and Interpretations

This chapter[1] explores the perceptions of alignment within BPM at the company through document interpretations and interpreting employee perceptions of BPM in general, the Lean Six Sigma initiative, and the On Time Delivery (OTD) Sprint initiative. Utilising the four themes identified in Chapter 3, the chapter shows how BPM is currently perceived at the company, delving into recommendations for improvement to identify missing components of the current process, exploring feelings and emotions surrounding it, and taking a vertical and horizontal view of each process.

4.1. Document Interpretation

Two company newsletters were made available by TradMan: December 2017 and March 2018. These documents were used to gain an understanding of one way that the organisation communicates its strategy for business process management.

In the December 2017 issue, Harry (5) presents a clear-cut front-page statement, detailing the organisation's 2018 business process management strategy, immediately stating that "for 2018, we will be making On-Time-Delivery (OTD) our focus.". He goes on to explain that this is a change to previous practices, and that he has an appetite to get "as many people as possible to identify what we need to be working on to improve delivery" in order to "reach our target of more than 90%.". Finally, Harry (5) explains how the employees' ideas are to be implemented into "our business plans for the year and then delivered" and that "the whole way we run the business in 2018 will be based around improving delivery performance." Thus, the BPM strategy for 2018 is clearly to improve OTD.

The March 2018 edition of the newsletter begins in a similar fashion, with a brief update from Harry (5) regarding the OTD Sprint, but also some additional details concerning the

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[1] *The interviewees mentioned within this section have been renamed for anonymity reasons and their respective positions within the organisation can be seen in Table 2. The quotes, numbered in superscript, can be found in Appendix 3 for more detailed information about what each interviewee said.*

implementation of many other "projects for continuous improvement and Lean Six Sigma". Both Lean Six Sigma and OTD Sprint are provided with their own sections within the newsletter. Lean Six Sigma is explained as a combination of Lean and Six Sigma, with "the ultimate aim [... of reducing] variation and [eliminating] waste." The motive behind the implementation is unclear from the document, although it does state that this was "communicated in the employee reviews" (a quarterly meeting that every employee should attend to receive general updates regarding organisational progress and future milestones), so perhaps the motive was mentioned there. In addition, there is no information as to exactly how Lean Six Sigma is to be implemented at the company. The lack of this information makes it impossible to determine from the newsletter whether this is a new strategy for BPM at the company.

In addition, the document provides a dedicated section to update employees on the progress of the OTD Sprint. This section clearly identifies who the employees are that are involved, what team they belong to, and what portion of the business each team is working to identify improvements for. For instance, "Team F is looking at efficiencies from order receipt to [company] purchase". The document continually states that the teams are looking for improvements that have "a direct impact on OTD". The section also clearly identifies how employees company-wide are being consulted for their ideas for change and feedback on the already-identified areas for improvement. Finally, the section ends with a statement from Harry (5), clarifying that the aim for the OTD Sprint was to "ensure that ideas and analysis of our processes would be undertaken by employees with employees" in order to maximise employee "input into the improvements we decide to make". It is important to note that this aim is in line with the aims mentioned in the December 2017 issue and this clearly shows consistency from Harry (5), because if aims are being maintained, it can be assumed that he is confident the end goal of 90% OTD can indeed be met.

4.2. Perceptions of Alignment in BPM in General

This subchapter comprises the findings concerning the communication of processes, responsibility for BPM, feedback on BPM processes, how the employees perceive the processes, and what their feelings and expectations are; which will be later utilised in the discussion.

The business processes at TradMan are stored on the intranet[i]. They are driven by Olly (4D)[ii], rather than Harry (5)[iii], and operate within the business's certification requirements. **New or updated processes** are sent in an email in order to inform. It is then the responsibility of the employee to read and understand the processes; arguably, Olly (4D) shows that he perceives this form of communication as transparent because everyone in the company can see it. However, not everybody reads the processes, which is acknowledged by all interviewees, even Olly (4D). Employees who seek unknown business processes from the intranet rather than asking first perceive themselves as the minority and imply that they were not trained to do this. Instead, the interviewees show that they learn from more senior employees, prompting a reliance on people over processes. Employees show that, because business processes are sent via email, they are not compulsory to read and rather spread via word-of-mouth.

From how Olly (4D) assesses this current system of process communication[iv], it can be viewed that Olly (4D) understands that not all people follow the business processes, he views this as not a major issue. When asked how he feels about the current system, he stated:

> I don't really care. [...] it's about allowing people to, and enable them to make the business a better place. But it's not my position to make that happen [...]. Do I think we could do it better? Yes. Do I think we could make this business a much better place by doing some of these things in a more structured and organised way? Yes.

> [The current organisational structure makes me feel] frustrated, down-beat [and] unable to make change.

The beginning of this statement can be viewed as apathy or indifference. From his point of view, the end game is to enable employees to make improvements. Olly (4D) then begins to open up about structural issues that he feels, if corrected, could help improvements to happen. It can be understood how the current organisational structure is causing him to feel low, frustrated and unable to make change. When asked about what his recommendation would be and what it would accomplish for him, Olly (4D) stated that he would "restructure the business", which can be interpreted as he thinks that the organisational structure is the primary cause of issues surrounding BPM at TradMan. He does not think that it would change a lot for him personally[v], but "the management and execution of tools would be confined to a certain number of individuals who ensure that they're being done correctly and rolled out in such a way." Arguably, this is in contradiction to his aforementioned statement where he would like to enable employees to make the business a better place. Olly (4D) clarifies that people do not have the knowledge or the tools and claims responsibility and

accountability are the issue; he has the desire to centralise that responsibility and accountability for the forthcoming rollout of the company's Lean Six Sigma initiative. It seems he desires centralised responsibility and accountability for BPM in general too, but combined with the aforementioned apathy, his statement can be interpreted to show that he thinks of BPM in general at the company as a lost cause.[vi]

Davina (1G), part of the lowest hierarchy level, was the only interviewee who unequivocally stated that she utilises the company intranet first to find a business process[vii]. This can be understood as Davina (1G) following the company processes, as she always looks there first before asking for help. However she identifies herself as being in the minority. When asked how she learns about new and updated processes, Davina (1G) states: that usually she gets the information from senior employees and new employees do not get trained in the business processes either but rather get things explained by senior people in the team who know about the processes.[viii] Exactly on this topic Astrid (3E), who is a more senior employee, wonders about what would happen if she left the company:

> If I was to step out of the position, it would require a significant level of training for someone to pick up. That's not because I'm an expert in what I do. […]. The general understanding [of processes] is with people, but not necessarily with specific ways of doing things that I could reference away from myself, [...] within a document.

This can be understood that, even though there is a central, digital area for storing processes, people still rely on learning from senior staff, who can be viewed as being the vessels for knowledge within the organisation, rather than the processes themselves. This, and the opinion by Davina (1G) is backed up by several employees from levels 3 and 4, who identify that people don't read them[ix, x, xi], suggesting that even though the processes are communicated from senior management, they are still not sufficiently informed.

The interviewees expressed their **expectations and also recommendations** concerning the communication of processes and the above mentioned topics. When asked whether the system she described worked and what would be her recommendation for change, Davina (1G) was sure that the communication of processes process could be improved. She proposes mandatory continuous learning and training because word-of-mouth could also teach new colleagues wrong steps of a process.[xii]

This recommendation is echoed by Harry (5), who started at the company two years ago: "Nobody actually took me through [...] a BPP [Business Process Procedure] or a process document and so I picked it up intuitively."

Davina's (1G) statement can be interpreted as that the communication of processes at the company can be improved with training about the new processes. Previously, Olly (4D) mentioned that people don't have the knowledge or the tools to make improvements; arguably, it is possible to understand that interviewees agree on training as an issue. This lack of training appears to be causing Davina (1G) some concern, because if she isn't being trained on the new processes that are coming in or having refreshers, how can she be sure that the training she is providing to new starters is correct to the processes? This could be one reason why Harry (5) was not trained on the processes.

Moreover, Luke, as a level 3 manager, makes similar recommendations, signalling that the processes themselves could benefit from an entrenched **feedback** mechanism, as "we rely on feedback and we hardly ever get it".[xiii] Similarly to Günther (3F), Luke (3B) highlights the issue that people have a choice as to whether to be involved in a feedback process.[xiii] His statement can be interpreted as a call for a rigid feedback system that calls on the input from all who utilise the process. Emma (2B) takes the idea of a feedback system further and describes how, if she was going to get feedback for some computer software, she wouldn't necessarily ask the people who paint the end product. Instead, she suggests the use of "See it, touch it, use it"[xiv], to build a decision-making committee from the end users of the software. Emma can be interpreted to call for more involvement from necessary personnel in the general BPM at TradMan, confirming that there is a perceived lack of feedback in the process that involves people that actually "touch" or "use" the processes.[xiv]

When asked about how the current BPM system makes them feel, the employees shared the following: Davina (1G) expressed a willingness to learn and to get involved but feels left alone, not getting trained on necessary processes, which then produces frustration.[xv] Whereas Günther (3F) feels left in a spot and does not feel getting the appropriate support, training and HR development necessary for his job and future. He does not find a reason why the company would not invest in the development of their employees.[xvi] Casper (1A) also expressed frustration and disappointment:

> When you are not involved, people do not understand how it has affected you. […] You need to put a process in that, you feel yourself, you did not need to do and if they would have asked you early on you would have been able to highlight that.

Isabel (4A) was very clear about the company missing opportunities[xvii], as well as showing she has unused potential[xviii] because she would like to make changes. Jan (1C) showed apathy

and expressed how he expects this way of working as standard, "It's just the way it is. [...] I'm indifferent".

On the whole, the feelings and experience surrounding general BPM at the company are negative, with a general resonating frustration through all levels of hierarchy and departments. It can be interpreted that the majority of interviewees show that their willingness to conduct BPM is unwavered and they do not want to miss what they perceive as missed opportunities. However, it can also be understood that some interviewees are expressing apathy with the current state of general BPM, which can be interpreted as less willing to conduct BPM than other interviewees.

Recommendations are made at the top of the hierarchy to centralise accountability and responsibility in order to ensure that knowledge and tools are utilised properly by a select few. **Recommendations from the bottom** include training on the processes to ensure that people not only stick to the business processes, but also have to ability to conduct appropriate training, and also compulsory feedback recommendations were made to include employees that "touch" and "use" the processes, to ensure that the processes are fit for purpose. The differences in recommendations show disparities between the top and the bottom of the business. The interviews show that, at the company, BPM in general can be assumed to be purely informative, with little-to-no feedback procedures or training.

Finally, the apathy from the top (Olly, 4D) seemed to resonate with one employee from the bottom of the hierarchy, as previously mentioned (Jan, 1C). In addition, Olly (4D) identified the current organisational structure as the cause of his frustration and feeling down-beat; even in his position he felt unable to make change. The feelings surrounding BPM in general at the company are, on the whole, negative, and it was evident that the vast majority of employees were frustrated with the current BPM system; showing that they are disappointed, have willingness to learn and develop, have untapped potential, are undervalued and uninvolved, neglected and taken for granted, and are missing opportunities to improve the business.

Several interviewees mentioned their feelings about the isolated departments they are working in. Harry (5), concerning how the departments are structured, states that there is a "siloed approach" to the departments. "I am very keen on [breaking] down those silos and get people working across the, essentially, value stream of the business much more effectively." Günther (3F) and Luke (3B) detail of their **own processes** for project based BPM. Luke (3B)

and his team always create new processes depending on changing situations in the products, the company or when problems in old processes occur.[xix] Günther (3F) organises tasks and processes in a self-created tool because company tools are too slow.[xx] Günther's statement can be interpreted to show that the reason behind him using his own tool in his department is due to inefficiencies in the business tool. In addition, it is possible to interpret that Luke (3B) perceives a necessity for departmental improvements in order to provide corrective measures or reduce product variation. Casper (1A)[xxi] and Isabel (4A)[xxii] describe the issues with the silo departments. Everyone concentrates on their own tasks and is not aware of what other departments do. Also, Isabel (4A) points out that the process improvements in the departments have in the past been focused on very local process improvements.[xxiii] From these two interviews it can be interpreted that the silos are a phenomenon experienced by all departments. In addition even though there was an overall strategy for BPM, this does not imply automatically that the process improvements made by every single department are in line with this strategy for BPM. Klaus (2A)[xxiv] seconds this and expresses a degree of excitement about the prospect of breaking down silos with the OTD Sprint as they look into different departments in the process; there, they understand the others' problems and get a better understanding of what their thoughts and what common problems between departments are. It can be understood that the employees of every level of the hierarchy and of different departments are aware of this misalignment between the departments. Klaus' (2A) statement[xxiv] can be further interpreted to show that he expresses that it is an advantage to desire and understand the other departments' problems and thoughts on the existing processes, and he perceives the OTD sprint initiative as a facilitator for this communication on a horizontal level.

In addition to the current BPM in general at the company, Harry (5) discusses the implementation of a new ERP system that is being readied at the company. From this statement[xxv], it is possible to understand that Harry (5) believes the new ERP system is going to help unite the departments and integrate business processes. It can be understood that he desires to correct old processes in order to streamline this integration, and he perceives it as a positive move.

Luke (3B) and Emma (2B) from department B discussed the implementation of a new ERP system at the company. Luke (3B)[xxvi] began by highlighting how department B, as a whole, is

neglected and taken for granted during the selection phase of the new process and describes his department.

Luke (3B) identified the software used in department B as capable of being used across the organisation. Emma (2B) elaborated on her role in the organisation and compared to her role in the selection of the new ERP system. It can be interpreted that Emma (2B), as the engineer for that software, feels undervalued and uninvolved, while holding a position that she feels is crucial to the functioning of the business.[xxvii] She summarises her role in process improvement as the following: "I'm kind of, if you imagine it as a tree, I'm probably a little end of a twig that needs to feed along the branch into the trunk of the tree. Where in reality, I should be the branch."

It can be understood that there is a disconnect between the top management and the interviewees from department B as to why and how this system is being implemented, although there is a much more positive expectation from top management.

4.3. Perceptions of Alignment Through Lean Six Sigma

As described in the theoretical background, Lean Six Sigma is a combination of two disciplines: Lean, which aims to reduce the amount of waste; and Six Sigma, which aims to reduce the amount of variation. This subchapter comprises two sections; the vertical, where the perceptions are taken from people directly involved in the initiative; and the horizontal, where the perceptions are taken from people who are not directly involved in the initiative.

4.3.1. Vertical

From people who operate within the Lean Six Sigma initiative, they view as an enabler that is used to make baby-stepped improvements within the organisation and it is directly linked to business strategy[xxviii], which is reflected in the document analysis of employee newsletters. Harry (5) added that it is being implemented to influence a culture shift away from putting up with life, and towards "if life is not right, we fix it"[xxix]. It is possible to interpret that employees within the organisation put up with the current way of working and the current processes, they don't actively seek change. To him, Lean Six Sigma is an effort to change this culture. Similarly to Olly (4D), Harry (5) expresses that he wishes for the initiative to enable employees to make change and signals that it is a slow process that gradually builds momentum until making improvements is a part of everyday life. In order to accomplish this,

he arranges for the senior management team to witness presentations from another subsidiary to create buy-in. He then established an understanding with the senior team that this is business going forward, and that the initiative is not today's "flash in the pan", which can be interpreted as an indicator of what the business is currently like, initiatives are short lived.[xxx]

Lean Six Sigma is driven by Olly (4D), rather than Harry (5), and their expectations for the initiative can be viewed as realistic and neither optimistic, nor pessimistic (see in Swedish: lagom). Olly (4D) expresses an understanding of the differences in expectations between some employees; some are overly optimistic and think Lean Six Sigma is going to be a magical solution to all problems, whereas others are overly pessimistic and view it as just another initiative that "will never […] come into fruition".[xxxi]

The findings showed that there was no acknowledgement of any continuous flow of feedback to the top of the hierarchy and as previously mentioned, interviewees perceive little workflow between silos at the company. Casper (1A), who stated that "everyone works in isolation", mentioned that he is directly involved in the Lean Six Sigma process and is receiving training. When asked about what he expects from the initiative, he stated that "we are not very good at communicating at the minute, but I think we are getting there", which can be viewed as necessary acknowledgement from which to progress. He expects to gain an understanding of how other departments function, in order to take a step back and improve communication.[xxxii]

Casper (1A) understands that some senior management think that Lean Six Sigma "is going to solve every issue that we have" and adds that in his position, on "the bottom level we see baby steps you know: we'll put this in, we'll change it. We're not going to solve everything. It needs to be a gradual process". This statement can be interpreted to show unity between the leaders of the initiative (Olly, 4D and Harry, 5) and the people operating within the initiative. He shows an understanding of the improvements required for communication and uses similar language to Olly (4D) and Harry (5); "baby-steps" (Olly, 4D), "gradual process" (Harry, 5) and the acknowledgement that senior management think the initiative is going to solve every issue they have (Casper[xxxiii], 1A).

Casper (1A) also positively describes exactly how the culture change, that is described by Harry (5), is to be achieved. He states that "if we put in these tools and instill it in the newer people then it will force the older generation to sort of change as well" and "we're getting [a

broad scope of] people with new ideas, then people with the experience give an idea so everyone seems to be feeding into it". This can be viewed as a comprehensive understanding of how Harry's (5) vision of a culture change is to be achieved and can be interpreted to show unity and alignment between the people leading the initiative and the people working within it[xxxiv].

4.3.2. Horizontal

From the interviews with the senior management team, it is possible to interpret that the senior team's current reaction to Lean Six Sigma is positive, looking not just for that culture change, but also a reduction in employee turnover and thus keeping knowledge within the organisation.[xxxv] Isabel (4A) is a part of the senior management team and acknowledged she is not directly involved in the initiative, can be viewed as fully bought-into the initiative as her expectations are optimistic. It can be viewed that Isabel (4A) expects a lot more from the process, to "shoot for the stars" (Olly 4D), than either Harry (5) or Olly (4D), who imply that it is a "baby-stepped approach linked to business strategy" (Olly, 4D).

In addition, concerns were raised by those that are not directly involved in the process; Günther (3F) explained that there are no Lean Six Sigma representatives in his department and he wishes to have the time to be trained, which can be viewed as him perceiving time as the cause of his lack of training[xxxvi]; and Astrid (3E) states that "the direction, drive and empowerment has got to be given by the departmental managers", and her interview can be viewed as advising caution to the process, because managers who are unaware of what is necessary to achieve the goals set by Lean Six Sigma will not necessarily be able to provide the support, perhaps in the form of allowing time, required by shop floor personnel.[xxxvii]

Moreover, Davina (1G) mentioned she is not directly involved in the Lean Six Sigma process and is not being trained in Lean Six Sigma. When asked about current process improvement processes happening in the company and how new processes are communicated down from senior management to staff, she mentions that the higher management asked her team to express ideas and recommendations but it seems like not a lot has been fed forward to her, "not down to the staff, the senior management will obviously be aware of that, but I don't know of any goals, I honestly don't know what's in place". This statement can be interpreted to show that there is a lack of consistent understanding between those operating within the Lean Six Sigma initiative and those operating outside.

Davina implies that the initiative works through people working within the initiative seeking information from those outside of the initiative, "we had a meeting yesterday [and a colleague] took away some ideas that people in the team thought there were certain things that could be improved to help our processes to take away wasted time". This information seems to be communicated into the initiative well, as ideas are collected for improvement. However, because Davina is unaware of the goals of the initiative, the communication outwards (horizontal feedforward) does not appear to flow.

4.4. Perceived Alignment Through On Time Delivery Sprint

As briefly described in the theoretical background, a Sprint is a cycled development process. The OTD Sprint is an initiative at the company that has been created in order to meet the strategic goal of improving OTD, as detailed in the findings from the document analysis. In order to create a comprehensive view of the perceived alignment created by the implementation of the OTD Sprint, a view from the Top, Middle and Bottom has been created. In addition, the company granted the researchers access to the external consultant, Mr. X, who describes how he was utilised to help steer the process and to help facilitate feedback to the senior management team.

4.4.1. Vertical

Harry (5) kicks off by explaining, from his point of view, how the financial aim of increasing margin is to be met through the OTD Sprint initiative. It can be understood from the interview that Harry (5) perceives improving on time delivery as the most important component to increasing margin, and therefore he has communicated the OTD Sprint as the business strategy for BPM. He stated that he worked with a consultant and the senior team to design the initiative and that it will be worked on by cross-functional teams. Crucially, he highlights the necessity for feedback, which can be interpreted to show that he perceives feedback as important in this process. This initiative takes feedback one step further and introduces anonymous feedback, which Mr X describes as something that doesn't have the same sense of accountability and so helps to get to the root cause of an issue. He shares that the feedback must therefore be taken with a pinch of salt, but the accountability is instead introduced at a later date where the teams have to correct the issue, this helps to create "horizontal cooperation".

It can be understood that there is a perceived unity throughout the ranks of those working within the OTD Sprint initiative; Klaus (2A), whose opinion was shared by others in the initiative, understands that the focus of the initiative was on "on time delivery as a main goal. [We] looked at ways of streamlining certain processes and [...] actually refined a few procedures". Klaus' (2A) use of similar language to Harry (5) shows that he is fully aware of what is occurring within the initiative. The initiative can be perceived as providing a solution to Emma's (2B) "See it, touch it, use it" issue, because ideas are actively collected "from the people who actually carry out the tasks" (Klaus, 2A).

When discussing how this initiative makes him feel it can be interpreted that Klaus (2A) views the initiative positively, but previous initiatives that have failed seem to have left a lingering air of disbelief and hesitation in any new initiative due to a perceived lack of previous buy-in from the senior management team. This can be interpreted as a breakdown of trust between the top and bottom of the hierarchy and could imply that there are long lasting negative effects that remain after a BPM initiative fails. Also, it can be understood that Klaus (2A) sees the potential for this initiative to foster cooperation and produce a collaborative atmosphere that begins to bust the current siloed way of working, by actually making people want to contribute to improving the business.

4.4.2. Horizontal

In general, through the different departments and from people that are not directly involved in the OTD initiative, it can be viewed that there is a consistent understanding of the OTD initiative and what it can provide through everywhere in the business aside from some employees within the senior management team since on time delivery was not acknowledged by some. As previously mentioned, Isabel (4A) noted that the siloed departments at the company were creating their own process improvements, but they weren't creating an overall improvement. Isabel and other members of the senior management team, who are not directly involved in the OTD Sprint initiative, communicated how the business strategy for meeting financial targets was to be achieved through improvement of on time delivery, similarly to Harry (5). She shared that "we need to acknowledge that [processes] are not working, which we know, [Harry] might have alluded to some of them" but followed the statement by expressing with enthusiasm and gusto exactly how the strategy was to be achieved through sharing the workload through various hierarchical levels and interdepartmental teams, highlighting how the work done by lower teams will be "fed up to the next level to pull it all

together, to feed into the overall process improvement. So there should be synergy between" the top and the bottom of the hierarchical levels.

Franz (4A), who is also in the senior management team, also expressed positivity when discussing how, "it's the first time anyone has really looked up the chain to always see what my manager is thinking, […] to ultimately what the CEO, his actions and his words that he says", and stated that "it fills you with confidence" when talking of how information and actions from the initiative will "filter down [from the CEO], through the teams, through the departments". Thus, it can be viewed that he perceives the unity of thinking through the hierarchical levels as important and that is occurring through this initiative. In general, it is possible to see that the view from the top of the hierarchy concerning the implementation of the OTD Sprint is positive. In addition, the use of language is similar through most of the senior management. There is acknowledgement that processes are not working and there is an understanding that cascading objectives down the hierarchy and feedback of ideas up the hierarchy are all important. Therefore, It can be viewed that the some of the senior management are bought in due to their common understanding with the CEO, as previously discussed by Isabel (4A) and Franz (4A). However, Franz (4A) also stated that, "if [Harry] took a step back, I can guarantee it will just take a nosedive", suggests that different senior managers command different levels of trust and there is a lack of buy-in from other members of the senior team, which is also possible to interpret through both Olly (4D) and Per (4E), who did not highlight OTD Sprint during their interviews. However, Mr X stated that "the CEO has developed a strategy in theory in collaboration with the senior leadership team", which serves to swing the balance towards a well-informed senior leadership team.

Luke's (3B) statement[xxxviii] can be understood that he is not directly involved in the OTD Sprint initiative, but he ascertains information from the company newsletters, as detailed in the document analysis, and meetings that, arguably, help him understand the company strategy. Similarly to Isabel and Franz, it can be viewed that he is predominantly aligned with the CEO due to having the same understanding of the end-goal, which is to increase margin. In addition, given the silos discussed at the beginning of the chapter, it can be viewed that department B's strategy of getting things right-first-time and quicker is in-line with the company strategy. However, arguably, a reduction in variation is not in-line, although it could be interpreted that Luke (3B) views this as a contributing factor.

Finally, Davina (1G) expresses how previous initiatives have spread through the company via rumour rather than structured dissemination and this causes an unwillingness to cooperate because "if they're not going to talk to us properly about it, we don't really want to know". She explains how this initiative is different, and similarly to Casper (1A) and others who are not directly involved in it, her statement can be interpreted as expressing how everyone is aware nonetheless and there is a common understanding and everything has been communicated properly, causing people to be "interested, [and] want to help the business get better".

5. Discussion

This chapter takes the main aspects of the findings and discusses them in relation to the presented theoretical background. Firstly, the chapter discusses the employees' perceptions of alignment within the OTD Sprint initiative and extracts opportunities that can be interpreted from theory. Secondly, the chapter discusses the perceptions of alignment within the Lean Six Sigma initiative, evaluating whether certain alignments exist because of Lean Six Sigma itself, or its method of implementation. Finally, the chapter delves into how the perceived barriers and tensions can be identified by applying theory and discusses the effects of these on the employees perceived ability and willingness to conduct BPM.

5.1. Alignments and Opportunities

The OTD Sprint was identified by Harry (5) to be the initiative to bring about the organisational strategy of improving OTD, in order to increase margin. This end goal of the OTD Sprint can be identified through McClory, Read and Labib's (2017) model as a project learning outcome, as it is this end goal that is taken into account when making decisions. Therefore, it is possible to determine that a double loop learning methodology would be appropriate in order to change the relevant processes that have an impact on OTD.

It was found that the senior management team were aligned and bought-into the initiative, they were clear and consistent in their description of the current situation and understood that the target situation was improved OTD, and there was continuous education of the goings on within the process to all members of the senior management team. Rosemann & Brocke (2010) identify these two factors as crucial steps when enabling evolutionary, continuous change. Both factors were identified vertically through people involved within the initiative

and horizontally through to those outside as well. In addition, during his interview Harry utilised language consistent with that of the employee newsletters, which display the activities of the OTD Sprint in detail. Through Harmon (2010), this shows that the newsletters are conveying his expectations accurately, which means the people who read them should be well informed of the goings on within the initiative. This is reflected in the clarity of description of the process and the end goals by the interviewees who were either directly involved in the process or who were not directly involved. This combination of factors from Harmon (2010) and Rosemann & Brocke (2010) displayed in TradMan is more reminiscent of what McClory, Read and Labib (2017) describes as the methodology to create triple loop organisational cultural learning, as there is strong oversight from senior management that should serve to develop the learning ethos. No identifiable negative outcome was perceived from utilising a triple loop methodology to achieve a double loop goal. However, arguably, as this initiative is a Sprint and is therefore short lived, there is less of a need for this evolutionary change, but rather revolutionary process changes that create a larger impact. An opportunity arises here, in that this methodology could serve as a platform to continue after the Sprint finishes and provide evolutionary change, which is recommended by several employees both involved and not involved in the initiative.

Moreover, the sharing of information from within the initiative to outside of the initiative has been found to be perceived as successful, as the feedback ascertained from those on the outside has served to produce a feeling that they are contributing to the overall goal of improving on time delivery, which can be interpreted through Berg (2015) that their personal strategy for BPM is aligned to the organisational strategy for BPM, and thus successfully breaking down the barriers created by silos at the organisation that would otherwise result in information getting lost in translation (Gleeson, 2017). The initiative was described with positivity and enthusiasm by employees working both inside and outside of the initiative and people are interested and want to help the business get better. Therefore the willingness of employees to contribute is perceived to be high and indeed their perceived ability, as it requires a lot less training to provide an opinion to an initiative than it does to actively take part in creating the solution to issues identified. This can be said for personnel from multiple departments and layers of hierarchy.

Figure 3 below shows the perceived alignment through the OTD Sprint initiative and the lack of red crosses over the arrows shows that information surrounding the initiative flowed freely

through the hierarchical levels operating within the initiative and also flowed freely between those that worked within the initiative and those that worked outside of the initiative.
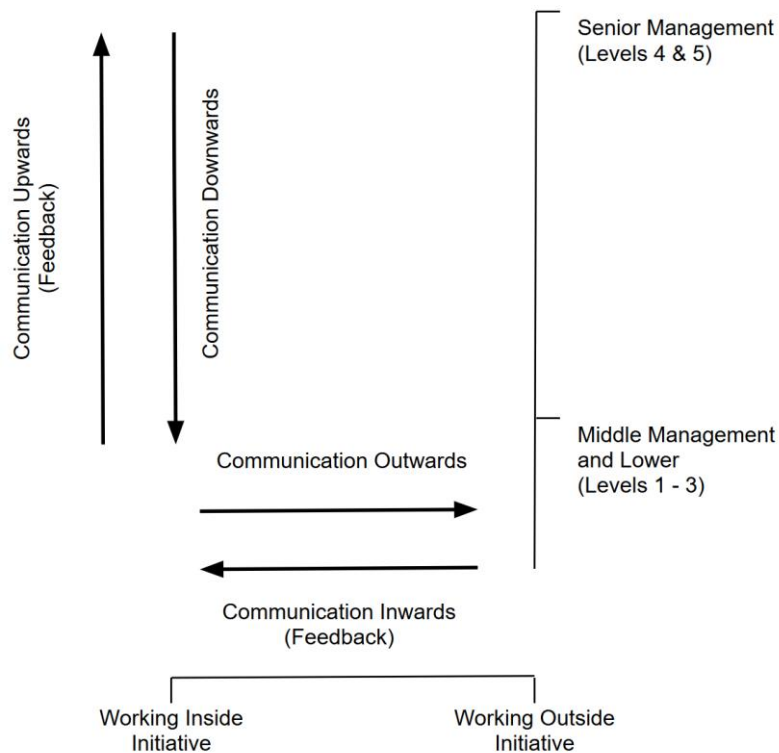

Figure 3 Perceived Alignment Through OTD Sprint
The absence of arrows with red crosses through them shows there was perceived free communication.

5.2. Not What, How.

Similarly to the OTD Sprint initiative, Lean Six Sigma was identified by Harry (5) to be the initiative that will bring about an organisational strategy of a culture change. This was consistent with the statements made in the document analysis. In order to enact a culture change within an organisation, McClory, Read and Labib (2017) suggests the use of triple loop learning, which develops learning action plans and sets learning targets in order to change the company ethos. Arguably, this was occurring with employees who were operating within the initiative; i.e. Casper (1A) was able to articulate how the culture change is to be achieved through training in the use of Lean Six Sigma tools and continuous education, which was identified as essential for the success of BPM initiatives by Brocke & Rosemann (2010) and Hammer & Champy (1993). However, the perceptions identified by Casper were not acknowledged by those operating outside of the initiative. In fact, quite the opposite was stated by Davina and the lack of consistent understanding of the learning outcomes can be

viewed through the McClory, Read and Labib (2017) model as inconsistent learning targets for the entire organisation, and rather learning targets for the processes they set out to change within the initiative, thus placing it in the second learning loop. In addition, Davina (1G) talked of her involvement in the providing of ideas into the initiative, which serves to show the initiative does more than just provide project learning in the single learning loop, and instead fully involves company personnel in reviewing project processes and parameters and updating them accordingly, thus positioning it in the double learning loop that, according to McClory, Read and Labib (2017), won't affect the culture.

Within the initiative, those working at the top and those working at the bottom of the hierarchies have a clear understanding that the initiative is being implemented to enable employees to make baby-stepped changes in order to produce a culture shift. Having this clear understanding is, according to Rosemann & Brocke (2010), an important factor when creating an evolutionary process culture that enables employees to successfully change processes and shows that the personal BPM strategies of the individual is the same as the organisation's BPM strategy for this initiative. The regular meetings for Lean Six Sigma can be viewed as continuous education and the employees utilise, as Harmon (2010) describes, consistent vocabulary from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy and, clearly, the training provided shows that the relevant HR system is in place. In this case, therefore, the employees perceive the vertical communication of the initiative as sufficient and those involved in the initiative are aligned to the organisational strategy. This has had the added benefit of managing expectations of those involved and they perceive an increased ability to create process change due to the involvement of ideas from those outside of the initiative. Finally, in addition to the actual alignment to the strategy, the alignment is perceived to have created belief in the strategy, which comes through as a belief that this will finally be the initiative that "will force the older generation […] to change as well" (Casper, 1A), which can be interpreted as contributing to the interviewees willingness to carry out BPM.

Arguably, the organisation does set cultural learning targets for the initiative, as expressed by Casper (1A), which would place the initiative in the third learning loop (McClory, Read & Labib, 2017). However, from the findings, it is not the setting of the targets that prevents the culture from spreading, but rather the lack of communication of these targets from personnel operating from within the initiative, to personnel operating outside of the initiative. For instance Casper's (1A) opinion of the impact of Lean Six Sigma is vastly different to that of

Davina (1G). Therefore, setting of cultural targets alone does not a culture shift create. This can be explained through Gleeson (2017), who describes a horizontal silo as a situation where communication doesn't flow freely between departments. In this case, the silos are not departments, but can rather be viewed as: those working within the initiative, and those working outside of the initiative. This issue becomes exacerbated by the vague goals set for the initiative within the employee newsletter, which does not help to transmit the organisational strategy of a culture change to the whole business as much as the detailed information provided by the employee newsletter for the OTD Sprint initiative.

Horizontally, Casper perceives that "everyone works in isolation" in current BPM in general and Harry (5) desires to break down silos in order to get people to work more effectively. However, it can be understood from theory that this initiative is not providing an adequate solution to the working silos, and is instead moving the silos from department-to-department to inside-to-outside the initiative. Horizontally, therefore, it can be understood that the initiative is not providing the alignment required to produce the desired culture shift, as Harry desires. It is therefore not creating a horizontal ability to fully contribute to BPM that is in line with the organisational strategy and it is in danger of lowering the horizontal willingness to contribute, as Davina states, "if they're not going to talk to us properly about it, we don't really want to know". It is possible to say that the Lean Six Sigma initiative could benefit from a similar attitude and approach to communication as the OTD Sprint utilises, which would serve to disseminate the cultural learning targets throughout the remainder of the organisation and fully break down the silos as desired, in addition to providing a platform from which to drive continuous evolutionary change. Therefore, the problem here is not the content of the initiative, but rather how it is being implemented and the structures that enable and encourage this communication to happen in the OTD Sprint are insufficient in the Lean Six Sigma initiative.

Figure 4 below shows how the interviewees perceive where communication works best through the Lean Six Sigma initiative; communication of information flows freely down, but there is no acknowledgement of feedback returning back up the hierarchy, which is represented in the diagram by a red cross covering the upward arrow pertaining to vertical feedback. In addition, communication outwards of the initiative seems to be inadequate, which is represented by the red cross covering the outward arrow pertaining to horizontal feedforward. However the personnel involved in the initiative appear to be efficient and

motivated to ascertain ideas and feedback from outside, which is represented by no red cross over the arrow pertaining to horizontal feedback.
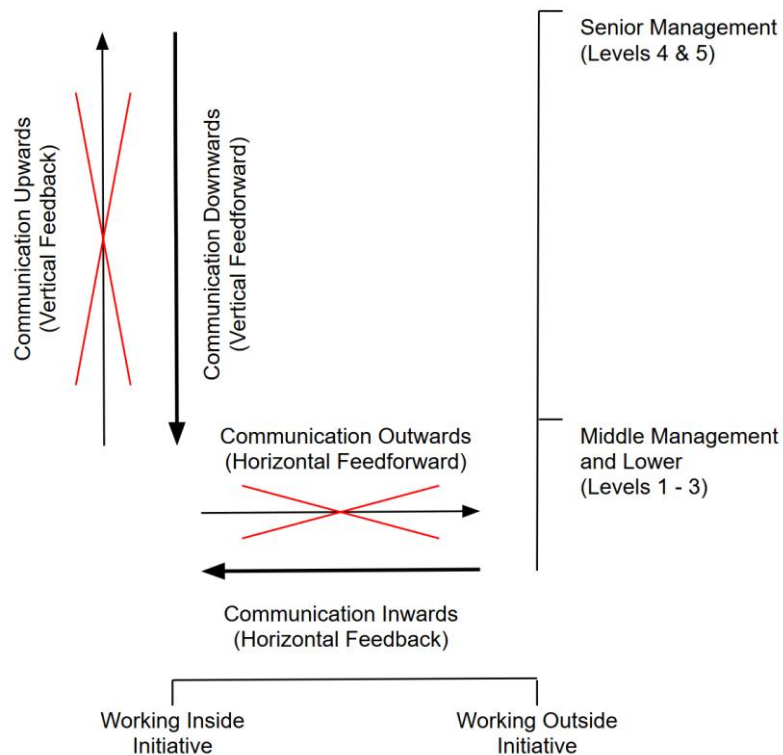

Figure 4 Perceived Alignment Through Lean Six Sigma
The arrows with red crosses through them show were perceived barriers exist to free communication. The absence of these symbols shows perceived free communication.

5.3. Barriers and Tensions

For BPM in general and Lean Six Sigma, Gleeson's (2017) argument for silos on the horizontal level to be able to being broken down by sufficient communication between the parties is not visible at TradMan. It can be understood how all interviewees from all hierarchy levels voice concerns about the silos, and it is possible to perceive that the CEO takes it on as his task to break those silos down: "I'm very keen on that we break down those silos and get people working across the, essentially, value stream of the business much more effectively" (Harry, 5). Klaus (2A) also sees the problem but sees a possible improvement of alignment through the OTD Sprint initiative. Accordingly it can be said that through initiatives the alignment between the departments can be improved in the near future. The lack of feedback and workflow between the departments indicate misalignment as information does not flow between them. As process improvement have been a very local, departmental process (Isabel, 4A), this shows the problem with silos within BPM. Klaus (2A) points out the OTD Sprint as

an initiative that will be breaking-down silos, Harry (5) on the other hand lays all his hopes into the new ERP system, while Luke (3B) and Emma (2B) expressed frustration that their opinion was neglected in the decision making process for the new ERP system, highlighting the issue that the Information Technology Tradition is often neglected and independent from the main organisation (Harmon 2010), as presented in Chapter 1.

As new and updated company-wide processes are only communicated via emails but the employees are not being trained on them, there is agreement between the employees that they do not read/ update themselves on the process due to time constraints and it is agreed that they could benefit from additional training instead of just receiving the process updates via email. The current way of communicating processes is only focusing on the processes themselves which fits into the single learning loop. It does not go further on to training the people on the processes and making them a conversation (feedback, feedforward) in line with the company strategy for the BPs, which could serve to update the employees on process objectives and thus provide a double learning loop. It is possible to understand how current state of communication of processes makes the employees not very hopeful of good communication with the other departments. Staying in the single learning loop can imply, that the emails transfer the change logs of processes in order to inform the employees. Due to the perceived lack of training (HR systems) on these new processes, the double loop is not reached and the effect of the emails stays low.

Many interviewees (e.g. Astrid 3E, Davina 1G) mentioned the lack of training or continuous education on processes. When looking at the indicators for alignment, it can reasonably be assumed that there is a lack of HR systems in place surrounding the use of this tool. The consistent use of vocabulary from lower staff (Harmon) suggests that they are aligned on what they perceive as the problem. This can be identified as a lack of vertical alignment from a vertical silo (Gleeson, 2017). Davina (1G) goes as far as to propose a solution (continuous learning) to the problem which can be identified as being in the second learning loop. Hammer and Champy (1993) identify "continuous education" (p.493) as important for better communication.

On top of the not having HR systems, it can be understood that there are feelings that contribute to the interviewees feeling unable to conduct BPM or implement the BPM strategy. Harry (5) stated that they are training "a number of people" for Lean Six Sigma (see above) and he wants them to be proactive to start BPM projects. Though, it is a very selective

group of employees included, which means that it divides the employees into two groups: the included and the untrained.

The siloed structure shows not only the problem with holding on to old organisational structures and the lack of information flow up the hierarchy (Gleeson, 2017), but also that personnel from every level of the hierarchy, including senior management, feel unable to make change. This issue is contributed to by the lack of HR systems in place that surround BPM in general that provide training, which cements this inability as personnel become incapable of making change and progressively feel unwillingness or apathy towards the idea of making change, which is identified in both Jan (1C) and Davina (1G). There was a consistent call for training by the majority of the interviewees, which shows there is still a desire/willingness to make change.

Nothing is perceived to be contributing to the employees' ability to be aligned horizontally; i.e. the presence of silos and informing through emails. While there was acknowledgement of sharing of process knowledge by senior employees to junior, it was perceived as inadequate as there was no formal training for the business processes, thus restricting the quality of dissemination of information from the senior management team. It was also acknowledged that there were no opportunities to provide feedback on BPM in general, which can be perceived as showing there was no communication of value back up the hierarchy. Figure 5 below shows the perception of communication of information through the hierarchical levels. Specifically, the figure shows that communication of processes through this initiative flows down, but does not return feedback up the hierarchy. It also shows that information does not flow freely horizontally between the departments, which is essential for good collaboration for BPM (Gleeson, 2017). Therefore, it is possible to understand how the double and triple learning loops have not been reached because, but not only as a result of, the barriers and tensions mentioned above.

The barriers and tensions discussed imply negative effects on BPM. Klaus (2A) and Franz (4A) mention that it could have long-lasting negative effects if BPM is not executed well or fails.
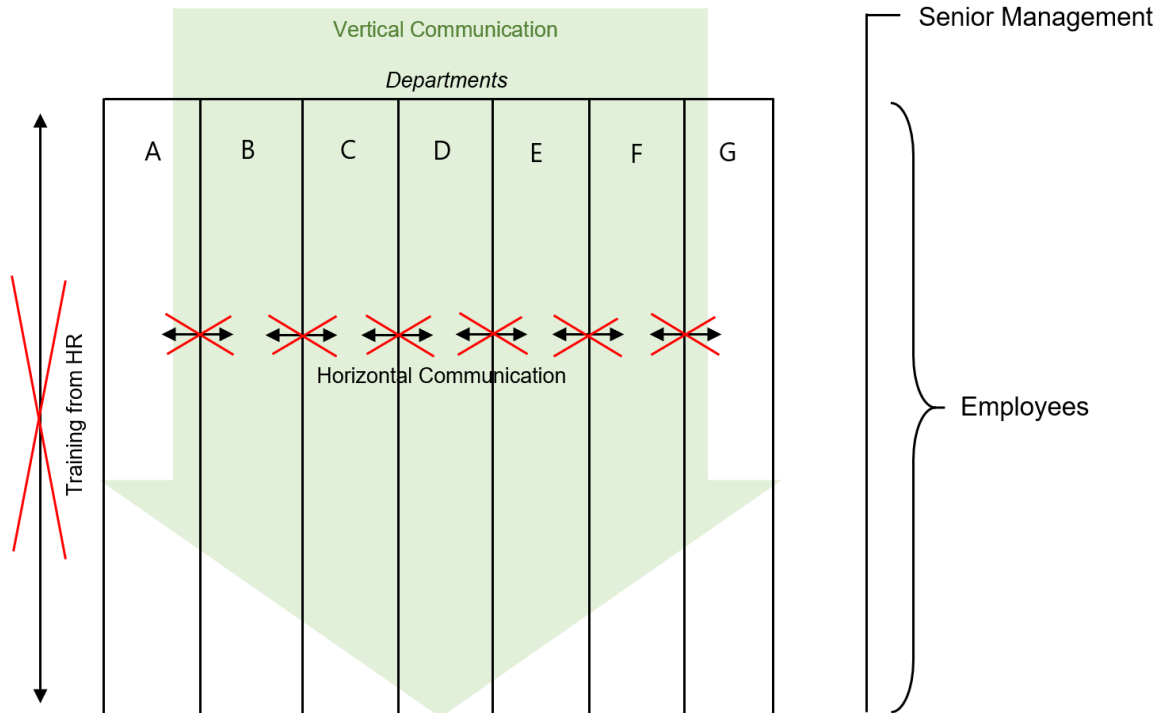
Figure 5 Perceived Alignment of General BPM
Legend: The arrows with red crosses through them show were perceived barriers exist to free communication. The absence of these symbols shows perceived free communication. The green arrow from the top to the bottom describes the functioning vertical communication of information downwards. The departments are depicted as silos.

6. Conclusion

This section comprises the main conclusions of the study and how the research purpose and questions have been fulfilled by the findings and discussion. Implications for practitioners research and education are then presented and finally the limitations of the study and possibilities for future research that have been identified from the findings.

This thesis aimed to highlight the barriers, tensions and potential alignments that can occur between organisational strategy for BPM, the BPM initiatives, and the employees' willingness and ability to carry out BPM. Thus, this study emphasised how these obstacles and alignments are lived and experienced through a company carrying out a variety of different initiatives.

The first research question pondered how employees perceive the vertical and horizontal alignment of different BPM initiatives with organisational strategy. Empirically, it is concluded that the perception of alignment of different BPM initiatives with organisational strategy depends not on the initiative being implemented, but rather how the organisational

strategy is communicated to personnel operating within the initiative, through to personnel operating outside of the initiative, and what structures are set up that enable and encourage this communication to happen.

The second research question deliberated the potential impact said alignment has on employee willingness and ability to conduct BPM. It can be understood that perceived low vertical alignment of BPM strategy created a reduced ability to conduct BPM and increased frustration and feelings of neglect. In addition, in some cases it can be interpreted as creating apathy and a refusal to be involved, thus reducing willingness. In contrast, perceived high vertical alignment of BPM strategy can be understood to increase willingness to play a role in helping the business progress, and creating enthusiasm and positivity, and an increased ability because their ideas are perceived to be listened to and implemented.

In addition, it is possible to understand that perceived low horizontal alignment of BPM strategy can create confusion as to what the end goal is, thus reducing the ability to contribute to BPM and, in addition, can create a reluctance to participate in poorly transmitted BPM, thus reducing willingness. On the other hand, it can be understood that perceived high horizontal alignment can create confidence in the success of BPM and thus can increase willingness to be involved in the change.

This study also discussed that even though employees expressed apathy towards an initiative, irregardless of whether they were involved or not, there was an abundance of interviewees that expressed a willingness to take part in initiatives that they are involved in. Moreover, even if an employee is unwilling to take part in one initiative, it does not necessarily mean that they are not willing to take part in another initiative that is communicated better and aligns people with the corporate strategy. Furthermore, it was discussed that activities that remove or reduce barriers to strategic alignment, e.g. deconstructing silos and providing training can serve to increase both the willingness and ability of personnel to contribute to BPM that is in line with the organisational strategy for BPM.

6.1. Implications for Research

Current research approaches the subject of BPM from the viewpoint that organisational strategy is the overarching philosophy that should guide and direct efforts for BPM. However, previous research focuses on strategic targets, and has shed less light on the

interplay between the human aspects and strategic alignment of BPM. This research therefore showed that effects of strategic alignment are important to take into consideration when trying to understand how BPM initiatives can impact the organisation's employees, from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy. Furthermore, this research has shown the importance of the inclusion of the human aspects in research of implementation of BPM initiatives by taking it into account when trying to understand willingness and ability, and contributes to research that this can affect the success of said initiatives.

6.2. Implications for Practitioners

McClory, Read and Labib (2017) state that in order to create organisational learning one must set learning targets and culture. Organisational learning is expressed through the learning loops (Figure 2) and setting learning targets and culture is necessary for a functioning triple learning loop (organisational learning and change). However, from our findings, it is possible to understand how it is not enough to simply set targets for cultural learning and expect them to transmit effectively. It is also not enough to transmit the targets through just the employees within the initiative, but management must encourage employees to share openly and transmit consistently through all methods of communication throughout the business, i.e. speech, newsletters, etc., what the learning targets are in order to successfully create strategic alignment of BPM that develops the ability of those involved and fosters a willingness to contribute from those involved and not directly involved in the process. Therefore McClory, Read and Labib's (2017) model could benefit from this information. In addition, practitioners must create and partake in activities that remove or reduce barriers to strategic alignment. For example, removing silos and providing training both serve to increase the willingness and ability of personnel to contribute to BPM. Furthermore, not taking care to ensure there is strategic alignment of BPM can have negative effects on the organisation, e.g. losing time and money on poorly implemented BPM, losing trust of employees and not reaching strategic targets.

6.3. Implications for Education

The effects of BPM on humans play a rather large role as discussed by this thesis and should not be neglected when teaching strategic alignment of Business Process Management. Content of the education should also be how processes are communicated and how the

employees of all hierarchical levels and departments get informed and trained continuously on BPM, as information flows on the horizontal and vertical levels is found to be essential for alignment.

6.4. Limitations and Future Research

Some limitations are important to consider in this study. Firstly, due to the research design of this thesis, it was not possible to interview all employees of TradMan. That would have given a 360° research with fully representative answers, which could have given different insights. Secondly, it is important to highlight that this study takes a snapshot of an organisation, it could have benefitted from being part of a longitudinal case study. However, as concluded, this thesis still adds to a deeper understanding of BPM initiatives. Finally, as discussed in the methodology, these findings cannot be assumed to provide universal truth due to it being a single case and therefore it would be interesting to draw comparisons between this study and other case companies utilising this methodology. In the future, it would be interesting to research further on the human aspects when implementing BPM, for example studying the full scope of alignment, misalignment and the employees' perception of it, could add even more to the research on the topic of the interplay between strategic alignment and employee willingness and ability in BPM.

Furthermore, as stated in the introduction, this study focussed primarily on the interplay between the Work Simplification/Quality Control Tradition and the Business Management Tradition. It would be interesting to broaden the scope of this study and begin to incorporate how the Information Technology Tradition interplays with employees' willingness and ability to conduct BPM.

Based upon the massive amount of data that has been gathered in the interviews, the material could certainly be analysed from different angles or by different researchers, due to the study's reflexivity. In addition, interviewees highlighted that failed initiatives are causing them to have little faith in future initiatives and therefore future research could study the long-term effects of failed BPM initiatives or the failed implementation of BPM tools on employees' willingness and ability to conduct BPM.

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Appendix 1 – Interview Questions

Warm-up questions

1. For how long have you been working at the company?
2. What is your background (studies, previous jobs)?
3. What is your task and position here?
4. With which departments do you work most? Least?

In depth questions

"When we are talking about process improvement, we are not only talking about the e.g. manufacturing process but also about any processes in the company e.g. communications"

5. How do you carry out process management here in the company? Examples Follow up: What is your experience with interdepartmental process improvement?
6. What is your role in process management? Examples
7. How have you learned about the current processes; how were they communicated to you? Examples? Do you think this method works?
8. How do you view the current system of process improvement?
   8.1. Is it successful? Why?
   8.2. How does it make you feel?
9. If you were to change the current process improvement system, what would be your recommendation?
   9.1. Why?
   9.2. What would this change accomplish for you?
10. Do you use tools to improve processes? For example to improve collaboration.
    10.1. Yes? Example?
    10.2. No? Why? Do you know of others who use them? Example.
11. Why were this/these tools installed?
12. By who were/was these/this tool(s) installed?
13. What are your expectations of these tools? What is the expected outcome of using these for you? Do others have different expectations? If so? What do you think, why?
14. What are the main positive and negative aspects of these tools in your experience? You can also give examples of situations in which this tool was handy or where it hindered the process.
15. Is there anything you would like to add? Or think we would find useful?

Appendix 2 – Study Information Sheet

This study sheet was handed to every employee to present a background to the topic, which was then discussed with interviewees prior to being asked questions. Every employee was given the opportunity to ask the researchers questions prior to commencement.

Dear Participant,

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study. This information sheet explains what the study is about and how we would like you to participate in it.

We are studying a Master of Science in Management at Lund University and the purpose of this study is to explore the impact, if any, of utilising process management tools for change management within knowledge-intensive firms. This should enable an understanding of the managerial implications of process management tools on the communication channels within the continuous improvement feedback loop.

BPI (Business Process Improvement) is about improving the current system and focusing specifically on an individual process without necessarily considering the interdependent components of the business. TQM is an enabler for this.

Business Process Reengineering is a process redesign philosophy that focuses on workflows through the organisation but still focused predominantly on one process at a time. Six Sigma and Buy vs Build are examples of this.

Business Process Management (BPM) is a relatively new concept and is still being explored, yet businesses are rapidly seeking to employ its benefits. The philosophy takes a holistic view of the organisation and looks to strategy to influence the direction of business process improvement and management approaches.

What we are looking to find out is where enablers and tools such as those mentioned and more fit within the BPM sphere, how they are used and what expectations various personnel have of them.

In order to elicit your views, we would like you to be interviewed by the two researchers involved in the study at Lund University. The interview will be audio-recorded and will last approximately one hour, and all information you provide during the interview will be completely anonymised. For you to take part in this study, consent from your line manager will be required.

The information provided by you in the interview will be used for research purposes only. It will not be used in a manner that will allow identification of your individual responses.

Once again, we would like to thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. If you have any questions about the research at any stage, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully

Appendix 3 – Quotes of Interviewees

i Olly: If it's a business process that changes, which falls in line with the certification requirements of the business, the process is uploaded, the new process is uploaded onto the intranet system. Everyone in the business has the availability to view and then a change email is sent out to everyone, explaining to them that it's their responsibility to view and understand that new process and ask questions if they need to.

ii Olly: My primary role here is to ensure that we remain within the requirements of the certification bodies for this business and industry that we work in and we do that, we achieve that and we deliver that.

iii Harry: I'm responsible for the business performance strategy, business process reengineering.

iv Olly: I suppose it's how you define what successful is. Do we have any issues arising from that we may have some people who don't follow it? Yes. Have they caused us major problems as a business, no.

v Olly: Restructure the business. What would [restructuring] do for me? Not a lot. But what it would do for the business is that, I think, then we would structure in that the management and execution of tools would be confined to a certain number of individuals who ensure that they're being done correctly and rolled out in such a way.

vi Olly: The carrying out is always a team effort and there's no 'one' but it's about that, who is responsible and accountable for making these things happen. That's the problem. [...] So it's nothing against the person, it's that they don't necessarily have the tools and the knowledge. But that's because we don't centralise that requirement and function. That's where Lean Six Sigma will be different, because it's all under me.

vii Davina: If there was a process that I was asked to get involved with, the first place I would look is [the intranet]. […] I would say that I would be in the minority, […] people don't pay much attention to the processes.

viii Davina: I haven't learned much about them, there are so many on the intranet, […] we're not really trained around looking at these documents, […] it's just that you pick it up from someone senior. […] We have had three new starters in our office and I know that none of them have been introduced to [business processes], so they are learning through the senior people in the team, teaching them things they already know.

ix Luke: [It's] a documented process, rather than an involved part of the job, [...] [I don't] read the process as a part of my day-to-day job.

x Günther: It's a decision of your own free will as to whether or not you read [the process], but again, not everybody has the time to read a whole process every day. You get copied onto things that we would never see or that would never be relevant to us.

xi Franz: New procedures, I'm not sure how we, it's normally word-of-mouth, normally, 'Oh, by the way, there's a new process procedure here.'

xii Davina: I think [pause], it could be a lot better. I think there should be some training somewhere. […] you should be constantly learning about new processes because they're changing all the time. And I think a refresher would be an idea. […] I've come from previous jobs where they really drum in the processes so that you understand them […], I think that everyone should be pushed towards understanding their own processes and making sure that they stick to them. Like, I would hate for the new people in our department to come in and I'll be showing them something and I'll be thinking, 'well, I don't know if that's actually in the process', so I wouldn't want to actually be training somebody away from the process.

xiii Luke: We rely on feedback and we hardly ever get it" […]. People have a choice […], if you've got a choice, you generally don't get the information feedback that you want. […] You could feedback into your systems and do something with it. As soon as you create processes that people have a choice whether to provide feedback, good or bad, it ends up falling down.

xiv Emma: It depends on the process being improved. Such as, and I'll use [Computational Fluid Dynamics] as an example. I don't need to ask the guys on the shop floor whether that's going to be important. […] You need to speak to the end users. You have to be selective with the sort of committee, as it were, the decision-making committee. Something that I used to do for [previous employer] is, "See it, touch it, use it.". So, who sees the information, who uses the information, and who actually touches that information. I think there has got to be an element of that because the 'see information', sometimes that doesn't need to be there. Certainly, the touch and use do need to be there, within a process.

xv Davina: I feel like I could learn a lot more… The big thing for me is that I don't know half of the procedures that are out there, because they have never been communicated. [When you don't know the processes and just learn from other people, I feel] frustrated, because, there have been times in the past where you've done something and it hasn't actually been the right way to do it. And then [Director] will come back and say, 'you haven't stuck to this process.'. And I'll say, 'well hold on I didn't know that this process was actually in place', so it can be extremely frustrating from a quality side of things.

xvi Günther: I've been asking for that training for seven years. What that pushes me to do, I think next year as a part of my personal development I'm just going to try and train myself via YouTube videos, because that's all that's available, and why not? Which is a bit sad that there isn't that support there, but I don't know why because it's not a huge cost.

xvii Isabel: I think we're missing opportunities, and I think we're missing opportunities to make things simpler and reflective of what we do.

xviii Isabel: I think out of everyone, I was probably one of the people that would try and make the change and spare the time because I'm probably not as much of an ideas person, I am more of an executor. So, give me something to do and I'll generally get it done.

xix Luke: [In department B], If things could be avoided, if we're selling the same thing, or if we reduce the variation in what we're selling [or] if something goes wrong, we create a process to fix it.

xx Günther: I keep a list of what's going on engineering wise [...] at all times to try to organise our process engineering more efficiently. I don't use [standard tool] because it takes two minutes to open up.

xxi Casper: At the minute everyone works in isolation, everyone works on what they have to work on and you do not tend to delve into what other departments do.

xxii Isabel: In the past people were probably working to their own perceived, important process improvements, departmentally. That might be true, but it wasn't creating an overall business improvement, which is what's needed.

xxiii Isabel: In the past people were probably working to their own perceived, important process improvements, departmentally. That might be true, but it wasn't creating an overall business improvement, which is what's needed.

xxiv Klaus: I think it was really beneficial going into other departments [within the OTD sprint teams] and seeing what their issues were what was holding them up because you only see in your little bubble. You don't ever see how your work affects other people and how other people are having the exact same problems as you. We are all working in silos here sometimes. So it's quite interesting to see what other people think.

xxv Harry: [The] new ERP; it is not just a computer system, it is a new business process. [...] We kicked off something with another set of consultants, which was top down driven with the senior team around mapping out the full process and then do a value stream mapping exercise and this was a head of the [connect project], which is the new ERP; which my aim is that we get all our process sorted out so that when we put the new ERP in, it mimics our new processes we don't just copy our pretty crappy processes over into the ERP and then they become embedded again and fossilised.

xxvi Luke: The company has made a decision, we are just [department B], a small group of people within a large organisation. So, they are never going to buy into using our software across the company, so they are going to

use the one that's the best for the company, that is going to be [the new ERP] I suppose, for managing docs and things like that. [...] there is not a lot of involvement from the rest of the company in [our department, we are] taken for granted.

xxvii Emma: I feel like my role within the organisation is a pretty heavy role. Because, if anything goes wrong and I'm not here [...]. But, I also feel that when it comes to the improvement of processes, I'm kind of pushed to one side and my opinions aren't noted. So my role within process improvement, [...] I'm kind of, if you imagine it as a tree, I'm probably a little end of a twig that needs to feed along the branch into the trunk of the tree. Where in reality, I should be the branch.

xxviii Olly: It's very much a baby-stepped approach to look to improve our performance, linked to business strategy.

xxix Harry: We are training a number of people so then they start thinking again, 'I can change that!' And that's what we're looking for. [...] My interest in Lean Six Sigma is that culture change aspect of people taking control of their destiny, making their own changes like I've done myself [...]. [It's not] in the individual projects that will give a benefit but it's that cultural change. [...] Then you build momentum like a rolling stone [so it's] part of the business fabric that, 'if life is not right, fix it'. We don't put up with it.

xxx Harry: We actually took all the senior team to [another subsidiary] where the CEO, quality manager and some of the guys who have done [Lean Six Sigma] came out and spoke to us[...]. We got the buy-in of the senior team and from there, I have been very consistent in my communication that this is coming; this is not optional, this is something you have to do. Support. So that was that backing and we've now started with the first group of people have been trained and they've got that knowledge that I'm bought into it, to see the team have bought into it and this is just part of the business going forward and very clear in that communication. This is not today's flash in the pan this is a five year plus program.

xxxi Olly: Some think it's going to fix everything fast and we're going to shoot to the stars and all this. I think some have a view it will not deliver - it's another initiative, it'll never take place, as in come to fruition

xxxii Casper: [I expect to gain an] appreciation of what each department does, [and] if you have more appreciation of what they are doing, that means you can take a step back or you can then go into their departments here. [...] So I think it gets everyone to communicate better. I think that is the main thing what we lack: communication.

xxxiii Casper: I think the higher up in the business, the greater the expectation [of the BPM tools] is. Top level think it is going to solve every issue that we have. [...] We are on a fun way of sort of the bottom level we see baby steps you know: we'll put this in, we'll change it. We're not going to solve everything. It needs to be a gradual process. I think everyone needs to understand that these tools are new. We're trying to get people on board so it's got to be baby steps up front. We're not just trying to solve everything in one go.

xxxiv Casper: The training that I've been on, we have been given the sort idea that it's for a culture change to point people to ask questions and get everybody talking, communication. [...] There are a lot of new people in [the company] and I think that if we put in these tools and instill it in the newer people then it will force the older generation to sort of change as well because obviously that's the way the times are going. So I think it promotes better business because we're getting people with new ideas, then people with the experience give an idea so everyone seems to be feeding into it. There's broad scope of people being trained on these processes. It's not just a certain level or you know there are people from [department G, A and E] from all over the business feeding into that. So I think it is going to be a useful tool.

xxxv Isabel: The obvious [expectation] is [...] process improvement. Because hopefully people are solving more things so the processes become simpler and part of day-to-day business as usual. People feel empowered to do their job, because they get listened to. People are then more inclined to go the extra mile. Either work harder, longer. On a temporary basis, if it's required, you get people staying here, so you don't have the [employee] turnover; keep the knowledge in-house rather than walking out of the door. You'll have a more positive workplace so there's lots of benefits. You'll have more soft benefits than just the process obvious ones as well.

[...] I'm probably different to some of the others who would be more sceptical. […] I'm positive about the change.

[xxxvi] Günther: I don't think [people are getting Lean Six Sigma training], not in [department F]. I would potentially like to get involved in [Six Sigma] just to, so to get a bit of an overview about it because I've never really been involved; initially because I didn't have any interest in it but I need to, as a senior and lead I need to take part in some of that. […] We've just [been asked], 'who wants to get involved?', [but] a shift of working towards my chartership with IMechE and my masters, has become priority

[xxxvii] Astrid: The level of training of Lean Six Sigma has to come from management, or the leaders in the business[and] the direction, drive and empowerment has got to be given by the departmental managers. […] We're bringing in a level of detail and training to the shop floor, but again you can train as many people as you like from the shop floor, but if the managers are not giving them any support because they doesn't understand what they're doing and what they want to achieve, it's never going to work out within the business.

[xxxviii] Luke: There are initiatives that get put in place from meetings that you may attend, hear about them from the intranet, the newsletter or […].