Don't get angry now, but you're fired!

A qualitative study on leadership and managers' view on conflict in correlation with notice of dismissal.

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Summary

Title: Don’t get angry now, but you’re fired!: A qualitative study on leadership and managers' view of conflict in correlation with notices of dismissal.

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Purpose:
Therefore, our purpose is to investigate how organizations relate to leadership styles and conflict management combined with notices of dismissal. Is there something they find essential for the company or is it something with a little lower priority?

Choice of Method:
With a hermeneutic point of view and a deductive approach we made a qualitative research to be able to discuss these questions. We based our thesis on situational leadership, one-best way leadership (non-situational leadership), conflict styles, conflict behaviour and a behaviour assessing tool called the TKI. Since we decided to investigate our main questions through a qualitative study we interviewed five managers who had recently issued notices of dismissal.

Empirical results:
When compiling our empirical data we found that neither of the theories that we have been focusing on were used, nor were other theories for that matter. Only one of the respondents claimed that he used a theory as a base for his leadership.

Analysis:
As we took our empirical findings into account when analysing, we found evidence that some managers were using leadership styles and conflict management theories without being aware of it. The respondents also claimed that they valued sharing information with employees as well as having a clear leadership style.

Conclusions:
After investigating and discussing responses we made the conclusion that it probably would facilitate for managers to have a theory as a base for their leadership and to combine this with personality and experience. In this way the manager would get a better combination between theory, behaviour and his or her own point of view. We also made the conclusion that it might be easier for the manager to have an already designed conflict handling theory prepared when handling a disagreement, and to know how to behave in such a situation. We made the conclusion that depending on how a conflict is undertaken, it may have different effects on the quality of the outcome of the conflict. This means as well that a conflict outcome might have an effect on the company as a whole. Being aware of external effects is also of great importance when dealing with employees and the process of trying to understand the reasons to their behaviour in conflict situations.
Foreword

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Johannes Nordström and Irene Andersson

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1. Introduction

1.1 Problem background

When ideas, opinions, goals, values or simply basic needs collide, conflict occurs. As people also react differently towards even the same type of conflict, there are few assurances that it is handled in the correct way. Some see conflict as something bad and unwanted, something that creates strife between members of the organization and something that is best avoided. While on the other side there are people that see conflict as something akin to an opportunity, a chance to analyse their thoughts and ideas and put them to the test against others. Some authors in the fields of social psychology for example, see this as an opportunity to grow as an organization, to deal with the problems generated by growth and move on.

It is not always easy to have opportunities in mind when conflict occurs on the job for example. Many of us revert back to typical defence behaviours when faced with conflict, behaviours that seldom improves the situation. Some may cast the blame on someone else even if he or she is just as much to blame for the situation, while some are afraid to face conflict and simply try their best to ignore it or rationalize it, and “putting the lid on”.

According to Arne Maltén (1998, p. 147), some of the effects and signs of a growing conflict could be a decline in productivity and quality, and growing feelings of distrust and unhappiness at work. These are symptoms of an unhappy work force that in turn could effect the company's productivity. This is why it is important that the corporate management must have a plan for when conflict arises, for conflict that is left alone for too long can have stifling and stagnating effects on the company.

The organization leader has a big role when a conflict occurs. It is essential that the leader has some kind of conflict management to solve the problem with minimal harm for the company and its employees, for even the employees who are not directly involved can be negatively affected by the conflict. To avoid any negative and destructive outcomes the leader has to find to solve the issue in the best way possible for all involved.

In an ongoing financial crisis many are tragically loosing their jobs. In times like this conflict is not uncommon whenever the word ‘cutbacks’ is brought up. By media one is often told the story of the unfortunate worker who just lost his or her job and often with undertones of the heartlessness and lack of empathy from management that are themselves often forced to make cutbacks.

But no matter how flat you make a pancake, there are always going to be two sides. Meaning in this case; there is often another side to the story of the unfortunate worker.

1.2 Purpose

This thesis takes the focus on job lay offs closer to the middle of the proverbial pancake with the intention to bring this kind of conflict out into the light with the hope of increasing awareness, among students and managers alike, of some of these issues. You will hear from different managers and how they are perceiving conflict that has arisen within their ranks. What could happen? How is it dealt with and could it be dealt with differently? Is there something they find essential within the company or is it something with
a little lower priority? Our purpose is therefore, besides increasing awareness of conflict and conflict handling in general, but also to try to shed some light on the subject of conflict and conflict handling among managers in correlation with notices of dismissal.

1.3 Problem

According to the above mentioned statement we have decided to ask the following questions:

1. How do leadership styles affect the company’s way of dealing with conflicts?
2. How do managers view conflict in correlation with notice of dismissal?
3. What connection is there between managers’ leadership style, conflict management and notice of dismissal?

With these three questions as a base we determined our main question:

1. How do managers pursue their leadership in conflicts when facing notice of dismissal?

1.4 Limitations

Conflict management is a very broad area which is why we chose to focus on conflict management from a leaders perspective. Furthermore, we decided to delineate this essay to five different companies working with conflict processes and conflict management, this to get a more realistic picture of how this works and is used in reality. Considering the culture differences we limited this thesis to Sweden. If we would have chosen to take other countries into account we would have to take the culture differences into consideration which makes this work too large. We chose to limit this thesis to two different leadership styles, as we found them to be quite extensive and current, and will be explained further in our section of chosen leadership theories.

We have chosen to focus on a five major respondents to compare the choices made when facing a notice of dismissal and having to make cutbacks in order to cope with the current financial crisis. The choices reflected upon are from the perspectives of the managers and their opinion of the conflict in the face of notices of dismissal. The respondent companies are, according to us, reliable and will together give a good representation of how leadership styles and conflict management are used in today's practice.

Our thesis is based on theories linked to our main question. We chose theories within the leadership, conflict and TKI area to be able to get a clearer view and straight answers that would lead us to our following conclusions. We hope and believe that our theories will help us to fulfil our thesis and that they will give us a deeper understanding by combining it with our interviews.

1.5 Explanation of concepts

As our respondents, or readers, might view important concepts differently we decided to add a section explaining some reoccurring concepts in this thesis.
As our respondents are not making any distinction between ‘leadership’ and ‘managing’, or ‘leader’ and ‘manager’, we found it best not to go into further detail about the meaning of the two concepts as it might only create confusion for our respondents or our readers. We have therefore decided to use the words management and leadership, and managing and leading, as words for the same concept.

The word ‘conflict’ comes from the Latin word ‘conflictus’ which in turn means strife or clash. (Maltén, 1998, p. 145)
To quote Arne Maltén, an author in the field of socio psychology, the definition of conflict is:

“A conflict arises from a clash, a collision or similar irreconcilable differences between goals, interests, points of view, values, basic needs or personal style.”
(Maltén, 1998, p. 145)

1.6 Disposition

1. Introduction
In this chapter we focus on explaining our aims and objectives for the reader. We also try to describe how we came to choose this topic. An explanation of our concepts is also included since we find it essential that the reader understand how we define certain concepts.

2. Starting points
In this part we try to examine our selves and our staring points. We found it important to let the reader be aware of any prejudice we might have had prior to researching for this thesis. We believe that it is crucial for the reader to know what starting points we chose because it can make it easier for him and her to get a view of the base of our thesis.

3. Chosen theories
Our chosen theories are described in this chapter. Since this is one of the foundations we consider it essential to explain them to our readers to widen their understanding of this topic.

4. Practical method
In this chapter our respondents and our interview-process is described in such a way as to keep the anonymity of the respondents. We wanted the reader to get a sense of where the empirical data came from and be prepared.

5. Empirical data
After our interviews we compiled the results. We described this chapter according to the structure of our questionnaire to make it as easy as possible for the reader to follow our reasoning.

6. Analysis
Taking our empirical data into account we could now formulate an analysis around our respondent's answers and comments from the interviews. Still having the reader in mind we split this chapter into “situational leadership” and “non-situational leadership”.

7. Conclusions
In this chapter we discuss our own conclusions based on the previous analysis of the responses. The purpose with this chapter is also to connect the two leadership styles that we have focused on and in this way let the reader be aware of the whole concept of this study.
2. Starting points

2.1 Prejudice

Throughout life we experience and practice different situations that will form our moral views and values. These moral views and values are created from day one and it is therefore obvious that these will have an affect on our essay. Even though we will base our thesis on different sources and research, we still believe that our backgrounds will have an impact. It might not be a significant impact but, when keeping in mind the strength of norms and values that people have, we do think that it is almost impossible not to let this affect our essay.

Earlier in life, during our time in high school, we have both been studying economics. Later, we both decided to continue within the economic circuit by, after some years off, start to study at Umeå School of Business Education, one of us with more international focus. The teachers and professors that we had during these years might have formed us to think in a certain way. Whether this was positive or not is probably too early to tell considering our, so far, lack of information about the subject. What we do have is a basic understanding that we will grow throughout this process.

In our working life we have seen a variety of leadership in use, both on a low, middle and high level. We experienced leaders with different priorities of what is important. Some put all effort in the company growth, some in goals and some others in cohesion or effectiveness. This made us realize that all leaders are different and have their own unique way to try to create a viable business. We have both been abroad for a longer time which we believe will have a positive effect on this thesis since experiencing another culture and learning how to deal with different personalities can have an affect on our ability to examine our respondents.

According to these arguments we believe that we have a good base for our thesis without too much prejudice. We have been taking courses in organizational behaviour and management so we have created several viewpoints and realized the importance of always analysing and seeing the different angles of a problem.

2.2 Subject

Considering our choice of studying at Umeå School of Business Education with focus on management, we found organizational behaviour and leadership especially interesting. The courses taken in management only increased our interest in this specific topic. The knowledge given to us during these management classes had a focusing effect on this thesis towards leadership, and the current economic crisis opened our eyes on the importance how to handle a conflict in connection with lay offs. We also believe that, since we both would like to work with management in the future, we might learn from this study and perhaps apply the findings in our future working life.

As the current economic situation unfolds we have noticed companies cutting back on staff and while some are faced with having to close down completely. The financial crisis has pushed companies to act in ways that they otherwise might not and this ongoing process might cause tension and in turn lead to conflicts within the organization. Therefore, we
decided to take a closer look, from a management perspective, on how to handle a conflict situation in the best way possible.

2.3 Strategy

The quantitative research strategy has long been the dominating method in the field of business economics. (Bryman and Bell, 2005, p. 85). Its usefulness when interpreting and gathering numerical data and numbers have made it the method of choice among business economists over the years. One major emphasis in typical quantitative research is quantification, the more data gathered the better and more exact the results. (Bryman and Bell, 2005, p. 40) Furthermore, quantitative research usually has a deductive strategy, meaning that emphasis lies on proving existing hypotheses or theories. (Bryman and Bell, 2005, p. 40) Finally, an important ontological aspect of quantitative research is that social constructions are separated from its social actors. (Bryman and Bell, 2005, p. 40)

The nature of qualitative research differs somewhat from that of the quantitative. Where the quantitative research often focuses on proving existing theories or hypotheses, qualitative research focuses on generating theories or hypotheses from observations, in other words, it often utilises an inductive strategy. It also emphasizes on trying to explain the social construct from the viewpoint of the respondents and their roles as social actors. Hence, one can say that the qualitative focuses less on quantification and more on qualification of data. (Bryman and Bell, 2005, p. 40)

We have chosen the latter, a qualitative strategy, to our research, as we believe this strategy suits our chosen field better than that of a quantitative strategy. In an attempt to discover how managers view and handle conflict as a result of notices of dismissal, from their own point of view, we felt that a qualitative and inductive approach strategy help us explain this better.

2.4 Approach

In preparation for a closer look into the world of managers and their way of handling leadership and conflict in connection with notices of dismissal we gathered a number of existing theories on both leadership and conflict handling. Even though none these theories approached the subject of conflict as a result of notices of dismissal among employees we felt that these theories were more than adequate for us to form a solid theoretical foundation which we then could use in comparison with empirical observations. The purpose was also to draw conclusions based on our study of managers and their views on conflict originating from notices of dismissal, to generate our own hypotheses and try our best at contributing to the subject of conflict in correlation with notices of dismissal. With this in mind we mean to argue that our intent is to use a deductive approach with some aspects of induction.

There are commonly two 'schools' of scientific approaches available for when conducting research. One being the inductive approach, where theories or hypotheses are formed as products of reasoning over empirical observation. In other words, the theory, or theories, comes as a result of the scientific research. (Bryman and Bell, 2005, p. 25)

According to Bryman and Bell (2005, p. 23), when using a deductive approach however the researcher starts by forming a theory or hypothesis that is deduced from existing theories, or
simply what he or she knows about a subject (note the dissimilarities compared to the inductive approach). This is then tested against empirical observations to see if the theories hold to critical analysis. This is our chosen approach. However, even though we have chosen a deductive approach to this research we are well aware that there will be inductive aspects appearing during the process. According to Bryman and Bell (2005, p. 25) this is not uncommon and both approaches may well contain some aspect of the other. Even though, given the frequency of inductive aspects in this research, it could be argued that it is a combination of both, making it more abductive in nature, we believe our primary deductive approach to be more dominating and pervasive and should therefore be considered to be its main approach.

2.5 Method

In the initial stage of this thesis we considered alternative ways of gathering data, this was considered in case we would somehow find ourselves unable to contact desirable respondents crucial to our research. These alternatives were quickly dismissed as we realized that in choosing a qualitative research approach to finding out managers view on conflicts in connection with notices of dismissal we needed data gathered on a more personal level. Our intent was to examine managers in their environment and as such we needed to meet them. We therefore decided that interviews would be the best method of gathering the necessary data. According to Bryman and Bell (2005, p. 162), an interview could be structured in different ways. We chose a semi-structured interview as it leaves room for the researcher to ask follow up questions (Bryman and Bell, 2005, p. 595) should we have any further queries about the meaning or interpretation of our respondents' answers. A semi-structured interview would help us to further examine manager on a more personal and deeper level as it helps us structure the interview around the chosen topics of leadership, conflict and notices of dismissal, but also gives the respondents freedom to elaborate his or her answers. (Bryman and Bell, 2005, p. 595)

Apart from this semi-structured interview we also made use of a conflict handling assessing instrument called the TKI after each interview had ended. The TKI is a questionnaire-like tool that consists of a series of statements where the respondents are asked to assess themselves on a scale from one, being the lowest, to five, being the highest (see Appendix 1 or 2). The TKI is considered to be a behavioural assessing instrument and made to categorise respondents. It is not to be confused with a regular questionnaire and therefore not part of the first semi-structured interview and has therefore no influence on the structure or outcome of said interview.

2.6 Epistemology

According to Bryman and Bell (2005, p. 27), an epistemological query focuses on whether something can be considered viable information or not. Epistemology, the knowledge of information, deals as such with the viability and limitation of information. There are two major schools within the field of epistemology, the naturalistic and the hermeneutic points of viewing information or material. The naturalistic, which has been the dominating way in research for many a year, (Bryman and Bell, 2005, p. 27) advocates the use of naturalistic laws when interpreting information. Often meaning, only what can be perceived by the senses
should be considered valid information and that science should be objective in its observations. (Bryman and Bell, 2005, p. 27)

The hermeneutic school differs from the naturalistic in a socio observational way, meaning, it advocates the acknowledgement of a difference between what occurs in a social scene, with people as social actors, and what is observed without social influence. If one only studies from an objective point of view one will never fully understand the subjective truth of social action. (Bryman and Bell, 2005, p. 29)

As this thesis utilizes a qualitative approach with face to face semi-structured interviews as its main source of primary data it is important to keep in mind that the data gathered are, according to the usual qualitative approach, most likely a social construction. Meaning, notices of dismissal, conflict and leadership are very much a part of a social scene, if not only part of a social scene, where its social actors play a large part in shaping the environment. Therefore it is important for this research to be seen it for what it is and thus in context to its origin. This is why we will view the data gathered here in this research in the light of its social origin, utilizing a hermeneutic epistemological approach.
3. Chosen theories

“Leadership implies communication with other people, an interhuman exchange with individuals and groups with a purpose of reaching goals and solving tasks”

- Arne Maltén (1998, p. 104)

There is no shortage of leadership theories, old and new, simple and complex. Yet after almost fifty years of researching managers, they are still having trouble finding the “right one”. Some researchers however, claim there is no such thing as the “right one”, but that leadership have to be adapted to different situations and people, while some persist and claim they have found the “right one”, an ultimate non-situational leadership style.

While we gathered knowledge of several leadership theories we encountered literature and theories from both schools/points of view, some advocating situational leadership, and some advocating the “one best style”, a non-situational leadership theory.

We realized that both sets of opinions might have something to offer our research into how managers perceive and deal with conflict when faced with notices of dismissal, so in order to get a fair and balanced view we ultimately decided on two major leadership theories, one from each school.

Blake and Mouton’s Leadership Grid (1991), the leading theory among those that advocate “the one best style”. The theory uses a matrix model to identify five different leadership styles based on different degrees of concern for production and concern for people. (Bloisi, 2003. p. 577)

Hersey and Blanchard’s Situational Leadership Theory (1969), a leading theory among those that advocate situational leadership. This theory mixes different stages of leader relationship behaviour and leader task behaviour with followers readiness/maturity in order to adapt leadership to the current situation.

What is a conflict and how is it managed?

“Change means movement. Movement means friction. Only in the frictionless vacuum of a non-existent abstract world can movement or change occur without that abrasive friction of conflict.”

(Saul Alinsky)

Most authors seem to agree that conflict is impossible to avoid in most situations. Humans are complex beings and as such some are bound to see things in a different perspective than others. It is often from this simple, yet unavoidable fact, that conflict arises.

Some even argue that a lack of conflict at first glans is often a sign of lack of commitment of the people involved and perhaps even a sign oppression and silencing of opinions. (Svedberg, 2007, p. 226)

A conflict that goes unchecked can go from irritation between co-workers, difficulties to cooperate, to acute problems and destructive patterns in the workplace. Symptoms of conflict can be unhappiness, immature behaviour, co-workers not speaking and increased sick-days and will ultimately affect company production or service. It is therefore crucial that managers
have some way of dealing with issues before they can affect the organization. Wood and Bell argue that being strategically prepared of how to deal with conflict in a certain situation has implications on the quality of the outcome of said conflict. (Wood and Bell, 2008, p. 126).

According to Bloisi there are two types of issues that most people have in mind when faced with conflict involving others, concern for their own well-being (getting what they want) and “maintaining the kind of relationship they want with the other party”. (Bloisi, 2003, p. 445)

These concerns have been summed up using five types of conflict handling behaviour and was first theorized in a grid by Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H Kilmann in 1974, a grid developed in the aftermath of the Blake and Mouton's managerial grid.

We believe that by using the TKI, by Thomas and Kilmann, we are facilitating the categorization of the respondents answers and in some part the respondents themselves into different conflict-handling categories, thus facilitating analysis. Furthermore, by comparing the results of the TKI of Thomas and Kilmann and with the leadership, and their conflict handling approaches, by Blake and Mouton we are strengthening the validation of our thesis and its conclusions.

We will continue this theoretical part on conflict later on by explaining some of different types of conflict we believe will be of use in this thesis, as well as some common defence behaviours people revert to when faced with conflict.
3.1 Theories on types of conflicts

According to Maltén conflicts happen to every living being at one point of another. A climate that seems without conflict could hide symptoms of avoidance or oppression of opinion, which are signs of greater conflict. (Svedberg, 2007, p. 226)

As conflict can arise from different situations and circumstances, there are also considered to be different kinds of conflicts on different levels;

Conflicts on Intrapersonal level – are conflicts that occur within a person. Such a conflict could be from having to choose between two attractive or non-attractive choices or between two roles that the person possesses, say father and employee; “should I stay and work, here where I am needed, or should I go home and spend time with my family?”. (Svedberg, 2007, p. 228)

Conflicts on Group level – are conflicts that occur between people for various reasons. Examples on conflicts on group level could be conflicts of interest, communication conflicts or even pseudo conflicts, where two parties agree but have misunderstood each other to a points of argument, when in fact there is no conflict. A pseudo conflict can also occur where one party is not aware of the conflict. (Svedberg, 2007, p. 228)

Further examples of conflicts between people could be conflicts of values, such as ethical or moral dilemmas, political or ideological or badly defined and discussed tasks. Data conflicts, where information or situations could be misinterpreted by different parties. It could also be about what is considered to be allowed or not, legal or illegal, or even about what is considered to be a problem. In a conflict of interests different and opposing ideas, interests or goals does not coincide. A conflict of interest could in many cases also involve a conflict of values. (Svedberg, 2007, p. 228)

A personal conflict is when a conflict has been personified and the conflict is expressed as personal. It could for example be between an employee and a manager, or the husband and the mother in law, when two parties simply do not get along because of personal issues. A personal conflict is usually harder do deal with as it usually anchors in personal values rather than matters of opinion. In such cases it might be more difficult to approach the issue without insulting the individual at the same time. (Svedberg, 2007. p.228)

Conflicts on Organizational level – where the goals of interests of the organization does not coincide with reality. Such conflicts could be conflicts of loyalty, system conflicts or structure conflicts. (Svedberg, 2007, p. 228) As we find the intrapersonal level, conflict between people and group level (not between organizations) to be more of interest in this analysis, we have chosen to limit ourselves to those levels and not explain conflicts at the organisational level any further.
3.2 Theories on Conflict Behaviour

When faced with a conflict we all react differently. As most people see conflict as something bad and unhealthy our first reaction is usually to avoid the conflict, act as though it does not exist, does not matter, or behave as though we are not a part of it. Because such behavioural defence mechanisms are a common occurrence when we find ourselves in difficult situations with other people, according to Freud they are used to protect our inner selves, we have chosen to list some of the more common ones here. The following behavioural mechanisms are gathered from the field of socio psychology and are considered typical behaviours for any person that has been blamed as the ‘scape goat’, or ‘wrong doer’, in a conflict situation (Maltén, 1998, p. 147):

- **Regression** – a behavioural defensive mechanism associated with immature and primitive behaviour. We act out, yell, stomp our feet in the ground and act the child. Sometimes we revert to a helpless state, totally dependent on other people.
- **Projection** – a defensive mechanism that focuses on projecting our own problems and faults on others. The theory is that it is somehow easier to see problems in others then in ourselves. “I’m not immature, you are!”
- **Overcompensation** – when in an effort to conceal our weaknesses and bad sides we overcompensate by showing off. Bold and daring actions and bragging are typical signs of overcompensation.
- **Repression** – as a group or individual we are prone to not admitting, or showing to others, that the group is facing a problem or conflict. We tend to forget, repress or trivialize any issue.
- **Displacement** – we let our feelings and problems or concerns affect someone else. Someone not really involved in the issue at hand. A difficult family issue could, for example, be displaced and we bring with us any hostile feelings from home to work and co-workers or vice versa.
- **Rationalization** – with a superficial argument we explain our own bad conduct or failure. A bad day at work is explained by “I slept badly last night”, even though we might have slept just fine. When turned down by a date it is explained with “nah, she was kinda weird anyway”.
- **Identification** – in an effort to fit in to the norm, or group, we act like everyone else, even if we don’t relate to the behaviour. If scared a person will act tough to avoid suspicion because it gives us a sense of comfort.
- **Reaction building** – to create a false reaction or façade opposite to our real feeling. We make false friends of our ‘enemies’ and smile towards them. This is a way to avoid suspicion and conflict and to diminish our own aggression.
- **Intellectualizing** – instead of showing our true feeling we distance ourselves, separating our feelings from our intellect and our thoughts. (Maltén, 1998, p. 148) An example would be, if someone who has lost a family member in an accident and still has difficulties talking about it would coldly state; “yes, I suppose I do feel some apprehension talking about it.”

According to Maltén, the knowledge of these different behaviour mechanisms could be a valuable tool when analysing a conflict as it helps us to understand why some people act the way they do when confronted in some situations. (Maltén, 1998, p. 148)
3.3 The TKI

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Management-of-Differences (MODE) or Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Management Instrument, (TKI) is, according to some, a widely used instrument when measuring peoples disposition toward different types of behaviour when faced with conflict. It is used both in empirical research and for training purposes. According to Womack and Shell the TKI (or MODE) is the most widely used in the world when it comes to assessing conflict styles. (Womack, 1988, p. 321; Shell, 2001, p. 161)

It measures the respondents conflict behaviour on two dimensions – cooperativeness and assertiveness – by ranking their answers from a series of statements. (Some of which are used by the authors of this thesis in their interviews of the respondents.) The TKI uses a grid based on the earlier works of Blake and Mouton and their managerial grid, and five main character types of conflict handling, much like Blake and Mouton’s five leadership theories, to help assess the respondents conflict handling behaviour.

The five different types of conflict handling in the TKI are:

- Competing – A competing person fights hard for his or her own interests, sometimes at others expense, with little or no desire to cooperate with others. This behaviour is sometimes useful when protecting ones interests against other competing people or when unwanted decisions must be made. (Bloisi, 2003, p. 446)
- Accommodating – An accommodating person acts the opposite way, he or she is very accommodating towards others but has at the same time low interest in his or her own interests. (Maltén A, 1998, p. 182) Useful when the needs of the other party is more important than ones own. (Bloisi, 2003, p. 446)
- Avoiding – This conflict management style is about avoiding interactions of all kinds. The interests of others is as uninteresting as the interest of ones’ self and both are best left not pursued. This person avoids conflict for different reasons, from not wanting to disturb the harmony, to simply not caring or being afraid of conflict altogether. (Bloisi, 2003, p. 446)
- Collaborating – With this style a person strives to find a solution that satisfies both parties, combining assertive behaviour with the will to cooperate. This person does not avoid conflict like the one above, but confronts it. (Bloisi, 2003, p. 446; Maltén, 1998, p.182)
- Compromising – This style falls between all the other styles and the party in question does not win or loose but gives to take. Here, the differences are split to find a
mutually acceptable solution, a middle-ground, for the parties involved. (Bloisi, 2003, p. 447; Maltén, 1998, p.182)

According to Shell, it is not uncommon for respondents to display more than one conflict style as their main choice, where one is more dominant than the other. It is also not uncommon for respondents to show dislike toward some styles of conflict handling according to their final score. (Shell, 2001, p. 166)

3.4 Earlier research on the TKI

Since the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Management Instrument is such a widely used instrument, and has been during the last thirty years since it first appeared, it is hard to give a fair account of its use. It has been used in everything from teaching conflict resolution classes to personnel conflict training within health care and industry, and already in 1988 its many uses and properties had been examined by fifteen different dissertations. (Womack, 1988, p. 336)

According to Womack, the respondents’, or participants’, pre-existing expectations of a specific conflict outcome could alter their TKI score. When research was done in the public school system principals with positive expectations of conflict outcome used ‘collaborate’ and ‘compromising’ attitudes more often, while those with negative expectations tended to avoid conflict altogether (Womack, 1988, p. 337). This is similar to the results found by Zarankin, stating that prepared goals tied to conflict outcomes, has implications on how a person chooses to handle a specific situation. (Zarankin, 2007, p. 167)

Further research of the TKI in the field of gender differences among students has shown some considerable differences, but it is also unclear if those differences could be explained by the fact that the TKI has a tendency to produce more socially desirable responses from respondents than what is actually true (Womack, 1988, p. 338). A respondent might simply choose the most appropriate answer rather than telling the truth about his or her preferences. From research of organizational managers the results showed that the higher one went on the corporate hierarchy, and the more power the respondent had, the more likely he or she was to use more competitive styles of conflict resolution compared to those among the support or supervisory personnel in this research. This might also have been the case when examining the effects of experience, the longer the experience the higher score towards self interests, though this study showed mixed results. (Womack, 1988, p. 338)

However, Womack also states that most results gained from using the TKI should be scrutinized if the research is not performed correctly, since unknown situational variables affecting a persons conflict handling differ too much from situation to situation to be reliable at all times. (Womack, 1988, p. 345)
3.5 Blake and Mouton and the Leadership Grid

In 1964 Robert Blake and Jane Mouton published “The Managerial Grid”, a theory that promoted two attributes to leadership. One where the leader, or manager, is more focused on the results of the task in hand, and one where the leader, or manager, was more concerned for the well being of he’s/her co-workers. If implementing only the first path, the manager’s first and only concern would be sales figures, production quotas or completion time etc. The well being of the workers is of little or no concern, and when implementing only the other side, having much higher concern for people rather than production, the production would come in second and thus suffer and fall behind.

The idea behind the theory is that the two attributes would be measured on a scale from one, being the lowest, to nine, being the highest value. The two scales where combined in a matrix, or grid, called “The Managerial Grid” or simply “The Grid”, which according to Blake and Mouton would show how these two ideas interact (Blake and Mouton, 1969, p. 60). Since 1964 the theory of the grid has not changed much, containing the same two attributes and scales, but in later years it has also come to be known as “The Leadership Grid” (Bloisi, 2003, p. 577) (see fig. 2).

As seen in the picture above, at the points of intersection of the scales are theories of leadership styles, where five of them are considered to be more typical than the others. According to Blake and Mouton these are leadership styles that every manager has in mind when dealing with people. (Blake and Mouton, 1969, p. 60).

3.5.1 The 1,9 Leadership style – Country Club Management

1,9-motto: “Don’t say anything if you can’t say anything friendly.” (Blake and Adams, 1991, p. 80)

(see fig. 2)
People are the company's most important tool and if the people aren’t happy they won’t be productive. This kind of leadership style has strong focus on the employees’ well being where
nothing is more important, not even work. In fact, work is far less important. It is believed and argued that when effort is spent on comraderie and good will towards all, employees will feel more motivated and thus become more productive. But even though this argument might seem logical it has problems with productivity as happiness and friendship are the real goals. A manager of this leadership style believes that the goals of the company and the interests of its employees do not coincides and if these interests are ever put up against each other, the well being of the people will always come first. What drives such leadership is the fear of rejection and the will to please others. (Blake and Adams, 1991, p. 78)

Conflict management 1,9
This kind of manager hates conflict as he or she all too often has a tendency to take it personally. A conflict of interests is seen as a personal rejection and is therefor better avoided. To prevent conflict the manager often showers the employees with praise on hope that no animosity or conflict will arise. (Blake and Adams, 1991, p. 79) If a conflict is already occurring it is best to simply agree with the other party, that way the risk of rejection is minimized. (Blake and Adams, 1991, p. 82)

Conflict style behaviour analysis 1,9
The kind of conflict behaviour that Blake and Adams (1991, p. 79) is describing could perhaps be seen as repressing by the manager in an attempt to trivialize the problem, or even regression to a helpless state or show a false façade (reaction building) where agreeing and giving in to others seems like the best way to avoid the problem.

3.5.2 The 9,1 Leadership style – Authority management

9,1-motto: “Produce, or die!” (Blake and Adams, 1991, p. 56)

(see fig. 2)
The 9,1-manager is driven by fear of failure and the will to dominate. As far as this manager is concerned people need to be controlled in order to do what they are told. If employees are not supervised and controlled they would not know what to do, there would be nothing done and the whole company would soon descend into chaos. The lesser the human element is involved in the process the better it is to achieve company goals as such things as cooperation is mainly a waist of time. With such attitude towards employees this manager has a hard time getting along with others and sees employees mainly as being there to implement the managers decisions.

However, such a controlling environment can also create fear among employees, to such a degree that true feelings, failure or disagreement is hidden from the manager.

Conflict management 9,1
When instructions are given as precisely as from such a manager there should be no problem. If however, an issue between the manager and an employee arises on how to resolve a certain situation the employee almost always ends up being steam rolled into submission. Its the managers way, or the high way. (Blake and Adams, 1991, p. 61)

Conflict style behaviour analysis 9,1
Regressing to angry outbursts and yelling seems to be this managers way of handling conflicts, as is not wanting to face a problem by wanting, and claiming, to have everything
under control. This behaviour is also similar to projecting, blaming someone else for creating problems even when the manager is equally at fault.

### 3.5.3 The 1,1 Leadership style – Impoverished management

1,1-motto; “Sorry, it’s not my problem.” (Blake and Adams, 1991, p. 116)

(see fig. 2)

At the base of the two scales, were the two fields meet (1,1), is a theory pervaded by ambivalence. Through an impoverished leadership style, where a manager has no concern for either production and task assignments or the employees he works with, the manager sees most forms of interaction with others as something that is best left alone. Concern for people stretches only as far as trying not to be in the way and letting employees do their job and make their own decisions as long as it doesn’t lead to conflict. Matters of production is only maintained through least amount of effort, enough to keep his or her job. The manager has virtually become one with the inventory and has little concern for anything else but to stay neutral. (Blake and Adams, 1991, p. 116)

**Conflict management (1,1)**

Where matters of conflict are concerned; what is left alone and not talked about can not grow to become a problem. The impoverished manager will want to avoid interaction with others as it is considered a source of conflict. Conflict itself is considered to be bothersome and never constructive. Information flow from above is handed down to employees word for word so as to not appear as the proverbial bottle neck and attract unwanted attention, as is information going up. (Blake and Adams, 1991, p.116) When conflict do arises the 1,1-manager will go through the motion of appearing to do something about it when in fact he will not. Unsubstantial answers and statements to questions and confrontations are this managers speciality, anything that ends the discussion. Any complaints are answered with comments aimed to diminish its meaning and sweep it under the rug. (Blake and Adams, 1991, p. 116)

**Conflict style behaviour analysis 1,1**

Here there exists a variety of different conflict behaviours in order to deal with conflict. Most likely those behaviours that help avoid conflict or cast blame on someone else as not to draw attention to his or her faults and risk being caught not caring. This manager is most likely to repress any issue and not admitting there is a problem, and if it is, it is not this managers problem but someone else's. Projecting, repression and reaction building are some of the behaviours used to cast blame on someone else, trivialize the problem or showing a false reaction as someone who cares, when in fact he does not and has no intention of dealing with anything.
3.5.4 The 5,5 Leadership style – Middle-of-the-Road management

5,5-motto; “You gotta give to get.” (Blake and Adams, 1991, p. 141)

(see fig. 2)
This manager is all about compromise and coming up with a mutual solution for all. Eccentric and extreme methods only lead to problems and conflict. You have to give a little to take a little. It is also important to fit in and not stick out, to be one of the group and do what others do. The manager will strive to be popular and fear being ridiculed and ostracised, his or her interests are tied to the group and driven by the need for acknowledgement from its members.

Conflict management 5,5
This manager realizes that organizations are not without conflicts, and it is the managers responsibility to avoid them, either by working on employee relations and seeing to it that any future issues is handled with pre made and strict processes, thus freeing the manager from any fault as “this is the way we do things around here” (Blake and Adams, 1991, p.144), or by not admitting to any unpopular standpoint. The main process of dealing with conflicts that has arisen is to compromise and find a common ground or in worst case scenario be willing to “agree to disagree”. This compromising way however, can be an obstacle for productivity as no real progress is made.

Conflict style behaviour analysis 5,5
It seems that the behaviours that is described by Blake and Adams in this 5,5 leadership style is similar to behaviours such as Repression and Identification described by Arne Maltén. Repression, meaning that the manager is willing to lie to oneself and others to conceal the fact that there is conflict, everyone is getting along fine. Identification with the group is as mentioned an important part of this managers leadership style, together with the desire to be popular and the fear of being ridiculed.

3.5.5 The 9,9 Leadership style – Team Management

9,9-motto; “Are you with me on this?” (Blake and Adams, 1991, p. 211)

(see fig. 2)
This leadership style can be found at the top right corner of the Grid and is characterized by high concern for employees as well as a high concern for work related tasks. However, this leadership style is the only style among the Grid-styles that doesn’t see the two concern-scales as opposites of each other. Instead, this style advocates that the best results are achieved through active participation by all. This is grounded in a relationship between people and work permeated by mutual trust and respect. This does not mean that everyone has to agree but at least be heard before final decisions are made.(Blake and Adams, 1991, p. 189) According to Blake and Adams, this style is only applicable where there is a leader that has the means of motivating employees to achieve the extraordinary goals. What drive this manager is a sense of fulfilment through contribution and the fear of becoming selfish. (Blake and Adams, 1991, p. 189)

Conflict management 9,9
Once again this leadership style is unique as it is the only style that does not avoid the conflicts but addresses them head on. Although conflict in itself is often perceived as negative, practitioners of this style have a tendency to see conflict more as something that can be turned into positive things if handled right. A solution can be found if everyone involved acts in a mature way and in the interest of doing good. All thoughts that could help solve a problem should be aired. Facts, feelings or attitudes, nothing should be left unspoken so that nothing can be misunderstood, the manager takes time to listen to ides from all involved. A 9,9-manager also realizes the importance of being understood correctly and is therefore careful when expressing goals and expectation, so that none will feel disappointed or betrayed if something does not turn out as planned. (Blake and Adams, 1991, p. 192)

It is also this managers belief that it is only by clearly expressing our intentions, goals and expectation that we can make ourselves understood by others and thus avoid being ’stepped on’. (Blake and Adams, 1991, p. 194)

**Conflict behaviour 9,9**

As managers of this leadership style isn’t trying to avoid conflict there are no typical conflict behaviours that can be directly applied. The conflict behaviours described by Maltén (1998, p. 147), are mainly applicable when the involved are trying to avoid a confrontation or conflict. However, according to Maltén, we could all fall back on these defence behaviours as we are all people. This of course also includes managers applying the 9,9-style, though they are not typical for the style itself.

### 3.6 Earlier research on Blake and Mouton’s Leadership Grid

Ever since Blake and Mouton published their theory on the managerial grid in 1964 a stream of studies have been performed to compare everything from gender to experience differences in health care as well as corporate business. As more and more cultures blend and mix the concern to solve conflict has also risen in order for this multiculturalism to thrive. (Holt and De Vore, 2005, p. 166) According to Holt and De Vore (2005, 166), in order to solve these cultural originated conflicts we need to have a deeper understanding of cultural background. This in turn might lead to a better work environment. (Holt and De Vore, 2005, p. 165) When discussing earlier findings, she also states that grid-testing of conflict handling showed substantial differences between cultures. According to Holt, people of western cultures are in general more individualistic in nature, and have a tendency to utilize more ‘forcing’ (a.k.a competing) styles in their conflict handling than more collectivistic cultures. (Holt and De Vore, 2005, p. 165) Gender differences have also been measured showing women as having a lower tendency to utilize forcing styles compared to men in general. (Holt and De Vore, 2005, p. 165) Further findings among research of Blake and Mouton's grid applied to power relationships in corporations pointed to an apprehension to confront superiors in any way that seemed challenging. While superiors apparently did not feel any such apprehension towards employees in order to meet company production goals. (Holt and De Vore, 2005, p. 173)

The managerial Grid by Blake and Mouton have also been used in training programs throughout many types of businesses. Although its excessive use around the world during many years, there have been contradictory results from studies on the outcome on such training programs. According to Keller, (1978, p. 354), no discernible difference could be seen after the implementation of the Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid Seminar Training Program. Keller argued however, that a lack of involvements from the managerial side of the
company limited the impact of the program, and that a lack of commitment and flawed “follow-up and implementation efforts” contributed to its poor effects.

### 3.7 Situational leadership

Hersey and Blanchard created a new look at leadership styles in 1969 (Claude and Graeff, 1997, p. 1). They founded the hypothesis that there is no “best way” to act as a leader. Since we are all different, we behave and act differently when facing even the same situation. To know how others perceive you and to analyse yourself is something that many people find difficult as a leader. Therefore, Hersey and Blanchard defined a leadership style as “a leaders’ pattern of behaviour as perceived by others” (Hersey, 2005, p. 29). According to the complexity of analysing yourself this definition seems quite appropriate. It is essential for the organization that the leader is aware of how he or she is behaving towards its employees. Otherwise, unnecessary and pointless situations might occur, for example disagreements or conflicts.

![Figure 3. Situational Leadership](www.holyspiritinteractive.net/columns/stevehemler/lifeslittlelearnings/diagram01.jpg)

Furthermore, Hersey and Blanchard decided to divide the leadership style into two subheadings; directive behaviour and supportive behaviour. They argued that the leader could act on different levels within these subheadings. Directive behaviour means that the leader is focused on completing a task. This way of acting includes telling what, how, when and where the task should be done and it also clarifies who is responsible for the task. This can be on both an individual and group level. The supportive behaviour, on the other hand, is based on a two-way, or in some cases multi-way, communication. This angle is more targeted towards listening, encouraging, facilitating, explanatory and supportive behaviour. Depending on your personality and what kind of leader you are, you will use these aspects on different levels. Some leaders prefer to use a high level of directive behaviour and a low level of supportive behaviour while others prefer to act the exact opposite way. In our thesis we decided to compare the leadership style with the way that the leader handles a conflict. In our research
we could not find any facts that combined these two concepts. Therefore, the subheadings about conflict behaviour and style are based on our own assumptions and on hypothetical situations. To get a clearer link between the leadership style and the conflict behaviour we also chose to tie these concepts to examples using groups of people as we believe it will be easier for the reader to follow our philosophy. (Svedberg, 2007, p. 322 ff).

In our thesis we decided to compare the leadership style with the way that the leader handles a conflict. In our research we could not find any discussion combining Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership with conflict. However, we finally found a theory called FIRO that handles both conflict management and leadership styles. Therefore, we considered it useful in our thesis since we find the basic theory similar to this one. So, the conflict style is based on FIRO while the leadership styles are based on the theory of situational leadership.

The theory of Fundamental, Interpersonal, Relationship and Orientation (FIRO) was founded in the 1950’s in connection with the Korean War. Will Schutz, the founder, study the group effectiveness on the U.S Navy warships since they were interested in why it differed between the groups on the ship. In his research he found three different stages that groups go through when working together; need for inclusion, need for control and need for affection. (Svedberg, 2007, p. 187-188)

When it comes to conflict management he argued that in the first stage, need for inclusion, the group is focused on getting to know each other which means that conflicts are rare. This also depends on the fact that the members have not started to express their own point of view yet. (Maltén, 1998, p. 81). In the second phase the group is starting to develop their different roles and to have their own opinion. This opens up for conflicts since members are now taking initiative to actually to something about their own feelings and ideas. In the third and last stage the group is now comfortable with each other and has started to accept each other and find a common thinking. This make conflicts rare even though they do not always agree with each other since they have found a way to deal with conflicts. (Svedberg, 2007, p. 188-189)

Since we chose to take advantage of conflict management we decided not to discuss the leadership styles that are included in this model.

According to what level a leader chooses to use these approaches, Hersey and Blanchard created four basic leadership styles that are combined with the individual competence in which we included conflict management;

**3.7.1 Leadership style 1 (S1) – Telling**

This style has its main basis on directive behaviour and the supporting way of acting is of lesser importance. This leadership style is instructive and the major task is to guide the individual or the group in what, when, where, how and who is going to fulfil the task. (Hersey, 2005, p. 36). When an employee is at a low level of competence (level 1) this type of leadership is useful. By giving clear rules and directives the employee will be the most effective. For example when starting a new project that employees do not hold prior experience of. (Svedberg, 2007, p. 324).

As the leadership is based on giving directives instead of coaching and motivating, and the level of experience is assumed to be low we can describe the group to have low competence.
When the recently assembled group starts to work together we can assume that the members of the group are a bit reclusive. This means that they claim to agree with each other, even though they may not, all to avoid conflict, and we can therefore categorize the group as being in the ‘identification stage’ of team work. The members try hard to fit the norm and act like everyone else as one must not stand out from the rest of the crowd (Svedberg, 2007, p. 188). As this behaviour supports the ignoring of any conflict issue that might arise, covering it up and acting as though everything is fine, one could compare this to the repressing conflict behaviour described earlier by Maltén (1998, p. 148).

3.7.2 Leadership style 2 (S2) – Selling

In some cases, it is of great importance that the leader gives clear rules but also that he or she, combined with this behaviour, is supportive and is available for employees. When an employee is at competence level 2 he or she needs the manager to, at a high level, both act in a directive and supportive way (Hersey, 2005, p. 37). This leadership style could be applied when an individual or a group have been working on a project but is starting to lose their motivation or if they do not have enough knowledge to continue the task.

As the group has worked together for a while they also start to gain knowledge of each other and to have their own point of views. The leader is acting in both a directive and a supportive way to help the group in their development. When the group starts to feel more comfortable with each other they begin to express their different opinions at a higher level which will probably make conflict occur within the group. (Svedberg, 2007, p. 188). How you act in a conflict situation differs between individuals however. According to Maltén (1998, p. 148), it can be anything from acting like a child (regression), try to protect our selves by putting the blame on others (projection) or we lay or problems on someone else (displacement) etcetera.

3.7.3 Leadership style 3 (S3) – Participating

Leadership style 3 has its focus on the supportive way of behaving and do not pay that much attention to the directive way of acting. The competence level is increasing which means that the employees are now able to make some decisions on their own. The leader is focusing on trying to support the employees in their decision making process. (Svedberg, 2007, p. 325). This phase is more towards making the employees feel comfortable in their working-roles, comparing to leadership style 1 and 2 which has its benchmark on directing the employees. Leadership style 3 can be used when leading workers on a medium level since they already have the competence how to solve a certain task (Svedberg, 2007, p. 325).

In this scenario the group is making progress. They make their own decisions and the leaders’ role becomes smaller and smaller. In S2 (Selling) leadership style conflicts are not something unusual, it is a fact that the employees starts to recognize each others differences. In this style the group members have passed that stage and conflicts are now increasing. (Svedberg, 2007, p. 188-189). People might still use excuses like “I slept really bad” to try to make it sound better when a special task is not delivered on time, rationalization (Maltén, 1998, p. 148). But in a bigger perspective, conflicts have mainly subsided.
3.7.4 Leadership style 4 (S4) – Delegating

When the competence level is high there is no need for the employer to act neither in a directive nor in a supportive way. Therefore, this leadership style is based on faith and trust towards employees. Here, the leader’s main task is to encourage employees and to guide them on a low level. The leader has started to trust its employees and giving them the opportunity to make their own decisions. Since the employees are now more self confident they are not in need of a high level directive. When a group or an individual is more skilled this kind of leadership is appropriate. (Hersey, 2005, p. 60). In this last leadership style the group has enough knowledge for most situations and they are also aware of each others reactions and behaviours in most of the situations that they face. Conflict is something that is hardly mentioned, the employees are comfortable in their own roles and the work should go smoothly. (Svedberg, 2007, p. 189). What, on the other hand, might be the reason for conflict to arise could be if the organization has to reorganize or change its culture. This is further discussed in the analysis part.

These four leadership styles are based on the fact that one has to be able to categorize ones employees to achieve optimal effectiveness, according to Paul Hersey (2005, p. 48). What level of direction and supportive behaviour should be used for this person? Which leadership style will be the most effective in this situation? To be able to use this situational leadership theory one needs to be aware of these questions. Imagine if you, as a leader, did not have enough information about your employees. This would, most likely, lead to negative results for the individual or maybe for a whole group. If an employee has the 4th level of competence and you are applying leadership style 1 (telling), this might have devastating consequences. The employee might believe that you consider him or her to be untalented or stupid. But on the other hand, if the employer has totally control and knowledge about its employees the work will hopefully go smoothly and without any problems. (Hersey, 2005, p. 55ff). Another dilemma might occur when the leader gets the wrong impression about the situation and advance too fast or too slow between the different levels. Either the employees will not be ready to move to the next level or they are more talented than the leader realized and they will turn out to be bored because the lack of advancing. In both cases the motivation and effectiveness will decrease within the group and in some cases it might even stop the progress of development (Svedberg, 2007, p. 325).

In this theory no step is more right or wrong than the others. What kind of leadership style 1 (telling) chooses might differ between occasions. The competence and knowledge always differ according to Hersey which is why the leadership style has to be seen from a detached point of view. There is no best way to act as a leader. Hersey also argue that if a manager behaves in the same way in every situation he or she will not reach the optimal level of effectiveness with the group. (Hersey, 2005, p. 48).

According to this discussion about Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory we can establish that it is essential for employer’s to be aware and to have enough knowledge about its employees to be able to behave in the right way to achieve the best results.
3.8 Earlier research on Hersey and Blanchard – Situational Leadership

Paul Hersey and Kenneth H. Blanchard’s theory “the situational leadership” has, through the years, been useful within many different aspects and angles. We believe that since this model is appropriate to adapt into all different kinds of business styles, company structures and cultures it is not a coincidence that it has become popular, and even a base for many companies in their development and survival on the market.

“The theory has been incorporated in leadership training programs representing over 400 of the Fortune 500 companies, and over one million managers and supervisors from a wide variety of institutions are annually exposed to the tenets of the theory.” (Fernandez, 1997, p. 67)

Even though it is quite clear that the theory is used by many different kinds of business lines all over the world, there are studies who claim that there is a lack of practical usefulness. One study within the U.S Military Academy argued that they could not find significance between followers readiness and maturity level, which did not yield clear evidence of a predicted interaction between leader style and follower attributes. (Robert P. Et al, 2006, p. 407) A second one, concerning adapted leadership in Taiwan, claimed that successful companies have a greater benefit from the situational leadership than the unsuccessful companies because adapting leaders seems to appear within these companies. They also claimed that this does not mean that a company's’ successfullness relies in their adapting leadership style. (Silverthorne, 2001, p. 399). Third, a theory seen from the across-job perspective made the conclusion that they found the situational leadership easy to adapt since it is straightforward, appealing and easy to learn. However, the criticism against the theory was mainly that they claimed it to be hard to recommend, mostly in textbook and classrooms, because of its lack of validity. (Fernandez, 1997, p. 82)
4. Practical method

4.1 Secondary sources

The secondary data includes the scientific research, market surveys and professional information that are not mainly gathered for our thesis. We use this research and their analyzes as a part of our work because it would waste our time and it would bring high economic costs for all the different tools that we would be in need of, but most of all we do not have the resources and the knowledge that we need to make this within the time schedule. Why do something that has already been done and not use the already existing information? (Bryman and Bell, 2005, p. 230).

4.1.1 Data collection from secondary sources

Since we decided to focus on both leadership styles and conflict management we had a lot of research to investigate. Mainly, we have examined the information that we found significant in our thesis. By using the terms; Leadership, leadership styles, conflict management and conflict styles in the University database we could select existing articles within our two main topics. According to the high number of hits we found it quite hard to choose between the different articles. It was not easy to find the right sources for our thesis but after searching for a long time we finally picked out the articles that we found most important.

However, we found several books that were written by the founder of the theories that we use as a base for our thesis. These books have been very useful for us considering the fact that we believe them to be reliable which has a great significance thought our work.

In the current financial situation there are a lot of discussion going on in media about notice of dismissal and terminations. Considering our restriction to notice of dismissal we have been able to keep us updated on a daily bases and be aware of the current market situation. This facilitated our search for respondents. We searched in newspaper articles on the Internet to get in touch with potential respondents.

Through our thesis we mainly used nonfiction, scientific articles and the Internet to gather significant information. In the beginning of our work, in the problem background, we chose to make use of the nonfiction information that we had. We rank this as data with high reliability since we borrowed our books from the university library, which we believe to be trustworthy. Later on in our work we used research from scientific articles and the Internet to get a wider view. We still used the nonfiction as a basis but we chose to extend our approaches by means of scientific articles (that we got from the web of science on the university library website) and the Internet. According to the high amount of research we decided to focus on two major theories within situational leadership and non-situational leadership style.

4.1.2 Critique, secondary data

First of all, according to our problem formulation, we consider the main area quite wide. The discussion has been going on for decades and it is developing all the time. Especially the topics leadership styles and conflict management has a very long background to take into account. Therefore, some of the non-fiction books may not be the newest on the market but on the other hand, considering that our choice of theories had not developed much during the past decades, we did not find it a problem. Furthermore, the vast amount of literature available made it hard for us to find the most relevant articles and non-fiction. The articles are
too many and the topics are too wide to be able to be aware of it all. Also, since we have a ten weeks deadline, we do not have enough time to search through all the information available.

There is always a dilemma with the reliability when it comes to secondary data. The sources that we chose to gather information from may not be written by the founder of the theory which might have caused a misunderstanding when interpreting the theory. The second author may have interpreted the theory wrong which will in turn cause deficiencies in our thesis. That is why we have collect information from different sources and not only one, to make the reliability as high as possible. We also focused our thesis on theories and founders that are well known to increase the reliability.

As mentioned, we found newspaper articles that we used from the Internet. We searched on google.com to find them. We are aware of the fact that google.com is considered a source with a quite low reliability. We are also conscious about that the articles may reflect the authors own ideas, but since we only used the articles to get information about contacting respondents we do not see any problem with this.

### 4.2 Primary sources

Unlike the secondary sources the primary sources includes the data that we came in contact with during this thesis (Bell, 2005, p. 125). It is the statistics and facts that were produce according to our specific purpose and aim. Since this is a qualitative study we used interviews as a primary source to collect information that would facilitate our work and make it possible to determine conclusions. We focused on finding as much primary sources as possible since we believe that the risk for misunderstandings and misinterpretations are reduced if you compare to secondary sources, where there might be a risk that the researcher has formed an incorrect view of the theory, which will in turn make our view distorted.

One thing that you should be aware of when you are in contact with primary sources is the fact that you might interpret it wrong and therefore make false assumptions (Bell, 2005, p. 127). We had this in mind when doing our research and making our conclusions.

#### 4.2.1 Data collection from primary sources

Since this thesis is based on a qualitative research we also collected primary data through interviews. We interviewed five managers at three different companies in Umeå. According to Alan Bryman and Emma Bell there are two different types of interviews; the unstructured and the semi-structured. If the interviewer use memorandum as a way to ask questions and does not have any detailed plan or a special way to precede in the interview it is of unstructured character The semi-structured way, on the other hand, means that the interviewer has prepared questions and has a special approach, but can still ask supplementary questions if they find it necessary When our interviews took place we had prepared questions within our main subjects that we wanted to focus on but we still asked supplementary questions a few times to get the respondent to answer in a more specific way. Therefore, we used the semi-structured character when interviewing our respondents. (Bryman and Bell, 2005, p. 363)

#### 4.2.2 Selecting respondents

To be able to solve our main question, we found it essential to carefully examine our respondents. The respondents’ skills and knowledge is important for our future research
within this topic. If the information that we need is out of reach, our result would not represent the main focus in this thesis. The selection process is therefore of great importance for our work. (Bjereld, 2007, p. 86).

In our thesis we focused on getting a deeper and broader understanding of the topic which is why we did not find it central to find representativeness in our sample. (Bryman, 2005, p. 138). In a random sample you have to ensure the possibility to generalize the outcomes. In our thesis we did not find this feasible according to the low amount of interviews. Therefore, this thesis is based on a non-random sample which means that we, as researchers, have the right to select the respondent that we find helpful in our study. (Johansson, 1993, p. 95).

When selecting our respondents we considered their position within the company. We also wanted to reach managers with plenty years of experience so that they had time to create their own view of leadership, conflict management and notice of dismissal. We believe that this will, in turn, lead to a greater reliability.

We started the selection process by using the information that we got from media lately about which companies that had been forced to make cut backs and announce notices of dismissal to their employees. We collected a variety of leaders and called them to get an interview. We contacted companies both with and without reach in case we would not get enough interviews within Umeå. However, we focused on the companies within reach in the first place and managed to get five interviews. All of the respondents wanted to be anonymous which is why we do not mention any names neither on the company nor the respondents. We gave the respondents the opportunity to choose the time and place that was best for them. All of them ended up to be within Umeå. Two at a manufacturing company of forest machines, two at an internationally known car manufacturing company that also manufacture trucks and one at a company manufacturing driver-seats for the previous car manufacturing company. Taking the size of both the manufacturers of forest machines and the company producing cars and trucks into account we did not consider it a problem that we had four of our interviews at two companies. We believe that our respondents would not share the same opinion or would not be affected by each other since they did not work at the same department. To get a broader view we decided to interview managers on different levels. In this way, the managers would probably have different point of views and different experiences. We interviewed two local managers, one production leader, one plant manager and one assistant manager that had been involved in the latest notice of dismissal within the company. All of the respondents were approximately middle-aged and possessed experience in management ranging between 17 and 34 years. We consider this long experience to be essential for our thesis according to our aim. We believe that the more experience and knowledge the respondents have, the more reliable they are likely to be. Since our aim is to determine how leaders handle their leadership style and conflict style when facing notice of dismissal we focused on companies with a resent experience of notice of dismissal. It turned out to be five companies within the same line of business. Our believe is that the specific line of business is more exposed to the financial crisis and therefore had to dismiss employees. This might have an effect on our thesis since they may share the same points of views according to their industry. However, we do not consider this effect as essential and will not pay attention to it but we want the reader to be aware that we had this in mind.

Before the interviews we made up a questionnaire so that we would have some kind of template to start with. We had the questionnaire as a base but we also asked a couple of supplementary questions when we found it necessary. After we put the questionnaire together we made a mock-interview where we examined, approximately, how long time one interview
would take (we got an approximate time of 40 minutes). This, in turn, made us realize whether the questions were hard to understand or if there was some question that was unclear. The final interviews took place at the respondents’ office or in a workroom of their choosing. After the interviews we send every respondent its transliteration so that they would be aware of what might be written in the thesis and also to create a trust between us and the respondent.

### 4.2.3 Implementation

Since we are focusing towards learning and understanding within the topic we ended up using a non-random sample. When we formulated our interview questions we had in mind that they had to make it as easy as possible for us to use the responses when finishing our work. We also wanted the questions to clearly converge with our main questions in chapter one. This would facilitate our work but it would also make it easier to explain answers for the reader and make this thesis easy to follow and to understand. We decided to divide the questions into different topics; General questions, leadership style, conflict management and notice of dismissal. Moreover we adapted a few questions towards situational leadership and some of them against one-best-way leadership. We posted the questionnaire in this way to be able to make the empirical data and the analysis as transparent as possible, but also to distinguish different kinds of leadership and conflict styles. Some of this interview structure and its queries were influenced by a previous thesis about conflict within health care from the University of Gothenburg by Sara Andersson and Maria Halvarsson, (2008).

### 4.2.4 Critique, primary sources

Since this kind of study requires much preparatory work it will make the amount of samples less than in a quantitative approach but on the other hand it might result in a wider research because as an interviewer you have the possibility to extend the questions (Bell, 2005, p. 158). When using primary sources, such as interviews, there are several effects that you have to be aware of, as an interviewer, to make as few mistakes as possible. During the interview there might be some reactions or behaviours that could influence the respondent. For example if the interviewer react to a certain answer or if he or she is asking a leading question. (Bell, 2005, p. 94) Other factors that might influence the respondent could be; how the interviewer uses the language when asking questions, if the interviewer has a strong connection to the topic or letting the results be affected by your values. These factors can be both conscious and unconscious Sometimes you might shape a question to your own advantage without knowing it. (Bell, 2005, p. 167)

It is important to take all this issues into account when using a qualitative approach to be able to critically examine whether the information that you get from respondents is reliable or not. We believe that we have been considering these dilemmas and would therefore define our interviews as reliable. By letting the respondents choose where the interview should take place we believe that it made them more relaxed which might have a positive effect in their way of answering questions. We decided to have one interviewer as the main interviewer to facilitate for the respondent. The other person were able to ask supplementary questions if needed. We also switched interviewer to avoid ‘language’ and ‘strong connection’ issues (as mentioned above).

### 4.3 Reliability and Validity

As mentioned a few times earlier it is of great importance to consider the studies' reliability and validity to be able to critically examine whether the respondent answers are reliable to
take into account or not. According to both Judith Bell and Maj-Britt Johansson Lindfors, reliability means that if you practice the same study over and over again, in different occasions, the outcome will still be the same (Bell, 2005, p. 117; Johansson, 1993, p. 107). Validity, on the other hand, is a bit more complicated to describe. It answers whether a certain question measures and describes what it is suppose to measure or describe (Bell, 2005, 117).

We found it challenging to conduct a qualitative study with high reliability since we believe that our respondent would not have the same opinion if this study was performed in another situation. No matter which company or what leader that you include into your study they will all have different point of views and earlier experience that has affected them in their life and therefore not their leadership style and conflict management. However, they can still have more or less the same point of views but we do not predict this chance as high. Of course we still aimed for a reliability as high as possible by for example changing the leading interviewer, since this person might have a way to express questions that could affect the responder to answer a certain way. We also wanted the interview to take place in a separate room to avoid external effects.

During the design of the interview questions we kept in mind that we wanted to get as clear and distinguishable answers as possible. Therefore, as previously mentioned, we divided our questions into several topics. In this way we got the answers that we wanted to measure which made it easier for us to ratiocinate them. Judith Bell claims that a study with low reliability is not able to have a high validity (Bell, 2005, p. 118). According to our approach we found this statement doubtful. We believe that since this study is based on a qualitative research it might be possible to have a high validity anyway. Due to the fact that we consider our questions to measure and describe what it was suppose to measure and describe made us question whether this approach is appropriate in this situation or not.
5. Empirical data

5.1 Concerning the General questions

“I would definitely want to become a leader if I had to start from the beginning”
- Quote from respondent

During the interviews it became clear that the managers all had fairly similar thoughts about what was expected by them in terms of responsibility and the daily duties of being a manager. The spontaneous response was often about manufacturing related tasks and how it was their responsibility to see to it that the product that left the facilities were of sufficient quality and shipped on time. Few seemed to have personal related issues in mind when asked about their role as a manager/leader/boss however, while the one who did did so with depth and concern for the well-being of the employees.

While some expressed concerns and worry about having to face lay offs and cut some of their workers, when asked about how they faired at their current position the general response was everything from ‘fairly content’ to ‘thriving’ and also ‘enjoying their work in general’. Even though the current economic crisis was, not surprisingly, always in mind, all respondents answered that they were content with their jobs in one way or another.

When it came to the concepts of ‘management’ and ‘leadership’ there were not any discernible differences in the respondents’ interpretations of the two concepts. None of the respondents saw differences, or seemed to have thought about differences, between the concepts. According to their answers the two concepts were, if otherwise discernible, hard to separate in practice and perhaps even unnecessary to do so. The daily responsibilities, duties and tasks assigned to the respondents during a typical day demanded no such difference either.

All the respondents also had extensive experience of management within their respective field. In all cases, the management position at which they were found was not their first position of management.
5.2 Concerning Leadership

“It is hard to tell but I think that my leadership style is quite clear”
- Quote from respondent

After we got an overview of the company structure and the managers’ opinions we focused our questions on leadership to be able to get a sense of the managers’ view on leadership styles and leadership management.

When taking decisions and having to deal with questions from employees the respondents stated that they had to deal with decisions at least once a week, some more often. Some of them had a special forum for questions while others preferred to make decisions in connections with the weekly meetings. They also mentioned that sometimes situations occur when they have to make a decision right away.

“My philosophy is to always give a straight and clear answer”
- Quote from respondent

As we asked the question “how would you describe your own leadership style” four out of five used the expression I think that I am acting very clear in my leadership. They also mentioned the importance of involving employees and to have an open conversation from the beginning to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts if a complicated situation, such as notice of dismissal, would occur in the future. One of them linked leadership to sports. He argued that being a coach in football is about leading a team towards a common target which you can compare to leading a group in an organization. A few of them also mentioned that they try to focus on overall objectives instead of the basic detailed targeting.

When the following question, about how they think that their leadership style is perceived by the employees, was posed the answers were quite similar. They believed that since they are clear as managers the employees would have the same point of view about their leadership style as themselves. They also founded their opinions on the fact that, during their years as managers, it had been a good atmosphere in the organization. On the other hand a few of them said that they thought it was complicated to know how others perceive them as managers. However, since the work goes smoothly and there are no major conflicts they assumed that the employees are pleased with the situation and that the managers are doing their job in a more or less good way.

After this we directed our question against notices of dismissal and asked if they had any previous experience of this. Unfortunately, they responded, that they had all previously experienced previous notices of dismissal but back when they were on a lower level of management. According to their position in the company they, had a hand in the notice of dismissal process in some degree or another.

As we moved on we asked the respondents to tell us if they had any pre-thought-out theory or model that they followed through their leadership. The responses were that only one of them had a formalized and thought-out theory which he used as a base for his leadership. He used the theory called FIRO which we have discussed and will discuss more in the analysis. The remaining respondents had a different kind of thinking. They mainly used earlier experiences and common sense to solve problems and to lead. One of them argued that, as a manager, you got to have the knowledge about both a ‘high boom year’ (high business activity) and a...
recession (low business activity) to be able to completely understand leadership. Another respondent meant that it takes more than a model or a theory to become a respectful leader, you also have to be able to judge characters and to have the right personality skills that are congenital. One respondent highlighted the importance of being yourself to get the respect that you deserve as a manager. Otherwise the employees’ would see through this, and conflicts might occur.

“A leader is not something you become based on education; it depends on your personality”
- Quote from a respondent

All of the five managers had a certain introduction process when recruiting new personnel. They all used this introductory process for new employees, but depending on what kind of department or task that the employee undertook, the introduction might not look the same in every case. They all agreed that the introduction is of great importance since it has to be clear for the employee what role that he or she is supposed to fill. In other words, according to the respondents, managers must, to some extend, adapt the introduction process to the specific situation. After the main orientation in the organization they shift focus more towards security, getting along with co-workers and feeling safe and secure as an employee. One manager mentioned that they have a meeting after the introduction to discuss the employee development. Another said that the introduction is essential for both the employee and the company as spending time on introduction will pay off in the long run. Only one of the managers brought up the fact that they adapt the introduction depending on the employee competence.

Regarding the leaders’ priority of production it appeared that the responses differed. One leader stated that they focused one hundred percent on production while another respondents argued that production is important, but not that much. The third respondent said that the company's’ growth and survival is depending on the production while the fourth one argued that you can not put all you effort on production because you will then neglect the employees the end. When we focused the question towards the priority of employees the answers were similar. All of them agreed that the employees are an essential part of the organization. A few argued that it is not possible to have a working organization if you only keep focus on the employees because then the production might be left wanting and the company growth would falter One of them sees the company as a big family where you should try your best to make them feel good and to please them. One meant that the personnel is the company’s foundation and if you do not pay enough attention to the employees as a manager, you will not have a working organization. One of the respondents saw this from another point of view and said that he thought that the focus on employees was way too low. He also mentioned that the company had a working human resource system before it was split up between Sweden and another country. Finally, when we asked them to put production and employees against each other in a hypothetical scenario it became clear that, even though the respondents wanted to focus on both production and the employees to find the best balance for their own organization structure, this was difficult to do. They argued that production and employees belong together and if you do not find the balance between these two you might not reach the optimal effectiveness in the organization. However, should that fail, concern for productions would ultimately be prioritized as the most important aspect, as it was the life blood of the company.
5.3 Concerning Notice of dismissal

The personal reflections that occurred when we started to talk about notice of dismissal was that it is a really hard and emotional progress and that it represents something that one would hope only to initiate as a last resort. The affected staff behaved very differently when informed about the situation, depending on what personality they have and if they were prepared or not. The respondents also mentioned that notice of dismissal is something that one is forced to do to keep the company going in times like these. Even thought they know that the employee will face a very unpleasant situation they can not do anything about it when the company sales are decreasing. One of the respondents said that a manufacturing company such as theirs is sensitive to a turning economy and that is one of the reasons why they have to make a notice of dismissal. When the company is faced with a notice of dismissal they have to focus on keeping specific employees that have specialized responsibilities and that are essential for the company. One of the leaders brought up the frustration of being forced to break perfectly working groups and teams that has taken years to create.

All of the respondents shared the opinion that it is important to have a straight communication and to inform the employees continuously about the ongoing situation. One of the leaders explained that they start the notice of dismissal process by determining where to do the cut backs and how extensive they have to be. Afterwards they inform the employees about the notice of dismissal and they keep them updated throughout the whole process until the dismissal is a fact. Two of them explained that they have to take the law, more specifically the employment protection act, into consideration when dismissing personnel, meaning that one has to dismiss the person who was the last one to be employed. A few of them mentioned some problems with this law. First of all there is a competence problem because the last employed might be the most valuable for the organization but they have to dismiss him or her because of the employment protection law. Second, one manager argued that they had been working on employing women and new graduates to the organization but this law made it hard for them now when the economic situation is rather critical. All of the respondents agreed on having separated meetings with the people involved so that they had time to ask questions and to express their feelings. And all of the managers also agreed on trying to solve the situation in any possible way before considering a notice of dismissal.

“I am having weekly meeting where I explain the company's situation to employees”
- Quote from respondent

Regarding their own opinions combined with the companies opinions about notice of dismissal only two found it separated to their own feelings. They argued that the law made it too hard to play a fare game and that the law is the reason why women and new graduated are under-represented. One of them also mentioned that the middle age at the company rise from 38 till 48 after such dismissals. The remaining respondents thought that their own opinion conformed to the company actions. They argued that since they are managers they had the possibility to make changes in the process of dismissal if they found it relevant.
5.4 Concerning Conflict

Even though previous questions had been much about the process of lay offs and how they personally felt about having to let people go, for which they generally answered that it was a necessary evil, only one associated the word conflict with disagreement originating among employees. The other respondents associated it more with work related issues where some issue would cause problems and conflict with production and then perhaps in turn affecting personnel. The general response when asked about the frequency of these work related conflicts was that they were rare in appearance and were mostly originating from restructuring and from the usual daily tasks. One respondent however had more occasions of work related problems than the others where employees had objections about the amount that had to be produced. But the respondent felt that this did not happen often. However, the same respondent, when asked about how he believed lay offs affected conflict at the company, believed his staff had been more understanding than most, even though they probably were affected by the current economic crisis as much as any other industrial employee. The responses among the other respondents when asked the same question, were slightly mixed. While two respondent only acknowledged the fact that conflict could occur in such situations, our first respondent gave a relatively detailed account on his experience of how conflict had occurred among his employees during this economic crisis. He confidently stated that in this kind of crisis, where notices of dismissal were unfortunate but necessary, rumours and foul moods could occur and that it was best to deal with them as soon as possible. He further stated that the best way of dealing with such gossip was to go to the source and have a face to face talk with the employee. In his opinion such rumours were often a result of previous tension and fears followed by the employee in question overhearing something that was misunderstood and later cultivated by previous mentioned tension and fears. This was spread to co-workers and became a rumour that soon reached his door.

The general pattern of similar answers, as seen with previous questions, did not wain when the respondents were asked how they dealt with the emotions that resulted from a conflict that had arisen as a result of the notices of dismissal. Most of the respondents acknowledged an inability to handle emotions and feelings resulting from such conflict. One respondent answered that he felt better after going for a long run outside, exercising, while another respondent stated that he simply tried to separate work from his feelings, and trying to ignore such emotions when coming home after work. The same respondent also stated that should his employees have any issues they would like to talk about he had an open door policy. If that was not enough they also had a health coach available for four hours a day. Other than the aforementioned health coach at the one company, there did not seem to be any other formal way of dealing with any negative emotions, feelings or turmoil that arose from conflict as a result of the current dismissals in any other company. Instead, having an open door policy seemed like an accepted way of handling any feelings, that an employee might have had as a result of facing job loss, for most respondents.

"As a manager you have to follow the conflict process. You can not believe that it will solve itself"

- Quote from respondent

Our inquiries finally led us to ask about the situation where the respondents were faced with having to finally inform the employee / -es once and for all that they had lost their occupation in a face-to-face meeting. One respondent was not part of that process, as he felt that the
dismissals were too numerous and individual talks would be too time consuming. The respondent stated that such talks were better left to the employees immediate managers. As a response to our query about a typical employee reaction at such a meeting, the answers seemed to be fairly similar. Although one could never be sure, according to the respondents, how an employee would react, because reactions differ from person to person, the respondents still seemed to be in agreement on the fact that the most common response was sadness and disappointment from the employee for having lost his or her job. Some respondents however also mentioned that they had experience in dealing with all kinds of reactions, most common, a part from sadness, was anger and blaming of the manager and then slamming the door on the way out.

Even though the respondents were hesitant to admit to anything out to the ordinary happening during the recent lay offs, some did have past experiences that were not ordinary. On rare occasions employees had even become violent during meetings and started throughing office chairs. This was shared with us off-interview and is not part of the original recording or transcription.

When asked about what they thought about their leadership abilities in general most responded with being content. Not everyone felt that they had reason to improve or learn anything new, although one respondent felt he should spend more time on the factory floor and expressed regret about the fact that the day had too few hours. Furthermore, when asked about how their opinion coincided with the company’s when it came to notices of dismissal most agreed on that the procedure their company had was a good one. One respondent felt the same but expressed that it was not uncommon for some managers in the company to disagree on that subject.

At the end of each interview the respondents were asked to fill out a short ‘questionnaire’ from Bloisi (2005, p. 448), translated to Swedish from English. The questionnaire consisted of 15 statements in which the respondents were asked to rate their conflict-handling abilities on scales from 1 being ‘Rarely’, to 5 being ‘Always’. The statements were designed to test the respondents conflict-handling ability and to discern what type of conflict management style he or she has.

We later finalized the responses, summed up the points and calculated what styles the respondents had. The resulting styles were all very similar. Each respondents total points suggested that they all had a ‘Collaborating’ conflict handling style. One respondent however had an equal amount of points suggesting an ‘Accommodating’ conflict handling style. None of the other respondents had a ‘second place’ that came that close to their main style.
6. Analysis

6.1 Blake and Mouton leadership

Even though most respondents, all except one, answered much the same when asked about their leadership style, we will try, from the impressions and responses, to loosely categorize the respondents anyway. Furthermore, when asked to point out where on the grid by Blake and Mouton they felt they fitted the answers are at best unreliable. One must keep in mind that the respondents were not aware of all the aspects of the grid and how it could be used, nor what the different types of leadership were on any dependable depth. The styles of leadership were only briefly explained and the respondents asked to imagine a hypothetical scenario in which the two scales of concern, for production/task/work and for people/employees were set against each other. We are aware of the shortcoming of such a question, but we thought at least the answer would hold some interest to how the respondents view themselves. We are likewise aware that the TKI statements the respondents were asked to fill out at the end of each interview were flawed by social desirability to some degree. Meaning, some statements could have been viewed as more appealing than others and were as such picked, not on basis on their own situation and abilities gained from self scrutiny, but as something that is more socially acceptable.

Having this in mind, we were then faced with a very challenging task of categorizing the respondents ourselves, and it turned out more difficult than what was first believed.

All respondents claimed that they used communication as one of their most important tools in their management of employees. Not uncommon were similar statements about how follow ups and involvement on a personal level were equally important. Although the respondents claimed to be advocates of communication and of confronting conflict, in some cases there seemed to be signs suggesting something different.

When asked about his feelings on production and how the human resources part of the company were prioritized, one manager stated that he saw no such difference between the two, which is according to the managerial grid a clear sign of a 9,9 leadership style. The 9,9 leadership style (Blake and Mouton, 1991, p. 182) is, as stated above, the only style that incorporates the two concerns in such a way that they are seen as one. However, the same manager also stated that production is what the company was all about and without it they would not survive, and that in times like these to survive was to dismiss people so that the company could keep its competitive edge. Whether or not this is a sign of Blake and Mouton’s 9,9 leadership style of not is unclear as the different leadership styles do not mention how to handle dismissals. The respondent continued, though, by claiming to have such a full schedule that he had little time to ‘walk around the lot’ as he put it, or having his door open for anyone. One can not help wonder though how full his schedule really was as he clearly had time to talk to two students writing a thesis (for which we are truly grateful...really). Could this instead be a sign of an underlying apprehension towards facing conflict? A conflict he would risk facing on the factory floor after having terminated hundreds of workers at that very factory? If this is the case it does not coincide with the 9,9 style as previously thought.

Another respondent stated that he had an open door policy and was ready to talk to anyone who wanted to. But the same respondent had also hired a part time health coach for the employees to talk to when they needed to. Can the fact that the same manager, who admitted
he would rather suppress any negative feelings of his own about the lay offs, separating his work from his feelings which is a sign of intellectualizing according to Maltén (1998, p. 148), affect his ability to handle others’ feelings on the subject? Could this then be a sign of apprehension from the employees part to bring personal feelings out into the light with this manager? One can not help wonder if it would be on account of an inability to handle such feelings that he instead hired a health coach. If so, was it an action of self awareness or was it pointed out to him? According to the managerial grid, only having to deal with conflict when confronted is a sign of a manager using the 5,5 leadership style (Blake and Adams, 1991, p. 144), which coincidentally was what this manager also pointed to on the grid.

The only one respondent to answer that he had a specific leadership style, which was situational leadership and not any style from Blake and Mouton’s grid, showed many early signs of being a team-work driven manager with a high concern for both production and employees, a typical 9,9 on the managerial grid. Driven by motivating his employees and being a firm believer in straight talks about any issues that might arise, this manager was quickly categorized as a 9,9 or close to it. However, when looking at the answer when, in a hypothetical scenario, the two concerns were ever put against each other, the respondent answered that production would always come first as it is what holds the company together. It became evident that this attitude towards the importance of production permeated the other respondents’ view of their work as well One might not view this as very surprising seeing as all respondents are working in the industry sector. However, looking at a bigger picture, are these the effects that the production business has on the respondents’ views on leadership, and perhaps even conflict handling, something of a permanent nature and is this priority of production something that one should consider a part of this particular business genre? If so, to what extent are the actions made by some of the companies, to transform some of their departments to be more HR aware, not a Sisyphean attempt?

Meaning, how will this business develop in ways of managing human resources if most business executives only have production on their minds, especially in times like this one? If one assumes that global economic crises are a source of conflict one could argue that it is in times like this, that successful, efficient and thoughtful management of human resources is most important, and mostly needed. Needed, in such a way that difficulties pertaining to the human and ‘soft’ aspect to business will ultimately affect the economic and ‘harder’ aspect to business. Meaning, if steps are taken to reassure the future of the business should those steps not also include the human resource aspect and the conflicts it entails?

This might have been in the mind of one respondent who claimed that, while he himself believed in communication and in confronting conflict, he wished that the company did the same. After the company had changed owner a couple of years back they had been left to deal with the human resource aspect by themselves. Once again it seemed to be difficult to categorize this manager as a certain leadership style from the managerial grid by Blake and Mouton. While, as stated above, the respondent, like the ones before, advocated communication and confrontation of conflict, a 9,9 sign, he seemed to believe he was somehow tied to the fate of the corporate group as a whole. Although we do not know the extent to which these circumstances stretched regarding human resources, according to the typical 9,9 behaviour however, he would likely try to find some way around it and act on what he was given, making the best of the situation.

As for the TKI-scores of the respondents, the fact that everyone scored as being a collaborating conflict handling type was surprising as the respondents gave impression to be
at least slightly different in that aspect. Meaning, while some did not show any signs of conflict avoidance at all, which corresponded with them stating they preferred conflict confrontation, some of the respondents showed more than one sign of using a conflict avoiding style in their managing. According to the TKI-score, none of these observations were true, but in fact far from it. The TKI suggests they all preferred conflict confrontation in a collaborating style, which is, looking at the managerial grid of Blake and Mouton, a clear sign of 9,9 leadership and not corresponding with Womack's findings on the relationship between corporate hierarchy and an increasing competitive style among managers (Womack, 1988, p. 338).

Although, in light of what Wood and Bell argue, a respondents’ TKI-score is very susceptible to the individuals own personality traits (Wood and Bell, 2008, p. 130), so a high collaborating score could be better explained by analysing the respondents different personality traits. (Although we are aware of this, and the fact that this would have been an interesting part of our analysis, such an extensive analysis of the respondents different personality types is far outside both the scope and expertise of this thesis.) Furthermore, according to earlier research of the TKI, personality traits are not the only variable capable of altering a respondents’ TKI score. Social desirability, where the respondents chooses a desirable answer from what he or she sees as the most appropriate answer in the eyes of others, is a factor likely to have altered these respondents responses. Compared to earlier and more extensive research, where a larger number of statements seems to have been used in TKI-tests than what was done in this thesis, these responses were left with fewer interpretations and those responses more open to social desirability flaws. In light of this, it is possible that the respondent's answers do not reflect a true picture of their conflict handling abilities and that relying on their results would give an inherently false conclusion based on its analysis alone.

### 6.2 Situational leadership

After having held the interviews and getting a clearer view within the subject we are starting to open our eyes for a variety of alternatives and assumptions. The situational leadership that looked quite easy to adapt in the beginning now turned out to have some difficulties when using it in practice. As mentioned, situational leadership theory is all about changing your leadership style depending on the specific situation (Claude and Graeff, 1997, p. 1). However, as mentioned in the method there might be some difficulties when categorizing the group competence before knowing what leadership style to adapt. Several managers argued during our interviews that they act in a very clear way as a leader and that informing employees is of great importance. According to this statement and the fact that they all valued involving and motivating employees made us want to place them into leadership style 2 (selling), which means that they focus on both directing and supporting behaviour (Hersey, 2005, p. 37). But, since the competence level here is quite low we considered leadership style 3 (participating) instead. According to this leadership style the competence is rather high and therefore the directing behaviour is not as necessary as in leadership style 2 (selling). The leader is more focused towards supporting and encouraging the group to reach a common goal. When looking back at our interviews it is clear that the managers wanted to motivate and to involve the group to make it functional. It became clear that it was hard to tell what kind of leadership style that they used. If you are a manager at a high level you probably have subordinated managers down in the hierarchy who has a long experience and high competence. In this
situation leadership style 4 (delegating) it would be appropriate since they are focusing on the supportive behaviour (Hersey, 2005, p. 60).

When a company is facing a conversion such as restructuring, a change in the corporate culture or adjusts in the organization, negative outcomes might occur. We are mainly talking about conflicts and that the group feels misplaced during and after the change. Before the change a group might have been working together for a long time and the leader can now use leadership style 4 (delegating) to support its employees (Hersey, 2005, p. 60). Conflicts are rare and the group is almost independent of the manager. But what happens when the the economy faces a down going trend and we enter a recession which will force the companies to do cut-offs? The groups that were built up years ago and has created a working team must now start again at competence level 1 (telling).

According to Hersey and Blanchard it is of great importance that the manager adapts its leadership style to S1 (telling) so that the leader and the employees are at the same level (Hersey, 2005, p. 37). As our respondents described, this phase is something that their organizations are in the middle of at this moment. Because of the recession they are forced to do cut-off and notices to be able to survive on the market. Considering the fact that four out of five did not use a pre-thought-out leadership theory it was hard to tell if the managers adapted their leadership style when the group is back at competence level 1 or not. The respondent who based his leadership on FIRO mentioned that it is of great importance to be aware that you have to treat the group according to leadership style 1 (telling). Another respondent also mentioned that having to make just a small change could give the result that the whole group becomes confused. This is when it is crucial for the manager to act in a more directive way again since the group is facing a new task.

As previously mentioned, having to make a change in the organization might lead to several difficulties. One of the dilemmas that a company has to face is notice of dismissal. Several leaders argued that when the group is comfortable and almost independent they have to make a notice of dismissal, according to the economic statement, which will divide the working group. The group will now loose at least one of the important roles that it consisted of. The different roles inside the groups will now become unclear and the group is back to competence level 1. As Hersey and Blanchard argue the group now has to be treated with leadership style 1 (telling). This means that the leader has to be totally aware that the group has to be both directed and supported to be able to work functionally again (Hersey, 2005, p. 37). This process includes a big risk for conflicts. Both if the leader and the employees are at different levels but also if the employees find it too difficult to start from the beginning. For the individual itself this is a very tumult situation.

The future is unclear and you might have some difficulties at home already that now grows bigger and bigger. However, this might be the reason to bad mood and lack of motivation which could be the reason why conflicts occur. Our respondents argued that they had seen a variety of different behaviour of employees when facing a notice of dismissal. Sadness, frustration, shock, anger, immaturity and emptiness were some of the reactions that they mentioned. Comparing this to the theory of different types of conflict behaviour we can see that regression, projection, repression, displacement, reaction building and intellectualizing are characterized (Maltén, 1998, p. 148). These kind of reactions and behaviour is, according the the respondents, the most common when dealing with notices. Considering the possibility that the noticed employee have a family to feed, a noticed wife and a newly bought house the different behaviours are quite understandable.
What the respondents did to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings in this situation was that they focused on informing and trying to deal with the problem before it turned out to be too complex to handle. They also mentioned that they wanted to inform the employees on time so this would not come as a surprise. In that case, the employee would have time to think this through and to be mentally prepared if he or she is affected. But, external factors as media and rumours can make it hard for managers to make this as painless as possible. We will discuss this further in the conclusion.

Several respondents mentioned that they found it difficult to know how their leadership is perceived by their employees. They also said that they more or less took for granted that the employees were pleased with their leadership style since they did not express any dissatisfaction. According to FIRO and competence level 1 there is a complication in the group since you do not express your feelings and you do not have your own point of view (Svedberg, 2007, p. 188). The risk for underlying conflicts, or repression, is high which could mean that the employees are not pleased with the leadership style but since they focus on trying to make everything work smoothly they might hide it. If the group is facing this state it might be one of the reasons why the respondents thought that there were no ascites against their leadership style, but we should not forget that the group could be at competence level 4 and actually be pleased with the leadership style. Another angel could be that the group consists of employees that are afraid of conflicts. In this case there would be no difference whether or not the group is at competence level 1 or 4, the conflict would still by underlying. Thus, according to the difficulty of knowing where the group is today you might choose the wrong leadership style and think that everybody is satisfied but in reality there are many things that you, as a manager, could do better.

It is not only hard for the leader to know how they are perceived by their employees, it is also difficult to have enough knowledge about employees to be able to adapt the right leadership style. Even though the situational leadership is based on placing employees according to their competence level some issues might arise when categorizing personnel. As told, problems might occur when treating an employee at competence level 4 as a competence level 1. How is it possible for a manager to have enough knowledge about employees to make the right decision when choosing leadership style? One respondent claimed that he wanted to be a part of the employees’ life outside the work. He mentioned that it would make it easier for him, as a manager, to understand a certain employees’ behaviour.

Several managers also claimed that they have weekly meetings when employees have the time to express their feelings or to share their own point of view with the rest of the group, including the manager. This is a way for the managers to achieve information about their employees to be able to categorize them and to adapt their leadership to their competence. The real question is; is it enough? Will they be aware of the employees’ preferences by having weekly meetings? Employees’ preference causes new dilemmas. What if an employee at competence level 2 wants to be treated according to competence level 4? This employee might have personality preferences that differ from other employees. Even though he or she, according to Hersey and Blanchard, needs both directing and supporting at a high level it might not go in line with this employees’ personality. He or she might prefer the manager to focus on supporting instead of directing. Hence, if the manager does not have enough
knowledge about its employees conflict might occur when treating an employee against its preferences.

In terms of new employment it became clear that the respondents had a basic introduction process that they used in every case of recruitment. This introduction process might be expanded and adapted to the final role that the employee has been given. According to situational leadership this way of introducing new employees is appropriate since the roles will be clear and since it may facilitate future work. Only one of the respondents argued that they considered competence when going through the introduction process. This respondent said that depending on the competence that the employee possesses when entering the company, the introduction could take a different amount of weeks. This goes in line with the situational leadership which argues that you should adapt your leadership style depending on the competence of your employees (Svedberg, 2007, p. 322). The remaining respondents claimed that they did not have a specific way to treat employees with different competence level. Is this a sign that they do not practice the situational leadership? If so, would it be so terribly wrong? According to Hersey and Blanchard it would not be correct to define a group where the members are on different competence level (Svedberg, 2007, p. 322). This would cause conflicts and lead to dissatisfaction since the member with the highest competence level would find his and her work unjustified or too easy because he or she is working with co-workers on a lower level. The respondents, on the other hand, claimed that it is essential that the group understands each other which can easily be done by making all members start at competence level 1 to, later on, advance together and be able to have a straight communication from the beginning. This could, in turn, increase the future disagreements and conflicts within the group.

7. Conclusions

It is clear that, except for the one manager claiming to use a situational leadership style such as F.I.R.O, usage of a formalized leadership theory is a rare occurrence. The analysis and effort to categorize the respondents in accordance with Blake and Mouton, Situational Leadership or the TKI shows mixed and contradictory results in all respondents. In light of these mixed results from comparing the respondents with theories that they are themselves admitting not to practice, perhaps one should be more inclined to look at why these managers do not work in accordance with any theorizes model of leadership or conflict handling. Whether this is a result of lack of information about leadership theories or not is however not a conclusion we can draw at this point, but it would be easy to interpret these results as something akin to an apprehension among managers towards formalized leadership theories. The belief among some of the respondents that leadership/management is a personality trait that one can not develop to the same extent as a naturally developed leader/manager seems to coincide with this attitude towards theorized leadership styles.

When considering the finding that the majority of our respondents do not rely on any specific theory as a base for their leadership style or conflict management it made us question the respondents readiness in situations where conflict management or strong leadership might be needed. The fact that some forms of conflict are considered positive, or have positive outcomes, when handled correctly makes a lack of a formalized conflict handling style an unhealthy flaw in an organization's human resource agenda.
According to Wood and Bell (2000, p. 130), Zarankin (2007, p. 167) and the general TKI theory (see previous research on the TKI), a respondents personality traits as well as his or her attitude and goal orientation when dealing with conflict has large implications on the quality of the conflict outcomes. Without a formalized leadership or conflict theory as a tool for managing human resources there are too many variables deriving from the manager as an individual affecting outcome. Meaning, if a manager is personally affected by, as an example, the current economic crisis, there are no guarantees, assurances or even predictable tools to use to establish a positive outcome of conflict. Therefore our recommendation is that these respondents should review their standpoint towards theorized leadership and conflict handling styles. Using a theorized model of leadership and conflict handling reduces both the individual variables affecting conflict outcomes but also reduces the influence that external factors might have on a conflict or leadership situation. Such external factors might also be less extreme in nature than the economic crises, but more mundane such as the involvement of media, the spreading of unvalidated rumours or family matters. External factors like these will most likely always occur, and were even mentioned once or twice by our respondents, and will therefore also affect the individuals within the organization. Although these are all factors a manager has little ability to control we still advocate the use of a theorized leadership and conflict handling style to better equip the manager at handling such effects on the organization and its employees.

As mentioned, conflicts might have a positive effect in an organization if handled in an appropriate way according to the specific situation. This is why we find it necessary or even essential for managers to have a certain conflict theory as a foundation for their leadership. Since the managers seem willing to solve the conflict in the best possible way we argue that every leader should have a pre-thought-out theory in how to deal with conflicts. This because a conflict might occur when you least expect it and if you have previously studied different behaviours and situations that might arise, you would also be more prepared. According to us this would, in turn, lead to a better problem solving and probably a more profitable outcome for the manager and the employee as well for the company itself. The respondents claimed that they valued the importance of information and dealing with conflict before it expands. These statements are two signs that the managers are positive when it comes to having an open communication with employees. It became clear to us that the managers have understood the importance of dealing with conflicts but in some cases we started to wonder if they had the knowledge in how to do it. What would happen if every manager was given a template in how to deal with conflicts according to their personality and line of business? We believe that this could help leaders in their conflict management and that it would also make them prepared for different kinds of behaviour that might occur in different scenarios. The outcome could be that the conflict finally turns out to be positive instead of negative when handling it correctly.

This put evidence into our previous reasoning, mostly when discussing reliability and validity. We argued that it was hard for us to get a high reliability on this thesis because or choice of a qualitative study. As we here also argue that the respondents do not have a complete common leadership style we believe that our study do not embrace a high reliability. The validity, on the other hand, is represented in a clear way. We found much value within our interviews and the questions made us draw the conclusions according to our main question about leaders` way of pursue their leadership in conflicts when facing notice of dismissal. Therefore we consider our validity in this thesis to be of great value.
8. Further discussion

Considering the time perspective and the extent of this work we had to limit our thesis to managers’ opinions about their leadership style and conflict management. It would have been very interesting to be able to investigate whether this is consistent with employees’ perceptions or not. Perhaps our thesis would have had a totally different outcome when taking employees into account. Since we partly based this work on notice of dismissals we interviewed the companies who suffer the most from the economic crises. The fact that all of our respondents were from the same line of business might have influenced the analysis, but on the other hand it might have made the work more precise which could facilitate the understanding for the reader and make it easier to compare the respondent results.

As we already discussed in chapter 3 there are some complications when using a TKI-test. We believe that such a test sometimes have the tendency to be too obvious. If the respondent understands what statement would give the “best” results or the results as the respondent wants it to be, he or she would probably not answer in line with the actual fact. Therefore, it is of great importance that the writers are aware of this issue. It would had been interesting to give the same type of TKI-test to the managers’ employees to get their point of view about the leader and then compare the results.

It is our belief that there is no best way to handle every situation; it all depends on the specific case. Therefore, we argue that focus should be more towards employees and managers personality combined with some form of situational leadership where you can examine what type of conflict management or leadership style that is the most appropriate in the specific case. Could one solution be to expand the situational leadership theory with personality aspects?

8.1 Future research

There has been much written about different management theories and their applicability on conflict handling, but perhaps it is in times like these, during a global economic crisis, that the lack of research on management and conflict handling when dealing with notices of dismissal, becomes apparent. We recommend further research into the area of work related, and dismissal-related, conflict handling by managers as the possibility that this is the last economic crisis is slim to none, and that further research could help widen the understanding of the effects that dismissals have on conflict in organisations. The approach on conflict handling research should also be expanded, with equally extensive examination, with the employees views on how such conflicts are handled by managers as it would give a more complete picture and also limit the effects of social desirability from managers on such research.

As technology advances, hurdling us forward, the world shrinks and we are given more and more access to the world as a whole, it becomes ever more important for us to increase our understanding of different cultures as well as our own. As argued by Holt and DeVore (2005, p. 165), in order for this multitude of cultures to get along, in business or otherwise, it is imperative that one is prepared to the best of ones ability for whenever, and wherever, conflict might arise. Therefore, being able to understand, to handle and resolve volatile situations can not only improve ones work environment, but as conflict can be found on all levels of human interaction, such conflict handling ability might also have far more important diplomatic implications.
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Appendix 1 – Interview questions with TKI (in swedish)

Intervjufrågor:
Vi börjar med generella frågor för att få respondenten bekväm:
1. Beskriv er verksamhet.

2. Hur länge har du haft chefsrelaterade arbetspositioner? Alt, ”Hur länge har du vart chef?”

3. Hur är det att var chef på -----

4. Vilka aspekter skulle du vilja säga ingår i DITT vardagliga arbete som chef?

5. Ser du någon skillnad på ledarskap och management i din position som chef?

Ledarskapsfrågor:
6. Hur ofta är du tvungen att fatta ledarskaps-/management-relaterade beslut som direkt påverkar din personal?

7. Hur skulle du beskriva din ledarskapsstil?

8. Hur tror du de anställda skulle beskriva din ledarskapsstil?

9. Har du haft andra chefsbefattningar än denna (där personalvarsel var en del av jobbet)?

10. Har du någon på förhand uttänkt ledarskapsmall eller teori som du utgår ifrån?

2st Hernsey and Blanchard-relaterade frågor
11. Hanterar du alla nyanställda på samma sätt och vis?

   - Hur hanteras anställda, ledarskapsmässigt, som uppvisar skillnad på kompetens i arbetet?

12. Följs ett speciellt tillvägagångssätt i hanteringen av ny personal EFTER anställning?

3st Blake and Mouton relaterade frågor:
13. Hur mycket prioriteras arbetets/produktionens mål?

14. Hur mycket prioriteras personal?

15. Hur ser det ut när de ställs mot varandra?

Om varsel:

17. Hur går varselprocessen till?

   - Går du efter ett på förhand utarbetat tillvägagångssätt?
   - Hur skulle du beskriva hur du informerar anställda i samband med varsel?

18. Hur tycker du din syn på varsel förhåller sig till företagets i helhet?

   - Överensstämmer de två?
   - Något du skulle vilja ändra på?
Om konflikter:

19. Vad tänker du på när du hör ordet konflikt?

20. Hur ofta uppstår det konflikter i samband med produktionsrelaterade mål, dvs. arbetet?
   - Hur hanterar du dessa konflikter?

21. Hur tror du varsel påverkar konflikter här i företaget?

22. Hur hanterar du känslor som väcks hos dig själv vid konflikter i samband med varsel?

23. Hur hanterar du känslor som väcks hos de anställda vid konflikter i samband med varsel?

24. Kan du beskriva en typisk reaktion hos en anställd som får besked om varsel?

Slutligen:


Är det något du skulle vilja tillägga?

Efter detta fyller respondenten i formuläret på följande sida.
TKI

Fundera på tidigare konfliksituationer där dina önskningar skiljde sig från någon annan persons eller grupps önskningar. Markera till höger hur ofta du applikerade följande taktiker.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sällan</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Jag argumenterar för min ståndpunkt.</td>
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<td>2. Jag förhandlar till en kompromiss.</td>
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<td>5. Jag eftersträvar starkt min ståndpunkt.</td>
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<td>7. Jag håller mig till min lösning oavsett.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Jag föreslår ”middle-ground” argument.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Jag undviker sårade känslor med att inte dela med mig av mina meningsskiljaktigheter.</td>
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Appendix 2 – Interview questions with TKI (in English)

Interview questions:
We started with some general questions to make the respondent feel comfortable.
1. Describe the business.

2. For how long have you had a leadership position?

3. How is it to be a leader on ....?

4. What aspects is a part in your daily work as a leader?

5. Do you differ the concepts leader and manager?

Leadership questions:

6. How often do you have to make leadership/management related decisions that have an immediate affect on your personnel?

7. How would you describe your leadership style?

8. How do you think that our leadership is perceived by your employees?

9. Have you had any other leadership position where notice of dismissal was a part of your work?

10. Do you have any pre-thought-out theory or pattern of behaviour that you use in your leadership?

2 Hersey and Blanchard – related questions

11. Do you handle all your recruitment in the same way?  
    - How do you handle employees, according to leadership style, that differs in competence?

12. Do you follow a special introduction AFTER recruiting employees?

3 Blake and Mouton related questions

13. To what extend do you prioritize the production objective?

14. To what extent do you prioritize your employees?

15. When putting these together. What do you prioritize?

Concerning notice of dismissal:

16. What are your personal opinions about notice of dismissal? Personal reflections?

17. How does the notice of dismissal process work?  
    - Is it a pre-thought-out process?
- How would you describe your way of informing employees when facing notice of dismissal?

18. How do you think your view of notice of dismissal relates to the company as a whole?
   - Are they conformed?
   - Something that you would like to change?

Concerning conflicts:

19. What do you think about when you hear the word conflict?

20. How often does conflict rise in connection to the work?
   - How do you handle these conflicts?

21. How do you believe notice of dismissal effect conflicts within this company?

22. How do you handle the feelings that you get when facing a conflict in connection to notice of dismissal?

23. How do you handle your employees’ feeling when facing conflicts in connection to notice of dismissal?

24. Please describe a typical situation that an employee might have when facing notice of dismissal.

Finally:

25. How do you look at your own leadership skills and leadership style?

26. How do you look at the way that the company handles conflicts?

Is there something that you would like to add?

After this we asked the respondent to fill in the form that you find on the following page.
TKI

Consider conflict situations in which your wishes differed from those of another person or group. Indicate how often you applied each of the following tactics.

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<th>Rarely</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I argue to prove my position</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I negotiate for a compromise</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I try to meet other’s expectations.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I try to find a mutually acceptable solution.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I firmly pursue my position.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>I keep conflicts to myself to avoid hassles.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>I hold to my solution no matter what.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>I compromise through give-and-take tactics.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I share information to reach a joint decision.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I keep my differences to myself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I accommodate the wishes of others.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I try for the best solution for everyone.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I propose a middle-ground argument.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I go along with the suggestions of others.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I avoid hard feelings by not sharing my disagreements.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>