To Talk the Walk

A study of top-managers' use of communication

Author: Johannes Nordström

Supervisor: Nils Wåhlin
Foreword

The road toward this finished thesis has been a long one. It has been a road with many head-scratchings, exhalations of frustration and dead ends. But even though I claim the results as a product of my own efforts, the truth is I could not have done it without help. That being said, I would like to thank my supervisor Nils Wåhlin and also Sofia Isberg at USBE for nudging me in the right direction when there was something I forgot. I would also like to thank the respondents without whom this would not have been possible. There is no end to my appreciation for them who participated despite their busy schedule.

I would also like to thank my parents for having the patience for listening to me carry on about communication and for being my sounding board during the making of this thesis.

Many thanks to you all!

Johannes Nordström,
Umeå, Sweden, May 2010
Summary

Title: To Talk the Walk – a study on top-managers' use of communication in their leadership

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Author: Johannes Nordström

Supervisor: Nils Wåhlin

Keywords: management, communication, leadership, organizational leadership, organizational communication, organizational management, employee-, organizational-, corporate-, business communication, rhetoric, leadership communication, leadership, transformational leadership, transformational, charismatic leadership, charismatic communication

Problem: How do top-managers perceive and use communication in their leadership?

Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to shed some light on the topic of top-managers’ awareness and use of communication in organizations with hopes of increasing awareness and understanding of communication-use in an organizational context for managers and students alike.

Choice of Method: As the purpose is to understand the use of communication in a context, a hermeneutic point of view has been taken. As a result a qualitative research method together with semi-structured interviews was chosen with the intent of comparing the empirical findings with established theories from the fields of communication and leadership, resulting in a mainly deductive approach.

Empirical results: Findings among respondents pointed towards great awareness of many aspects of communication, channels and barriers and an understanding of its impact in listeners. Use of verbal communication channels seemed to be favored among the respondents.

Analysis: Questions are raised as to the efficiency of value building when using communication channels with a low degree of personal contact between sender and receiver and what the possible influences it can have on employee cynicism and identification towards the organization.

Conclusions: An increased use of personal contact is recommended, but as managers’ communication is largely controlled by time and daily schedule, use of rhetoric is more likely as a means of circumventing some of the possible negative aspects.
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1. Introduction

In this section I will present the background of the issue that is presented and studied in this thesis. This is then reduced to a single research question followed by a presentation of the purpose of this thesis with additional chosen delimitations.

1.1 Problem background

I know you think you understand what you think I said, but I’m not sure you have understood that what you heard was not what I meant. – Unknown

In the world of people there are few things more important than communication. With it, we give information and receive it in turn. With it, we are able to reflect upon the world our interpretations of it. We project our own opinions on to others and, often as a consequence, affect other people’s thoughts, feelings, attitudes, intentions and values. Having the ability to communicate is a vital part of everyday life no matter where one comes from, and it is, and has always been, an essential part in our survival as humans.

With communication we can keep ourselves intellectually stimulated as it gives us information about the world around us; express ourselves emotionally, as well as our needs and wants, either through song or speech we express our sadness or joy; socially, we convince others to act the way we want and also allow ourselves to maintain relationships with people, family friends and the society we live in. As it is true in everyday life, so is it true in organizational life as well.

In most organizations today, tasks are most often performed by people, and where there are people in an organization, there is a need to coexist and work towards a common goal. Meaning, there is a need for communication. But whatever the reason; be it an inability to understand what is being said, or simply a matter of not being present when information was passed on, one of the most common problems in organizational life are communication problems (Jacobsen and Thorsvik, 2002, p. 334), several of which could have been solved by simple communication policy guidelines (Kitchen and Daly. 2002. p.51). It is a goal for all organizations to provide employees with the right information channels in order for them to do their jobs efficiently (Kitchen and Daly. 2002. p.51). This also provides a challenge; to present the information in such a way that it is wholly and equally understood by everyone.

When communicating we presume to know what others see, think, feel and perceive things; we presume to understand the meaning of the content of a message; we express our message in words and then assume that it is enough for others to understand us; we expect others to understand us even though we have limited knowledge of how others perceive us. In organizational life however, there are often preexisting channels made specifically for information transfer. They tell us what to report and by whom, to whom at what time etc. But despite this, communication in organizations does not always equal a transfer of meaning. Balogun and Hailey (2008), when discussing the effects of communication in organizations, once referred to it as a game of Chinese Whispers, where someone whispers something in the
ear of their neighbor, who then whispers it in the ear of their neighbor and so on. When the message finally comes back again it often sounds nothing like the original message. The authors’ point in this metaphor is not only that we are imperfect when it comes to remembering what has been heard and read, but that when processing information, we are all different and therefore interpret that information differently (Balogun and Haily, 2008, p. 188).

Communication is not only a process of transferring information, but also a process where new interpretations of that information occur. It is not only our personal experiences that has shaped us, and it would be impossible for any manager to change that, but so does the current circumstances in which we find ourselves at the moment. It is only by making sense of these circumstances and how they affect organizational communication, either by facilitating or hindering it, that managers can gain insight and see how they can be controlled and used in a constructive way. That makes communicating well an important part of any manager’s agenda, and how decisions can be communicated, a crucial variable in determining organizational success (Kitchen and Daly, 2002, p.47). In an article on internal communication, Kitchen and Daly (2002) have concisely summarized the argument stating that:

“If internal communication is a key issue with regard to how successful change management programs are implemented, then understanding that link could prove crucial for all enterprises as they adjust not only to new circumstances at home, but also to the fierce inroads of aggressive international business (...) Competitive advantage which resided in capital in the 1980s, in technology in the 1990s, will reside in people in the new millennium” (Kitchen and Daly, 2002, p.52)

Following the technological change and progress in product and service performing industries, from simple product line production to high performing, high technological production with an increasing demand for a highly skilled workforce, there is an overall increase in intellectual capital in today’s business landscape. With such an increase in competence, skill and awareness, there is also an increasing demand for meaning, context, intellectual creativity (Qian and Daniels, 2008, p. 319), and belonging in and about the production process. To be able to meet these demands and fulfill the needs for competitive advantage, the role of the communicative leader becomes increasingly important.

Transformational leadership is one of the most researched styles of leadership today. By appealing to followers’ emotions, values and moral guidelines in hopes of motivating and uniting followers for the purpose of reaching a higher goal, transforming leadership makes strong use of charismatic leaders and good communication. (Northhouse, 2010, p. 171).

A lot of research has been made on the communication needs of managers. But when looking further up the organizational hierarchy, good communication becomes even more important for top-managers. Having the ability to control and govern, requires information about what it going on in the organization. Lack of information, or receiving the wrong kind, can have debilitating effects on top-managers’ ability to discover and respond to unwanted situations
and occurrences. Such information could only arrive if communication is working properly. On the other hand, being able to control, correct and govern well requires that top-managers are able to communicate their wishes to employees (Jacobsen and Thorsvik, 2002, p. 334).

As top-managers do not communicate as much with employees as middle-managers do, nor do they handle practical issues as much. This changes the demand for detailed communication of a practical nature. Instead their communication is largely controlled by the vision the company has set and the strategy that must be projected internally. Although not as practical in the details as lower managers’ communication, this does however often shape their communication to that end. A vision that is an abstract and non-substantial concept is transmitted in broader strokes than most other daily issues. Thus, top-managers are faced with a challenge that many managers on lower levels do not face. It is this area that this thesis focuses on in the hope of filling the theoretical gap mentioned.

1.2 Research gap

During the research gathering for this thesis, I came across many articles written by both distinguished and well-known authors, as well as those written by less known yet being equally intriguing. To give the reader some indication as to the foci of these articles used I have tried to summarize some of their content and general arguments. The main foci of the literature found are as expected focused around communication and communication in relation to leadership. Even though the articles found were useful, together they still left some areas unexplained. In “A communication model of employee cynicism…”, for instance, the authors Qian and Daniels (Qian and Daniels, 2008, p. 319) address the importance of communication when combating the effects of employee cynicism in organizations. The authors discuss how employee interaction can affect attitudes toward management decisions and more specifically; attitudes toward senior management. However, even though the authors mention senior management in their article they do not present research facts or any deeper discussion around the possibilities and repercussions surrounding senior management. In fact, the authors mention that there is a limited amount of literature on cynicism, especially in relation to the field of communication. (Qian and Daniels. p. 328). In his article, “The seven communication reasons…” the author Philip Salem refers to previous studies made in the field of communication within organizations, and presents results in the form of seven more common communication mistakes. Salem discusses the limitations of management communication and that to make sense of communication there needs to be a sense making process between people. But no analysis of communication on senior management levels is made. (Salem 2008 .p. 345). Such speculation around social interaction and sense making processes, however, are similar to those by Liz Yeomans (2008) when she discusses how communication is often viewed as simply using words to construct a message. Yeomans (2008) points to a need for interaction when communicating. This, according to Yeomans (2008) needs to be seen as an occurring theme within organizations, where individuals not only learn fact from messages, but also interpret it and give it meaning in relation to the social context of the organization (Yeomans 2008 .p. 271). Although interesting, there is a research gap in the article concerning communication and senior management level. Furthermore, even though, in their study authors Nelissen and van Selm (2008) are discussing the positive effects that management communication can have on employee attitudes towards organizational objectives, there is no referral to communication concerning senior
management. (Nelissen and van Selm. 2008, p. 307) Their arguments are similar to arguments made by Chawlay and Kelloway when stating that already good communication has positive effects on trust in management and thus employee receptivity within the studied organization. Similarly to Nelissen and Selm however, Chawly and Kelloway also refrain from going deeper into any practical nature of such communication by senior management. (Chawlay and Kelloway. p. 496). In their article, van Vuuren et al (2007) refer to communication as a means of creating conditions of commitment for supervisors within organizations, and that feedback from the manager seems to be one of the more important aspects for establishing commitment ( van Vuuren et al, 2007. p. 116). However, at the same time the authors leave a gap concerning specifics around senior management. While Wood (2006) recognizes the importance of non-verbal communication and calls for an increased awareness in management, the author does not recognize its importance for senior management specifically but instead refers to management as a whole (Wood 2006. p.202)

Concerning leadership; in an earlier article, and as one of the catalysts of transformational leadership, author Bass argued for how managers can be taught to be more charismatic and communicate with the help of visions of a better future. However, as Bass argues for how an increase in charismatic attributes and attitudes could help managers become better leaders, there is a general lack of both discussion and facts concerning how communication should be handled by charismatic senior managers of a practical nature (Bernard Bass .p. 27). Also on transformational leadership, the author Özaralli discusses in his article the effects transformational leadership can have on empowerment and team effectiveness. Although the results of the study suggested that effects were positive and strongly related to the use of transformational leadership, in which an ability to communicate vision was crucial, no further examination of practical elements concerning how were discussed. (Özaralli. p. 335)

While the article is a bit more recent than that of Bass, the article by Eisenbach et al (1999) also concerns transformational leadership and its uses in organizational life in a less generalizing manner. There is however a lack of depth concerning how values can be communicated by managers. (Eisenbach et al 1999. p. 86). In their article Kitchen and Daly (2002) explore the link between communication and successful implementation of management programs. But even though the authors discuss their findings and the importance of understanding such a link and how it is a competitive advantage of the future, they only make short referrals as to the practical nature of the subject is mentioned. (Kitchen and Daly 2002 .p. 46)

The communicative leadership choices top managers are faced with on a daily basis are on many levels very different from those of a middle manager, or a floor supervisor, by being of a more abstract nature, often concerning company values or the company visions and missions. Although not extensive, this sample of articles does point to a gap in the literature, namely; the practical use of communication among top managers specifically, either as a stand-alone communication topic or in relation to transformational leadership. Mastering communication on any level facilitates goal completion for any organizational activity involving human elements. For top managers that means being able to better communicate the visions of the company and reaching the company goals. That good communication is part of a healthy organizational culture and that it facilitates activities between people, whether it is to govern or to gather feedback, is no secret. But beyond that, to speculate on the specific details concerning its effects for top management, can be a moot point if there is a lack of
knowledge about how to apply it in practice or how it is being consciously applied by today’s senior managers. Examining how top managers choose to communicate during their leadership is therefore a step towards filling that gap, and the main focus of this thesis.

1.3 Research Question

In light of the background presented I have decided to formulate the research question in the following way;

*How do top-managers perceive and use communication in their leadership?*

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to shed some light on the topic of communication in organizations and hopefully increase awareness and understanding of communication-use in an organizational context for managers and students alike. This is to be done by:

- Describing the basic structure of the process of communication according to general theory.
- Identifying some of the factors that influence communication among members in an organization.
- Describing the awareness and attitudes towards communication and influential factors among top-managers.
- Analyze top-managers’ choice of communication in, and in correlation to, their leadership behavior, and analyze the choices in light of more recent communication research.

1.5 Delimitations

As the research on communication and leadership is too vast to address or handle in this thesis I have chosen to limit my research to what I believe to be some of the more prominent theories, which I also believe to be representational for the majority of communication theories, in their way of structuring the basics of communication as a process. For analysis against leadership theory I have also chosen to limit this thesis to one of the most researched approaches to leadership in recent times, the Transformational Leadership Approach, which will be explained in detail further on in the section on chosen theories.

In addition, I have also spent much time thinking of a way to best incorporate other theories, especially Hogg and Terry’s (2001) Social Identity Theory, which I believe could contribute much in terms context to communication and possible scenarios. However, after careful consideration it was concluded that the scope of such research would be too wide for this thesis. As it is not used or referred to, there will not be any further description of it.
2. Methodological Starting points

2.1 Prejudice

The things we experience and learn as individuals help shape us to who we are, and thus decide how we affect our environment. For the purpose of this thesis, any preexisting knowledge, feelings and attitudes the author might have towards different things before this thesis took form is called prejudice. Such prejudice could be the result of the author’s social background, education or upbringing, whatever the case; it could pose as an influence to any scientific assignment performed by said individual. As it is most likely impossible to be entirely objective and analyze how such previous experience might have influenced this thesis, I have nevertheless chosen to include this part explaining what I believe could be relevant.

Prejudice, as mentioned above, could be divided into two subcategories; first hand prejudice and second hand prejudice. First hand prejudice is the experience and knowledge the author has gained through personal experience, while second hand prejudice are mainly collected from second hand sources containing information that has already been processed by others and compiled into volumes such as books or magazines (Johansson Lindfors, 1993, p.25, p. 76), such as those found in a curriculum.

The preexisting knowledge this author has collected about the subject comes mainly from education at university level, where courses in management where taken and introductions to different leadership styles were made. This sparked an interest in management that later became the topic of a thesis at bachelor level with a subtopic of conflict handling among managers in correlation with notices of dismissal (Nordström and Andersson, 2009). The bachelor thesis was co-authored together with one other management student with similar experiences. The experience that came with writing a bachelor thesis; interviewing managers at different positions; analyzing empirical material and comparing with established leadership theories by authors such as Blake and Mouton (1964) and Hersey and Blanchard (1969) only strengthened the interest in management, leadership and communication. The author’s experience with communication in general however, can be said to mostly have come from firsthand experience, mainly from different types of jobs. Even though the jobs were often in a service oriented business such as restaurants, hotels and nighttime entertainment, it is hard to conclude that such job related experience could have given the author any deeper or unique insight that could have had any relevant impact on this thesis. In addition, it should be mentioned, as it is in later chapters, that the author has previously finished an internship at the bank chosen for study, something that influenced the choice of organization to a high degree. The author’s thoughts behind the choice, other than believing it would fit research criteria pertaining to the focus of the study, might also have been influenced by the idea of contributing to knowledge possibly beneficial to him in his aspiration to work as a manager. The risk of biasness concerning previous internship has been considered, but based on the internships short duration it was also concluded to be diminutive and therefore not an influential aspect during research.
In summation; one could perhaps speculate that in having written about managers’ perception of conflict, and the fact that most leadership theories encountered by the author in previous thesis work included some form of basic introduction to communication in organizational contexts, has sharpened the authors’ perception towards conflict in organizational life.

2.2 Choice of subject

The choice to study management at Umeå School of Business (USB) was partly based on a preexisting interest for working with people. It was also my intention, or hope if you will, that when choosing management related topics for both the bachelor thesis and the master thesis, it would not only be entertaining to write about, but also that it would amount to knowledge that could be useful for me personally in my desire to work as a manager in the future.

Another major influence in my choice of topic has been my recent internship at the organization in question, an internship that was equally as much fun as it was educational and inspiring. The fact that my internship began during a major organizational change sparked my interest of delving deeper into communication and the challenge it poses for top-managers today.

2.3 Epistemology

Epistemology is the knowledge of information and deals with the limitation and viability of information. According to Bryman and Bell (2003), there are two major schools within the field of epistemology, the hermeneutic and the naturalistic way, where the latter has been the more popular one for many years. The naturalistic school, as its name applies, advocates a use of naturalistic laws when viewing information, meaning; it is only what can be seen or felt with one’s own senses that should be used as valid information in an effort to be objective (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p.27).

Followers of the second school however, the hermeneutic school, argues that in order to wholly understand an action performed it is sometimes imperative to also look at the social context in which it was performed. As such, the hermeneutic school acknowledges the difference between actions performed in a social context from one that is performed without (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p.29).

It is my intention that, when looking closer at top-managers’ use of communication in their leadership, I will be using a hermeneutic approach when viewing and interpreting this information. It is my belief in that by viewing gathered information in light of the organization as a social scene, and with people as social actors, I would be in a better position to understand why managers communicate the way they do. This of course also means that my experiences and preexisting knowledge as a researcher might affect how I view the information and thus my analysis of this research, but it is my belief that by being aware of this I will maintain the high level of reliability that is required.
2.4 Methodological Strategy

According to Bryman and Bell (2003), two prominent authors in the field of scientific research strategy and whose works are widely used among university students, there are two main strategies when it comes to scientific research methods. The quantitative- and the qualitative research strategy, where the quantitative research approach have dominated the field of business economics for a long time (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p. 85). This has mainly been due to its usefulness for handling and interpreting large amounts of numerical data, such gathered from surveys for example, and has contributed to it being the strategy of choice among researchers in the field of business economics for a long time (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p.40). The quantitative research strategy has also usually been associated with a deductive research method, where effort lies in proving or disproving existing theories (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p.40). It is also commonly associated with the naturalistic school of epistemological, meaning that the quantitative research strategy separates the social construction from its social actors (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p.40).

The second approach to research strategy mentioned is the qualitative research strategy. As opposed to the quantitative strategy, where focus lies on proving or disproving existing theories, the qualitative strategy is often more associated with an inductive approach and thus means to generate new models or theories from what is observed. In the qualitative strategy the social scene is not separated from its social actors, but often acts as a means to explain the social scene from the viewpoint of the respondents as social beings (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p.40). I have chosen to utilize a more qualitative strategy as I believe that, in its ability to incorporate the social scene as a vital influence on data, it is better suited in my effort to examine the top-managers’ choice of communication in their leadership.

2.5 Methodological Approach

According to Bryman and Bell (2003), much like the strategies described above, there are also two dominating approaches to reasoning. The inductive approach seeks to form new theories from what is observed and is usually associated with a qualitative strategy. This approach has its use mainly for when the researcher wishes to study a field that has little or no previous research written about it and thus lacks preexisting theoretical background (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p.25). With the deductive approach however, the researcher usually starts by forming a hypothesis based on preexisting theories, or the researcher’s own knowledge on the subject. In later stages the researcher then gathers empirical data on which the hypothesis is then tested to see if it holds to critical analysis (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p.23).

As it is my intention to observe how managers perceive and use communication in their leadership, I have prepared by gathering theories and research on both leadership and communication. This I believe is the best way to form a solid theoretical background on the bases of which I could observe the empirical data gathered. It is my intention to analyze and, if possible, draw conclusions based on the observed responses gathered from managers. As I have preexisting theories as a starting point this thesis is mainly using a deductive approach. However, as the possibility exists that new hypothesis may be formed on the basis of the gathered data at the end, and not one that is postulated in advance, this thesis also holds aspects of an inductive approach.
2.6 The gathering of secondary data

2.6.1 Data collection, secondary sources

Most books used in the making of this thesis have been gathered from the library of Umeå School of Business. The search for scientific articles was made at the university library of Umeå School of Business, with Emerald as the most frequently used database due to its high degree of peer reviews, ensuring the validity of its articles.

The keywords used during the searches of scientific articles were, for communication; management, communication, barriers to communication, leadership, organizational leadership, organizational communication, organizational management, employee-, organizational-, corporate-, business communication, rhetoric.

…for leadership;
leadership communication, leadership, transformational leadership, transformational, charismatic leadership, charismatic communication

Additional search engines used: Business Source Premiere and Google Scholar.

Once I decided on using transformational leadership I was aided by my supervisor Nils Wählin who supplied me with books by Thomas Müllern and the MLQ.

2.6.2 Critique of Secondary Sources

The vast amount of research made on communication provided some challenge to finding the right articles and books needed. Also, as described by Bryman and Bell (2003), there are some dangers an author needs to keep in mind when searching for secondary data. Dangers such as; the complexity of the data - if written for another purpose, not knowing what to look for or not being able to guarantee its authenticity (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p.237). Not knowing what to look for proved to be the biggest challenge, but as I started on time it did not pose any major problems that could not be overcome in the end. In order to ensure that the data was reliable I was careful in my search, ensuring that the articles used had a high number of peer reviews, and the books were written by serious authors with other publications in their works.

2.6.3 Choice of theories

The choices of communication theories made, was mainly based on findings when searching literature relating to leadership. The choice concerning leadership theory, the transformational theory, was influenced by it being one of the most researched theories on leadership today and mainly dealing with leadership. There have also been some focus on obtaining books including the original forms, or editions, of the theories of interest, this was an effort to use theories that had been altered, or interpreted by others, as little as possible. Besides the use of books, there has also been some focus on the use of scientific articles in an effort to capture research made in the fields of interest during recent years. This was done in order to maintain the validity of the thesis.
2.6.4 Explanation of Concepts

Throughout the thesis there will be some references to different concepts. To minimize any misunderstanding I have included a section explaining some of these concepts as per the definition used in this thesis.

Top-Managers – A person positioned high up on the hierarchical ladder within an organization, often with one or several middle-managers as subordinates.

Communication – An interpersonal process of transmitting a message with hopes of invoking a reaction, often transmitted via a channel by either speaking, writing, gesturing or touching.

Employee – An individual employed no matter what level. In this thesis, often referred to those positioned lower down on the hierarchical ladder.

Transformational Leadership – A relatively new model of leadership, with focus on charismatic and inspirational elements. It is also one of the more commonly used leadership models.
3. Theoretical framework

In this section I have included some theories about the basics of communication in order for the reader to get a broader picture and clearer understanding of how this thesis approaches communication. This is then followed by theories on communication, earlier research on communication, barriers of communication, and finally ending with an explanation on the theory of transformational leadership.

3.1 The basics of communication

3.1.1 Shannon & Weaver

In 1949 authors Shannon and Weaver first published the theory of communication following the development of the many alternatives of communication in the years leading up to it. The theory would later be one of the most widely used models of communication to date. Its parts as described by Shannon and Weaver (1959) are still a part of the altered versions of today’s models and consists of; the information source, which produces a message that is to be communicated. Such message could be of various types, such as a television signal or a radio signal The transmitter, which serves as an operator of the message chosen in order to transform the message into a suitable signal for the channel. The channel or the medium used to transmit the signal. Here, Shannon and Weaver (1959) mention such things as wires, a coaxial cable, a beam of light or a band of radio frequencies as examples of channels for the purpose of transmitting the message. The authors continue by mentioning how during the transmission, or at one of the terminals, the message could be affected by noise. Finally the signal is then received by the receiver which then reconstructs the message and presents it to the destination, the person it was intended for.

fig 1.0 (Shannon and Weaver, 1959, p. 98), The Mathematical Theory of Communication

As described by Shannon and Weaver (Shannon and Weaver 1959, p. 98), one of the problems with the process of communicating was when the message would be sent at one point and recreated at another point with the intention to make it as similar to the one selected
to be sent. As the name of the model suggests, Shannon and Weaver’s (1959) model of communication had engineering aspect in mind when constructing the model, thus using logarithms to explain its use. The details of the mathematics used will not be presented here however.

3.1.2 A developed model
Since Shannon and Weaver’s (1959) initial model of communication first came out in print it has grown and evolved to incorporate other variables, as well as human communication as well. Authors Brown (1975), Brown (1976), Wood (2006) and Bloisi (2003) all have similar definitions of communication, which is something akin to; a process of a person sending a message with the intent of provoking a response (Brown, 1975. p.24; Brown, 1976. p.15; Wood 2006. p.197; Bloisi, 2003, p. 308), while its effectiveness is measured on how close the receiver’s interpretation of the message is to what the sender intended (Bloisi, 2003, p. 308). The main components in the process of communication is depicted by Bloisi (2003), when referring to a model by Everett M. Rogers and Rekha Agarwala-Rogers (1976), as ‘the sender’, ‘the receiver’, ‘the message’, and ‘the channel’ (Bloisi, 2003, p. 310).

This basic process has similar structure and main components in Bloisi’s (2003) explanation of communication, and similar to descriptions made by Brown (Brown, 1975, p. 24). The process above, between sender and receiver, starts in the left-hand column when the sender

![Diagram](fig 2.0 (Bloisi, 2003, p. 311))
wishes to communicate an idea or intention etc., to the receiver. The sender then *encodes* the message, translating it to a format believed to be understood by all parties with the intention of getting the information across. However, according to Brown (1976), there are many things affecting our own encoding of an intended message; our personality, past experience, present mood, how we see ourselves, our attitudes toward and thoughts about the receiver, preconceptions, expected reactions and also the situation at the time of communication (Brown, 1976, p. 15). After the encoding is done the result is the message, which is now ready for transmission via one of the receiver’s senses.

The way in which the message is transmitted is called the *channel*, wherein *verbal* channels utilize sound waves through speeches, telephone, letters or memos. Herein lies face-to-face communication as well, which takes up the largest part in a manager’s everyday communication, according to Bloisi (Bloisi, 2003, p. 312). *Non-verbal* channels includes touch, facial expression and even tone of voice. New technological breakthroughs such as the e-mail or telephone text messaging have improved communication in many ways. However, such long-distance communication also lessens the degree of non-verbal communication which can lead to misunderstandings (Bloisi, 2003, p. 312). This issue is also mentioned by Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2002) as the authors refer to studies made on work teams spread over some distance. The authors claim that such distance has a debilitating effect on communication. Distance makes closeness difficult, which in turn affects people’s ability to form trusting relationships with their colleagues. It also makes it difficult for team members to ascertain how much information is enough with the risk of sending too much information, and thus debilitating the receiver’s ability to discern what is important information and what is not (Jacobson and Thorsvik, 2002, p. 334). According to researchers Kitchen and Daly (2002), a combination of written and face-to-face channels is best (Kitchen and Daly, 2002, p. 51). The medium chosen, and its ability to influence communication, is also supported by Brown (1975) in his article, as he discusses how it affects our non-spoken communication.

Assuming the receiver has acknowledged the sender’s message, the receiver’s *decoding* then begins, which is in turn affected by as many variables as the sender’s encoding was in the beginning.

Fig 2.0 also mentions *Noise* as one of the components affecting communication. Noise is here defined as anything that is interfering with the communication process at any stage, be it a sender’s style of communicating; an irritating voice, speak too softly, irritating handwriting or speaking tone. When transmitting the message it could refer to actual background noise or nearby distractions. Bloisi (2003) also mentions how noise can be such things as the receiver failing to pay attention, hostile attitudes or mental/emotional distractions, different frames of reference or simply a lack of motivation (Bloisi, 2003, p. 313).
3.2 Levels of communication

In their discussion on communication, both Palm (2006) and Wood (2006) point to the existence of two different levels of communication and the importance of being aware of them when communicating with others. As we communicate, focus often lies on the spoken and the information we mean to communicate with our words, be it in spoken or written form.

Palm refers to this as “hard” information, and that good internal information in such a form has many good uses in an organization:

- It gives a common frame of reference.
  - Good internal communication can work as a common denominator, a foundation on which discussions can begin. This enhances the efficiency of the discussions and reduces problems based on misunderstandings. Less time is spent trying to figure out where everybody stands on many issues (Palm, 2006, p. 152).

- It reduces opposition
  - Opposition among coworkers can have debilitating effects on the organizational efficiency by worsening cooperation, increasing suspicion against managerial measures and making key personnel withhold information. Good internal communication can combat that opposition (Palm, 2006, p. 153).

- It can make ambassadors out of employees
  - Despite good effects from chosen media communication it is the workforce that generates the strongest effect on what opinion the environment has on the organization. Problems at work have a tendency of making its way to friends, family and neighbors etc (Palm, 2006, p. 153).

Of course, bad internal communication can have serious negative effects on organizational life as well:

- It can increase the spreading of rumors.
  - Too much rumors can have detrimental implications and are nourished by flawed internal communication; absence of updates, update with too much information, too little information or simply the wrong information. This could in turn lead to strife and opposition among employees affecting motivation.

- It paints a negative picture of the managerial competence.
  - Bad internal communication – lack of clarity, bad timing etc. – has a tendency to be seen as, not only communicational incompetence, but as incompetence in general by the employees (Palm, 2006, p. 154).

Communication on the second level transmits on a more abstract level and also incorporates attitudes toward values. Palm calls this information for “soft” information. Soft information, although it works on a different level that the hard information, holds an equally important part in the process of communication between individuals, often with the intention of affecting attitudes and values (Palm, 2006, p. 152) or nuances of meaning that words fail to communicate (Bloisi, 2003, p. 312). This is also supported by Wood (2006) as he discusses
some of the findings from a compilation of studies on communication and rapport. Wood (2006) argues that study results indicate that there are non-verbal signals that are important during judgment of the traits of candor, expertise and benevolence. Wood (2006) continues by stating that decisions around trust-related characteristics and trustworthiness, on an inter-personal level, are influenced by these non-verbal signals in particular. In either way, it is important to know what relation the listener, receiver, has to the sender, as the most common relationship when it comes to internal communication, is the one of manager and employee (Palm, (2006), p. 29; Brown (1976), p. 17). According to Palm (2006), these are usually more important for managers in uncertain times and that with good ‘soft’ information;

...there is an increase in employee commitment, where mood and coexistence is affected by the relationship between the workforce and management, personnel turnover, working environment and several other factors (Palm, 2006, p. 154).

...values and goals of the organizational can be strengthened. This is especially important in correlation with organizational change where new values and goals must be anchored quickly.

Finally, as Palm (2006) discusses the importance of communication and soft information as a means of affecting values in order to strengthen teamwork and coexistence, he also mentions how one of the strongest influences on teamwork is the knowledge of a common enemy. This effect however, also carries an inherent danger for when an organization lacks a common enemy or simply has not acknowledged it. In such times the common enemy could be easily found within the organization, where the most common one is management (Palm, 2006, p. 155).

Although named differently as ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ information by Palm (2006), the different levels of communication mentioned are similar to what can be found in Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers’s (1976) model, presented by Bloisi (2003), as Verbal and Non-verbal ways of communication.
3.3 Barriers to communication

By referring to research made about some of the more common communication mistakes made, author Bloisi (2003), and similarly Brown (1976), hope to increase our awareness in the hopes of better our communication. The author presents them in different categories;

Frames of reference
How can it be that when two individuals hear the same message they get two entirely different meanings? A complex combination of past experiences and different expectations of the present situation help shape us as individuals and form our interpretations of the world around us. Although two people hear the same words accurately, they each have different associations tied to those words, thus ending in different cataloging and understanding. These perceptions, or frames of reference, are what can make a person from a different generation hear cold as someone younger talks about their cool experience (Bloisi, 2003, p. 318). As mentioned by Palm (2006), this barrier is one that can be combated by good internal communication (Palm, 2006, p. 152). In short, good communication facilitates further communication. Palms (2006) argument is also supported by Brown (1975) in his article as he mentions how difficulties can occur if parties are communicating without being on equal speaking/listening terms. (Brown, 1975. p. 27)

Semantics
Semantics refers to the meaning and use of words. Some professions seem to have their own language; doctors, lawyers or even car-mechanics. This specialized language, called jargon, can simplify communication within the group. But as that group often has the same frames of reference, meaning is not lost when the language becomes complex, shortened or socially specific. This can however confuse or intimidate outsiders (Bloisi, 2003, p. 319). This point made by Bloisi (2003) is also supported by Brown (1975) when discussing how, even though we might speak the same language, a language needs to be on the same wave length and shared by all parties if to be understood.

Value judgments
Bloisi (2003) gives an example of value judgment as when a listener has evaluated the worth of a message before the sender has finished sending it. Such judgments are often the result of previous experience with either similar types of communication or the actual sender. Such value judgments at the receiver’s end also has a way of making the sender aware of it happening, such as when someone stops listening (Brown, 1976, p.17) because he or she has deemed the message unimportant, making the sender defensive and thus inhibiting transmission and the communication process further (Bloisi, 2003, p. 319).

Selective listening
According to Bloisi (2003), when the content of a message received by the listener is in conflict with the listeners preconceived notions, beliefs or expectations, the content of that message could be blocked or distorted in order to fit those preconceptions. This is called selective listening (Bloisi, 2003, p.319). According to Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2002) this tendency is especially true when dealing with issues involving negative information. In such cases the information is then interpreted by the receiver in such a way that negative consequences affect the individual in the smallest way possible. In an organization such
information could be filtered as it passes middle management before reaching employees (Jacobson and Thorsvik, 2002, p. 351), much resembling the filtering described below. In his article Brown (1975) discusses similar barriers and how people sometimes in their “restlessness” assumes what others are going to say based on a preexisting view of the sender.

Filtering
Bloisi (2003) and similarly Brown (1976) describes filtering as being something much akin to *selective sending*, where a sender often chooses to send information that is believed to either be the only relevant information to the receiver, or simply does not wish to share information for other reasons. (Bloisi (2003) p.319; Brown (1976). p.20) This description is also mentioned by Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2002), and that suppressing or withholding negative information, is more common in upward communication such as in situations of performance evaluations or if a manager believes it could cause a negative situation for the manager (Jacobson and Thorsvik, 2002, p. 350). One of the most common reasons for why a middle manager chooses not to share such information from senior management is because it is believed that senior management lacks insight and understanding about how the information could affect employees (Jacobson and Thorsvik, 2002, p. 351). This barrier is also mentioned by Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2002) when discussing feedback. When it comes to the ability to pass information upward, it is often more limited than for information passing downward due to the fact that there are less people on higher positions. If all information could pass upward unhindered members on higher position would have difficulties processing and interpreting that information. For that reason there are often certain criteria for what information is desired at higher levels. In that situation filtering is a part of the company formal structure. In short, whether information is traveling downward or upward, and the more levels it passes, the more the information can change (Jacobson and Thorsvik, 2002, p. 351).

Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2010) also state that the feedback in correlation with the role of an employee is often limited within a hierarchical organization and that such information can be altered. The authors are also claiming that the role of an employee that is characterized by differences of status also has an inherent need for recognition and respect from one’s superiors. In worst case scenario, this can manifest itself as an employee downplaying negative information and emphasizing bad information. This, according to Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2010), poses a difficulty for leaders and their ability to retain reliable information or being able to evaluate a situation correctly based on given information. According to the authors, in a relationship where there are differences of status, obtaining true and valid information could prove difficult (Jacobson and Thorsvik, 2002, p. 352).

Distrust
According to Bloisi (2003), a lack of trust on the part of any of the communicators could in itself be a cause for the situation to develop any of the previously mentioned barriers of communication. It could even be more complicated than that, meaning; that lack of trust might have arisen from communication hindered by the same barriers. Even if neither of the parties is distrustful or dishonest, a lack of good communication can lead to a lack of trust (Bloisi, 2003, p. 320).

According to Bloisi (2003), distrust is sometimes caused by status differences, such as lower-level members feeling intimidated by higher-level members’ job titles, offices or even modes of dress. Such intimidation could then develop into a fear of ridicule, resulting in employees refraining from initiating communication (Bloisi, 2003, p. 320). Furthermore, according to
Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2002), trust and credibility is greater between individuals from the same culture. This is mainly because the belief of a shared sense of values is greater (Jacobson and Thorsvik, 2002, p. 358).

3.4 Forming the message, the rhetorical way

“Let rhetoric be the power to observe the persuasiveness of which any particular matter admits.” – Aristotle

The art of rhetoric is an old one. The ability to awaken emotions and inspire with the goal of convincing others has been around for almost as long as the spoken word. The core of classical rhetoric, and its definition, is that it has long been a linguistic tool for leaders (or speaker/writer = greek., orator) to use in order to convince others about whatever was on the agenda (Müllern and Stein, 1999, p. 19). According to Müllern and Stein (1999), Aristotle of ancient Greece – an early advocate for the use of rhetoric – mentions three ways in which someone could be convinced, and names the concepts accordingly in original greek; first by use of ethos – by focusing on the character of the speaker (writer) in order to inspire trust in the listener (reader). The second is by way appealing to the listener’s emotions – pathos. Third is by way of the actual arguments the speaker is using – logos. However, Müllern and Stein (1999) continue their argument by stating that; by only allowing rhetoric to be used as a tool for convincing would be to severely restrict its use (Müllern and Stein, 1999, p. 22). Müllern and Stein (1999) is therefore referring to a more recent definition of rhetoric as a more versatile tool, incorporating not only the spoken word and the speaker, but also the listener. The newer definition of rhetoric transcends its old role as a simple tool for convincing others, becoming something more complex and multifaceted. It now describes man as a linguistic creature, living in a social world partly constructed by language. Here the role of rhetoric becomes less technical and more like a base of knowledge by which we interact with the world around us (Müllern and Stein. 1999, p. 27) to interpret and to contextualize.

“This is the view of rhetoric as involved in all processes of human communication and reality construction.” (Watson, 1995, referred to in Müllern and Stein, 1999, p. 27) - Watson

Some generalizing differences between the classic and the new rhetoric are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classic Rhetoric</th>
<th>New Rhetoric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To strictly convince</td>
<td>Creation of meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on the speaker/text</td>
<td>Focus on the context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentative situations</td>
<td>All human linguistic interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetoric as a technique</td>
<td>Rhetoric as language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned communication</td>
<td>All communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 20 -
By using the newer definition of rhetoric there are several benefits to be gained, according to Müllern and Stein (1999). We are no longer tied to the strict approach of classical rhetoric, but we are also free to tie rhetoric to new insights gained in other areas of social science, such as communication and philosophy. By using rhetoric we give language to that which is socially constructed as a means of creating a deeper meaning (Müllern and Stein, 1999, p. 33), and we move from a perspective of informing to one of communication (Müllerns and Eloffsson, 2006, p. 204).

According to Müllern and Elofsson (2006), as a manager trains herself in rhetoric, she gains not only an arsenal to convince others, but also new ways of listening to the arguments of others and testing them against reason (Müllerns and Elofsson, 2006, p. 205), and so, the relationship between the orator (e.g. manager) and employee becomes one of mutual openness for the other’s arguments (Müllerns and Elofsson, 2006, p. 206).

Müllern and Elofsson (2006), continue by addressing important aspects of good rhetoric, aspects that also tie to what they argue to be charismatic leadership. Expectations, they argue, is a psychological mechanism that has profound impact on the listener’s interpretation of what is heard. Concerning the concept of expectations, there are two theories, two perspectives that view expectations differently. The first, being more hedonistic, argues that people weigh their options on how well they concur with their own preferences, how desirable they are, and that decisions are made on the likelihood of achieving said options. It is here that someone skilled in rhetoric could create a feeling that the goals are desirable and achievable (Müllerns and Elofsson, 2006, p. 206). The second theory concerning expectations makes use of expectations more from the view point of what is socially expected of us as individuals. This sense of commitment can then be shaped toward a specific goal by forming, either values or a strong sense of identity that commits the individual to an organization, for example, by ways of relating. The challenge here, the authors argue, is how a manager could form new values using rhetoric. Something that is highly improbable if the orator and the audience have very different values initially (Müllerns and Elofsson, 2006, p. 206). This concept of forming a sense of community and belonging, is also supported by Palm (2006) as he discusses ways of forming closeness by ways of including in a message that which is familiar to the listener (Palm, 2006, p. 60).

Müllern and Elofsson (2006) continue their argument around important aspects of rhetoric by mentioning how an effective message does not necessarily have to build on reasonable arguments, logos, alone, but can also be effective by establishing a form of trust between himself and the listener, called ethos (Müllerns and Elofsson, 2006, p. 208). As previously mentioned by Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2002), in correlation with barriers of communication and distrust, trust might be gained by indicating shared values between the listener and the speaker. The importance of emotional elements in a message, pathos (Müllerns and Elofsson, 2006, p. 208), is similarly mentioned by Palm (2006), which also state that if the topic does not inherently emotional, it is up to the speaker to make it so in order to create interest in the listener. Without interest, it is difficult to convey a message (Palm, 2006, p. 60). According to Palm (2006), this can be done by increasing the volume of the information. This creates not only an increased chance of detection for the receiver, but also communicates a sense that a message must be important. Furthermore, Palm (2006) argues that a sense of closeness, or relevance, increases the interest of the receiver. An argument also supported by authors Kitchen and Daily (2002), when mentioning how a message should be perceived to be relevant to employees (Kitchen and Daly, 2002, p. 51).
Such closeness can be created by including in the message; something that is already familiar to the receiver; a description of possible consequences of following or not following the speaker's advice; a connection to the individual, not just to a group; emotions, as previously mentioned; discussability, a topic that people can have difference of opinion over is more interesting than one that leaves nothing to discuss (Palm, 2006, p. 60).

### 3.7 Earlier research on communication

The amount of research on communication is vast and the writings numerous. Since mentioning it all would be too much, I have chosen to focus on communication research centered on its use in an organizational context for the purpose of this thesis.

In an article on a study on the effects of communication in a higher education institution, authors Qian and Daniels (2008) initially, and unrelated to their own findings, refer to previous research about the SIP-theory, and also explain how the SIP-theory (social information processing) points to how work-related attitudes are socially constructed, not simply given to us. According to the SIP-theory our work-related attitudes are formed in a social context where social cues and information given to us socially work as influences. Furthermore, people are also very much affected by the opinions of others at the work-place, meaning our co-workers, and so our work-attitude is therefore also relationally influenced (Qian and Daniels, 2008, p. 322). The authors continue by mentioning how research have shown that cynicism and intention to resist are closely associated, more specifically, that cynicism has been identified as one of the sources of resistance to organizational change (Qian and Daniels, 2008, p. 322). Change could in this case be seen as a process for a major decision affecting the organization in one way or another.

In the article, Qian and Daniels (2008) continue by also referring to the research of Miller and Monge (1985) that shows how information helpfulness is a predictor of anxiety, and that the perceived quality of information gained directly influences attitudes toward organizational processes, more specifically; openness to processes (Qian and Daniels, 2008, p. 322). The authors then stipulate that a perceived high quality of information could reduce employee uncertainty and also provide rationale and encourage cooperation (Qian and Daniels, 2008, p.322).

One final theoretical referral the authors made, was concerning the importance of trust in management among employees. As cynicism and trust are closely related; in such a way that someone that trusts an object is unlikely to be cynical about it, and vice versa, trust could then be a determinant of cynicism. The authors Qian and Daniels (2008) emphasizes this argument by referring to the findings of Albrecht (2002), stating that trust in senior management is indeed a determinant of cynicism (Qian and Daniels, 2008, p.323).

The authors own study was conducted in a large mid-western university in the USA during a major change. A cross sectional survey was then administered to 949 faculty members through e-mail, resulting in 186 respondents, a 19.6% reply frequency. The results of the study indicate that communication processes – information and relationships in the work environment have significant effect on cynicism in correlation to change (Qian and Daniels, 2008, p. 328). According to the authors Qian and Daniels (2008), the results indicate not only
that change-specific cynicism has significant impact on willingness to change among employees, but also; to combat this, administrators should provide employees with timely information, providing them with means to figure out where the change is taking them, an argument supported by statements made by authors Chawla and Kelloway (2004). Chawla and Kelloway (2004) refer to previous research and state that uncertainty can arise if rumors play a major role in how information spreads in an organization (Chawla and Kelloway, 2004, p. 487).

Continuing Qian and Daniels’ (2008) arguments, administrators should be aware of how employee attitudes are affected by their close colleagues and encourage in-group and lower level discussions. The authors also argue that, in accordance with the results; that trust is a large determinant of cynicism, administrator’s needs to create more opportunities for administrator-faculty interaction (Qian and Daniels, 2008, p. 329).

Qian and Daniel’s (2008) findings, on the importance for managers to pass on timely information, are also corroborated by Nelissen and van Selm (2008). In their own study of a large Dutch international organization, it was found that responses to changes could initially be both positive and negative at the same time, but could also be influenced by management communication. Nelissen and van Selm (2008) then recommend that dialogue be maintained between managers and employees in order to create a shared set of meaning and a common way of thinking (Nelissen and van Selm, 2008, p. 315). This is also very similar to what Palm (2006) mentions about how good internal communication helps create a common frame of reference. Palm (2006) argues that one of the most important acts on a manager’s agenda is the act of “anchoring” a decision before its implementation. Acts or sanctions that could mean economic repercussions for people need often be motivated and argued for before implementation. Not anchoring a decision – explaining to the personnel why the decisions are necessary and what they could mean for the individual – beforehand could leave management needing to legitimize their actions afterwards, which is then greatly dependent on how successful the event turned out to be (Palm, 2006, p. 18). This is similarly argued by authors Kitchen and Daly (2002), who’s research show that communication helps employees prepare for decisions by announcing and explaining its effects (Kitchen and Daly, 2002, p.50).

In another article, Salem (2008), examines material from three independent studies made on communication and points to some common communication behaviors that accompany failure to transform organizations. The first study was conducted at a government agency that underwent transformation in South Western USA. Although the article does not mention the number of respondents, it had a response rate of about 80%. The second was at a 700 member food manufacturer in Mid Western USA, while the third was conducted at a nonprofit coalition in North Western USA. According to Salem (2008) all three studies used semi-structured interviews together with quantitative results. Salem (2008) has then cross-referenced the articles with each other on order to find similarities. In the article Salem (2008) claims that insufficient communication is a common reason why organizations fail to change. He argues that information cannot be given through memos, reports or e-mails, but is created by the organizational members themselves as they make sense of them. Here Salem (2008) argues that such things as memos, reports and e-mails are only opportunities to make sense, and that communication is a social process in which organizational members can make sense together. This argument coincides with statements made by Palm (2006) about how forms of media, channels, should only arouse interest for new issues, not market them. They should
instead act as platforms and facilitate eye-to-eye discussion where it is easiest for counter-arguments to form. In other words, a dialogue with contact (Palm, 2006, p. 158). Salem also claims this is especially crucial in times of transformation; failing to get the entire organization talking about a transformation, will also result in failure to reach transformational goals (Salem, 2008, p. 338). This argument falls close to findings made by Yeomans (2008) as she examines the organizational life in a hospital during times of transformation. In her article, Yeomans (2008) found that specific social groups, such as nurses, constructed their own social context and lacked identification with sense-making activities, such as newsletters. Instead much tacit “wisdom” was simply handed down person to person within those social groups (Yeomans, 2008, p. 282), which is a finding that supports the previous arguments mentioned by Qian and Daniels (2008); about how work-related attitudes are shaped in a work related social context by social cues and information passed on by other members. Local identification is also a common problem among companies today. According to Salem (2008), communication is not only for exchanging information, but also plays a vital role in human interaction. Interactions that help develop an individual’s self-perception and define the individual’s role in the organization. It is by communicating with other members that our organizational identification emerges. Communication works to establish identification in different ways, one is to develop a shared sense of vision; where all members work toward a common goal. Another way is to make more people part of the planning process, Salem (2008) argues. But change has a tendency to disrupt those identities, leaving members wondering how it will affect them and what they, or the organization, will become. If there is no communication that ties individuals to a shared identification, members could instead revert to older and more local and independent identities (Salem, 2008, p. 339). These arguments are similar to those made by Palm (2006), supporting his statements about how communication works to build a common frame of reference.

It is also similarly made by Van Vuuren et al (2006) in their article on organizational commitment. In their article Van Vuuren et al (2006) makes references to previous research, stating that both De Ridder (2004), Mathieu and Zajac (1990) and Putti (1990) found leader communication and information to be antecedents of better work environment, increasing employee commitment to, and sense of membership of, the organization (van Vuuren, de Jong and Seydel, 2006, p. 118). In fact, the closer the organization’s identity is to the individual’s identity, also meaning ‘value congruence’, and the stronger the motivation among members to cooperate and be flexible towards management initiatives (van Vuuren, de Jong and Seydel, 2006, p. 119). According to Salem (2008), global distrust, is yet another common problem faced in times of organizational transformation. The author here defines distrust as being characterized by fear, skepticisms and cynicism, and claims it is something that, once developed, could cause managerial initiatives to fail (Salem, 2008, p. 340), which an argument is similarly made by Qian and Daniels (2008) when addressing cynism. If there is no trust in management, Salem (2008) claims, employees have a way of expressing their distrust among other members in the organization, (which is also something that is mentioned by Qian and Daniels (2008) when discussing how individuals’ work related attitudes are highly affected by colleagues) usually about how management distribute resources. This is also similar to the statement Qian and Daniels (2008) discussed earlier about how trust in senior management is a determinant of cynism. Salem (2008) ends his article by pointing out that many of the mistakes made can be tied to the limited communication made by management (Salem, 2008, p. 340).
3.8 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership has been on research map of leadership since the early 1980s, making it relatively new in comparison to many other forms of leadership. With its focus on charismatic and affective leadership elements, transformational leadership has gained popularity among today’s workgroups who want to be inspired and motivated in their work. According to Northhouse (2010), in an article analysis published in Leadership Quarterly, Lowe and Gardner claimed that 34% of the articles published in Leadership Quarterly between 1990 and 2000 were written in the field of Transformational Leadership, making it one of the most popular leadership approaches today. (Northhouse, 2010, p. 171)

Transactional Leadership was first mentioned as a term and coined by Downton in 1973 and later made famous in 1978 in the political scientist James MacGregor Burns’s work titled Leadership. There Burns attempted to link leaders and follower and described two categories of leadership; the Transformational and the Transactional approach, the latter being the most common and referring to most types of leadership approaches. Named after the exchange that exists between leader and follower, (examples used could be how a leader sometimes offers a promotion to someone that works hard or when the teacher gives a grade when a student has completed a task) the Transactional approach can be observed in many levels of the organization (Northhouse, 2010, p. 172). This view seems to be similarly shared by Müllern and Elofsson (2006), in a general discussion on the nature of leadership, and that transactional leadership seems to work as long as an organization is stable and predictable; a leadership based on conditional rewards in the form of higher salary or benefits – or negative feedback. According to Müllern and Elofsson (2006), this could result in leadership only being performed when results do not meet expectations. Transactional leadership has long been seen as something that can identify desired expectations in employees by bonding performance with the right reward (Müllern and Elofsson, 2006, p. 106).

The other approach categorized by Burns, according to Northhouse (2010), was the Transformational approach, where the connection created between leaders and follower increases the motivation and morality of both parties. Here Burns uses Mohandas Ghandi, and the way he changed the minds of millions, as a typical example of how transformational leadership works. An example of this, set in an organizational context, could be a manager with an agenda to transform the values of an organization, also ending up changing himself (Müllern and Elofsson, 2006, p. 106).

As opposed to many other leadership approaches, Transformational Leadership focuses on changing and transforming people, motivating them to work for the sake of the appointed task and not for any reward or to avoid punishment (Söderfjäll, 2007, p. 21). Where the transactional leader advocates stability, the transformational leaders create transformation in its followers, the self and the organization (Bloisi, 2003, p. 588). The transformation is made possible by the leader by ways of assessing the motives, and satisfying the needs, of its followers by using a focus on emotions, ethics, values, standards and long-term goals. This way, according to Northhouse (2010), the Transformational approach can motivate and influence its followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them, often with a charismatic and visionary leadership at the helm (Northhouse, 2010, p. 171).
Even though the Transformational Leadership lacks the preciseness in its setup (such as assumptions of how a leader should act in certain situations in order to succeed) like many other leadership models (Northhouse (2010) describes it as being closer to a series of generalizations of the typical behavior among leaders who are transforming in their leadership approach) it hold benefits that in many cases differ from that of the more traditional transactional leadership approach (Northhouse, 2010, p. 190). The nature of transformational leadership; its focus on the emotions, motivation and needs of the employees and how they are met; a leaders ability to inspire and provide a vision, are mostly consistent of what people expect leadership to be and it is also what makes the transformational leadership approach naturally appealing to most (Northhouse, 2010, p. 187).

“...at testing times when people confront the possibilities – and threats – of great change, powerful foundational values are evoked. They are the inspiration and guide to people who pursue and seek to shape change, and they are the standards by which the realization if the highest intentions are met” – (James MacGregor Burns, 2003, p. 29)

This role of transforming leaders is also discussed by Burns (2003) himself, in that transforming leaders define public values that connect to the principles of people and that these principles are the force behind revolutionary proclamations and memorable statements. Statements that so clearly cut to core of values and of what is at stake. But such values are not usually part of the everyday life (MacGregor Burns, 2003, p. 29), nor in an organization.

Through the transformational approach, leadership is also seen as a process which incorporates the needs of the leader as well as the needs of the follower, making it a codependent process. This, according to Northhouse, also means that leading in itself is not the focus of the approach, but the needs of others are, giving followers a more prominent position in the relationship of leader-follower. Leadership is then seen more of an emergent element from that relationship (MacGregor Burns, 2003, p. 29). While the more common transactional approach focus more on the right type of reward and action in certain situations, the transformational approach applies a broader view incorporating both the reward but also pays attention to the needs of the employees (MacGregor Burns, 2003, p. 29).

Attention is also given to group morale and moral responsibility, motivating followers to go beyond their own needs and focus on the good of the group or organization. This sense; that leadership has an inert moral aspect, is one aspect of what sets transformational leadership apart from other leadership approaches, according to Northhouse (Northhouse, 2010, p. 187).

Müller and Elofsson (2010) argue that, when working for the good of the group or organization, an individual is stimulated to fulfill a more spiritual need in the self and the individual’s self-actualization. The psychological needs referred to by Müller and Elofsson (2010) is about creating meaning, individually and organizationally, and is the most powerful motivator for people today, but also too complex to study with only transactional rewards such, as salary and provision. Müller and Elofsson (2010) also mention a newer theory of leadership, a theory that argues that most leaders do show a mix of
transformational/charismatic and ordinary transactional leadership. The “Full range of Leadership-model” incorporates aspect from both transformational and transactional. Efforts to measure the variables and aspects of this theory have resulted in a test called the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ).

### 3.9 The MLQ – a tool for leadership behavior

As research around the MLQ has grown, so has the number of its measuring variables. The earliest version started with charisma, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation. These were considered to be the basics of transformational leadership. As the test was developed it also came to incorporate testing of two transactional variables; contingent reward, were a manager rewards an employee who’s effort has met expected results; management-by-exception, were the manager avoids giving directives if everything is running smoothly (Müllern and Elofsson, 2006, p. 108).

The aspects of the current MLQ includes those mentioned, but includes the variables of charisma as two parts, according to Müllern and Elofsson (2010); Idealized influence, which is about behaving like a role model, an example, for one’s coworkers or employees, being admired, respected and trusted, and thereby strengthening the leader’s influence. A charismatic leader is consistent and acts according to “live as you teach” (Müllern and Elofsson, 2006, p. 109). The second variable, inspirational motivation is about communication where the transformational leader motivates and inspires by creating context and meaning. They create a positive vision of the future and emphasize the importance of the individual’s own contribution to something greater. This enhances not only the motivation and team spirit of the group, but also for the whole of the organization (Müllern and Elofsson, 2006, p. 109).

By also questioning assumptions and finding new ways of solving problems, the transformational leader uses intellectual stimulation in his or her leadership. Focus also lies on enhancement and making the organization more effective, often by seeking new pathways to perform tasks, rather than working on old routine. An aspect of this, according to Müllern and Elofsson (2010), is; not to criticize coworkers in front of others; embracing ideas that might not similar to the manager’s own, and working toward making coworkers independent and to work on their own (Müllern and Elofsson, 2006, p. 109).

Even if members of an organization have to work in teams, they should still be seen as separate individuals, and this requires individual consideration. The transformational leaders have the ability to act as a mentor and to acknowledge that individual’s needs are different. Without the feeling of being supervised, but instead supported by two-way communication, individuals can cultivate their own confidence (Müllern and Elofsson, 2006, p. 109).
3.10 Improving one's charisma

Although using the term charismatic leadership in many of their arguments, Müllern and Elofsson (2010) acknowledge that it is indeed the same transformational approach developed by Burns (2003) that is discussed (Müllern and Elofsson, 2006, p. 13). The authors are also referring to previous research on transformational/charismatic leadership when discussing how such leadership can be learnt. Concerning the learning of leadership, Müllern and Elofsson (2010) mention how leadership has long been seen as something that a person is born to be, which does not leave much in terms of developing said leadership. The aspect of being born as a leader raises doubt and the possibility that such a leader is stuck in those natural behaviors. It is however, later believed that leadership is something that can be learnt, at least to some extent (Northhouse, 2010, p. 171).

A main starting point is then that it takes understanding around the factors that can influence leadership. Again referring to previous research, Müllern and Elofsson (2010) mentions some vital aspects:

- To critically evaluate everything that is occurring and not occurring in order to discover if there are problems.
- Learning to formulate visions about the future, through different brainstorming sessions, for example. These visions can then be used to deliver motivation and inspiration.
- To enhance one’s communication about the vision of a better future. Something important to remember here is that charismatic individuals also communicate by body language and what actions they perform.
- In the end, transformational leadership is about creating an autonomous work climate with motivated employees. To achieve this, a manager has to be able to express his or her expectations, while at the same time give deserved rewards and facilitate for employees by removing bureaucratic obstacles (Müllern and Elofsson, 2006, p. 139).
3.9 Previous Research on Transformational Leadership

The approach of transformational leadership, relatively young as it is, has been the focal point of much research since its first mentioning in the 1970s. According to Northhouse (2010), a literature review about the content in research articles published between the 1990s and 2000, showed that 34% were about transformational or charismatic leadership.

One such study was conducted by the Turkish author Nurdan Özaralli (2002). The aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between transformational leadership and team empowerment and effectiveness. A sample of 152 employees from 8 different organizations in different industries rated their opinion of their managers’ transformational leadership behaviors, and how much they themselves felt empowered. As a part of the study the respondents also evaluated their team’s effectiveness in terms of innovativeness, communication and team performance (Özaralli, 2002, p. 335).

As a way of measuring the perceived level of transformational behavior the author used an altered version of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. Although the questionnaire had the same variables as a standard version, the variables of charismatic leadership, inspirational leadership and intellectual stimulation was not divided into subcategories, but merged into one. This, the authors argued, was because the sample of respondents did not feel there was a difference between the different dimensions (Özaralli, 2002, p. 341). The author referred to research made by Avolio and Bass (2010), claiming that transformational leaders tend to provide mentoring in order for employees to feel a sense of self-confidence. The authors themselves found that results of the study corresponds with that previous research statement, showing that transformational leadership did indeed strengthen team effectiveness as predicted. The study also showed that groups under transformational leadership expressed a high level of perceived innovativeness, a high level of performance and goal attainment with the group in which they belonged, and also efficient in-group communication. The author continue by emphasizing the importance of creating a working environment where employees feel motivated, or empowered, to seek new and innovative ways of solving a problem or doing their job without fear of punishment. This, the author mentions, is much in accordance with his own results; that creativity among employees tend to be high when working with a transformational leader (Özaralli, 2002, p. 341).

The most powerful contributor to team effectiveness however, was the components of meaning and goal internalization, in short meaningfulness. The author concludes that, if employees perceive their job as something meaningful and important, when it has a desired level of responsibility, the work contributes to the organization in an important way, when they feel inspired by goals of the organization, then employees feel that the team is more innovative, they exchange ideas within the team and reach team objectives (Özaralli, 2002, p. 342).

Özaralli’s (2002) results are in many ways consistent with what is argued by Bass (1990), that transformational leaders generally have a better relationship with their supervisors and also have a tendency to generate extra effort among employees than transactional leaders, and making them more satisfied with the company’s performance appraisal system. Bass (1990) also argues that research shows that mass communications broadcasted to individual
employees have a much higher likelihood of impact if it is reinforced with a face-to-face follow up by managers (Bass, 1990, p. 25).

Northhouse (2010), referring to research made by House (1976), is stating that charismatic leadership has many benefits, such as; having an increased trust by followers in the leader’s ideology; increased similarity between follower’s beliefs and leader’s beliefs; unquestioning acceptance of the leader; expression of affection towards the leader; and increased emotional involvement in the leaders goals. Northhouse continues his reference to House in claiming that these effects are more likely to occur in stressful times as that is usually when followers look to leaders for guidance (Northhourse, 2010, p.175).

3.10 Criticism against the Transformational Approach

Being so generalizing, the transformational approach could seem to lack clarity and therefore be difficult to apply or even understand at times. As the idea behind its approach is to incorporate such a wide spectrum of activities for a leader – creating a vision, motivating, nurturing, supporting, fulfilling needs, being a change agent and building trust and morale, it is difficult to define (Müllern and Elofsson, 2006, p. 105).

Being so difficult to define makes it also difficult to evaluate and measure. In attempts to ascertain any level of measurement researchers have used versions of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ); a tool used to measure different aspects of a leader’s behavior such as; charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration etc., it was found that as some aspects had parameters that were hard to define, also made them difficult to separate from other leadership styles, which meant that they would perhaps not be unique to the transformational approach (Müllern and Elofsson, 2006, p. 188).

Considering the difficulties of defining its parameters, and how widely incorporating it is, how then can the transformational approach be used in practical leadership? This question is raised by the authors Müllern and Elofsson (2010), who argue that; as the theory emphasizes the central role of motivation in leadership, and in light of motivation focuses on values, self-worth and self-image, it also poses a difficult challenge for the manager: how is this done in practice? Although it may sound easy for a leader to connect to an individual’s identity by communicating company visions that coincide with the individual, the fact that an individual’s self-image and identity is shaped in a complex process with the rest of the world, connecting to that identity is difficult at best (Müllern and Elofsson, 2006, p. 188).

Although this dilemma is brought up by Müllern and Elofsson (2006), they also argue that that fact that the approach addresses motivation and the employee’s self-image, it brings a valuable contribution to leadership, and as long as a manager is aware of the problem of complexity in connecting to the individual’s identity, the theory can very well enrich the knowledge of leadership. One must not be fooled into thinking that it is possible to manipulate people in an easy and instrumental way, but that theories on leadership should be used as a guideline to reflection, not as a checklist for specific actions.
3.11 Author’s theoretical summation

In an attempt to further explain the current theoretical framework and to make it easier for the reader to get an understanding of the intentions behind the choices of theories, I have included a short summation of the theoretical framework as intended:

- How does it work?
- Important aspects?
- Barries and influences?

Rogers and Roger’s (1976) model of communication (fig 2.0)

How can it be practiced efficiently by top-managers?

Rhetoric

…soft communication?

Transformational Leadership

How can it be studied?

The Multifunctional Leadership Questionnaire

Communication

Leadership
4. Practical method

In this chapter I will present the limitations chosen for the thesis, how the choices for respondents were made, as well as a presentation of the reasoning behind the development of the interview guide. Furthermore, as the respondents’ participation is to be confidential the name of the organization as well as the names of all respondents will not be given. The description of the organization and the respondents will also be kept on a general level as not to divert any reveling detail.

4.1 Sample choice

As mentioned in the beginning, the choice of organization was very much influenced by a previous internship of mine. It was believed that the connection already established through this internship could somehow facilitate the acquiring of respondents for the thesis. And as the focus was to analyze top-managers’ opinions and choice of communication, the most effective way of getting in touch with valid and reliable respondents in the organization was to simply send requests by ways of e-mail to every member of top-management. Despite having a full calendar the respondents answered quickly and with a positive attitude toward participation. When the requirement for the number of respondents needed had been reached, a notice of this was sent out to the rest that had not yet replied.

The bank at which the respondents work is one the oldest and largest banks in Scandinavia, with branches and sections in many other countries worldwide, and has been registered on the Stockholm stock exchange, OMX, for many years. The respondents are all highly experienced top-managers with many years of leadership behind them, and are considered reliable for the purpose of this thesis.

4.1.1 Delimitations

I have chosen to limit my number of respondents to five respondents at top-level positions in one of the largest banks of Scandinavia. As each respondent has vast experience in leadership and in communicating with employees, from both previous and current organizations, they are considered valuable and representative as top-managers. The respondents’ choices of communication that are analyzed, in correlation with their leadership behavior and then presented are from the perspectives of the managers interviewed. Concerning the specific effects of chosen communication methods; it is not my intention to interview the managers’ employees in search of established and conclusive effects. It is merely to analyze the top-level managers’ reasoning around the choices of communication they make, and to analyze these choices in light of recent communication and leadership theory in order to speculate on potential effects. This is to limit the span of the thesis.

As stated above, as the respondents’ participation is to be confidential the name of the organization as well as the names of all respondents will not be given. The description of the organization and the respondents will also be kept on a general level as not to divert any reveling detail.
4.2 Interview

As the intention is to find out how managers perceive and use communication in their leadership, it was believed that gathering data was best done by asking the source of this managerial information and experience directly, i.e. the managers themselves. In line with the qualitative strategy and the hermeneutic nature in which the information would be analyzed, it was decided that the gathering of information would be most efficient by conducting interviews with the respondents. By choosing to interview the respondents it was believed that the social context would be easiest to capture in order to gain a greater understanding. I also chose to use a semi-structured interview as it structures the interview around certain topics that would make it easier for me to stick to one subject at a time. This would give the respondents freedom to elaborate in their answers while giving me an opportunity to ask follow up questions if needed (Bryman and Bell, p. 595).

Four of the five interviews conducted had to be done over the telephone, for reasons of distance from the respondents, while the fifth respondent was situated in Umeå region and so that interview was made person-to-person. All interviews made were recorded with the respondents permission using a digital Dictaphone borrowed from the Umeå School of Business. Some element of insight may have been lost due to the fact that the interviews were made over the telephone, and not by person-to-person interviews that could enable the interviewer to see the respondents reactions and mannerism. However, as this was an obstacle that could not be overcome, the analysis of the respondents’ answers will be done with this in mind. It is believed that by maintaining this awareness the required level of reliability is maintained.

4.2.1 Interview guide

The interview guide (see Appendix 2.0) was structured around the main points of the theories on communication with the purpose of analyzing the respondent’s attitudes and thoughts. The intention was to start by asking general questions about a subject and letting the respondents respond with their most general and spontaneous thoughts on the subject of internal communication. The intention behind was that spontaneous answers about their thoughts and attitudes were in all likelihood closer to what it is that form their daily communication. The questions were then usually complemented with a follow up question of a more specific nature. As the respondents are anonymous, the first few questions concerning the respondent’s own position and background were merely asked in order for this author to pinpoint whether their experience was reliable or not and to give the respondents time to adjust to being interviewed. The replies concerning their positions and experience will of course not be presented.
4.3 Other delimitations

It should be clarified that the purpose is to analyze the respondents’ collective awareness and choices of communication as they perceive it, not to analyze them individually against each other or their individual experience and positions. Such an analysis would also require a more detailed account of each respondent which would violate the agreement of their anonymity. Together with the answers from the interviews, a questionnaire around the topic of leadership was also sent out with the respondent’s permission, The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was to provide a means of compliment to the interviews, in order to gain deeper insight into the respondent’s choices of communication in correlation to their leadership behavior. The questionnaire, as described in a previous chapter, was provided by my supervisor Nils Wåhlin at the Umeå School of Business, with permission to use explicitly for the purpose of this thesis. As it is protected by copy write law and only accessible by paying a license fee, however, it will not be a shown as an Appendix together with this thesis.

Furthermore, as part of the bank’s annual evaluation of employee satisfaction, a section focused specifically towards managers is also included each year. In it are sections of employees’ satisfaction with several different subcategories, concerning everything from levels of happiness and innovation to levels of perceived trust in, and communication from, managers etc. There will be minor references to the survey, but as it is protected by the bank’s secrecy acts, its specific content or any detailed description will not be given.

4.4 Research criteria

An important part when conducting, but also when critically examining, scientific research, that any data taken into account by the author must be trustworthy. Bryman and Bell (2005) discusses four different criteria of trustworthiness of a qualitative study and how it differs from those of a quantitative study (Bryman and Bell, 2005, p. 50):

The authors mention credibility and it is usually relating to arguments and conclusions made and whether they are ruled by causality or not. In other words, if it is claimed that the ‘independent variable X’ causes reactions in the ‘dependent variable Y’, is it for certain that there is a causal link between X and Y, and that it really is X, and no other variable, that is causing the variations in variable Y? (Bryman and Bell, 2005, p.49) The arguments made in this thesis are described in a later chapter where the readers can follow the author’s line of arguments and conclusions for themselves.

The concept of transferability raises the question of how generalizing the results of the research are, and how well they can be applied to other contexts. One important aspect concerning the transferability is the research sample choice and how representative the samples are (Bryman and Bell, 2005, p.49). Due to the respondents many years of experience in managerial positions at the current bank as well as other organizations, and that all respondents are currently seated at top-management positions, they are considered representative for the purpose of this thesis. Also, based on the respondents’ many years of
experience, the conclusions drawn in this thesis can be considered transferable to other contexts concerning top-managers and communication.

Dependability, or reliability, concerns whether or not the research in question would produce the same results if it would be repeated. This concept is often used in correlation to research of a more quantitative nature where research based on surveys for example, are easily reproduced (Bryman and Bell, 2005, p.50). In research based on qualitative and interpreting methods on the basis of a number of specific individuals, the likelihood of getting exactly the same results if conducted in another context can be questioned. However, should the research be conducted anew, in the same context and with the same respondents, should they come forward from their anonymity – and assuming the respondents experience has not changed during that time – the results are likely to be similar. Methods of how this thesis is structured are presented above.

Confirmability, concerns the author’s ability to stay objective and not let his own values affect the results and conclusions of the thesis (Bryman and Bell, 2005, p.50). It is my standpoint that by being aware of one’s position as a researcher, it is possible to limit one’s own influence over conclusions made and stay as objective as possible. The degree to which this is possible is however also discussable; can someone that is a creature of social processes themselves be totally objective? If that is indeed the case, in an effort to increase the reader’s awareness of this, there is a section addressing the author’s own prejudice in the beginning of the thesis.

4.5 The respondents

The respondents that have participated in this thesis are anonymous and will not be named. As the respondents are situated at especially high, and at times unique, positions within the bank, it was decided not to reveal the name of the bank or to go into any greater detail around it, in order to protect the respondents’ identities. The respondents’ anonymity has also formed the empirical account of the answers given. It should be clarified that the purpose is to analyze the respondents’ collective awareness and choices of communication, not to analyze them individually against each other or their individual experience and positions. Such an analysis would also require a more detailed account of each respondent which would violate the agreement of their anonymity. Furthermore, for the sake of ease for the reader and author, all respondents will be referred to as male.

4.5.1 The respondents

Respondent X – used to work in New York and has over 20 years of managerial experience behind him. He recently joined the bank at a higher international level and is quick in letting me know many of the bank’s strengths and how it tailors its business to many different categories of customers, both the big and the small. - 38:48 min. Interview date: 2010-05-07

Respondent Y – has a calm demeanor and has been a manager all his working life and also at other banks. He is now a regional manager at the bank with about 25 middle-managers reporting directly to him. - 59:46min. Interview date: 2010-05-05
**Respondent Z** – works with change at an international level and emphasizes that the customers’ needs is his platform. Z has worked at the bank for 21 years and has been a manager for 19 of those years. He has a handful of people reporting directly to him, helping him manage the often several hundred in his project staff. - 35:49min. Interview date: 2010-05-05

**Respondent Q** – has 23 years of experience as a manager behind him. From previously working at the Swedish Post office, Q had a stab of 59 people. Now Q works at the bank, has a full schedule usually revolving around human resource issues and a stab of 29 people with 8 reporting directly to him. - 43:19min. Interview date: 2010-04-28

**Respondent W** – assures me that he is always reachable on his cell-phone should there be a need for any further questions. As a manager at national level, Q has 14 others reporting directly to him, many of those are seated at top-managing positions themselves. - 30:21 min. Interview date: 2010-04-29

### 4.5.2 The Bank

With a major domestic market share and a network of branches and offices abroad, the bank at which the respondents were found, is one of the largest and oldest banks in Scandinavia. It has long positioned itself as a *people’s bank*, and a bank of strong values. It has in recent years undergone a major organizational change with the effort of increasing and shifting the authority and decision making processes to its many local offices.
5 Empirical Data

In this chapter I will present the information I received from conducted interviews with the respondents. I initially conducted a pilot interview with a middle manager situated at a local bank office in order to gain some insight into how much time would be needed and what improvements could be made on the questions. As a result, some minor changes were made. Also, the test-respondent suggested an additional question, which resulted in question nr 18. Even though nr 18 is slightly more direct than other questions I believe it serves a purpose in finding out how in touch top-managers are with current theories in communication.

“This is a sales organization; it’s different from what it was ten years ago.” - Respondent

Q 4) When asked to describe their thoughts on their daily communication in general, the idea was to get an insight of how the respondents spontaneously thought about, and what their impression was, of internal communication. All five respondents started by explaining the number of people that reported to them and that played a large part in their daily routine, a number varying around a handful, with one respondent having around 25 coworkers. The respondent with around 25 coworkers admitted to it being an absurd managerial situation, but that, although challenging, he had worked out a monthly routine with which he could still converse with all middle managers. This routine was not unique, however. All respondents communicated with their coworkers mainly by e-mail and scheduled telephone conversations, but also made efforts to meet coworkers (middle managers) in person as often as possible, varying from once a week, to once a month, but then with frequently more telephone conferences in between. Two respondents emphasized that fact that a personal contact plays a large part in the “process of socializing” and that is strengthens trust while another respondent however, mentioned that there was a distance between him and his coworkers, as he was situated several stories above his team. The respondent expressed an awareness of the fact that it could have potential negative effects on his ability to communicate with his coworkers, but that he tried showing up unscheduled on the lower floor, in person, a couple of times each week, and especially if there was any issue on the agenda that he felt could have had impact on the coworkers.

Besides telephone contact, e-mail and the occasional personal meeting, all respondents, mentioned the intranet, its many different uses, and the large role it plays in the daily routine for the whole bank. Two respondents also mentioned how they blogged about their work on the company intranet, in an effort to keep employees informed and provide understanding of what a top-manager does on a day-to-day basis. This, one respondent stated, created understanding, which in turn builds trust. As a response to question number four all respondents felt they had an open communication with their coworkers, three of them clearly mentioned the importance of being open, straightforward and honest in their approach to communication. One respondent continued by discussing how important it was that everything had to be in line with the company strategy, the right values, purpose, and the people involved. This, according to the respondent, was the foundation on which the company could then make decisions and plan details.
Q 5) When asked to describe the communication in the bank in general, the purpose was to see if all respondents had the same idea and opinion of how the internal communication worked. The respondents gave varying responses, two stated that every top-manager has his or her own responsibility to structure the communication with coworkers as he see fit. Although there are also no clear ways or directions of how internal communication should travel, it differs according to manager and what type of issue it is about and that there exist clear principles about who has responsibility over, and therefore, should make statements about what. Such communication, according to one respondent, passes through the local middle-manager, and that he as a regional top-manager never addresses employees directly, as that would interfere with the local bank-manager’s responsibility.

One respondent stated that, although the responsibilities of ‘who should communicate what’ were set, the bank was currently dealing with a major communications restructuring as an entire level of middle managers had been removed. According to three respondents the banks internal webpage, the intranet, played a large role in the company’s internal communications, especially as people in the banking business often have access to computers. As a response to being asked to describe the internal communication in the bank in general, one respondent mentioned how difficult it was to fill the need for information in times of change, and that that was usually the main issue that coworkers were dissatisfied with.

When asked about the existence of any policy regarding internal communication, all respondents believed there was one, but none could say what it contained. One respondent said that there had long been talks of employees needing to take responsibility for their communication, but that there was a need to go from information to communication. The respondent continued by stating that they were in a process of removing policies, and that there were too many policies in Sweden today. Instead, he argued, it is more about each manager needing to take responsibility for his or her communication, and that this was an issue that was now incorporated in the company’s education programs for managers. The over-belief of the effectiveness of policies, he argued – that as long as there is a policy, things will work – could very often have opposite effect. The respondent also gave an example of this in practice, that while another bank just recently had made a statement about locking social medias, such as Facebook, their CEO had gone the opposite direction. He had, according to the respondent, made it clear that he believed in people’s own sense of responsibility about social medias, and that they instead needed to stay in touch with current development. This was instead handled with an open dialogue in each department about how social medias should be approached. According to the respondent, this created joint attitude in turn creates a sense of solidarity among coworkers that is often stronger than any policy.

Q 6) When asked with whom the respondents communicated the most with on a daily basis, one respondent simply stated “my assistant”, while the respondent with around 25 employees felt that communication with every middle-manager was important and that his daily communication therefore had to vary in order to fit them all in. Another respondent however, mentioned that he usually made his communication either early in the morning or very late at night, either calling his middle-managers, or composing e-mails. This he felt, was because of his days being full of booked meetings, something he felt was his job.
As a response to if they ever delegated communication, most respondents answered that they often did, and that they had to, or else they would not have time. All respondents continued however, by stating that if the matter was more important than daily updates or rapports for example, or if it was something that could affect coworkers, then it is important that the communication is handled by them. One respondent stated that good information is not just about giving the right information, but also to inform at the right time. If a sensitive matter was to somehow reach his employees in some other way, which is a risk in large organizations, according to the respondent, it could have negative consequences and reflect poorly on him as a manager, even though his information might not be that much delayed. His experience was that employees do not like to hear important news, especially bad news, from anyone else than the manager in charge. The respondent also stated that realizing what impact a message could have on the individual, was one of the more challenging tasks for a manager. To handle sensitive communication personally was expressed by the respondent as "a matter of decency", while another respondent expressed it as him then wanting to "own the communication" himself.

"It is easy to believe that just by putting something on the intranet, you've fulfilled your communicative responsibility." - Respondent

Q 7) When asked about what they believed to be important variables in order to ensure a good internal communication, one respondent mentioned how much of today's communication moves towards using the intranet, and that this new trend was discomforting. The respondent mentioned that, as a manager, it is easy to believe that one has fulfilled one's communicative responsibility by posting something on the intranet. The respondent believed that the use of several channels was important, and that there is a need for personal connection and not just by e-mail or memos. The respondent also mentioned how he sometimes during coffee breaks also asks his employees to help him convey a message. The respondent believed that, as a manager, one must believe in the message that one is communicating, something that can be difficult at times.

Another respondent argued that one must spend some time thinking about the information you are giving and the impact it can have on others. Whether it is directed at an individual or a group, one must think about what type of questions that might arise. According to the respondent, it is a good thing to have answers to such questions in advance, and if there are no answers, one must also let others know that you, the manager, do not know yet. The respondent continued by stating that, it can be a good thing to let employees know how answers will be formed, so they as listeners will understand the process. Perhaps the answers will be available in a month, during which the employees might be a part of the process of forming the answers. The respondent summarized that, one, as a manager, do not always have to have all the answers, but it is important to think about what questions you do not have answers to that the ones affected by the change might pose. From there one can answer, “this is how it is”, or “I do not know” or “this is how the question will be answered”. The respondent continued by claiming that successful transformation is when a planned structural process has been made, one that is then communicated to employees and then involving as many as possible. The involvement can perhaps not occur at the planning table, the respondent said, but that everyone can leave input and feel that they can be a part of the process. Much can be gained from this, the respondent said, instead of leaving finished
solutions in the end, created behind closed doors. The more open one can be, and the more one involved the coworkers can be in order to create anchoring, the better.

One respondent stated that it is important to have an organization that people understand, and that roles and responsibilities are clearly set. Although the bank has recently undergone a major change, the respondent felt that things are settling and starting to work a bit smoother, something that can be difficult for larger organizations after a change. The respondent clarified that it is important to have a clear frame of doing things, and that he could not think of anything else that could be important for good internal communication.

The importance of setting clear roles was also mentioned by another respondent, but also that it is important to have a working atmosphere where people feel that being critical is a part of their job. The respondent called this as having an atmosphere with a "high ceiling", an atmosphere that is characterized by open dialogue and discussion. The respondent claimed that it was sometimes easy for a manager to surround himself with people that do as they are told without thinking for themselves and that that was one of the worst things that could happen to a manager. The respondent said it is important to have a feeling of "we understand each other", that everyone together has made a good analysis of the situation before moving forward, and that honesty creates a feeling of safety. Safety, the respondent continued, is very important. When faced with problems, having a sense of safety in the organization means showing that there is an awareness of the problem and how it can be solved. The respondent also claimed that the bank was in an unsafe situation that kind before he arrived. The environment perceived the banks situation to be more serious than the bank did, and that this created a feeling among the banks members of being unsafe. Questions arose about who was right, the environment or the management, and that created a bad feeling internally.

To be able to build a culture, the respondent continued, one must have foundation of values. It is from values that an organization can start discussing expected behavior from its leaders and coworkers, and when the behavior is achieved a culture can be formed.

“Whatever we communicate, it must coincide with our values.”

- Respondent

The respondent mentioned concern, openness, simplicity, and sustainability as being the values of the bank, and that when something is communicated it must coincide with those values. The respondent exemplified by saying that, if he communicated with someone, that person must feel that he, the manager, cares and is open-minded.

When asked if they had any example of previously experienced internal communication they felt was good, most respondents preferred to speak in a general manner. One respondent however, recalled a previous experience he had from another organization many years ago. In this previous organization, the respondent said, the environmental topic was still new but that the CEO thought it could matter in the future. He believed that asking the company’s 12,000 employees would be a good idea and subsequently made a homemade video where he stated that he had no idea about how to approach this but that seeing as they were so many, they could think about it together. The respondent summarized by saying that, it was not the channel that was the important variable in that message, but that the CEO conveyed his
feelings and vision. In the end it turned out that the company saved about 50-60 million sek by focusing on that issue.

“Communication has to be honest; it must go through the head and reach the heart.” - Respondent

The respondent also said that most people can take just about anything, as long as they understand, but that that those informing might be a bit too quick to communicate the what, but not the how and the why. To reach someone he, as a manager, needs to appeal to emotions and reach what the individual believes appeals to him specifically.

Q 8) When asked about what they believed could be obstacles to internal communication, one repeated his answer about setting clear responsibilities, and also how pride, as he called it, can sometimes make people think they do not need to share information. If someone believes he is solely entitled to presenting a solution or owning a project, it can be difficult to realize that sharing information is important.

Another respondent mentioned how, in a company that is registered on the stockmarket, it can sometimes be difficult when information that could be helpful to employees is protected by secrecy. In those cases it a manager is not allowed to inform employees about company ambitions or how things are likely to turn out, even if he would like to. The respondent also mentioned how previous cooperation with other firms has shown that managers sometimes do not recognize how a process often involves more members and departments than what is initially assumed. If a manager believes he can solve a problem or finish a process without involving other managers in the planning process, it can often fail due to lack of buy-in from coworkers in those departments that are involved but only get to hear the solution in the end.

One respondent answered that people are clever and can tell when you are not open, honest and forthright in your communication, and that is when internal communication can be counterproductive.

“Communication is an art form, and it requires daily care. In such a large organization as this one there are also many people in need of information.” - Respondent

The respondent also mentioned that obstacles also appear when one underestimates the challenge that lies in communication, what is clear for me might not be clear for someone else, the respondent said. Therefore it is important to have structures and processes at work in order for you to make sure that you and the other party heard the same thing. It is a constant process, the respondent stated, to think about one’s communication and to make sure it has been understood by the receiver.

Another respondent started his answer with an example from the day before the interview. The respondent mentioned again how important it was that a message appeals to the heart, to the receiver’s emotions and interest and how a presentation from the day before was a good example. The respondent and his team had all been in a good mood throughout a day fully scheduled of supplier presentations. From being on top, however, the mood drastically sank to
the bottom as the last supplier presented their case. This, the respondent said, was because the presentation was so boring. It serves as a good example as to the importance of presentation and packaging of a message, the respondents said, especially as all suppliers basically has the same message.

Q 9) When asked to describe the process of how when they themselves communicate a message, the purpose was to find out their initial and spontaneous response about their own choices and process of preparation. Respondents stated that it depends on what type of information it is and what context it concerns. One respondent said that the channel varies depending on the message. If it is something important that could affect his coworkers, he would choose to convey it himself in a physical meeting. Otherwise, if it is something like an annual rapport, he usually e-mails it.

One respondent argued that things can be done very differently, but that one should go through one’s own argument beforehand and know what it is you base your argument on, and what it is you hope to achieve with the decision you made or the information you are giving. That is usually what people ask about, according to the respondent. It is therefore important to know what you base your argument on. Here, the respondent continued, is where a decision or information should be based on the bank’s overall strategy in order to deliver a clearer picture for employees. Change for change’s sake is difficult to motivate.

Another respondent mentioned how important it is to explain well, that middle-managers understand what the top-managers are doing, as they are supposed to act as bearers of what the top-managers do. Also important for the top-manager, according to the respondent, is conveying a message without making the middle-manager feel burdened by it. Most things are also formed in an open discussion in order to keep each other informed.

Q 10) When asked about their thoughts when specifically preparing and forming a message, one respondent admitted to not preparing much at all, and that most thing were communicated “on the fly”. The respondent did however, make a difference when it came to important issues that could affect coworkers, then the planning is detailed. Whether or not it is planned, the respondent said he usually tries to keep the mindset and current situation of the receivers of the message in mind beforehand, in order to be better prepared for reactions.

Another respondent also stated that preparations are not so complicated, but that it should follow reason and logical order. There are always going to be those that disagree, so it helps to be prepared on possible objections and questions that might arise, and one’s own argument as to why something is good for the bank.

The importance of connecting a message to a reasonable line of argument was also mentioned by other respondents, but one continued by arguing that there is a challenge for top-manager, not to over-communicate. One of the biggest issues in today’s banking, especially for middle managers, the respondents said, is being swamped with information. To this problem, the respondent argued, there is no right way of doing things, but that he tries to be wary of how not to burden a middle-manager when communicating something. The respondent continued by saying that he also tries to practice a sense of adaption to information among his
coworkers, or a motion of rocking as he described it by swaying his hands back and forth. If that is successful, then the main issue can mean a lot less trouble and resistance when it arises.

One respondent believed strongly in involvement, and that it would be impossible to sit in his own room, make decision and then send messages thinking he was smart. He argued that, it is his place as a leader to form a frame, a structure for the organization that feels right. When that is done one can start to look at what roles and responsibilities that are needed. After that is when you look at to whom you communicate with. His role was often to confirm something that has involved many members and ended in a decision that he finalizes and anchors, as he calls it, in order to communicate it to the rest of the organization.

**Q 11) When asked what they believed to be of specific importance if order to ensure that a message is well received**, one respondent said he believed that as a manager one needs to believe in what one communicates. According to the respondent, there are many managers that to not want to communicate and that are thankful for e-mail. Believing in communication and what you communicate are important aspects for a communicative leader.

This was also mentioned by another respondent, as an important factor when communicating a message, but also that believing in what one as a manager communicates, creates trust. Communication, the respondent argued, is about trust. It is not something that is simply said, but one also needs to convey a sense of having thought things through. People want to know why things are done the way they are, that is how things work in organizations today. Doing things by ordering people around does not work in the long run; there is no flow in it. That is why it is important that people uphold such values as openness, the respondent continued, so that it is conveyed when communicating. There is no other way to work in a company that is governed by values, the respondent stated. Working with values, the respondent added, is not about having a checklist for certain situations. It is more about a way of relating to them, and keeping them in mind. The practical way of doing things can always change. The values are, according to the respondent, the blood of the organization. Without them, they would falter.

Another respondent felt that he had answered that question with a previous answer, but continued by saying that it is important to know what you base your argument on, and that you should always keep the receiving group in mind, how they can perceive the information and to adapt the message accordingly. If addressing several hundreds of people one can think about a common denominator, and try to appeal to that.

“*The companies that best achieve their business model are those that conduct very open discussions.*” – Respondent

Having set clear roles and responsibilities, one respondent stated, he is then free to make decisions confident that they will be predictable for the rest of the bank. According to the respondents, it is very seldom he has to inform of something that is not prepared and discussed in advance.

**Q 12) When asked what they believe to be obstacles for communication on the sender’s part**, one respondent answered; not being informed enough yourself, or blaming others for
when there are no answers. This, according to the respondent, can seriously hurt the message and is often obvious for coworkers. The other respondents felt they had already answered that question.

Q 13) When asked to describe what they believe happens after a message has been sent, the purpose was to find out if the respondents gave any initial thought to the processes of social interaction among the employees. Most respondent answered the same; that it depends on what type of message it is. Either coworkers started to talk about the message, or they did not. But that it is important to have personal contact to be able to listen to coworkers in case the message created feelings of unease, from a risk of losing their job for example. The respondent who sat on a different floor that most of his coworkers tried to be there for his coworkers by showing up a couple of extra times afterwards, in case someone had any opinions or wishes to discuss an issue, if he felt the message was received in a less than desirable way. Another respondent mentioned how he might not always be present afterwards, in which case it became all the more important for middle managers to be present. One respondent felt that one could often tell if a message was received as it should. But if it had not, it became important, as a manager, to be able to ask one what it was that could have been done better. According to the respondent, it was therefore important to have created such an organization, such an atmosphere in which people feel that it is acceptable to be critical, but that it was a challenge to get people to feel that acceptance. Laughing, the respondent mentioned how the workplace was not so much different from how it was at home.

One respondent instead mentioned how important it was to conduct an ongoing discussion around important issues to get feedback and those efforts were measured in the end. He then mentioned the annual employee satisfaction survey in which coworkers get to express themselves on how they feel things are working at the bank, what is good and what is bad etc.

“When working as a manager, you always get filtered information.
You don’t always get to hear the most negative opinion on a matter.” - Respondent

Q 14) When asked about how they felt about feedback, in order to get a feeling of their initial response, most respondents answered that they felt it was important and that feedback reached them in many different ways. One respondent stated that feedback was essential, but that as a manager, one almost always receives filtered information, in a sense that one seldom get to hear the most negative opinion, which can also be constructive at times. Continuing, the respondent said that, it happens sometimes that a manager had launched what he believes to be a good idea, but while coworkers feel differently, none voices their discontent. The respondent also stated that, that is how a hierarchical organization works. The respondent argued that since, as a manager, one does not always get the truest feedback, one has to be perceptive and see what types of reactions that one has created. Another respondent seemed uneasy, but hoped he had created such an atmosphere where coworkers could express a difference of opinion.

Two respondents felt they had given an answer to that from a previous question.

“You don’t do good business if you’re afraid.” - Respondent
Q15) In an effort to be more specific, the respondents were asked to give some prerequisites that could facilitate good feedback. One respondent mentioned that planning for feedback was important, and that he felt he had done so by involving coworkers in a decision process. This, the respondent said, was to give coworkers a chance to contribute with opinions. Another respondent mentioned how he sometimes calls coworkers he has a long history, or a close relationship, with in order to get, what he feels is, proper feedback.

One respondent mentioned how order was an important variable to receiving feedback, order to how communication works internally, but that he also tried to create an atmosphere where coworkers will not be afraid of him as a manager. Fear, the respondent argued, is not good for business. The respondent continued by mentioning how values play a large part, that by committing to being open in discussions for example. Two respondents felt they had answered that with answers from previous questions.

"Leadership is contagious, if you’re bitter, you get a bitter environment.” - Respondent

Q16) When asked what they believed could have detrimental effects on feedback, one respondent answered that not asking questions about coworkers opinions can have negative consequences. The respondent continued with an example of such and mentioned how he had ended a two day meeting by spending a half hour talking with coworkers about the seminar and how they felt about it. The respondent however, also mentioned how difficult it was to get coworkers to talk about things, but that much depended upon the manager. The importance of the manager’s attitude was also mentioned by three other respondents, stating that it plays an important role in creating and shaping the atmosphere at work. One respondent exemplified by talking about a hypothetical scenario in which if he, as a top-manager, would shout and be offensive toward a middle manager, it would create panic and anxiety in that middle-manager, and it would not take long before that middle-manager turned that anxiety and panic to the rest of his coworkers. This, according to the respondent, was not preferable. Instead, he argued for having examples of good scenarios ready in order to explain how things should be. The respondent, felt that it was a difficult balance between needing to motivate by way of example, and to see that a harder touch was needed, but that one as a manager still needed to start from a more humanistic standpoint.

In his answer, one respondent mentioned that it was not a leader’s place to focus on him, but to focus on others and help others succeed. In order to achieve this, one had to build a desirable environment.

Q17) When asked if they ever get in conflict with what they communicated, all respondents felt that it was important to believe in what one as a manager was supposed to communicate to others. If it was a simple matter of being informed, one might need to talk things through with colleagues in order to be convinced or gain the proper information. Other respondents argued that, seeing as much has to do with the values of the company, and that if
one were not happy with the values to begin with, that was a standpoint that had to be dealt with earlier on. Either by continuing, or, if the values do not match, take a stand and leave. One respondent, although not mentioning leaving if disagreeing, also stated how important it was to look at how well the values matched one’s own, but that leadership was a task of dual identities. Even though one might feel that a decision is wrong on a personal level, it might be right for the bank and that as a manager, one has to make those kinds of decisions as well. Another respondent felt that, should he ever have to communicate a decision that was unexpected and not predictable, he had not done his job properly by creating such an atmosphere that followed values and behaved accordingly.

Q 18) In order to find out how the respondents related to establish theories on communication the respondents were asked if they ever used such knowledge when communicating. Even though no respondents mentioned making use of such formalized theories, all respondents mentioned being in contact with personnel specifically tasked with handling communication. It was stated that all regional managers had personnel consulting them on such matters whenever it was needed. One respondent continued by mentioning how he tries to make sure that the message was “on the right wave length” as the listeners, that there was a difference when addressing coworkers or the board of directors. One respondent also argued that sometimes there was no great difference between communicating with employees or those outside, and that making use of those proficient in communication could help limit technical and profession specific language. Seeing as openness was an important aspect, what was communicated internally should also be able to be communicated externally – and vice versa – as long as no laws of secrecy were broken.

One respondent added that he often works together with a former theatre director. The respondent felt that because being interviewed and giving presentations was such a large part of the respondent’s job, this could give him valuable insight into how people perceived him when standing on a stage.

“This Communication is not always what’s on the slides.” - Respondent

5.1 MLQ

The respondents’ answers from the questionnaire show high degrees of variance in some aspects, while on other aspects the results displayed commonalities on high levels. In correlation to the charismatic variable, Idealized Influence, the respondents’ in general scored high in correlation to behavior, yet low on inherent attributes. According to the MLQ manual, such results point to a preference among the respondents of focusing more on charismatic actions and deeds rather than a certain behavior as a person.

The respondents also scored high on Inspirational Motivation, which, according to the MLQ show preferences of acting in ways that motivate those around them. This is, according to the MLQ, done by providing meaning and challenge and encouraging others to envision a bright future. The respondents scored low on Intellectual Stimulation. Scoring high on Intellectual Stimulation shows, according to the MLQ, a preference for stimulating followers’ effort to be
innovative and creative by questioning assumptions and approaching old situations in new ways.

A high score on *Individual Consideration*, shows, according to the MLQ, a preference for paying attention to each individual’s need for achievement and growth, thus developing followers to higher levels of potential, by acting as a mentor. Here, most respondents scored between high to very high, with one respondent scoring low.

The respondents’ scores relating to Transactional Leadership were low, with the exception of a high score on *Contingent Reward*. A high score on Contingent Reward shows, according to the MLQ, a preference for clarifying expectations and to offer recognition when goals are achieved.

Finally, the respondents scored low on *Passive / Avoidant Behavior* categories. According to the MLQ, a high result in such categories point to avoiding behavior, such as avoiding specifying agreements, clarifying expectations, or providing goals and standards to be achieved.
6. Analysis

In this section I will discuss the various aspects of communication shown by the respondents and compare them to the theories gathered. I will touch upon the different implications resulting from using different levels of communication as well as some of the possible barriers encountered. I will also address some of the main issues from earlier research on communication and how different variables of a planned message can affect receivers, all in light of the answers provided by the respondents.

Looking at fig 2.0, information moves through different stages between a sender and a receiver. The act of processing information, or coding and decoding as it is called, plays a large part in the process that is communication. Between being sent, to it being received, the message travels by ways of a channel. As the channel of choice affects both the message and its consistency, and also affects how well it is received, the choice of channel is an important one. The structuring of the daily internal communication with coworkers at the Swedish bank is, as mentioned by a respondent, much left up to each manager to structure as they see fit.

The respondents initial answers when describing their own communication, showed a high awareness of their own communication and how it could affect other members of the bank. Although not mentioned by all respondents, awareness of many of the variables influencing communication as described by theory was addressed, such as; choice of channel and the strength of personal contact; the impact a message can have on a receiver, and the receivers current state of mind. As mentioned by the respondents, personal contact was something that they tried to fit in. It strengthens the social process and facilitates the building of trust and closeness. Despite this awareness however, the respondents interviewed seemed to conduct much of their daily communication verbally over the telephone and via e-mail with only the occasional blogging and weekly or monthly personal meetings. Although it must be acknowledged that this choice is probably out of necessity based on the general time limit experienced by the respondents on a daily basis, the implications of this could still be worth looking into.

From the interpretation of the respondents’ responses it would seem that major decisions within the organization involve some form of coworker input to a great extent. By having such a high involvement by others one could argue that the need for good communication is greater. Furthermore, these increased efforts made to communicate in early stages and making others part of a decision making process, is precisely what creates an anchoring effect on decisions and thus facilitating their implementation, as argued by Palm (2006) and Kitchen and Daily (2002). Giving member’s time to digest information, the concept of cradling of information and the rocking motion described and displayed during interviews also points to an awareness of such anchoring effects of easing information among the respondents. However, as mentioned by Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2002), communication without non-verbal communication creates a distance that makes it difficult to form trust, distrust being one of the barriers of communication mentioned by Palm (2006), with potentially the most powerful impact and potential consequences. A lack of trust can also by itself create other barriers of communication, such as selective listening or value judgments. The emphasis on having shared values, as mentioned by the respondents, is however also a way of combating such
distrusts, according to Palm (2006). Another potential and noteworthy effect of such distance when communicating is the difficulties in reading the other party’s need for information that arises. The difficulties mentioned by Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2002) can result in communicating parties sending either too little or too much information. Both of which are constantly experienced difficulties mentioned by respondents, and by Palm (1998) as an influential variable to the starting of rumors. As mentioned by Palm (1998), rumors can arise from flawed internal communication, either too little or too much information, and can have detrimental effects on work atmosphere, leading to strife among employees and could affect motivation.

Furthermore, when asked what they believed occurred after a message was given and the respondent had left, most respondents believed it was important to show a presence afterwards incase coworkers had any questions or anything to discuss, as they felt this was in line with the value of openness that protrude the bank. Although the respondents voiced how difficult it was to get employees to talk, no respondent mentioned the possibility that, even if asked, employees might not voice their immediate concerns back to the respondents, but instead talk among themselves. According to the research conducted by Qian and Daniels (2008)(and similarly by Salem (2008)), administrators (read, managers) should be aware of how employee attitudes are influenced by the information received in a social context at work and how they are affected by the relationships they have with their colleagues. Meaning, if coworkers or middle managers do not voice their immediate concerns to the respondent, even if the respondent is asking, there is a large chance that the conversation will continue after the respondent has left the scene. Whether or not the outcome of such discussions is good or bad, the implications exist that employees might prefer to listen to their colleagues’ opinions. Also having Palm’s(1998) arguments about gossip in mind, the potential result of this process is that employees might form their own opinions on a managerial decision without the direct influence of the respondents, only judging decisions on the basis of how valuable and helpful the internal information was perceived to be from the employees’ point of view.

According to Nelissen and van Selm (2008), a way of combating this would be to increase dialogue between managers and employees, something that is, according to the respondents, implemented as part of their value system. According to the respondents the value of openness for example, influences much of the daily routines and communication at the bank and input is sought during most work processes. However, only the annual surveys conducted at the bank can give any indication as to the effects of such efforts when there is such a low degree of personal contact between the respondents and their middle managers, or with lower positioned employees, which according to one respondent was not his responsibility to communicate directly with.

**Concerning Levels of communication**

**Hard information**

Hard information, although named by Palm (2006), was also referred to by Wood (2006), as being one part of the two levels of communication, the other one being soft information. Hard information is the facts and actual information in the message that is transmitted and what most people consciously focus on transmitting when communicating. According to the respondents, effort is put in providing the right information behind arguments, and making
arguments about decisions as linear, reasonable, transparent and easy to follow as possible when communicating with organizational members. Also, that ‘everything’ must also be in line with the company strategy, the right values, purpose and have the right people involved in order to build a platform on which decisions and details can be based.

This is similarly mentioned by Palm (2006) and Bloisi (2003) as the creation and building of a common frame of reference that can then act as a platform, a starting point, on which participants of communication can base their arguments and ideas. The idea, according to Bloisi (2003) is to facilitate and make discussions more efficient, something that one can interpret as being highly valued among the respondents and also implemented as part of their daily reasoning and communication. The basis of this transparency in their reasoning was briefly mentioned by a respondent; that it was important that middle managers understand what the respondents were doing as they would be needed to act as carriers of that information. This is again mentioned as another effect of good use of ‘hard’ information argued by Palm (2006), how it can convince others to a point which they then will support the argument, acting as ambassadors towards other members. These points to a keen awareness around the effects of good information use among the respondents.

However, the respondents’ high degree of use of e-mails and memos in their daily communication clashes with arguments made by Salem (2008). In his argument about how insufficient information is a common reason of failure to transform among organizations, Salem (2008) argues that e-mail and memos are by themselves not sense-making, that information cannot be given by ways of e-mail and memos but that it is instead created by the organizational members as they make sense of them themselves. Salem (2008) continues by stating that such channels are only opportunities to make sense and that it is in the process of communication that the sense is created. Salem’s (2008) statement also seems to be supported by Palm (2006) when claiming that different forms of media should only entice and arouse interest for new issues, not market them. Such different forms of media should act as a platform from which personal eye-to-eye discussions can be made, discussions where it is easiest to confront counter arguments. This brings us back to the previous speculation about the possible sense making processes among coworkers unmentioned among the respondents.

To continue this line of reasoning; as it is improbable to conceive that the respondents are successful in informing all members of the organization all the time in every situation, it brings us to the arguments made by Qian and Daniels (2008), and supported by Yeomans’ (2008) findings, that work related attitudes among employees are shaped in a work related social context by social cues and that information is sometimes passed on by other members. Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2002) refer to this as they discuss findings made by previous researchers. The authors argue that coworkers generally put more trust in the informal communication conducted between two parties on a coffee break, than the formal information previously given by senior management (Jacobson and Thorsvik, 2002, p. 361). One cannot help but speculate that even though the respondents encourage an open platform where everyone is encouraged to participate with input, the respondents’ choices of channels that lack personal contact might have negative effects on their efforts to encourage such an open atmosphere. Despite communicating through channels dealing mainly with hard information, the respondents still affect members of the bank and their softer aspects.
**Soft information**

As mentioned, another aspect of communication according to Palm (2006) and Wood (2006) is the soft information, an aspect that transmits on a more abstract level and incorporates attitudes and values. Soft information can sometimes succeed in communicating the nuances of meaning that words cannot. Soft information is according to Palm (2006) highly dependent on the relationship that exists between the sender and the receiver. Communicating soft information can according to Palm (2006) affect values, goals and also commitment among coworkers in an organizational context. Furthermore, according to the previous arguments made by Salem (2008), communication is not only about exchanging information, but also plays an important role in human interaction. It is by communicating with others that an individual’s organizational identity emerges. Salem (2008) continues by stating that this identification is established in different ways; by developing a shared sense of vision by working toward common goals, and also to have more people part of the planning process.

By making other members a part of planning processes and informing in early stages, it is clear that the respondents show awareness of, and put effort in, sustaining positive attitudes. It is also done by emphasizing values such as concern, openness, simplicity, and sustainability in the bank, and also by trying to behave according to those values even when communicating. This could potentially affect members’ identification and sense of belonging in a positive way. However, by reducing the personal contact that is required when communicating soft information, a vital influence in the building of closeness and trust; could this have detrimental effects on the respondents’ efforts to build these values in their bank? If the personal contact is reduced, the soft information is reduced; and as soft information is vital in the forming of identities – and following Salem’s (2008) previous SIT arguments – what effects could this have on the respondents’ efforts to build company values, if the employees, form their own social identities among each other, in their own groups? Are the respondent’s efforts to build values among employees strong enough if their personal contact with them is low?
Forming the message, the rhetorical way

According to Müllem and Elofsson (2006) rhetoric has long been used as a tool for appealing to others in order to convince. Müllem and Stein (1999) also argue for the use of a newer version of rhetoric, one that incorporates; not only the actions of the speaker, but also the influences of the listener, making the individual a social being in a social context. Müllem and Stein (1999) also talk about how the listener’s expectations can have profound impact on what is said, and that the speaker can use this in his arguments. This is done by one skilled in rhetoric either by appealing to something desirable and achievable, or by appealing to something that is socially expected of the listener. However, according to their answers, there did not seem to be much focus on planning messages among the respondents. One respondent even stated that, unless it concerned something important that could affect his coworkers, he usually “wings it” despite an awareness that a message is better received if it relates to the individual directly. Without knowledge of how detailed or how extensive the communicative aid the respondents receive from communications personnel is, one can only speculate on what some of the possible effects of implementing some rhetorical aspects into the respondents daily communication might be.

Implications of the MLQ

The respondents felt they have a high consideration when it came to other members of the bank and according to the MLQ, having a high score on individual consideration as a manager incorporates a behavior of acting as a mentor to others. It also coincides with the respondents’ high score on inspirational motivation, showing a will to encourage meaning and challenge the employees by envisioning a bright future. However, what effect does acting as a mentor have when the personal contact is limited? Considering the attitudes the respondents feel they have toward others, this would be one area that would be immediately and highly affected if personal contact would increase. It would strengthen the influence top-managers would have on their middle-managers and employees and their process of social identification, and perhaps also on company values.

The respondents’ high score on idealized behaviors also coincide with their statements, showing high preferences for communicating such things as; having a sense of purpose and mission and also communicating values. The respondents did not however score high on having idealized attributes, and as described above, such scores indicate reluctance to act powerful and confident. This is an interesting aspect among the respondents’ replies. Acting in ways that instill pride in others for being associated with the manager might be beneficial in the strengthening of members’ organizational identity and the spreading of values. If said values were part of someone whose behavior was considered charismatic and exuded confidence and power, would it not be beneficial? One cannot help wonder if this could somehow be a cultural thing. Although not scientifically proven; as Swedes, or perhaps even all Scandinavians, we have deep rooted traditional values about equality telling us not to be more than anyone else. But such speculations are for another thesis.

Which brings us to the last two aspects of transformational leadership, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation. As the respondents scored high on inspirational motivation and low on intellectual stimulation, a question arises; is it possible to motivate individuals positioned at higher levels in financial sectors, most of whom we can assume to have academic backgrounds, without keeping them intellectually stimulated? What effects
will this have in the long run? I would argue that if not intellectually stimulated there is an increased risk that an individual becomes unhappy and perhaps eventually cynical towards his tasks and the organization. As already discussed, cynicism could eventually spread among other members and become an obstacle for change.

I would argue that one can be free to assume that there are many pitfalls to communication, especially in an organization. An organization that lives on values pervading the organization is also dependent on those values spreading through communication. If the channel by which the communication travels impedes it, or shackles it, values and other valuable information cannot be spread in effective manner. This is true for both conscious as well as unconscious transmissions. A manager that wishes to motivate his coworkers can have his message muddled, losing some of his communicational impact, by a limiting channel. A charismatic manager cannot come to his full potential by only talking on the phone. A channel that does not allow the observing of other’s reactions can lead to negative consequences when it comes to feedback. It should be noted that the respondents deliver important messages in person, but who is to say what is important for each individual? I would argue that, no matter if the messages are considered important by the manager or not, poorly transmitted messages, or messages untouchable to feedback, can still undermine a work atmosphere during a longer period.

As stated by the respondents, there is an atmosphere and culture of openness protruding the bank, an atmosphere that encourages feedback. However, that culture is in itself also dependent of the respondents’ ability to build it during a long period of time. Add to this the many barriers that protrude many companies, barriers that the respondents themselves are familiar with. Filtering, a common problem for downward as well as upward traveling information could become all the more serious if combined with feedback issues and a channel lacking personal contact. Filtering is not the only barrier that can cause problems. As mentioned, a company that is dependent of values is also dependent on those values spreading. If coworkers do not trust the company’s top-managers, cynism could develop. If a channel does not allow for good feedback, or provide possibilities for efficient oversight in a situation for top-managers, it could lead to coworkers talking amongst themselves about their cynism, creating job-related identities pervaded by cynism and a “we-against-them” mentality. So what could be done to make thing better?

It is easy to point and say that an increase in personal contact would be a solution to some of the barriers of communication mentioned by the respondents. By conducting personal meetings more often the respondents would most likely have an increase of impact of the hard information they are transmitting. More personal meetings would likely give a stronger impact to the spreading of values that is so highly valued by the respondents. Trust in the company and its top-management would increase, cynism would decrease and facilitate the respondents’ ability to read their coworkers reactions, thus increasing the possibilities for feedback and the openness that is desired be the respondents. As a result, coworkers’ identities towards the company would be strengthened and their values more easily influenced.

Although appealing, one must be realistic and realize that managers today are burdened by heavy workloads that more often than not make it impossible for them to meet with all parties involved. And so the question remains; what could be done to make thing better?
Conclusions

In this section I will sum up the arguments made in the previous section and also present the resulting conclusion. The purpose of the conclusion is to answer the research question and purpose statements presented in the beginning of the thesis.

The respondents all showed great awareness concerning their communication and its possible implications and impact. However, considering the respondents generally low personal contact with those reporting directly to them, I have raised some speculation around whether or not the effectiveness of value creation could increase if their personal contact increased. It could be that the channels of communication chosen by the respondents have dampening effects on their efforts to build shared values. With a low degree of personal contact closeness can be difficult to build and in worst case; trust might be affected between the employees and the respondents. As a result, the employees’ processes of identifying with the organization or management might be diminished, leaving employees forming their own identities when seeking social interaction among other coworkers. Even though the respondents showed awareness of some rhetorical aspects, none were mentioned as being used in their practices of daily communication.

As mentioned by a respondent; “good communication must go through the head and touch the heart”, and “it must be interesting”. As a tool within the field of communication, rhetoric has existed for thousands of years. But rhetoric does not just go through the head to touch the heart, a good practitioner of rhetoric speaks to a listener’s head and heart at the same time, and almost no matter what channel. Based on the respondents work load and their almost characteristic lack of time, rhetoric is a way of forgoing some of the negative aspect deriving from the use of channels lacking in personal contact. Through its many forms, rhetoric can help the respondents even on a day-to-day basis, not just when something important is transmitted. It has the ability to address an individual’s intellect by way of reason, logos, something already implemented by the respondents. Also, having the receiver in mind and incorporating that mindset in a message on a more practical and substantial level; by projecting scenarios concerning the individual and increase the use of arguments based on emotions, pathos, together with the reasonable arguments already used, it might be easier to connect with coworkers and coming closer to an efficient value building process.

So, based on the respondents pressed schedule, and a so far unresolved need to use verbal channels to a, according to some theories, potentially unhealthy degree, I have taken it upon myself to alter the previously shown (fig 2.0) communications model of Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers (1976). To adapt it to top-managers today, and incorporate their lack of non-verbal (soft) aspects, as mentioned by the respondents in their daily communication, the above text concerning “non-verbal” channels has been removed. Instead I have replaced it with what I deem to be a, at least satisfactory, solution to some of the negative aspects concerning the respondents’ practices of communication, namely; the use of rhetoric.

Furthermore, as a reminder that practiced communication can have barriers not mentioned in current communication theories, I have also added the issue of Time to the Noise square. Hopefully this will manage to serve as an illustration to my arguments in this thesis and perhaps even come to some practical use should someone deem it noteworthy.
7.1 Future research

As the purpose of this thesis was to explore the attitude toward, and use of, communication among and according to, top-managers with the hope of increasing the understanding of communication-use in such a context, there is a limit to the practicality of this thesis already from its start. As one of the limitations used in this thesis was that of limiting its focus to the top-managers’ the point of view, the gap in its practicality lies on the other side of the communications models used. In order for research on the efficiency of communication, in any context, to be fully practical, there need to be research conducted on both sides of the message. Meaning, to make full use of the conclusion herein, I recommend future research to be conducted among top-managers’ coworkers and middle-management also. Without a clear indication of how top-manager communication is perceived by listeners, there will difficulties in determining its true impact and effects. In addition, concerning how the aspect of time influences the respondents’ choice of communication, I would also recommend further research on time management and how this affects managers’ use of communication. Are there ways for managers to circumvent the negative influence of time altogether?
If looking back to the research gap presented initially; concerning the practical communication choices among top managers specifically in relation to leadership, we find that by examining choices such as the ones presented in this thesis, it is possible to help fill a previous research gap and perhaps facilitate and improve on many of the issues experienced in organizations that, if solved, perhaps could help top managers improve on effectiveness in human relation, goal communication and finally goal completion.
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Interviews with respondents as described in chapters *Practical method* and *Empirical data*
Appendix

1.0 Interview Guide – swe

Intervjuguide, svenska:

Problem:
Att undersöka top-chefers syn och val av kommunikation i samband med ledarskap i tider av organisationsförändring,

Begrepp:
Begreppet 'Anställd' är här liktydigt med en anställd i samma organisation men som innehar en underordnad position till respondenten. M.a.o. en underordnad.

Påminn respondenten om att all information kring respondenterna kommer att behandlas konfidentiellt – inga namn etc. – samt förstöras efter att arbetet färdigställts.

Den analys och resultat som kommer av arbetet är endast till undervisningssyfte.

Generella frågor:
1) Vad har du för befattning och vad innebär den i stora drag?

2) Vad har du för erfarenhet av att vara chef?
   - Hur länge?

3) Vad har du för erfarenhet av organisationsförändring?
   - Någon speciell omfattning?

4) Kan du berätta lite om internkommunikationen här (på arbetsplatsen)?

Generella frågor kring Kommunikation:
5) Kan du berätta lite om internkommunikationen här i organisationen i stort?
   - Existerande intern-kommunikationspolicy?
   - Inofficiell policy angående hur internkommunikation ska skötas?
   - Etiska regler kring hur internkommunikation bör ske?

6) Vem eller vilka kommunicerar du allmänt mest med på arbetet på en daglig basis?
   - Händer det någon gång att du delegerar ett ärende gällande internkommunikation?
   - Isf, hur ofta?

Förutsättningar för god internkommunikation:
7) Vad tror du kan vara viktiga förutsättningar för att tillförsäkra god internkommunikation?
   - Kan du komma med ett exempel där det skedde god internkommunikation utifrån tidigare erfarenhet?
   - Utveckla. Vad möjliggjorde att det blev bra?

Kommunikationsbarriärer:
8) Vilka faktorer tror du kan vara hinder för internkommunikation?
   - Kan du komma på ett exempel på hinder för internkommunikation från din tidigare erfarenhet?
   - Utveckla.

Syn på, och val av, kommunikation och formandet av budskap:
9) Kan du berätta hur det går till när du vill informera en målgrupp om något?
   - Varierar efter omfattning av information, budskapet?
   - Varierar efter hur viktig informationen är?

10) Hur resonerar du kring förberedelsen och utformandet av budskapet?
    - ...kring målgruppen?.
    - ...kring hur och när budskapet ska framföras?

Rollen som sändare:
11) Vad tror du kan vara viktiga förutsättningar, för sändaren av information, för att få ett bra genomslag av det man vill framföra?
    - Något exempel på detta från tidigare erfarenhet?

12) Vad, hos sändaren, kan vara direkta hinder för att uppnå bra genomslag av information till en tilltänkt målgrupp?
    - Något exempel på detta från tidigare erfarenhet?

Medvetenhet om budskapets / kommunikationsprocessens mognadstid:
13) Kan du berätta lite om vad som sker efter att budskapet givits enligt din uppfattning?
    - Vad tror du händer bland målgruppen?
Feedback:
14) Kan du berätta lite kring hur du resonerar när det gäller feedback av det du kommunicerat?
   - kring om budskapet innehåller, av målgruppen, icke önskvärd information?
   - kring hur du nås av feedback?
   - kring om det är önskvärt?

15) Vad tror du kan vara viktiga förutsättningar för att få konstruktiv feedback utifrån rollen som chef?
   - kan du ge något praktiskt exempel på hur du försökt skapa förutsättningar för att säkerställa äkta feedback?

16) Vad tror du kan vara direkta hinder, i rollen som chef, till att erhålla konstruktiv feedback från den tilltänkta målgruppen?
   - vad kan det bero på?

17) Rörande internkommunikation som ska kommuniceras, händer det dig någon gång att du hamnar i konflikt med budskapet i fråga? (ledande fråga)
   - Exempel på tidigare erfarenhet?

18) Tar du någonsin hjälp av vedertagen kunskap vid utformandet av ett budskap?
   - Varför?
   - Exempel på teori?
   - Exempel på person som hjälper?

SLUT PÅ INTERVJUN
Något respondenten vill tillägga?
Tack för att ni ställde upp!!
**2.0 Interview Guide – eng**

**Intervjuguide, English:**

Problem:
How do top-managers perceive and use communication in their leadership?

Concepts:
The concept of ‘employee’ is here similar to an employee working in the same organization but positioned at a lower level. In other words, a subordinate.

*Remind the respondent that all information on the respondents will be handled confidentially – no names etc. – and is also to be destroyed after the thesis has been finished. Analysis and conclusions will only be use for educational purposes.*

**General questions:**
1) What is your profession and what does it entail, in a broad sense?

2) What is your experience of being a manager?
   - For how long?

3) What is your experience when it comes to organizational change?
   - Any specific area?

4) Can you tell me a bit about the internal communication at your office?

General questions on communication
5) Can you tell me a bit about the internal communication in the organization?
   - Existing internal communication policies?
   - Unofficial policies?
   - Rules concerning ethics of internal communication?

6) With whom or who do you communicate most on a daily basis?
   - Do you ever delegate a matter concerning internal communication?
   - How often?
Prerequisites for good communication:
7) What do you believe can be important prerequisites for achieving good internal communication?
   - Can you think of an example where there occurred good internal communication?
   - Develop.

Barriers to communication:
8) What factors do you believe can act as barriers to internal communication?
   - Can you think of an example where such barriers occurred from any previous experience?
   - Develop.

View of, and choice of, communication and the forming of a message:
9) Can you describe how it works when you wish to inform a target group of something?
   - Variance according to magnitude of information?
   - Variance according to importance?

10) How do you reason around the preparation and forming of the message?
    - ...about the target audience?.
    - ...about how or when the message should be transmitted?

The role as a sender:
11) What do you believe can be important prerequisites, in the role of a sender, in order to ensure good impact of what one wish to deliver?
    - Can you think of an example from previous experience?

12) What aspects on the part of the sender do you believe can act as obstacles to good impact?
    - Can you think of an example from previous experience?

Awareness of message maturity period:
13) Can you describe what you believe happens after the message has been transmitted?
    - What do you believe happens among the target audience?
Feedback:
14) Can you tell me about how you reason when it comes to feedback of what it is you communicate?
    - ...if the message includes undesired information?
    - ...about how you are reached by feedback?
    - ...about whether or not it is desirable?

15) What do you believe are important prerequisites in order to establish constructive feedback in the role of manager?
    - ...can you think of any practical example where you as a manager have tried to create such prerequisites?

16) What aspects do you believe can act as obstacles, in the role of manager, in order to establish good feedback?
    - ...why do you think that is?

17) Concerning internal communication, do you ever come in conflict with what you have to communicate? (leading question)
    - Can you think of an example from previous experience?

18) Do you ever consult established theories when shaping a message?
    - Why?
    - Examples of theories?
    - Person helping you?

End of Interview
    Do the respondent wish to add something?
    Thank you for participating!!

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