Exploring engaging leadership in a global organization

Authors: Johanna Mailert & Ida Stanar
Supervisor: Cecilia Strand
Examinator: Therese Monstad
Date: 7/6 - 2015
Authors remark

In the beginning of January 2015, we received an exciting assignment and finished it in June the same year. This was the perfect assignment as it deals with leadership, a subject that we both are very passionate about. Therefore, we would like to show gratitude to the organization and our supervisor that commissioned the assignment and gave us the honor to execute it. Without their guidance and help, the study would have been impossible to complete. We would also like to thank the respondents who took their time and participated in the study and shared insightful information that was important in order to fulfill the purpose of the study. During the entire process we had support from our mentor at Uppsala University, Cecilia Strand and co-mentor Therese Monstad and would like to thank them. Finally, we would like to thank our fellow students in our seminar group at Uppsala University, who provided us with valuable feedback and input that allowed us to write a study we are proud of.
Abstract

Employee engagement has become an important factor for organizations, as employees are invaluable assets in knowledge-intense sectors. In order for organizations to engage employees, leadership has been pointed out as the key to success. However, there is a gap of how leaders’ practices lead to engagement. Therefore, a global organization commissioned an assignment to further investigate engaging leadership in their organization. Hence, the purpose of the study is to identify top leaders’ practices in relation to employee engagement. To fulfill the purpose a research question was framed as following; how do top leaders’ practices create and maintain employee engagement? In order to identify top leaders, a previous leadership and engagement survey by the researched organization was used. The survey revealed which leaders were good and engaging, according to the organization’s employees. Among the top leaders, 12 respondents were randomly selected to participate in this study.

This study was conducted using theories related to employee engagement, transformational leadership and communication. Based on the theories, a conceptual framework of transformational leadership and its five key components was created. Also, communication was incorporated into the model as it was considered to impact every component of the conceptual framework. Three different methods were used to gather empirical data: interviews, questionnaires and observations. These three methods complemented and provided supportive evidence for each other.

The results showed how leaders’ practices create and maintain engagement and one reason is that they are good communicators. To be able to engage employees, leaders were conscious of the voice of their tone and adopted their communication style to the situation and whom they were talking to. Furthermore they were good listeners and had an individualized consideration, in order to reach out to the employee in best possible way. Significantly, leaders were skilled at conveying organizational messages and adopting them to the context of the employees that created engagement. The leaders were very supportive and showed recognition to the employees to keep them motivated in their work tasks.

Key words: Employee engagement, transformational leadership, vision, inspirational communication, intellectual stimulation, supportive leadership, personal recognition, engaging leadership practices, and communication.
# Table of contents

1.0 Introduction ............................................................................................................. 1
   1.1. Problem identification ......................................................................................... 2
   1.2 Purpose and research question ........................................................................... 3
   1.3 A brief history of the studied organization ....................................................... 3

2.0 Literature review .................................................................................................... 4
   2.1 Employee engagement ......................................................................................... 4
   2.2 Engaging leadership ......................................................................................... 6
      2.2.1 Transformational leadership ....................................................................... 7
   2.3 The relationship between employee engagement and the key components of transformational leadership ............................................................................................................. 11
   2.4 Communication and the five components of transformational leadership ......... 13
   2.5 The conceptual framework of transformational leadership ............................... 15

3.0 Method .................................................................................................................... 17
   3.1 Research design .................................................................................................. 17

3.2 Research process .................................................................................................. 18
   3.2.1 Choice of theory ............................................................................................ 19
   3.2.2 Empirical data collection ............................................................................. 20
      3.2.2.1 Interviews ............................................................................................... 21
      3.2.2.2 Questionnaire ......................................................................................... 22
      3.2.2.3 Observations .......................................................................................... 23
   3.2.3 Management of empirical data ..................................................................... 24
   3.2.4 Method of analysis ....................................................................................... 24
   3.3 Validity and reliability ....................................................................................... 25

3.4 Methodological challenges ................................................................................... 26

4.0 Empirical presentation and analysis ..................................................................... 27
   4.1 Vision in practice ............................................................................................... 27
   4.2 Analysis of vision .............................................................................................. 29
   4.3 Inspirational communication in practice ......................................................... 30
      4.3.1 The importance of inspirational communication .................................... 31
      4.3.2 Situations where leaders use inspirational communication ..................... 32
   4.4 Analysis of inspirational communication ......................................................... 32
   4.5 Supportive leadership in practice .................................................................... 35
      4.5.1 How leaders support when employee engagement is low .................... 36
      4.5.2 Supportive leadership - a time consuming process ................................. 37
   4.6 Analysis of supportive leadership ..................................................................... 38
List of figures

Figure 1. The figure illustrates the conceptual framework of transformational leadership and its key components. .................................................................15

Figure 2. The figure illustrates the research process and the course of actions for the qualitative and quantitative research approach. .........................................................19
1.0 Introduction

Today’s global organizations find themselves in an unpredictable and complex environment, filled with competitive opportunities and threats (Ireland & Hitt, 1999). There are also other challenges such as dealing with different cultures, confusing communication channels, new technology and managing employees (Gregersen, Morrison & Black, 1998). However, according to Wiman (2012, 18 October) the greatest challenge for today’s leaders within global organizations is managing their employees successfully, and getting them engaged in their work. According to Saks (2006), organizations having disengaged employees has given rise to serious consequences. He (2006) argues that it leads to loss in productivity and consequently monetary losses, which demonstrates the importance of employee engagement. Consequently, engaging employees is crucial for organizations in order to stay competitive. It has been debated for years how to achieve trust and engagement, and many authors argue that leadership is the key (Shamir, House & Arthur, 1993; Gregory Stone et al., 2004; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). Therefore, leaders in today’s organizations have to work continuously with creating and maintaining engagement among their employees. Nothing can, however, be achieved without communication. Therefore, these leaders need to be good communicators, as it is through communication that leaders execute their leadership and persuade employees to become engaged and aligned with the organizations vision and goals (Ireland & Hitt, 2005; Holladay & Combs, 1993; Baldoni, 2004).

Having engaged employees can mean a great deal for organizations regarding what issues they attend to, how the business grows and how competitive it remains (Saks, 2006; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Further, in recent research, a positive linkage between business performance and employee engagement has been discovered; when there is willingness among employees to invest oneself and develop their skills, it automatically leads to a desire to help the organization succeed. (Macey & Schneider, 2008) However, the numbers of studies about how leaders’ practices result in engaged employees are few (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). At the same time, organizations find employee engagement to be the leaders’ greatest challenge today (Wiman, 2012, 18 October). Hence, there is a gap between organizational and academic interest in employee engagement, which motivates this study.
1.1. Problem identification

Global organizations face a great deal of challenges and one of them is how to keep employees satisfied and engaged in their work. The difficulty is that there exists no universal solution that will magically engage employees (Macey & Schneider, 2008) and no map of how to establish conditions where they will thrive and exert engaging behaviors. Despite that, employee engagement has become a great interest for organizations, and a search for employee engagement yields more than 7 million hits on the web, and many consultancy firms promote different tools to engage employees (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). Another explanation is that employees’ contribution has become a critical topic in today’s rough business climate, where organizations try to produce more output with less employees, which leads to the importance of engaging every single one to perform to their utmost (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). On the other hand, many leaders believe that one advantage to remain on top on the market is to have a vast reserve of skills, knowledge and experience within the workforce that represent an invaluable asset (Dewhurst, Harris & Heywood, 2012, June).

In recent research, there is a gap between employees’ engagement and how it correlates with leadership (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). Today there is much written from the perspective of employees but few studies have been made from leaders’ point of view, of how a leader’s practices affect employees’ mind-sets and performance (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). In order to fill the gap there is a need of exploring how leaders in global organizations engage their employees and what they need to do in order to become a great leader. Without knowing the relationship between leaders’ practices and engaged employees, there will not be a solution for how to engage the workforce of global organizations.

This study was conducted within a global organization that recently performed a global leadership and engagement survey, where the employees assessed their leaders. This previous survey conducted by the organization, identified top leaders who were considered to be good at engaging employees within the organization. Hence, it provided an opportunity to investigate leaders’ practices in order to see how these top leaders work to create and maintain engagement.
1.2 Purpose and research question
The purpose of the study is to identify top leaders’ practices in relation to employee engagement. By studying top leaders it will generate a greater understanding and knowledge of how leaders of today manage their workforce and how they affect employees’ engagement. Without knowledge of how leadership influences employees’ commitment, it will be difficult to know what engages them. Harter, Schmidt and Hays (2002) argue that organizations can learn a great deal about leaders’ practices that drive business outcomes, when studying their own top leaders. To answer the purpose of the study, one research question has been framed:

1. How do top leaders’ practices create and maintain employee engagement?

1.3 A brief history of the studied organization
The organization that provided the assignment to investigate how leadership practices create and maintain engagement, is a global IT organization with over 400 000 employees around the world, where about 4000 employees are based in Sweden. The organization was founded in the later part of the 20th century and is one of the largest organizations when it comes to IT-related services and B2B. The organization’s structure consists of nine business units, whereas six of them are in Sweden and each one has its own internal hierarchy. The units also have different functions and have their own agenda and goals to achieve. Each business unit is moreover divided into several different groups and each group has their own leader. This could be illustrated as seeing the groups a several islands, talking the same language but with different dialects and cultures.
2.0 Literature review

The purpose of the study is to identify top leaders’ practices in relation to employee engagement. This chapter starts with defining the fundamental concept of employee engagement, and why it has become an important factor. After that, leadership will be presented, focusing on transformational leadership, as it is the key to create and maintain employee engagement. Finally, the literature review ends with linking the concepts of employee engagement and transformational leadership together. To conclude, the chapter ends with a presentation of the conceptual framework of transformational leadership that will be used in this study.

2.1 Employee engagement

Employee engagement is a topic of interest to many global organizations and is being discussed in many different forums (Saks, 2006). There exist widely different opinions about the definition of employee engagement and drivers behind this phenomenon. Due to this fact, there also exist different opinions of how to define employee engagement. One definition of employee engagement is the measure of an employee’s emotional and intellectual commitment to their organization and its success. (Witemeyer, Ellen & Straub, 2013)

The definition used in this study is a combination of several academic articles where employee engagement involves both emotional and rational factors (Witemeyer et al., 2013). The emotional factors include individuals experiencing personal satisfaction from their work, and being able to express their true nature and behavior in tasks, which will favor ones connection and feelings of being part of an organization (Kahn, 1990; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Witemeyer et al., 2013). The rational factors relate to the level of how employees understand their role in relation to organizations’ objectives and help the employer to succeed (Macey & Schneider, 2008). In this case leaders play a significant part as they can help the employees understand their role and create a behavior that makes employees wanting to help the organization succeed (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). Measuring employee engagement can be hard as it refers to subjective factors that by nature are hard to quantify. Macey and Schneider (2008) suggest that it can be measured on four elements; satisfaction, advocacy, commitment and pride. In other words, employee engagement is about how employees feel and how their feelings make them want to behave in an organizational context (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008).
Employee engagement has become an important factor for many of today’s organizations, as employees are invaluable assets in knowledge-intense sectors. Bakker and Demerouti (2008) argue that having engaged employees lead to several advantages, such as increased creativity, productivity and that they influence their colleagues and consequently perform better as a team. Moreover, engaged employees are optimistic, efficient and carries more organizational self-esteem, which is an important indicator of peoples well being within an organization. Bakker and Demerouti (2008) found four reasons why engaged employees perform better than others. It can be explained as people often experiencing positive emotions, being in good health, creating their own job and personal resources and transferring their engagement to others. This could be a reason why organizations pay attention to this subject and sees it as an important factor in order to improve their business (Saks, 2006).

Kahn (1990) was a pioneer to drive employee engagement as a research domain. His (1992) focus lies on individuals and their personal selves, in what way to get them present in their work role and how to direct individuals’ energies toward the realization of organizational goals. In order to achieve this, Kahn (1992) argues that employees have to be attentive, connected, integrated and focused in their role performances. However, the business world has changed and has become even more fast-paced and the working conditions have changed during the last decades. Today, organizations are very focused on performance and employees are working under time pressure, where individuals are seen as one among many. As a result, organizations spend less time on the individual today. (Meyer, Allen & Topolnytsky, 1998) This may result in employees feeling they do not get enough attention, which according to Kahn (1992) is essential in order to have engaged employees. When employees feel they are not attentive, connected, integrated and focused in their role performance, it may lead to them not feeling embraced by the organization, and therefore lack willingness to dedicate their heart in assignments. In the end, these employees will not perform as well as they can; they will neither take part in learning, growing, or changing, nor contributing to the organizations success (Kahn, 1992; Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Bakker and Demerouti (2008) argue that leaders can engage their employees by giving them feedback, which will gain and foster the learning process and increase their competence. According to studies conducted by Truss et al. (2006), Ruck and Welch (2012), employees
ranked committed leaders as an important factor in order to feel motivated in their work role. However, 30 percentages of employees feel that their work rarely or never counts for their leader, which can be explained by the difficulty of finding leaders possessing the right managerial skills to involve and engage employees in their work role (Kronz, 2014; Truss et al., 2006). This underlines the importance of understanding the relationship between leaders and employees, and how it affects employee’s engagement. In line with Truss et al. (2006) arguments, Worldwide and Bethesda (2007) found that organizations that communicated effectively with their employees were four times more likely to have high levels of employee engagement. According to Ruck and Welch (2012) employees have a desire of being well informed as well having their voice heard, which is a communication challenge for leaders. Despite that, organizations are not effective enough in communicating to employees how their actions are important for the business as a whole (Ruck & Welch, 2012). This shows that besides having a good relationship with the employees, communication is a highly important factor to consider.

To sum up, communication is a vital factor in engaging employees. This is due to leaders needing to convey how their employees are important and how they contribute to the organization. The communication needs to involve both emotional and rational factors that make the employees feel emotionally and intellectually stimulated, which are prerequisites in order for leaders to create and maintain employees engagement.

### 2.2 Engaging leadership

For several decades, leadership has played a central part of academic research on management and organizational behavior (Yukl, 1989; Bass, 1999; Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014). Although this field has been studied, there exists numerous of definitions of leadership, which according to Yukl (1989) correlates to researchers individual perspective and interest within this phenomenon. While some authors view leadership as collective process shared amongst members of a group, others argue that every group have role specializations where leadership is one of the roles. In the latter case, one person has more influence than others and performs leadership functions critical to the success of the group (Yukl, 1989). Another discussion within the field of leadership is the distinction between leadership and management (Mintzberg, 2004; Yukl, 1989). Mintzberg (2004) argues that these concepts overlap, and that management without
leadership is sterile and leadership lacking management is disconnected. However, according to Yukl (1989) and Bennis and Nanus (1985), the fundamental difference between the concepts is that leaders influence commitment, whilst managers only carry out position responsibilities and exercise authority.

Due to the plurality of definitions, the one used in this study is that leadership is about getting things done through others. This definition goes in line with Guibord (2012), who argues that leadership is about setting up a team, developing trust among the team members and knowing how to get the very best out of every individual. Guibord (2012) arguments highlight the importance of personal interaction between the leader and his team members, and how a leader coaches the group towards a common goal. In order to influence and inspire employees, there is a need for leaders to learn how to reach out to and communicate with employees. Leaders also need to be physical present and through their body language engage employees (Kahn, 1992).

One leadership style that focuses on transforming and inspiring employees is transformational leadership (Guay, 2013). Transformational leadership emphasizes emotions and values, and provides meaning to employees work by communicating inspiring messages to evoke emotions and to create long lasting relations. (Yukl, 1999; Guay, 2013) Therefore, the relationship between leaders and employees is central for not only engaging employees but also for successful communication (Ruck & Welch, 2012).

2.2.1 Transformational leadership
Over the past decades, the concept of transformational leadership has been established within the field of management and organizational theories (Shamir, House & Arthur, 1993). Today, it is one of the most popular approaches in order to understand leader effectiveness (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). The theoretical pioneer of transformational leadership was Bass (1985), who based his theories on Burns MacGregor (1978) ideas’ and concepts of transformational leadership. Bass and Avolio (1990) argue that transformational leadership is when leaders take their employees interests and emotions into account. It is done by broadening the employees’ perspective, communicating the purposes of work tasks, and by challenging them to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group. Transformational leaders have the authority to impact employees’ needs, values, and preferences, towards the realization of organizational
objectives (Shamir, House & Arthur, 1993). Gregory Stone et al. (2004) explain transformational leadership based on Bass (1985) theories, as a process of building commitment to organizational objectives by empowering employees to fulfill those objectives. Transformational leadership should put more emphasis on intangible assets, such as creating relationships and trust with their team members, in order to impact their values and perspectives. Further, transformational leaders should exert a behavior that encourages individuals to explore new ways of thinking by inspiring them through communication. This will engage employees and create commitment that fulfills organizational objectives. (Gregory Stone et al., 2004; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006; Shamir et al., 1993)

What makes transformational leadership unique is that leaders communicate innovative strategic organizational visions, emphasize individuals’ needs (Conger, Kanungo & Menon, 2000) and their characteristics are strongly correlated to organizational objectives (Judge & Bono, 2000). Typical characteristics associated with transformational leaders are that they possess charisma and communication skills to build relationships with employees. Further, they have the ability to increase employees’ motivation to their work through inspiring communication. Weber (1968) argues that charismatic leaders have unconventional ideas, attract individuals to follow them and have a portfolio of succeeded projects that validate their expertise. Many of these characteristics have not been fully explored and there is no evidence of how they benefit and improve employees’ performance. Nevertheless, charisma is associated with transformational leadership, but does not include all of the mentioned characteristics (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004) To sum up, the charismatic transformational leaders use inspirational talks, have great communication and interpersonal skills and demonstrate a number of behaviors that goes in line with values of the organization. Moreover, transformational leaders need to function as coaches or mentors, be attentive to individuals’ needs and desires, and foster two-way communication through effective listening. (Gregory Stone et al., 2004; Conger, Kanungo & Menon, 2000) Further, they need to give feedback and motivate the employees to put the little extra into their work by explaining the importance of their contribution (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006) According to Gregory Stone et al. (2004) transformational leaders persuade individuals by using their expertise, strength of relationships and charismatic abilities. Leaders engaging employees are valuable, because they make employees view their work as more challenging and
important (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). When leaders manage to engage and motivate individuals they automatically feel more stimulated at work and experience a feeling of content.

Schippers, Den Hartong, Koopman and van Knippenberg (2008), argue that it exists a link between transformational leadership and team performance. Further, they (2008) point out that transformational leadership increases team effectiveness, since leaders and employees share vision and have a common ground. It has been shown that a strong mutual viewpoint between team members, results in increased reflection on and communication about different tasks, strategies and processes within the team, leading to better performance (Schippers et al., 2008).

2.2.1.1 Key components of transformational leadership
Within the field of transformational leadership there exists many different components when describing what characterizes a transformational leader. However, many of these components have similarities, and can be summed up. The components used in this study include different characteristics and strategies that a transformational leader should possess in order reach organizational objectives. The components are vision, inspirational communication, supportive leadership, intellectual stimulation and personal recognition, and will be described in this section.

Vision is an important part of transformational leadership and is, according to Rafferty and Griffin (2004), an expression of an idealized picture of the future based around organizational values. It has been discovered that distinct articulated visions have a positive impact on affective commitment and engagement (Xu & Thomas, 2011) since it interweaves employees with believes and values of the leader. Judge and Bono (2000) claims that when transformational leaders inspire people to identify themselves with a vision, it results in reaching beyond their self-interest and encourages trust towards the leader and the work task. Moreover, when leaders express a vision, employees tend to become more attached to the assignment as well as increase the attractiveness of being a part of the organization. In order to articulate and communicate a vision, Rafferty and Griffin (2004) argue that charisma is an important component since transformational leaders need to convince the employees about an ideology that increases goal clarity, task focus and value congruence. Another positive outcome, when sharing a common vision, is that it results in the incorporation of organizational values and goals, which encourages individuals to adopt certain behavior that is requested by the organization and its
leaders. According to Ireland and Hitt (1999) the ability to express a tangible vision, values and strategy was the most important skill a leader should possess, since it has shown having a positive effect on team productivity (Schippers, Hartong, Koopman & van Knippenberg, 2008) as well as creating a culture that allows people to share knowledge.

_Inspirationa.l communication_ is defined as the expression of positive and encouraging messages and statements about the organization that build motivation and confidence (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). This definition describes the importance of having leaders who are communicative and know how to connect with people through enthrusting talks. It also refers to how leaders stimulate motivation towards a specific task among the employees, and encourage them to have faith in their ability to deliver the assignment successfully, as well as their contribution to the success of the team (Yukl 1989). Moreover, inspirational communication include leaders having impact on people’s intellect or emotions, as well as being able to envision a desirable future. For example, leaders describe how goals can be reached, set an example to be followed, set high standards of performance and express determination and confidence. (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004; Bass, 1999)

Rafferty and Griffin (2004) have defined _Supportive leadership_ as a way to express concern for employees and pay attention to their individual needs. The big difference that sets transformational leadership apart from other leadership theories is the supportive leadership, since it includes individualized consideration. Supportive leaders are employee-oriented, give them attention, follow up their achievements by giving them support, and give employees recognition for their work. Moreover, the individualized support involves the leader’s instinctive feeling of employees’ mind-sets and needs, and how to meet and behave respectfully towards them. Rafferty and Griffin (2004) argue that supportive leadership is the key in order to reach effective leadership in path-goal theory. The path-goal theory is when a leader chooses the appropriate behavior that is best suited to employees’ need in order to guide them through their path in the maintenance of their daily work activities. Becoming a supportive leader demands a behavior that is directed toward employees’ satisfaction, showing concern for their welfare as well as creating a friendly work environment.

Rafferty and Griffin (2004) have defined _Intellectual stimulation_ as the process of leaders enhancing employees’ interest in, and awareness of problems, as well as increasing their ability
to think about problems in new ways. According to Rafferty and Griffin (2004), intellectual stimulation is seen as the most undeveloped component, as it has not been subjected to extensive research. It is however, an interesting part of transformational leadership, because intellectual stimulation increases employee’s ability to conceptualize, comprehend and analyze problems, which has resulted in improved quality of employee’s solutions (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004).

*Personal recognition* is the last component that is connected to transformational leadership. Rafferty and Griffin (2004) define personal recognition as the provision of rewards, such as praise and acknowledgement of individuals’ achievements. Personal recognition is when leaders value individuals’ efforts and reward their achievements by showing credit and acknowledgment, but only if it matches the vision of the assignment. Reward is a big part of personal recognition, such as verbal rewards, recommendations for pay increases, and promotions, or recommendations for exceptional effort.

### 2.3 The relationship between employee engagement and the key components of transformational leadership

Barling, Slater and Kevin Kelloway (2000) argue that there are links between transformational leadership and theories of employee engagement, such as motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, proactive behaviors and organizational citizenship. These links indicate that transformational leadership can enhance employees’ satisfaction and affective commitment to their leader and organization (Barling, Slater & Kevin Kelloway, 2000; Ghafoor, Qureshi, Kahn & Hijazi, 2011).

Xu and Cooper (2011) found that transformational leadership has positive effects on the performance of the employees. Further, they (2011) were able to find a link between how leaders support teams, being genuinely interested in the team members by celebrating success and their personal development and employee engagement. The result of transformational leadership was a higher state of engagement, which can be explained by leaders support and genuine interest in both the team and the individuals within the team. Hence, there is a relationship between employee engagement and two of the transformational leadership components; supportive leadership, and personal recognition.
Ghafoor et al. (2011) found a significant relationship between transformational leadership, employee engagement and employee performance when studying telecom companies. They stated that employee engagement is developed when transformational leadership is strong. Further, they found that transformational leadership could lead to employee engagement by inducing feelings of corporate citizenship, sense of belonging, affection, and satisfaction towards the organization. Transformational leadership can also evoke employee engagement through intellectual stimulation. For example, empowering employees can lead to them feeling organizational support, a sense of belonging and intellectual stimulation. This leads to employees feeling comfortable taking decisions and feeling responsible for their work. Hence, there is also support that employee engagement can be created by the transformational leadership component of intellectual stimulation (Ghafoor et al., 2011).

Papalexandris and Galanaki (2009) studied leadership’s impact on employee engagement, and found positive linkages between employee engagement, and leaders’ ability to mentor and communicate. The authors (2009) argue that good mentors are the best predictor of employees’ engagement, since it will encourage employees to develop ideas, take initiatives and contribute to improve organizational performance. Hence, this corresponds to the transformational leadership components of supportive leadership, personal recognition and intellectual stimulation. Further, Papalexandris and Galanaki (2009) found that creating and communicating a vision could induce employee engagement, as they will get employees to understand the future plans, get motivated, involved and engaged in the vision. Hence, the link between inspirational communication, vision and employee engagement is also to be found.

To conclude, the linkages between employee engagement and transformational leadership show that there is theoretical support for this study. However, the theories describe what the linkages are but not how transformational leaders engage their employees in practice. Therefore, this will be examined through the conceptual framework of transformational leadership, consisting of the key components; vision, inspirational communication, supportive leadership, intellectual stimulation and personal recognition. However, there is an aspect of transformational leadership that has not been fully elaborated, namely communication. Communication is essential in leadership (Bernhut, 2000) and needs to be highlighted in relation to the five components of transformational leadership. This will be described in the next section.
2.4 Communication and the five components of transformational leadership

Communication is essential in leadership (Madlock, 2008; Holladay & Combs, 1993), but has not been highlighted within theories of transformational leadership. Barrett’s (2006) definition of communication is explained as the transmission of meaning from one person to another or to many people, verbally or non-verbally. Communication should according to Scott-Phillips et al. (2012) not be looked as a trait rather as an interaction between people. Moreover, communication is an on-going process as leaders constantly have a dialogue with employees, due to the appearance of new situations or messages that have to be dealt with. When leaders are having dialogues with employees, a process of sharing thoughts, questions and ideas begins, based on a current situation and moment. During this process individuals interpret each other’s messages as well as analyze the response, in order to make sure that the message has been correctly understood. (Bohm, 1996) This process is difficult as it opens up for misunderstandings due to different perceptions of the meaning of what has been said. However, it is through dialogue leaders can gain additional perspectives and ideas when communicating (Bohm, 1996) with employees. Bohm (1996) argues that dialogues augments the meaning of communication and is therefore a vital part in leaders’ ongoing communication processes. Sensemaking is also a fundamental part of communication, as it is a means of transforming circumstances into comprehensible situations, and functions as a starting point to act on (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005). Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld (2005) argue that sensemaking is central as it is a way to convey materialized meaning to actions through communication, and to increase employees’ understanding of a situation. Thus, sensemaking can unify leaders and employees and create a shared understanding, which makes it easier to work towards the same goal (Bohm, 1996). It is also through conversations that leaders have the possibility to impact employees’ heart and senses by transmitting the meaning of a situation (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005).

There are different ways to communicate, and it is important to have the knowledge to choose the appropriate communication style. Daft and Lengel (1986) argue that communication is the act where ambiguous issues can be cleared out, and they identified face-to-face communication as most effective in bridging uncertainty and reduce misinterpretations. Therefore, they (1986) argue that written communication should be used only when a message is clear and does not consist of any ambiguous meanings (Daft, Lengel & Trevino, 1987). In order to understand underlying meaning of communicated messages, Bohm (1996) also highlights the
importance of face-to-face communication. By using face-to-face communication, leaders have the opportunity to actively ask questions and challenge fundamental assumptions of problematic situations (Bohm, 1996) and get a better understanding of employees’ mindset.

Besides knowing how to communicate, Fairhurst and Connaughton (2014) argue that having a language focus increases the ability to create understanding among people, and make leaders aware of how to express feelings and emotions. Madlock (2008) likewise highlights the use of language but argues that it is combined with gestures and tone of voice. Other important communication skills include the ability to actively listen to other points of views, to negotiate, share and respond to information, and to communicate effectively by appealing to the interest of employees in order to persuade them to follow their vision (Madlock, 2008).

According to Fairhurst and Connaughton (2014), communication has been seen at as an incidental part of leadership that only functions as a variable that is related to leadership processes or results. However, communication is essential in leadership as it builds trust between leaders and employees (Thomas, Zolin & Hartman, 2009). According to Barrett (2006) it is through effective communication that leaders can get things done through others. This could be connected to Madlock (2008) who found linkages between communication and leaders’ success, arguing that communicative skills can create higher employee satisfaction and subsequently enhance their performance. Due to the fact that communication to some extent has been neglected in the literature of transformational leadership, only two of the five components of transformational leadership have obvious connection to communication, which are vision and inspirational communication. However, Holladay and Combs (1993), Bernhut (2000) and Madlock (2008) argue that communication is crucial in leadership, as leadership is executed through communication. This shows that communication is in fact related to all of the five components of transformational leadership, as it underlies all leadership practices. For example, it would be impossible for leaders to give support, personal recognition or intellectual stimulation to their employees without communication. Further, Macey and Schneider (2008) points out that communication is strongly connected to leadership, where leadership communication results in higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment and organizational belonging among the employees. Furthermore, Blickle et al. (2013) found that when leaders failed to communicate properly with their employees, the employees were unmotivated and
unsatisfied towards their leader and work tasks, and lost the belongingness to the organization. If leaders instead knew how to communicate properly, the employees’ results were better, their motivation was higher and their commitment and enthusiasm towards their work and organization was superior.

Building on the reasoning above, communication is something that underlies all the five components of transformational leadership. Therefore, it will be incorporated into the conceptual framework of transformational leadership.

2.5 The conceptual framework of transformational leadership

Through the literature review, three parts that are important in fulfilling the purpose of this study have been identified and explored; transformational leadership, employee engagement and communication. The model (figure 1) consists of five wedges, each containing a component of a transformational leadership, which are vision, inspirational communication, supportive leadership, intellectual stimulation and personal recognition. The different components are connected with each other and are executed through communication; hence communication is an essential factor in the framework. The model illustrates that when leaders possess the different characteristics, it leads to employee engagement.

Figure 1. The conceptual framework, and its key components of transformational leadership (own construction).
The conceptual framework of transformational leadership is based on theories from Rafferty and Griffin, (2004). However, their (2004) theories have been developed and elaborated to the purpose of this study, and have been extended by adding communication as an essential factor that underlies the five components of transformational leadership. The conceptual framework is novel in the way that communication is added as a key component to reach employee engagement through transformational leadership. Further, the aim is to study how top leaders’ practices create and maintain employee engagement. By observing these leaders, using the components of the model, it may show how they work and if some of these components are a more dominant than others. This framework will also function as a guidance to identify whether these leaders possess the characteristics of transformational leaders. If they do, the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement would be strengthened and organizations would know how to develop leaders that can engage employees. In other words, the conceptual framework will help to find a link between what characterizes a good leader and how their practices contribute to engage employees.
3.0 Method

In this chapter the operationalization of the purpose of this study will be presented and described. It starts with a description of the research design followed by the method of collecting data. This chapter ends with a discussion of the validity and ratability and methodological challenges of the study.

3.1 Research design

The topic of this study was commissioned by the researched organization as a result of the organization lacking knowledge of how leaders engage employees. This underlined the purpose of the study, which is to identify top leaders’ practices in relation to employee engagement. In order to fulfill the purpose, a research question was formulated that aims to give the answer of how top leaders’ practices create and maintain employee engagement. In order to be able to investigate how leaders’ practices create engagement, the organization gave access to a survey, which they had earlier conducted. The survey revealed leaders who scored the highest rating concerning employee engagement and from this list, 12 top leaders were chosen from each of the six business units, to take part in this study. Therefore, the survey from the organization was a good starting point and helped for further investigations. To be able to fulfill the purpose, these 12 top leaders were interviewed, they answered a questionnaire about their leadership practices and they were observed. By mixing all of these methods, the aim was to reveal behaviors among the leaders that would generate an understanding of the engaging every-day practices of the leaders. The qualitative method, consisting of interviews and observations were used to ascertain leaders’ characteristic behavior that raises the level of employee engagement. The quantitative method, the constructed questionnaire of leadership practices, was handed out in connection to the interviews. But how these different methods were conducted will be described in more detail later on in section 3.2.2.

All of the methods were based on the conceptual framework of transformational leadership and its key components, in order to operationalize the purpose and to ensure that the right aspects were investigated. Therefore, this study has a deductive approach as it is grounded in theory and where the components of the conceptual framework drive the process of gathering data (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2006). By doing this, empirical
findings could now be compared with the theory about transformational leadership and its positive effects on employee engagement. The intention with this research approach was to get a detailed description of the phenomenon’s different aspects that will bring forth a holistic viewpoint about how leaders’ practices create engagement. According to Bryman and Bell (2011) the benefit of getting a holistic viewpoint is that it increases the understanding about the phenomenon’s wholeness and will gain understanding of the creation of employee engagement.

3.2 Research process
The research process started in connection with the assignment from the researched organization that wanted to know more about leaders’ practices in relation to employee engagement. In order to fulfill the purpose of the study, there was a need for a well-structured plan, which was the argument of the creation of the method scheme (see figure. 2) The method scheme for this study started with searching for relevant theories about leadership and employee engagement, to be able to reach next step, the collection of empirical findings. It is therefore important to be thorough during the theory process; otherwise it could lead to looking after the wrong aspects (Bryman & Bell, 2011). When the empirical data was collected it needed to be managed and structured. The conceptual framework of transformational leadership was the foundation of structuring the data from the interviews, observations and the questionnaires. Now leaders’ practices for engagement could be more easily analyzed with the empirical findings.

However, this research process was an iterative process, due to when analyzing there was a need to go back and read the material one more time, in order to secure important findings were not overlooked. There was also a need of reevaluating the theory and adding information of aspects where it was necessary. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), working iteratively with theory and empirical findings will enhance the result, since the theories will constantly being evaluated and in the end improved. Therefore, this was the most suitable research process for this study, because it allowed critically evaluating how leaders’ practices created and maintained employee engagement.
3.2.1 Choice of theory
As mentioned in the previous section, the topic of this study was commissioned by the researched organization. The fact that the subject was already decided when the study began narrowed down the theories that could be used in order to fulfill the purpose of the study. The two main topics that were given on forehand were employee engagement and leadership. With these topics as a start, the priority was to explore employee engagement and leadership to gain further knowledge about their theoretical background. As time progressed and understanding of the two topics grew, it became more evident that leadership as a concept was too broad. Therefore the concept of leadership was narrowed down to transformational leadership, which also could be linked to employee engagement. With the connection found between transformational leadership and employee engagement, the theories were used to develop the foundation of the conceptual framework used in this study. Rafferty and Griffin (2004) identified five components of transformational leadership that could be linked to employee engagement; vision, inspirational communication, supportive leadership, intellectual stimulation and personal recognition. However, the theoretical foundation of these five components did not explicitly involve communication, when in fact leadership theories argue that communication is the key for leaders in order to be successful (Holladay & Combs, 1993; Bernhut, 2000; Madlock, 2008; Baldoni, 2004). Therefore, communication was incorporated as a foundation in the conceptual framework of transformational leadership.
3.2.2 Empirical data collection

The process of collecting data started with a meeting in the beginning of January 2015, with the Human Resource (HR) leader of the organization, who was in charge of the assignment. During the meeting, the HR leader explained that the organization needed a greater understanding of top leaders’ practices in relation to employee engagement. This was decided to be the purpose of this study. The researched organization had previously conducted a survey by a word leading third party organization that provided data through advanced measurements systems. In the survey employees assessed how good leaders were in terms of motivation and engagement. In other words, the survey identified which leaders distinguished themselves in terms of motivating and engaging their employees in their work tasks. However, until that day, the organization had not used the information or transformed it into any kind of leadership changes in order to increase the motivation among the employees. The reason behind the lack of changes was that the organization only knew which leaders were good, not how they actually created or maintained employee engagement.

Based on the results from the organization’s survey, a strategic sample was made. In a strategic sample, variables that have theoretical significance are identified. Thereafter, the variables are used to find respondents that are suitable to the study. (Troost, 1997) In this study, the variable was that the leaders needed to have received a high score in the previous survey conducted by the organization. By using the organizations survey, the selection process was highly simplified, as top leaders could be identified. Among the top-scoring leaders, a random sample was made where e-mails were randomly sent to both males and females within the category. This resulted in 12 leaders participating in the study, among which nine were men and three were women. More data could have been gathered but it was considered that more data would not provide any new insight. As every respondent in this study participated in both an interview and a questionnaire, the data from every respondent was rich. As a complement, some of the leaders were also observed in their every-day practices.

The different methods complemented each other well, as the process started out with an interview that brought forth personal reflections about their leadership style, while the questionnaire gave information about how they ranked their own performance as a leader. Combining the interview and questionnaire with observations of the respondents, the data could
be compared to form a comprehensive picture of the leaders’ engaging practices. How the interviews, questionnaire and observations were conducted will be described in detail in the next section.

### 3.2.2.1 Interviews

In this study, the interviews were semi-structured and the pre-formulated questions were all linked to the five components of the conceptual framework of transformational leadership (see appendix 1). The operationalizing of the interview questions was done in order to make the answers of the questions empirical measurable (Andersen, 1998). Before performing the interviews, two pilot interviews were conducted to ensure that the questions were interpreted in a satisfactory manner. However, even though the interview questions were thoroughly constructed and tested, they had to be adjusted a couple of times, because some respondents did not elaborate their thoughts as expected. The follow up questions varied in amount during the interviews, depending on how talkative the respondent was and how he interpreted the questions. The interviews were structured to emphasize greater generality in the formulation of initial research ideas (Bryman & Bell, 2011) to encourage the respondents to share their own perspectives. Moreover, semi-structured interviews give the respondents the opportunity to express their opinion and elaborate when interesting discussions emerge (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2006). It is therefore important that the interviewer is observant, flexible and follows up on interesting thoughts (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Another advantage was that the interviews gave detailed information and descriptions of situations and processes (Björklund & Paulsson, 2003) that illustrated how leaders interact with their employees.

In this study, 12 interviews were conducted with respondents from the six different business units of the organization. The reason behind the choice of interviewing 12 respondents was due to the fact that they were the top leaders of the six business units; hence the choice fell on interviewing two leaders from each unit. The interviews lasted between 30-60 minutes, with an average duration of 50 minutes. According to Trost (1997), a few well-performed interviews are more valuable than plenty interviews of lower quality. The advantage of the strategic sample in terms of the interviews was that all respondents were able to describe how they engaged their employees. The fact that the respondents are top leaders provides legitimacy for the information they have contributed to this study. During the interview process, the knowledge of
transformational leadership and its correlation to engagement grew. This enhanced the interviewers ability to pose more targeted and specific questions, which enriched the material with more details. The difficulty when interviewing was when respondents were not specific and gave short answers, which challenged the interviewer to find ways to overcome the problematic situation.

In this study, the respondents are anonymous, as some of the information they have provided can be sensitive and might jeopardize their position within the organization. Hence, when presenting the empirical findings, the name or the position of the respondents will not be displayed. As all the respondents have top scores from the organization’s earlier conducted leadership and engagement study, it does not matter who said what, as they all have similar positions within the organization. Therefore, the focus has been to capture the essence of the respondents’ answers rather than individual point of views.

3.2.2.2 Questionnaire
The questionnaire performed as a part of this study is not to be mixed with the survey performed by the researched organization. The questionnaire used in this study (see appendix 2) was created as a tool to validate the answers of all of the 12 respondents, who answered the questionnaire in conjunction with the interview. Hence, the questionnaire provided supportive evidence for the interviews, and the results of the questionnaire was not compared between respondents. The aim was to create a short, reliable, and valid instrument for measuring leadership, based on Bass’s (1999) Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). The MLQ was a source of inspiration as it is constructed of concepts that are strongly connected to behaviors that motivates and increases engagement (Bass, 1999). The MLQ was also constructed during Bass (1985) earlier studies of transformational leadership, which is a reason of why this questionnaire is used as an inspiration during the construction of the questionnaire. Bass’ (1985) model was further developed by Schneider et al. (2015), who embedded concepts into a six item scale-model, called Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire (PLCQ). Combining the MLQ and PLCQ allows leaders to answer how they perceive their communication with their employees.

The questionnaire used in this study was constructed according to likert scale. The questionnaire contained statements that the respondents answered on a scale from zero to five, where zero was completely disagree and five completely agree. Using the likert scale gives the
interviewers the opportunity to perform a statistical analysis of the variables (Christensen et al., 2011). However, in this context the questions were used to provide supportive evidence for the respondents’ answers in the interview and enhance the pursuit of answering the research question. Therefore the data of the questionnaires will not be graphical presented in the empirical presentation (see chapter 4.0).

3.2.2.3 Observations
In this study, five leaders have been observed in order to get a better understanding of how they act and behave in real world situations with their employees (see appendix 3). The leaders have been observed in their work environment during business- or team meetings. The observer in this case was not actively participating in the meetings and was only there to listen and observe the leaders’ practices. Bryman and Bell (2011) argue that this kind of observation lets the observer get an inside perspective and a deeper understanding of individuals reality in their natural context. It was therefore considered as a highly relevant method for this study. Observing these leaders in their daily work facilitated the understanding of their leadership practices, and what they actually do.

Prior to the observations, an observation template was developed, and used to grade to what extent the leader practiced according to the five components of the conceptual framework of transformational leadership (see appendix 3). In line with the questionnaire previously described, the observation template was inspired by Bass’ (1999) MLQ, to measure leadership behaviors. As there are many similarities between the interview questions, the questionnaire and the observation template, they complement each other well, as the methods have been used to provide supportive evidence for each other. For example, the observations were great complements to the other methods, because what could be observed could later on be contrasted to the leaders’ replies from the interviews and questionnaires. This combination helped in understanding the leaders’ practices as the same aspects were studied in three different ways.

Common risks with observations are that the respondents might feel uncomfortable and therefore change their behavior because of nervousness, and that they simply do not want to share information to others (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In this case, the observations were performed without any major difficulties and the leaders’ practices could be observed. This was due to that all of the observed leaders were aware of why they were being observed. The fact that the leaders were being observed might have affected them to act differently than they usually do,
and over emphasize certain aspects in their leadership. However, as observations were combined with other methods to provide supportive evidence, it would have been identified if the leaders were behaving differently, which they were not.

3.2.3 Management of empirical data

All the interviews were recorded with permission from the respondents and later on transcribed. As the interview questions were semi structured and had pre-formulated questions, they could easily be compiled and summarized according to a thematic coding (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This made it easy to distinguish differences and similarities in the leaders’ practices. Because the conceptual framework of transformational leadership was incorporated into the interview questions, questionnaire and observation template, the compilation of data was facilitated as it could be performed in a structural manner. A common problem with observations is that it can be hard to remember what has been observed if observations are not recorded (Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, due to that an observation template was used in this study, it ensured that no important information was forgotten. The observers also took notes during the observations if anything important happened but was not incorporated within the template.

After gathering and compiling the data, it was important to create a common ground among the researchers. To create the common ground, every interview, survey and observation was thoroughly read and discussed jointly in accordance with the thematic coding. During this process, any anomalies between the leaders' replies from interviews, the questionnaire or the observations could be identified.

3.2.4 Method of analysis

The fact that all the empirical data from interviews, questionnaires and observations was aligned to the conceptual framework of transformational leadership and then coded thematically, aided significantly in the analysis (Christensen et al., 2011). The compilation of empirical data described in section 3.2.3 was put in relation to the conceptual framework of transformational leadership and its key components. During the entire process, the purpose and the research question of the study was always present in order to avoid missing the target. To start out from the five components, vision, inspirational communication, supportive leadership, intellectual stimulation and personal recognition, it facilitated the analyze process. Now information could be more easily gathered that describe how leaders’ practices descended from these components.
Further, it helped to screen all data that did not add value in fulfilling the purpose or answering the research question. This data was removed during this process, but stored in case of changing opinions. The data analysis process was iterative where the researchers went back and forth between empirical data and analysis, to ensure the data was aligned to the purpose and research question (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The intention of the analysis process was to generalize and illustrate the leaders’ practices as one, but in the cases where the leaders’ practices differed the differences had to be illustrated.

In the empirical presentation, the data will be presented according to the five components of transformational leadership, followed by an analysis. For example, after presenting empirical data related to the component vision, an analysis of vision will follow. This structure was chosen due to the large amounts of empirical data presented. If the empirical data and analysis were to be presented in different sections, it would be hard for the reader to remember the empirical data when reading the analysis.

3.3 Validity and reliability
Two pilot interviews were conducted to ensure that the interview questions were formulated accurately and that the respondents would interpret the questions correctly. Deacon et al. (2007) argues that pilot interviews leads to greater validity, as they can confirm that the interview questions are relevant to what is being studied. The pilot interviews allowed for reformulation of questions in order to ensure satisfactory interpretation. Thus, the study’s validity increased as the pilot interviews helped in measuring what aimed to be measured more confidently. Even though a few questions had to be reformulated after the pilot interviews, they aided in enhancing the validity of the study.

To strengthen the reliability, three methods of data collection were used. The interviews, questionnaires and observations were used to provide supportive evidence for each other. By using these methods, it could be made sure that what the leaders expressed and how they practiced was aligned. Deacon et al. (2007) reasons that reliability includes how reliable measurements are and how they describe the quality of the data. In other words, reliability is when independent measurements provide similar results. By using three methods to provide supportive evidence, the study’s reliability was augmented significantly. In spite of this, there are factors that decrease the reliability of this study, as semi-structured interviews were conducted.
Consequently, if the same interview questions were used again, different follow up questions could emerge depending on the respondent. However, since the interviews were complemented with questionnaires and observations, it was made sure that the data was relevant for the study.

### 3.4 Methodological challenges

During this study there have been some challenges, such as handling large amount of data, the difficulty of generalizing research result and the subjectivity of the data collection and analysis process. To quote Campbell (1975): “*After all, man is, in his ordinary way, a very competent knower, and qualitative common-sense knowing is not replaced by quantitative knowing ... This is not to say that such common sense naturalistic observation is objective, dependable, or unbiased. But it is all that we have. It is the only route to knowledge-noisy, fallible, and biased though it be*”. This quote shows the complexity when collecting data, and the difficulty to reduce biases and that is up to the researcher to overcome these struggles. Thus, the different methods are grounded in theories that will reduce biases and facilitate an objective comparison between theory and empirical findings. Three different methods were used to collect data in accordance to the conceptual framework of the study. A challenge then becomes to make sure that the data gathered from different methods is consistent in its quality. This was overcome by using the different methods to provide supportive evidence from each other, and to create one general truth rather than one for each method. To exemplify, the questionnaire was used for leaders to evaluate their own leadership, in order to be able to find contradictions or support to what the respondent had said earlier.

Another challenge was during the observations, as the respondents’ were aware of that they were being observed. Therefore, the observer tried to position herself in subtle way in order not to attract any unnecessary attention. However, it might have influenced the respondents’ way of behaving, and making them act as they thought would look good for the purpose of the study. However, as observations were combined with other methods to provide supportive evidence, it would have been identified if the leaders were behaving differently, which they were not.
4.0 Empirical presentation and analysis

This chapter is a presentation of the empirical data collected from the researched organization. The names or positions of the respondents will not be displayed, due to their wish of being anonymous. Therefore, the data will present the essence of the respondents’ answers rather than individual point of views. The empirical data is structured on the five components of the conceptual framework of transformational leadership; vision, inspirational communication, supportive leadership, intellectual stimulation and personal recognition. Each component presentation is followed by an analysis.

4.1 Vision in practice
The empirical data shows that the global office of the researched organization sets the visions and strategies for the future, and then passes them on to the leaders. These visions are communicated each year and leaders have the responsibility of the realization of the organizational objectives. However, leaders perceive these global visions as too abstract, and therefore interpret them and adapt them to their local setting. If the vision is too abstract, the respondents state that it would be hard to convince the employees about the organizational ideology and the purpose of the vision.

“It is not so interesting to discuss what overall goals the organization has, I don’t think so, the employees don’t think so”.

Due to this fact, some leaders do not communicate all of the global visions to their employees, and instead focuses on local goals and concrete objectives. But to be able to adapt the vision into their local context, they need knowledge of their employees in order to find a communication strategy that will get them to embrace their vision.

It has been shown that the organization decides what the leaders should focus on, and the leaders have to convey the organizational objectives to their employees. In order to adopt the organizational objectives, leaders need to break them down into smaller and more tangible parts. Thereafter, some respondents argued that it was important to have a discussion with the employees, where they clarified the strategy of fulfilling the vision. This was done to facilitate the understanding of the goals and how they would affect the employees. However, the
respondents argued that it is not enough to simply communicate the vision, they also have to be attentive to their employees and act if they are not working in accordance to the visions. Consequently, being attentive is considered as an important part of being a leader, to ensure the fulfillment of the organization’s visions.

The leaders within the organization found it hard to transmit the organization’s vision about engagement, due to it being poorly explained and communicated. For example, the leaders received the results from the organization’s previous leadership and engagement survey and how they scored, but they did not get any information if it would lead to any extensive leadership changes. The respondents argue that when the organization is not clear in its communication, their leadership will be unclear as well. Further, the leaders described that when they were not able to fulfill the goals set by the organization, it created a stressful environment. This pressured situation consequently affected the attitudes among the employees negatively and could possibly decrease their engagement. Therefore, leaders try to avoid these situations by working proactively; being attentive to employees and their problems, and motivating them to keep up their good work.

The leaders have team meetings four times every year where they discuss the goals together and pass on their visions about future challenges. Some of the respondents also had contact with their employees on a weekly basis to discuss the agenda and at the same time let employees ventilate possible issues. However, regardless of the character of the meeting, all respondents usually discussed the current state of operations, the desirable state and the strategy of how to get there. While some leaders discuss their goals and visions during the meetings, others believe that it is up to the employees themselves to figure out how they, individually, should fulfill them. There was consensus among the respondents to have a clear communication style when sharing a vision, in order for all employees to know what they are working towards.

“I always try to use examples when goals are not clear. Otherwise employees do not now what they should be working towards”.

By communicating visions, leaders also tried to create a sense of belongingness to the organization, hoping that the employees will perform better if they feel like their contribution matters. Further, the majority of the respondents found it important to have private conversations with employees. During these conversations, they individualized their way of communicating, in
order to reach out to the employee in best possible way. By changing the communication style, the leaders could impact each individual and effectively discuss how the employee could contribute in accordance to the vision and goals.

4.2 Analysis of vision
Xu & Thomas (2011) argue that distinct visions have a positive influence on employees’ engagement, as they help them to interweave with the organization and its values. The empirical findings show that the organization’s global visions are not adapted to any local office, which has been shown to affect the employees negatively. As a result, leaders often find themselves being unable to communicate the visions to the employees. Hence, according to Macey and Schneider (2008), when leaders ignore and do not communicate the organization’s visions, it leads to negative consequences, such as failing to create a sense of belongingness for the employees and thereby distancing them from the organization. To make sure this does not happen, the majority of the leaders try to break down the vision and objectives into tangible goals, and adapt them to their local context. This could be linked to Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld (2005) who argue that in order to affect employees, leaders need to communicate meaning and sense to increase the understanding towards a situation. Hence, the leaders in this study created a shared meaning among the employees, to create and maintain engagement towards local visions and goals. Moreover, Ireland and Hitt (1999) argue that the ability to express a tangible vision, values and strategy is the most important leadership skill. Further, they (1999) argue that these abilities have positive effect on team productivity. Therefore, it can be argued that the practices of the majority of the respondents are creating higher productivity among employees, by adapting the vision to their local context and breaking it down into tangible goals.

Daft and Lengel (1986) argue that communication is the act where ambiguous issues can be cleared out, and identified face-to-face communication as most effective in bridging uncertainty. Further, Xu and Thomas (2011) argue that distinctly articulated visions have a positive impact on commitment and engagement. The empirical data shows that the respondents act in line with Daft and Lengel (1986) and Xu and Thomas (2011), as the majority of the respondents find it important to make the vision more clear and relatable for the employees. The leaders also preferred face-to-face communication when conveying visions and upcoming work.
challenges. This indicates that by doing so, the respondents create engagement, which could be an explanation to why they are considered top leaders. To further elaborate, Judge and Bono (2000) argue that when leaders communicate a vision, employees tend to become more attached to the assignment as well as increase the attractiveness of being a part of the organization. It can therefore be argued that when the respondents communicate their vision face-to-face to the employees, they get more productive, find the organization more attractive and find themselves engaged in their work tasks.

Rafferty and Griffin (2004) argues for the importance of being able to communicate the vision. In this study, the majority of the leaders are good communicators as they have the ability to adapt their style of communication depending on whom they talk to. These leaders use the organization’s vision and decide, depending on the employees and the leaders’ knowledge about the employees’ situation, what they will tell them to get them engaged. The leaders had different ways of doing this, such as one on one meetings, weekly meetings, or quarterly meetings. However, it is clear that they prefer physical meetings when communicating visions, which Daft and Lengel (1986) identifies as the most effective communication channel. It also illustrates how the respondents use vision as a tool both to create and maintain engagement. The reason that their practices differ might be that the employees in the leaders’ groups are different, and some might need closer contact with the leader than others in order to become or stay engaged.

4.3 Inspirational communication in practice
There is consensus among the respondents that they need to be very clear and straightforward in their communication style, otherwise they might loose people’s interest and fail to communicate their message properly. All respondents believed that communication face-to-face is preferable but leaders tended to use email when it came to spreading larger amounts of information. The use of email can be beneficial in some situations, as some employees are very busy and therefore prefer to communicate through email, as it allows them to answer when they can. All of the respondents argue that in order to be able to inspire employees, they needed to adjust their way of communication based on whom they are talking to and in what situation. To quote a respondent:

“You have to be a chameleon, depending on situation and person you are talking to”
This goes in lines with another respondents reasoning, who stated that you have to realize that people are different and thus adapt your leadership style and the way you communicate to make oneself understood. If the message is not obvious enough, one respondent stresses that there is a need for self-reflection of how to communicate even more clearly.

Inspirational communication is also about recognizing individuals and adjusting the way of communicating based on their personalities. The respondents argue that it is essential for them to be well informed and transparent in order to inspire their employees through communication. This also creates trust among the employees and thereby increases their attentiveness. One respondent argued that leaders sometimes need to be less vocal and more carefully listen to what other say, in order to be able to set the right tone. When it comes to setting the right tone, most of the respondents preferred having an informal tone that procures inclusiveness.

“When I was younger, I was a military but getting more experienced I became less authoritarian”.

The quote is related to the fact that the respondent realized that a co-operative communication style worked much better since the employees became more engaged when they were asked to help.

4.3.1 The importance of inspirational communication
The empirical data shows that communication is important in order to engage employees, but also that the respondents have different agendas when communicating with employees. Some leaders want to communicate in order to understand how their employees think and to get to know about their ideas. This style of communication is personal, and where the leaders want to communicate for their own benefit. To exemplify, one respondent mentioned that his communication style has gotten improved by self-reflection and by trying to understand the individual when communicating a clear message. Other respondents use communication to make the employees understand the leader and his objectives.

“When is precious and you need to be spot on”.

This kind of communication is used to increase the understanding among the employees and to let them know how they contribute to the organization’s bottom line. Another example of the use
of inspirational communication is when leaders try to convey how employees can think differently, in order to perform even better.

4.3.2 Situations where leaders use inspirational communication

Leaders of the researched organization used inspirational communication in different kinds of situations, but with one purpose: to engage their employees. One situation mentioned, was when leaders needed to understand a problem, and therefore had one on one talks with employees, where they carefully listened in order to understand the root cause. Based on the information given, the leaders could now guide and lead the employees, since they knew how to verbalize inspirational messages. Besides one on one talks, several leaders organized different arrangements where they could influence a larger group of employees at the same time, such as town hall meetings and brainstorming sessions. During these meetings leaders communicate information about future challenges, as employees need to be encouraged and eager to meet upcoming tasks. These activities allow leaders to convey personal experiences and knowledge to the employees, while at the same time communicate the importance of the employees and how their contribution makes a difference. Further, the empirical data suggests that inspirational communication is frequently used when dealing with problematic work situations. Therefore, one respondent discussed the importance of how leaders express themselves, due to some expressions leading to negative associations.

In most of the earlier situations described, leaders communicate in person to the employees. Further, half of the respondents tried to avoid digital communication channels when aiming to inspire employees. This is due to leaders considering that digital communication channels increases the risk of misinterpretations, because of the lack of physical interaction. Therefore, they stressed the importance of communicating clear messages when using digital channels in order to minimalize misunderstandings.

4.4 Analysis of inspirational communication

Rafferty and Griffin (2004) argue that inspirational communication is an expression of encouraging messages about the organization that create motivation among employees. Furthermore, they (2004) argue that leaders need to know how to bond with the employees through enthusing talks. The empirical findings show that the leaders possesses good communications skills and that they know how to express themselves in order to engage
employees to embrace future challenges. In order to connect with employees, they adjust their communication depending on whom they are talking to as well as adding own personal experiences in their talks. In line with Bohm (1996), it is important that leaders are personal in their communication, as they can affect the employees emotionally, and shape a mutual interest towards a future challenge. This way of communicating could lead to a collective understanding of a situation that would strengthen the message conveyed (Bohm, 1996). The leaders’ focusing on their communication also goes in line with Fairhurst and Connaughton (2014), who stress the importance of having a language focus when communicating, as it increases the possibility to create meaning among their employees. The fact that the leaders’ adjust their communication style depending on whom they talk to also suggest that they appeal to employees’ personal interest, which Madlock (2008) argues is a way to persuade employees to follow their lead. Thus, it could be argued that the leaders’ practices are about being aware of how they communicate in order to affect the mindset of their employees. The leaders are personal and value giving individual consideration in order to connect with the employees and create engagement, which also suggests that they have to be good judge of characters and possess the ability to redirect their communication when it is needed.

The empirical data shows that to be an inspirational communicator, leaders consider other aspects to be able to convey inspirational messages. It is also about listening to employees, to develop an understanding of how employees feel and reason, and in the long term perspective get the picture of how to inspire each individual. These communication skills could be related to Madlock’s (2008) ideas, as the leaders’ practices correlates with what Madlock (2008) describes as key factors in order to be able to communicate effectively. Furthermore, the respondents were self-reflecting regarding their way of communicating, with the purpose of becoming better communicators. This describes the importance of communication, which goes in line with Holladay and Combs (1993), Bernhut (2000) and Madlock (2008), who argue that communication is crucial in leadership, as leadership is executed through communication. This further supports the integration of communication into the conceptual framework of transformational leadership, as the empirical data keeps pointing out the importance of communication. There are, however, some forms of communication that the respondents try to avoid as much as they can, like digital communication. The underlying reason is that digital communication enhances the probability of misinterpretations, and the leaders have to be
extremely clear when using these tools. This goes in line with the reasoning of Daft and Lengel (1986) who argue that written messages opens up for misunderstandings. Thus, the leaders’ are aware of when and how to use the appropriate communication channels in order to engage employees. It could also explain why the respondents want to communicate face-to-face, as they more easily can adapt their communication style depending on the employee and his individual situation. Kahn (1992) and Daft and Lengel (1986) argue that physical presence reinforces and reduces misinterpretations of leaders’ messages when inspiring employees. This indicates that the leaders’ practices are about knowing the benefits and issues with different communication channels and how they impact employee engagement, and in the end use physical communication to reduce misunderstandings.

In addition to what has been described, the empirical data shows that there are more fundamental aspects to inspire employees. The respondents consider it important to be well informed and to possess knowledge about the subject in order to communicate clear messages to the employees. The importance of being well informed can be linked to Rafferty and Griffin (2004) and Bass (1999), who claim that leaders need to show confidence. Leaders can exert confidence by being well informed about a situation, and hence feel confidence in what they are going to communicate to the employees. It is also important that the information possessed by the leaders is communicated to the employees, as they have a wish to be well informed, which can lead to engagement (Ruck and Welch, 2012). Hence, being well informed and communicating that information is a prerequisite for leaders to be able to create engagement. Furthermore, by being well informed, leaders have knowledge about the employees tasks, problems and results, and can therefore deliver useful feedback, which Bakker and Demerouti (2008) argues leads to engagement. Finally, information helps leaders to come off as more attentive, which has shown to have positive effect on employee engagement.

An interesting aspect revealed by the empirical data but that is not described in the theory is the way the respondents reflect on how they communicate. For example, they always consider their tone of voice, which they want to be inviting and to induce participation. This suggests that the way leaders communicate is important in order to create and maintain engagement. This is not only about the tone of voice itself, but also about how they deliver messages in an inspiring way, which Madlock (2008) highlights as important aspects of communication. For example, it is
likely that the leaders cannot yell at their employees if they want them to take on new challenges. This reasoning can be linked to Harter, Schmidt and Hays (2002) who discuss that leaders need to have the ability to communicate how the employees can contribute, and create a behavior that leads to employees wanting to contribute to the organization’s bottom line.

4.5 Supportive leadership in practice

Supportive leadership has shown to be very important in order to encourage and engage employees. All of the respondents reason that their support is crucial for employees, in order for them to be engaged and to maintain their interest in their work, which in return results in increased performance. One respondent argued that engaged employees work harder and are willing to do the little extra for the organization.

The leaders of the researched organization have different practices of showing their support. Some leaders found employee empowerment and letting them take more responsibility to be the key for succeeding engagement. To exemplify, some leaders empowered employees with tasks that were important to them in order to increase engagement. In this setting, the leader’s role is more of being a coach and showing their support by recognizing the employees as individuals and give personalized advises. Others found meetings to be powerful in order to reach engagement, where leaders together with the employees shared knowledge and discussed different subjects. During these meetings, the leaders supported knowledge sharing and actively took part in the discussions. However, according to one respondent, these meetings only take place four times a year due to the fast-paced business climate that in the long run reduces the chance to learn from each other.

The empirical findings show that communicated support is fundamental in order to keep employees interested in their assignments. For example, when a leader verbally express appreciation and give recognition to individual’s efforts and to what they have accomplished.

“It is all about the people and sometimes, it is just the talk itself that encourages people to do their job well”.

This quote goes in line with other respondents, who believe that having a dialogue where they can give clear answers to employees’ questions, giving them a positive view on their contribution and talking about realistic expectations, is essential when supporting employees. To
effectively reach out to the employees, one respondent highlighted that great knowledge about
employees work situation is very helpful. In these cases, the leader can more easily coach and
motivate employees when they face difficult situations and challenges. The empirical findings
show that the supportive communication can take place in different settings. Some respondents
recognized that the informal moments, such as a small gathering by the coffee machine, is a good
way to give that little extra push of encouragement. When having these informal meetings,
leaders experienced that they could give their advise in a more relaxed way and also motivate
employees to keep up with the good work. Another informal setting described was leaders
having lunch with employees where they could talk about everyday life. The underlying reason
for this was to create relationships while at the same time get insight of how to motivate
employees individually.

However, one challenge when it comes to supporting employees in their work was when
a leader had employees positioned in other geographical parts of Sweden. The reason for that
was the difficulty to develop close relationships, since they only met twice a year. Another
challenge was that the organization has too many boundaries, systems and “must do’s” that limit
leaders to come up with new ideas to support and motivate employees.

4.5.1 How leaders support when employee engagement is low
The empirical findings show that more than half of the respondents found the importance of
handling everyday situations in order to maintain a high state of engagement among the
employees. To be able to deal with everyday situations, several leaders made sure that they were
there for the employees, for example if they experienced problems with a specific work task. The
benefit of being present was that employees had direct access to them, and where leaders now
had the opportunity to directly face the situation and actively support and lead employees
through their problems. The respondents also described different practices when they needed to
support discouraged employees, such as being communicative, frank and observant in order to
immediately take action when something was not working. Most of the respondents points out
the importance of communication, in order to figure out why employees lack engagement and
thus choose a suitable action plan.

“I need to know the root cause, and not go to the solution right away”.
For example, a leader realized when talking to an employee that the person was not thriving with its position within the organization and thus needed to be relocated. Therefore, the leader believed in being responsive to and aware of the root cause, to find a suitable action plan.

4.5.2 Supportive leadership - a time consuming process
Supportive leadership requires time, and half of the respondents thought they had the time necessary to support their employees. They also thought that it is important to take their time even though the organization would not require that from them. One respondent argues that the bottom line with his job is solely about spending time with the employees.

“I really see my employees as factors towards success, and I need to do every possible thing to make that happen”.

The citation illustrates the importance of being able to prioritize, and that other things can wait when employees need help or support. However, the empirical findings show that some respondents constantly struggle with how they should clear their schedule in order to be able to motivate, educate and coach the employees.

“Here at the organization I think it is a common statement that leaders believe they do not spend enough time supporting their employees”.

The reason for not having enough time to spend on their employees is that some leaders have too many administrative and managerial tasks, such as sales reporting or time logging. Further, the organization expects that leaders should always be two steps ahead, but the administrative tasks are time-consuming, making it impossible to fulfill the desire of high-level management. One respondent explained that the overload of administrative tasks makes it hard not to see the employees as numbers in Excel-sheets instead of human beings, which have effects on how they can support their employees.

In order to solve the problem and to be able to spend more time with the employees, one respondent argued that leaders should be more leading, since they spend too much time on management. Thus, some of the managing tasks should be automated in one system, which would free up their schedule and result in more time for the employees. This goes in line with another respondent who argues that there are too many administrative tools and that some were very time consuming, which lead to frustration and less time to spend on employees.
4.6 Analysis of supportive leadership

The empirical data show that leaders are supportive as they realize how support can impact employee engagement positively. Moreover, the leaders focus on the individual and they set high value on employees, because it is their contribution that creates value to the organization. With an individual focus, leaders can develop customized work methods that could improve employees work skills and in the long run benefit the organization. This goes in line with Rafferty and Griffin (2004), who argue that individual consideration is the key in order to be effective in one’s leadership. To be able to show individualized consideration, there is a need of communication, as it is through communication leaders support employees. It was obvious that the leaders used communication to gain knowledge of underlying motives to different problems, when supporting employees. This strengthens the fact that communication is essential when supporting employees and that it is a tool to create engagement. Without engaging in dialogues it would be difficult to know how to affect employees as individuals, as dialogues can provide information about employees’ personal interests. Madlock (2008) argues that without effective communication where leaders appeal to interest of individuals, it is hard to have an impact on them. This indicates that leaders need to combine effective communication with personal consideration in order to engage employees. Moreover, the leaders need to focus on the employees as individuals, and be informed about their situation in order to support and coach them the best way possible. Even though the leaders did not explicitly utter the importance of communication when showing support, it is easy to see the pattern, as it would be difficult to show support without expressing it verbally.

The description of the respondents’ reality and their work practices goes in line with the definition of supportive leadership by Rafferty and Griffin (2004), who argue that supportive leadership is important to employee engagement. It can therefore be argued that supportive leadership plays a crucial part in reaching a high state of employee engagement. However, in order for leaders to be able to support their employees, it is clear that they need the support from the organization. Today the respondents argue that they feel limited by the organization, resulting in their inability to fully support the employees. Therefore, they need resources such as time, monetary incitements, and being liberated from administrative tasks to create and maintain engagement through supportive leadership. Despite that, leaders try to take their time to be supportive and to genuinely show interest in employee’s situation or problem. According to Xu
and Cooper (2011) this leadership behavior leads to employee engagement, which is a positive indicator on leaders’ efforts and practices.

In theory, Rafferty and Griffin (2004) describe that leaders need to possess social skills to be able to be supportive and coach employees to go beyond expectation. This suggests that leaders need to listen, interact and communicate in order to support their employees. However, the definition of supportive leadership by Rafferty and Griffin (2004) lack the aspect of communication. Meanwhile, Barrett (2006) argue that communication is essential for leaders to be able to get things done through others. This indicates that there is a link between supportive leadership and communication, as the underlying meaning of supportive leadership is to coach and lead employees towards a desired direction. To be able to support employees, communication is essential, and in line with Bohm (1996) it is through dialogues that leaders can figure out how to coach and engage individuals. Thus, by communicating, leaders can verbalize their support and pass on individualized messages, in order to create and maintain engagement. Communication as an important skill is verified by the fact that all leaders considered it to be crucial, for example during weekly meetings or when coaching individuals by giving them clear answers to their questions. This statement could be linked to Papalexandris and Galanaki (2009) who found linkages between employee engagement and leaders’ ability to communicate, which indicate leaders need to be good communicators. The leaders believe communication is important when interacting with employees, which could be linked to Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld (2005) arguments, as they point out that communication is a way to convey materialized meaning to actions. This indicates that leaders’ practices are about combining their support in order to clarify a work task or situation.

On the other hand, there exist some obstacles for leaders to engage and motivate employees to the extent they wish, due to their busy schedule. Besides that they often find themselves under time pressure, the geographical distance made it more difficult to engage employees due to the use of digital communication channels. Daft, Lengel and Trevino (1987) argue that digital communication channels are used when conveying unambiguous messages. Hence, leaders become limited, as it is difficult to convey more detailed and rich information through these channels, as the risk of being misunderstood is higher. The geographical distance also indicates that it creates a gap between leaders and employees, as they need to use digital
communication channels. These channels complicate for leaders to create relationships with the employees and reduce the possibility of employee engagement. These channels could lead to employees feeling not been giving enough attention, which is according to Kahn (1992) essential in order to have engaged employees. Consequently, it is important that the organization makes sure that leaders have access to their employees in order to ensure employee engagement aligned with organizational values and goals.

Gregory Stone, Russell and Patterson (2004) explain transformational leadership as a process of building commitment to organizational objectives by empowering employees to fulfill those objectives. However, Rafferty and Griffin (2004) do not include empowerment, when defining supportive leadership, but the empirical data show that this aspect plays an important part. On the other hand, it is not clear how leaders actually link more responsibility to organizational objectives, and neither do they describe how they support employees when giving them more responsibility. Instead, the data indicates that when leaders are empowering employees, they distance themselves from the employees and let them become their own leader.

4.7 Intellectual stimulation in practice
There was a consensus among the respondents that it essential to stimulate employees, but also that it is quite hard to achieve. The underlying reason to this statement was based on the difficulty to create intellectual assignments due to ever changing business conditions. Beside external influences, some leaders mentioned that employees have a responsibility to communicate with their leaders if they feel unchallenged or under stimulated. When this situation occurs, leaders attend to the individual and personalize the stimulation method to their specific interest. Everyone does not share this point of view, due to the fact that some leaders do not believe it is up to them to make employees feel stimulated, and that they do not have the time required to develop their employees.

Many leaders found it difficult to create intellectual assignments, however, all agreed that they tried to stimulate the employees by challenging them to think about problems outside the box. One way of doing this was to create teams composed of young and experienced employees, where they could share knowledge and discuss problems from different perspectives. According to one leader, old methods could be combined with new ones that would lead to innovative ideas and new ways of doing things. The empirical data also showed that some respondents
experienced pressure from different management or customer channels, to constantly deliver new ideas. This was due to the fact that they work in a very changeable business environment where leaders found it a necessity to coach and challenge employees to go beyond the limits and to quote:

“As a leader you need to step in and take action”.

However, one respondent mentioned that leaders talk about encouraging behaviors that involve thinking outside the box and being innovative, internally called wild duck behaviors, but that more could be done. This reasoning is grounded in the fact that leaders do not know what they are set up to do and thus limit their course of action.

“Within the organization, you want to be a fish, since they throw you out in the ocean and watch how far you can swim. If you can swim, you could create your own world map and then only you know where to set your limits for how far you will go”.

The respondent argues that it is important to challenge one-self to take more responsibility for their personal development that could lead to a more contentment with ones situation.

To stimulate employees’ intellect, leaders encouraged certain behaviors they personally valued to be important. The variation of different behaviors depended on what context leaders were in. One respondent underlined the importance of promoting the curiosity of trying new things, for example new communication channels. Another leader found it vital for business to encourage employees to show a willingness to learn, be open minded and creative.

“To stay on top, employees need to have an appetite to learn new stuff”

Some leaders mentored their employees to feel good about their work when reaching beyond the expectation. To anchor this specific behavior, leaders stressed the importance of understanding what method was needed to accomplish the desired outcome. However, not all of the respondents did know what behaviors they wanted to encourage and one leader found it more meaningful to act on behaviors he did not like.

4.8 Analysis of intellectual stimulation
The respondents considered intellectual stimulation as critical for the organizations success. At the same time, they expressed how difficult they find it to challenge their employees constantly.
There empirical data has revealed a discrepancy between the theory of intellectual stimulation and the reality. While Rafferty and Griffin (2004) argue that stimulation is when a leader communicate and enhance employees’ ability to think of problems in new ways, leaders perceive intellectual stimulation as creating intellectual challenges for their employees. Interestingly, when the leaders described what they did to stimulate their employees, the majority mentioned challenging them to think outside the box, to be open minded and creative. Hence, the respondents’ actions were in fact in line with the theories from Rafferty and Griffin (2004).

The empirical data shows that the respondents believe intellectual stimulation is important. However, they also put some responsibility on the employees, who have to communicate with their leader if they feel under stimulated. In some way, this might explain why Rafferty and Griffin (2004) describe intellectual stimulation as the most underdeveloped component of transformational leadership. Because the employees themselves have to tell the leader when they are not stimulated, unless the leader sees it. The employees are usually in a role, where it is hard for the leaders to simply alter the character of the tasks. Instead, the leaders work with the individual rather than the task. When working with individuals, leaders have the opportunity to communicate sense and create a shared meaning towards the task, which according to Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld (2005) gives the leaders the possibility to have an impact on the employees’ mindset. This practice indicates that leaders who see their employees as individuals have a greater chance of affecting the employees, stimulate them intellectually and increase their level of engagement. The leaders use the tools they have and try to be attentive, challenge employees to think outside the box, be open minded and creative. They alter their stimulation method based on their knowledge of the individual and mentor employees to feel good about their work. In other words, the leaders try to develop the employees’ cognitive ability as well as making them feel good as individuals. Hence, it is much a question of personal development, which Papalexandris and Galanaki (2009) argues has positive linkages on employee engagement. This kind of leadership behavior can also be strongly linked to theories by Xu and Cooper (2011) who argue when leaders support, show interest in employees and their development, it leads to employee engagement.

Rafferty and Griffin (2004) argue that intellectual stimulation increases employees’ ability to conceptualize, comprehend and analyze problems. If the employees start approaching
problems in new ways and think creatively, it is likely that they increase the employees’ ability to conceptualize and analyze problems, as argued by Rafferty and Griffin (2004). Another practice that the leaders use to stimulate employees is the composition of teams with people with different backgrounds, thus, stimulating people intellectually. It can be described as a form of indirect stimulation where the leader enables for employees to stimulate each other. The benefit of composing teams like these can be linked to Bohm (1996), who argues that the creation of dialogues within a group can lead to new perspectives, and glue people together through shared meaning. Further, this indicates that when leaders compose diverse groups, they can create a shared meaning that is essential in order to keep them engaged towards a work task. The leadership practices are all used to make sure employees are stimulated, as well as stimulate, challenge and develop each other. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2008), engaged employees influence their colleagues and consequently perform better as a team, giving support for the leaders’ practices from an engagement point of view. The empirical data indicates that the leaders, in terms of intellectual stimulation, use tools that stimulate employees in a high extent, which in the end results in employee engagement.

4.9 Personal recognition in practice
The empirical findings show that the majority of respondents believed they could become much better in recognizing employees, especially employees’ efforts in the daily operations. The reason why this is not done more on a daily basis is due to the fact that the leaders believe the organization does not prioritize and financially support these types of recognitions. However, according to the respondents, personal recognition does not have to include a physical item such as monetary bonus. Instead, leaders experienced more appreciation when giving positive feedback, thus, time is needed to make this possible.

The respondents were carefully considering the different needs and motivation factors among the employees, and tried to fulfill them by showing personal recognition. For example, leaders let outstanding employees come up on the stage during town hall meetings where they would receive acknowledgement, giving them positive feedback, sending them gift cards, emails, or giving them bonuses. One respondent also believed that it was important to recognize top performers and separate them from the others and give them bonuses.
“You have to adopt to individuals and understand who wants what. People are not the same and need to be recognized differently”.

The empirical data shows that leaders assess the support from their organization, ranging from weak support to none at all. Therefore, many leaders feel constrained by their organization when it comes to recognizing their employees. The main argument is that leaders do not acquire any support from their organization, and that they do not have enough resources to always recognize their employees, even if they want to. One respondent described his frustration, stating that the incentive system has gotten less beneficial which has limited the leaders for delivering personal recognition.

“It is amazing how employees succeed not feeling unmotivated due to the lacking incentive systems”.

One respondent believed there are tools available for leaders to use in order to recognize employees. However, leaders need to be creative and constructive, as higher management does not educate the leaders about the tools available or how to use them. The lack of top management support in this context is articulated in the following quote:

“I do not think the organization really encourages you to be more than a manger, to be a leader. With that I mean that the organization often only wants us to fulfill our goals, nothing more”.

Another aspect regarding the difficulty of personal recognition is that the organization demands that employees constantly need to outperform; a well executed task is not enough, it needs to contain that little extra. One respondent found that the employees get pushed too far and that they almost feel like they get punished, and that good performance is not enough.

4.9.1 How leaders recognize employee’s achievements

The empirical data showed that all respondents used similar methods when recognizing employee’s achievements, such as giving feedback face-to-face or through digital communication channels. Some respondents acknowledge their employees mostly by what is accessible through the organization’s incentive system. One thing that is common for all respondents is that they try to see the uniqueness of each individual and recognize their individual efforts. They also adopt their way of showing recognition depending on the situation and whom they are talking to. One respondent admitted spending more time on top performing
employees, since they had contributed the most, and therefore had earned more credit. However, some respondents mentioned that they would want to spend more time on recognizing employees’ achievements, but they are restricted by the organizational rules. As a result, one leader admits spending his own money on activities, to celebrate team achievements.

The empirical data revealed that leaders handled good and bad achievements differently. All of the respondents agreed on the importance of having one on one meetings when they needed to deal with bad achievements. During these private talks they could find out about the root cause to the situation and several leaders stressed the importance of appearing sensitive and thoughtful.

“If we observe employees performing badly, we try to get them on the right side. You should never out an employee, and rather solve the problem instead of blaming employees for the result”.

Further, one respondent also found that handling bad achievements required a lot of follow up, and thus is a very time consuming process. Good achievements on the other hand were shown in public. One respondent also stressed the importance of acknowledging achievements that might not have been successful from the beginning, since it is essential to encourage employees to try.

4.10 Analysis of personal recognition
Personal recognition is when leaders give employees credit and acknowledgement when they deliver in accordance to the initial vision of the assignment (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). This description of personal recognition could however be questioned, as the empirical data shows that leaders try to recognize the employees even when they failed to accomplish an assignment. The reason might be that leaders feel they should recognize and support their employees in both good times and bad times, in order to maintain their engagement. It further shows that there are several types of personal recognition, and that leaders find it important to recognize employees’ efforts regardless result. It can therefore be argued that leaders use different tools and different kind of recognition whether they work to create, maintain or even reinforce the employees’ engagement.

When delivering personal recognition, the respondents always tried to adapt their way of communicating based on the employee receiving it. The personal recognition is often delivered
in person, which is a way to create trust between the leader and employee. This indicates that communicating appreciation is important in order to build trust, which goes in line with Thomas, Zolin and Hartman (2009), who argue that communication is the means of increasing trust. Hence, the practice of giving recognition indicates increased level of trust, as it is an important factor to enhance engagement (Guibord, 2012).

Personal recognition of any kind is a form of feedback from the leader to the employee. Bakker and Demerouti (2008) state that feedback leads to engagement as employees become more invested in their work. Further, if the leader delivers good feedback, it can be seen as the leader being attentive, caring and aiming to develop the individual. These are all practices that are described as engagement creating in the literature (Kahn, 1990; Bakker and Demerouti, 2008; Xu and Cooper, 2011; Kronz, 2014), suggesting that how the respondents communicate personal recognition is favorable in term of employee engagement. On the contrary, if the recognition was only delivered through a short e-mail and a thank you, it would probably be seen as if the leader did not bother to deliver the news in person and that what had been performed was not that important.

An interesting finding in the empirical data was where the leaders describe how they acknowledge efforts in front of other employees. It can be argued that this kind of recognition gives the employee senses of personal satisfaction and pride, which both are sentiments that lead to engagement (Kahn, 1990; Macey and Schneider, 2008). Further, this leadership practice shows that the leader values the efforts of the employees, which can make other employees engaged as engagement is transmitted among employees. This leadership practice shows that the leader is attentive and sees the effort that employees put into their work, which can possibly motivate the employees to maintain engaged.
5.0 Discussion

In this section the leaders’ practices will be discussed to understand how to create and maintain employee engagement.

5.1 The interrelatedness of the five components of transformational leadership

The empirical data clearly illustrates that the top leaders use practices similar to the five components of transformational leadership. It is not clear whether they do it on purpose or not, but it is likely a contributing factor to their high scores in the previous leadership and engagement survey. This study shows that the five components of transformational leadership are interrelated and should be treated holistically. To illustrate; in order for a leader to communicate a vision, the other components of transformational leadership need to be incorporated into the communication process. To communicate a vision is not easy, and it can be crucial when leaders want to engage their employees in order to realize the goals of the organization. As vision is not visible, it must emerge from dialogues and collective processes among individuals. If not, leaders and employees will not share the same vision and hence probably not strive for the same goals. Further, vision is also strongly connected to inspirational communication, and therefore, leaders need a strategy for inspiring communication. When a vision is spread and adapted to the employees’ context, they can more easily relate to the message and in the end be motivated to fulfill the vision. Thereafter, leaders need to be there for the employees, support and coach them, while at the same time give them freedom to push boundaries, in order to fulfill the vision. By showing faith in the employees’ ability to perform; trust and loyalty is created between employees and leaders. At this point, the leader sees to the individual, and acknowledges the wished behavior and gives them the credit they deserve. When leaders see to the individual, it also allows for employees to develop their skills and intellect based on their interest and desires.

The example illustrates how the five components of transformational leadership are interrelated, and that all components have to be considered in leaders’ practices. If a component is disregarded, it is possible that employees will not be as engaged as they could possibly be.
5.2 Communication bridging all leadership practices

After analyzing the empirical data, it is clear that communication is the foundation of all the five components of transformational leadership, and has proven to be a key factor. However, in theories regarding transformational leadership, communication is not mentioned as an important part, until now. This study has shown that communication is what enables leaders to engage their employees. Without communication, the leaders will not be able to pass on their vision in an inspiring way. Further, they will neither be able to support, stimulate or give their employees the individualized attention they need in order to create or maintain engagement. For example, the leaders in this study were very aware and self-reflecting on how they communicated with their employees, and it is clear that they have realized the importance of communication in their leadership practices. This is likely an explanation to why the respondents all received top scores in the organizations previous leadership and engagement study. The fact that communication is not mentioned more extensively in the leadership theories is questionable, as it is through communication leaders can consolidate a vision, provide support, and give recognition, attention and stimulation. Communication might be taken for granted in transformational leadership theories, but as it has the possibility to affect the outcome of leadership practices, it should be treated with more respect and be integrated into the theories.

5.3 Characteristics of the engaging leader

This study has examined leadership practices in order to identify how the leaders create and maintain employee engagement. Even though the conceptual framework of transformational leadership contains five different components, the leaders used the same approach and mindset regardless of what they wanted to do. For example, if leaders wanted to convey a vision, they adjusted their communication to the person they were talking to. The same approach was employed when the leaders tried to support, stimulate, recognize or inspire their employees. They always focus on the employees as individuals and take the specific situation into account to find the best way to reach out to them. In order to do this, the leaders need to know their employees, their strengths, their weaknesses and their drivers. To achieve this, leaders talk and listen to their employees, to get to know them. The leaders then use the knowledge in their practices to find ways to engage their employees. If the leaders disregard their employees, they will not know anything about them, and it is likely that engagement will not be created or maintained. Getting to know employees is a time consuming process, time which the leaders not
always have. If organizations want their leaders to engage their employees, they should hence make sure that they are relieved of administrative tasks so they can focus on engaging them.

A common feature among the leaders is that they all valued personal interaction with their employees. Even though digital communication might sometimes be easier, the leaders view face-to-face interaction as superior. Therefore, the leaders distinguish how they should approach their employees based on the situation. For example, if leaders need to address sensitive issues with employees they rather use face-to-face communication, but if it comes to spreading large amount of information they might prefer digital communication. However, personal interaction is an approach that leaders employ in relation to all of the five components of transformational leadership. Personal interaction facilitates feedback and discussion, where leaders can more easily show their employees that they care for them. Moreover, personal interaction is valued among the leaders as a way to strengthen their relationship with the employees and create trust and engagement through human contact.

Another thing that all the leaders have in common is self-reflection. They reflect about how they want to be treated by leaders and try to imitate that behavior in their practices. Furthermore, they reflect about the way they communicate with their employees, and critically review their practices when something has gone wrong. This is a characteristic that indicates all the leaders want to become better at what they do, and are humble enough to realize they can always become better.

To summarize, there are many things confirming the leaders’ use of the five components of transformational leadership. The fact that they do underlines the importance of vision, inspirational communication, supportive leadership, personal recognition and intellectual stimulation as tools to create and maintain employees engagement. Further, as these leaders have been judged as good leaders, it is arguably beneficial to incorporate the five components into leadership practices. From an organization’s perspective, they can use the five components of transformational leadership when educating their leaders, if they want their leaders to engage employees. However, they also have to focus on the communication skills of the leaders, as they will not be able to engage employees without them.
6.0 Conclusion

In this section, conclusions will be presented based on the analysis and discussion with the purpose to answer the research question, how top leaders’ practices create and maintain employee engagement.

It is evidential how leaders’ practices lead to engagement, and one reason is that they are good communicators. What makes them unique is that they individualize their communication style to ensure that their message is understood and embraced by the employees. In order to be able to bring forth a clear and easily understood message, they reflect on how they express themselves. For example, they think about their tone of voice based on the situation and whom they are talking to, as it crucial to engagement. In order to individualize their communication style they take their time and talk to employees with the purpose of getting to know them, and to gain knowledge of their motivational drivers. What is essential to all leaders is to be a good listener and genuinely show interest in employees’ needs and situation to be able to inspire them verbally. Furthermore, the leaders are good at breaking down information and adjust it to fit the context. To do this, leaders make sure that they are well informed about employees’ situation and adopt the message to employees’ current state, to create and maintain engagement.

Another conclusion that could be drawn is that the leaders try to be present and support their employees. Furthermore, they give employees recognition for their achievements regardless of if the result is good or bad. If the result did not meet the expectation of the leaders, they try to be solution-oriented and see to what could have been done differently, and motivate employees to try other ways of doing things. To be able to show support they prefer physical meetings as it facilitates the creation of good relationships with the employees, as they can identify the single individual. Moreover, leaders have activities where they stimulate employees’ intellect to increase their engagement. They also empower their employees as it leads to engagement, where leaders’ role is to act as a coach, leading them to stay on the right path.

6.1 Future research

The results of this study shows that more research is needed regarding the role of communication in relation to transformational leadership practices. For example, a study could investigate how effective the use of five components of transformational leadership is, if the leader is a poor
communicator versus good communicator. Such a study could possibly deepen the understanding of the role of communication in relation to employee engagement. Another interesting study would be to observe both the leaders and their employees to see to what degree their leadership practices are influencing the employee’s engagement. In this case, it would be interesting if the leaders were unaware of that they were being observed. For example, this study could include categorization of the leaders’ activities according to the conceptual framework of transformational leadership. If the employees’ engagement level is measured at the same time, it could be identified what leadership behavior creates the most engagement. Additionally, it would be interesting to observe top-scoring leaders and low-scoring leaders and compare their practices, in order to better understand which components in the conceptual framework are directly crucial in terms of employee engagement and effective leadership communication.
Reference list


Appendix 1. Interview questions

Date:  
Place:  

Background  
1. What is your name?  
2. What is your job role at the company?  
3. What does your job role consist of?  
4. How long have you been at this position and within the organization?  
5. Do you want to be anonymous?  

Supportive leadership  
1. Do you think it is important to engage the organizations’ members? Why/ Why not?  
2. Describe how you work to keep your employees interested in their work  
3. How do you encourage when they lack motivation and interest in their work?  
4. Can you recall a specific situation where you had to motivate an employee that was lacking in interest of their work?  
5. Do you experience that you have the time that is required to support your employees?  
6. If you could require tools that would lead to more time, what would they be?  

Inspirational communication  
1. Describe your communication style that you use towards your employees  
2. Do you communicate differently when you try to motivate different employees?  
3. What is important to you when you communicate with your employees?  
4. Can you give an example of a situation where you motivated your employees through communication? What did you do?  

Intellectual stimulation  
1. Do you encourage certain behaviors from your employees? If yes, which ones?  
2. When facing an obstacle or any sort of work situation as problematic, how are you usually dealing with it?
3. Do you challenge your employees to think about problems in new ways? How? Why not?

4. Is it important to stimulate your employees intellectually? Why/Why not?

Vision

1. What is a great leader to you?

2. Tell me about your view on being a leader…
   a. What do you want to achieve with your leadership?
   b. How do you communicate goals and vision of tasks achievements to your employees?
   c. What important values and ethics do you believe you demonstrate as a leader?

3. Do you have the support required from your organization to aspire your vision and empower others?

Personal recognition

1. How do you measure success as a leader?

2. Describe your thoughts on recognizing efforts of employees?

3. Do you feel you have the support needed from the organization to recognize your employees?

4. How do you acknowledge employees achievements?
   a. Is there any different of how you acknowledge bad or good achievements?

Is there anything I have not asked you about and that you would like to add?
Appendix 2. Questionnaire template

Date:  
Place:  
Participant:  

I am trusted by my team in overcoming any obstacle (vision)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I completely agree</th>
<th>I most partly agree</th>
<th>I more or less agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I am a symbol of success and accomplishment to my team (vision)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I completely agree</th>
<th>I most partly agree</th>
<th>I more or less agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

When there is a risk involved in my team I am likely the go-to person (vision)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I completely agree</th>
<th>I most partly agree</th>
<th>I more or less agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I always try to be clear about the messages behind the tasks for my team (vision)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I completely agree</th>
<th>I most partly agree</th>
<th>I more or less agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I suggest new ways of looking at how to complete assignments (intellectual stimulation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I completely agree</th>
<th>I most partly agree</th>
<th>I more or less agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
I am open about sharing my curiosity for new things to solve problems (intellectual stimulation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I completely agree</th>
<th>I most partly agree</th>
<th>I more or less agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I am considering myself not to be critical about creative ideas (intellectual stimulation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I completely agree</th>
<th>I most partly agree</th>
<th>I more or less agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I help others to develop their strengths (supportive leadership)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I completely agree</th>
<th>I most partly agree</th>
<th>I more or less agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I spend time teaching and coaching my team (supportive leadership)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I completely agree</th>
<th>I most partly agree</th>
<th>I more or less agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I make sure to spend one-on-one working time with my team (supportive leadership)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I completely agree</th>
<th>I most partly agree</th>
<th>I more or less agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I inform my team what they should do to be rewarded for their efforts (personal recognition)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I completely agree</th>
<th>I most partly agree</th>
<th>I more or less agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I recommend my team about open promotions positions for when it is deserved (personal recognition)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I completely agree</th>
<th>I most partly agree</th>
<th>I more or less agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Tells my team when we perform well (inspirational communication)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I completely agree</th>
<th>I most partly agree</th>
<th>I more or less agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Encourages my team members (inspirational communication)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I completely agree</th>
<th>I most partly agree</th>
<th>I more or less agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Develop a challenging and attractive vision, together with the employees (inspirational communication)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I completely agree</th>
<th>I most partly agree</th>
<th>I more or less agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Express confidence, decisiveness and optimism about the vision and its implementation (inspirational communication)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I completely agree</th>
<th>I most partly agree</th>
<th>I more or less agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree</th>
<th>I don’t agree at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
## Appendix 3. Observation template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Recognition</th>
<th>Agree completely</th>
<th>Agree to most part</th>
<th>Merely agree</th>
<th>Do not agree at all</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pays attention to work groups’ efforts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages individuals/<em>work teams</em> in their performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages individuals in their work role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indication of appreciation of the effort from the group members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows indications of what work is being done in the work group and by whom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intellectual Stimulation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses work group's suggestions to make decisions that affect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes decisions that are based only on his/her own ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages work group members to express ideas/suggestions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages work group members to solve problems together</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Supportive Leadership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Considers work group's/member’s ideas when he/she disagrees with them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listens to work group's/member’s ideas and suggestions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows concern or there exists indications of caring about work group members' personal problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes the time to discuss work group members' concerns patiently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows concern for work group members' success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treats work group members as equals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gets along with work group members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finds time to chat with work group members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides help to work group/members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspirational Communication</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives all work group members a chance to voice their opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives work group member’s honest and fair answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggests ways to improve group performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads by example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps work group see areas in which they need more training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps work group focus on goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explains company goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explains rules and expectations to my work group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explains his/her decisions and actions to work group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explains how work group fits into the company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulate a compelling vision of the future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sets high standards for performance by his/her own behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sets a good example by the way he/she behaves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>