

Choosing channels while acting as a channel: Perceptions of cross-border managers on mediated and strategy communication

International Business Communication

Master's thesis

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School of Economics

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Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to examine internal mediated communication and strategy communication within a multinational company from the perspective of a cross-border manager. The case organization of the study was a financial group operating in Northern Europe. Organized mainly by function, the company operates as cross-national organization and employs hundreds of cross-border managers (CBM), i.e. managers whose subordinates are situated in other countries than they are themselves. The study explored the perceptions of cross-border managers in order to answer the research questions: "In what ways do CBMs use communication media?", "What media do CBMs prefer and why?", "How do CBMs see their role in strategy communication" and "What are CBMs' views on strategy communication?".

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The source of data in the present mixed method single case study consisted of 3 semi-structured interviews and 65 responses to a web survey conducted among cross-border managers in the case company. The participants were Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian and Danish. The theoretical framework of the study illustrated how a cross-border manager is both an active selector of channels for his communicative acts and at the same time a channel himself used in the cascading system to communicate strategy top-down in the organization.

Findings and Conclusions

The findings of this study suggest that cross-border managers are capable users of a wide variety of communication media, who switch between tools without an effort and are eager to utilize also the most recent communication tools. The most preferred media, however, are the traditional options of email, mobile phone and face-to-face meetings. As receivers, CBMs also prefer the Internet and the intranet. It was also found that CBM's consider it as their responsibility to make sure their subordinates understand what the corporate strategy means to their department and everybody's tasks and duties. One of the main findings of this study was that CBMs would prefer the strategy to be communicated by the top management instead of their immediate supervisor. These findings were utilized in giving recommendations for the development of internal communications in the case company.

Key Words: Internal communication, strategy communication, communication channel, mediated communication, virtual leadership, cross-border teams, international business communication

Kanavan valitsijana ja kanavana: etäesimiesten näkemyksiä mediavälitteisestä ja strategian viestinnästä

Tutkimuksen tavoitteet

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli tarkastella monikansallisen yrityksen sisäistä mediavälitteistä viestintää ja strategiaviestintää etäesimiesten näkökulmasta. Tutkimus suoritettiin Pohjois-Euroopassa toimivassa rahoitusalan konsernissa, joka on järjestäytynyt pääosin liiketoiminnoittain yli maarajojen. Tästä johtuen yrityksessä työskentelee satoja 'cross-border' -esimiehiä, eli esimiehiä, joiden alaiset työskentelevät eri maissa kuin esimies itse. Tutkimus selvitti näiden etäesimiesten näkemyksiä, joiden avulla tavoitteena oli vastata seuraaviin tutkimuskysymyksiin: ”Millä tavoin etäesimiehet käyttävät viestintämedioita?”, ”Mitä medioita he pitävät parhaina ja miksi?”, ”Miten etäesimiehet näkevät roolinsa strategiaviestinnässä?” ja ”Mitä mieltä etäesimiehet ovat strategiaviestinnästä?”.

Tutkimusmenetelmät

Kvalitatiivista ja kvantitatiivista tutkimustapaa yhdistävän tapaustutkimuksen tutkimusaineisto koostui kolmesta teemahaastattelusta ja 65 vastauksesta verkkokyselyyn. Tutkimuksen osallistajat olivat case-yrityksessä työskenteleviä suomalaisia, ruotsalaisia, norjalaisia ja tanskalaisia etäesimiehiä. Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys kuvaa, kuinka etäesimies on samanaikaisesti sekä viestintäkanavien aktiivinen valitsija viestintätilanteissaan, että viestintäkanava, jota käytetään strategian viestinnässä organisaatiossa ylhäältä alaspäin.

Tutkimuksen tulokset

Tutkimustulokset viittaavat siihen, että etäesimiehet käyttävät taitavasti ja vaihtelevasti laajaa kanavavalikoimaa ja ovat innokkaita hyödyntämään myös kaikkein uusimpia viestintätyökaluja. Parhaaksi koetut mediat ovat sähköposti, matkapuhelin ja kasvokkaistapaamiset. Viestien vastaanottajina etäesimiehet käyttivät mielellään myös verkkoviestintää, sekä Internetiä että intranetiä. Tutkimus osoitti myös, että etäesimiehet pitävät velvollisuutenaan varmistaa, että heidän alaisensa ymmärtävät yrityksen strategian merkityksen oman yksikkönsä ja itse kunkin työtehtävien näkökulmasta. Yksi tutkimuksen tärkeimmistä löydöksistä oli, että etäesimiehet haluavat ylimmän johdon viestivän strategiasta lähiesimiehen sijaan. Tuloksiin perustuen case-yritykselle annettiin suosituksia siitä, kuinka sisäistä viestintää voidaan kehittää.

Avainsanat: Sisäinen viestintä, strategiaviestintä, viestintäkanavat, mediavälitteinen viestintä, virtuaalitiimit, kansainvälinen yritysviestintä

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1 INTRODUCTION – The medium is the message

Channel is one of the basic elements of a communicative act. It is present in every communication process, alongside with the other elements, such as the communicators (sender and receiver), message, channel, transmission (encoding and decoding), noise, feedback, and context (e.g. Tourish & Hargie 2004). Due to this centrality, the communication channels have received a lot of interest from academic researchers. Especially in the 1950's and 60's the so called media theorists gained momentum and their research grew to be increasingly important. Their work was popularized by communications theorist Marshall McLuhan (1984), who first coined the now popular phrase “The medium is the message” in his 1964 book, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*.

McLuhan believed that the medium in which content is delivered has as much influence on the society's and the individual user's perception of the message's meaning as the content it carries. Furthermore, he stated that each type of media encourages different degrees of participation on the part of the person who chooses to consume it, and, as such, the medium through which a person encounters a particular piece of content would have an effect on the individual's understanding of it.

Now 45 years later McLuhan's thoughts still sound very current and it is difficult to imagine he wrote them in the era before the Internet or even personal computers. For most of us, hearing the words participation and media in a same sentence brings associations with web 2.0 solutions and interactive business communication tools, such as virtual meetings.

These associations illustrate the reason why there is still a continuous need for more media studies after all these years: our conception of communication channels changes frequently. The speed at which the communication technology develops new tools results in constant evolution in the way communication media is used and perceived.

Christou (2009) claims that something else is happening too. Contrary to McLuhan's message, the medium no longer controls the audience. The audience now controls the medium, requiring the delivery of content in whatever form or medium it prefers. Although Christou refers to mass media, the same transition is likely to happen in the organizational context as well. In fact, we are already beginning to see signs of it. Sari Lehmuskallio (personal communication, March 23, 2010) claims that companies should offer employees similar tools for communication that they are already using in their private lives. Mahdon & Bevan (2007, p. 48) point out that if people are more likely to accept the message they want to hear, they may also be more likely to accept the messages that arrive through their preferred channels. Therefore, being aware of the media preferences of the audience is now more important than ever.

Besides communication media, which is the main focus of the present thesis, this study also investigates strategy communication perceptions. When investigating channels, the content of the messages cannot be fully set aside. A particular type of message content, strategy, is chosen for a deeper investigation of the relationship of channel and content in this particular case. Strategy messages were chosen for two reasons. First, from all the messages conveyed in an organization, strategy messages are unquestionably the most important ones for organizational success. The second reason was the contradiction perceived between face-to-face communication as the preferred channel for strategy communication and the increasing tendency of dispersed workforce to rely on mediated communication. Both of these reasons are discussed more in detail in the following.

To begin with, even the best strategy is useless if the implementation fails. The failure or success of the implementation is very often directly linked to communication. For example, the significance of communication in the strategy implementation process was evident in the results of a study based on 300 interviews in Finnish companies (Hämäläinen & Maula 2001) that revealed that according to top and middle managers, issues related to communication were the most focal area of difficulties in strategy implementation. More than three out of four interviewees considered issues related to

communication problematic in strategy implementation. Similar findings were reported by Alexander already in 1985 (as cited by Yang, Sun & Eppler 2008) in a study that showed that communication was mentioned more frequently than any other single item promoting successful strategy implementation.

The second reason relates to the contradiction in the use of communication channels in strategy communication. Face-to-face communication is commonly assumed to be superior to all other forms of communication. Especially when communicating strategy, there seems to be consensus among business communication researchers that recognizes face-to-face communication as the ideal way (e.g. Daft & Lengel, Hämäläinen & Maula). It is widely believed that in order to achieve the commitment of the employees the strategy needs to be understood, and that the best way to achieve this is by the means of face-to-face discussion.

Yet, as Berry (2006) argues, face-to-face communication does not cope well with organizational constraints such as time pressure and the geographic distribution of team members. It is very common in multinational companies today to find more and more geographically dispersed organizational structures and working teams. As Cornelissen (2008, p. 196) puts it, employees and managers are now often connected to each other by electronic means rather than by close physical proximity. Communication technologies have developed rapidly to rise to the challenge. E-mails, the intranet, video-conferencing and pod casting are used by managers to communicate with employees and by employees themselves to stay informed of company news. Virtual teams with distant leaders are becoming increasingly common. At the same time, travelling is cut to minimum because of costs, environmental issues and for work-life balance. As a result, managers often have very limited opportunities for face-to-face communication with their subordinates. Instead, their communication is based mostly on different kinds of communication media.

The challenge these conditions pose on strategy communication has been neglected by previous research. How does strategy communication fit to the virtual environment? If

there is a linkage between strategy communication and mediated communication, it has been ignored in earlier studies.

1.1 Research objectives

This study aims to contribute to bridging this gap by bringing together two aspects of company internal communication, i.e. mediated communication and strategy communication, and investigating them from a cross-border manager perspective. To be more precise, the object of the study is to accomplish a better understanding of cross-border managers' views and preferences regarding communication media and strategy communication. This knowledge can be used to better support cross-border managers in their role and also to find ways to communicate more efficiently with them. Knowing about their preferences can prove useful in making decisions about internal communication methods and media choices.

This study explores four areas of interest: being a cross-border manager, mediated communication, strategy communication and two-way communication. The study examines the perceptions of cross-border managers by aiming to answer the following two main research questions and four sub-questions.

1. How do CBMs perceive communication media?
 - 1.1. In what ways do CBMs use communication media?
 - 1.2. What media do CBMs prefer and why?
2. How do CBMs perceive strategy communication?
 - 2.1. How do CBMs see their role in strategy communication?
 - 2.2. What are CBMs' views on strategy communication?

In other words, the scope of the study includes examining cross-border managers communication medium usage and preferences as well as their perceptions of mediated and strategy communication in the case company. The concept of two-way symmetrical communication is also introduced since it is central to effective internal communication.

The perspective of cross-border managers is chosen for this study for two reasons. First, because their direct subordinates are situated outside the country where they are themselves situated, they naturally have fewer opportunities for face-to-face communication (both with their subordinates and in most cases also with their own manager, as he or she is usually a cross-border manager too). Consequently their communication is mediated to a large extent and communication tools are vital for their daily work, i.e. leading from distance. Furthermore, they can also be supposed to be accustomed to versatile use of modern e-communication media and have opinions about them. Second, as managers they have a key role in communicating corporate issues, such as strategy, further to their own subordinates. This makes them an important audience for internal corporate communication; their understanding and commitment achieved with effective communication is reflected in how they carry the messages further to their subordinates.

The present study is firmly positioned within the discipline of International Business Communication (IBC). IBC is characterized by Kankaanranta (2009, p. 26) as a relatively new, developing discipline, which is grounded in global communication practices. For such a discipline, practice-driven research topics, such as this one, are valuable in not letting the discipline to estrange from the very practice it emerged. The mission of the IBC unit at the Aalto School of Economics is to “enhance the business knowhow of internationally operating companies by contributing to greater understanding of the strategic role of communication in international business operations” (www.hse.fi/ibc). The relevance of this study for IBC is in contributing to the building of communication know-how by enhancing our understanding of the audience’s views and preferences for internal communications in a multinational company. Finally, this study answers to the call for research on how advancing technology affects what and how business communicates. According to Louhiala-Salminen (2009, p. 309), the gigantic leap technology has taken is one of the major trends affecting business communication in the 2000’s. As claimed by Louhiala-Salminen, business communication research should keep up with the developments of technology.

1.2 Case company

This section provides a brief introduction to the case company, which is further described in section 3.1, and explains the researcher's connection to the company.

The case company for this study is Celo¹ Group, a large financial services group operating in Scandinavia and the Baltic Sea region. Celo has been created through a series of domestic and cross-border mergers and acquisitions. The latest significant merger was finished in 2001. Currently the Group employs about 37.000 people and has around 10 million customers.

The case company provides an ideal setting for conducting international business communication research. Instead of having local operations in each country, the company is mainly organized according to business functions, operating as a cross-national organization. Therefore virtual organizational structures have become common in the case company and internal communication has a strong international aspect. Furthermore, the globalization process continues as the company has already expanded to Baltic countries, Poland and Russia. This progress is likely to increase both the number of cross-border managers and the challenge of their work, as team members from other than Nordic cultures are joining cross-border teams. Under these circumstances, the findings of this study will be hopefully beneficial in increasing the understanding of the ways cross-border managers communicate and how they can be supported.

The author of this thesis has worked for the company from 2001, but was on a study leave when conducting this thesis. During these years I have had the opportunity from an employee point of view to watch how after a merger people from different national and organizational cultures were brought together to form "one Celo", as the key message of a massive internal communication program was formulated. From 2003

¹ A pseudonym 'Celo' is used as the company wishes not to be identified.

onwards I had the possibility to participate in Nordic projects personally and experience how it was like to work with colleagues who were based in other Nordic² countries. This experience made me aware of some of the characteristics of dispersed teams and familiarized me with the tools enabling virtual communication. Furthermore, after becoming a manager myself in 2006 I had the opportunity to take part in leadership training programs and understand what is expected from managers and how their role is emphasized in the company.

The gained experience working for the company affected this study in two ways. First, it made me become interested in the topic of this thesis, i.e. exploring mediated internal communication from a cross-border manager perspective. Second, my tacit knowledge and experience was valuable as it enabled me to “ask the right questions” as a researcher, to speak the same (company-internal) language with the participants and to interpret the findings in an insightful manner.

1.3 Definitions of the key terms

In the present thesis the following definitions of the key concepts – medium, channel, tool, cross-border manager and cascading – are used.

Medium, channel and tool

The terms (communication) medium and (communication) tool are used in the present study interchangeably. Huhtinen & Ojala (2001 p. 6) define communication tools to be the media for information transfer from a sender to one or more receivers.

Although medium refers to communication channels, i.e. tools that transfer messages, the term channel is often considered to have an extended meaning. For instance Tourish & Hargie (2004) make a distinction between channel and medium by defining channel as describing both the medium and the means used to deliver message. The ‘means’ of

² In this study ‘Nordic’ refers to four Scandinavian countries: Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark.

communication would include face-to-face, telephone, written, (fax, email, 'snail mail', newsletter), audio and video.

A common way (e.g. Hrebiniak & Joyce 1984 as cited in Mustonen 2009; Hämäläinen & Maula 2004) to divide communication channels roughly to two groups – face-to-face and mediated - illustrates this distinction. In other words, communication media does not include face-to-face communication, whereas communication channels do.

Cross-border manager

The present study investigates cross-border managers working for the case company. Cross-border manager is a term used internally in the company and it refers to a manager having a cross-border team, i.e. a team that has members in several countries. In other words, a cross-border manager has subordinates situated in another country/-ies than his/hers own place of work. This definition does not include project managers who may lead cross-border project teams without being the immediate superior of the team members. Thus, the reporting structure is the dominant factor here. CBM is an abbreviation of cross-border manager used in this thesis.

Another term closely related to cross-border team is 'virtual team', also called as 'geographically dispersed team'. A virtual team is a group of individuals who work across time, space, and organizational boundaries with links strengthened by webs of communication technology. Members of virtual teams communicate electronically, so they may never meet face to face.

When comparing these two definitions, it is worth noticing that the definition of cross-border team entails the assumption that (at least some of) the members of the team are located in (and usually also originate from) different countries. Therefore, the element of cultural differences is always present when discussing cross-border teams.

Cascade communication, cascading

Cascade communication is defined by the Encyclopedia of management as a process of passing information down from the top of the organization, through all the levels in the hierarchy. It is based on the principle that, at each level, managers are responsible for briefing their subordinates, who in turn pass the information on by briefing their subordinates, and so on until the information gets to the bottom of the hierarchy. The supposed benefit of the cascade method is that it involves managers more directly in the communication process, thereby forcing them to take ownership of the information and to present it in a way that is meaningful and justifiable to their subordinates. The people on the receiving end of the message at each stage are more likely to listen because there is less power difference between them and the sender (their line manager) than there would be if the communication were a 'message from the top'.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. This introductory Chapter 1 has justified the need for this study and described the objectives. Chapter 2 discusses the research literature that pertains to the present study, i.e. work on mediated communication and strategy communication. After this, a development of the theoretical framework for the study is presented. Chapter 3 outlines the research design, methods and data. Chapter 4 presents the key findings of the empirical study and Chapter 5 discusses them. The final chapter returns to the aims of the study and concludes by summarizing the findings and their implications.

2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature review consists of an investigation into two key concepts related to the topic of this thesis; i.e. mediated communication and strategy communication. The overall aim of this chapter is to take a look at earlier academic research on these two fields and to find connections between them to provide a basis for this study.

The chapter begins with an account of mediated communication in section 2.1, which is then followed by section 2.2 outlining research on strategy communication. The literature review will lead to developing a theoretical framework for the study which will then be used in the analysis of the empirical findings.

2.1 Mediated internal communication

This subchapter defines mediated internal communication and discusses research related to it. After reviewing different ways of grouping communication channels, media selection is discussed. In the following sections, the impact of new technology on mediated internal communication is first discussed and then relation of mediated communication and communication by line managers and top management considered. Finally, the concept of two-way symmetrical communication is presented.

Grunig (1992) has defined mediated communication to involve the use of some sort of communication media, and gives for instance external news release, corporate television advertisement, corporate website and internal newsletter as examples. Åberg (2006) states simply that communication is mediated, if it employs technical media.

Mediated communication in business (MCB) has been extensively investigated since the 1980's. Gimenez (2009, p. 132) groups the research on this area into the 'medium turn' and 'the discourse turn'. Studies in the 'medium turn' concentrated on the medium itself (e.g. email, fax) aiming at gaining a thorough understanding of how electronic media worked and the capabilities it offered users. Studies by Daft & Lengel discussed

later in Section 2.12. on media choice are an example of 'medium turn' research. More recent studies have give rise to the 'discourse turn' in MCB by bringing the concept of context under consideration. This stream of reseach has focused more on how medium and context interact. Finally, Gimenez (2009, p. 139) argues for the need for a new turn, the 'critical turn', in mediated business discourse which would help "to reveal more complex realities in relation to questions of power and identity".

The focus of this study is on mediated internal communication, which is mediated communication with the company's internal stakeholders, i.e. its employees. Areas of internal communication in an organization can be differentiated in several ways, depending on perspective. For instance Cornelissen (2008, p. 196) distinguishes two central areas of internal communication in relation to the use of communication technologies, namely:

- (1) Management communication; and
- (2) Corporate information and communication systems (CIS).

Where management communication refers to communication between a manager and his or her subordinate employees, CIS has a broader focus. Corporate information and communication systems (CIS) refer to the broadcasting of corporate decisions and developments to all employees across the organization. The emphasis is on disseminating information about the organization to employees in all ranks and functions within the organization to keep them informed about corporate matters. CIS is often the preserve of the communication department who are charged with releasing information to employees through the intranet, e-mails and so called "town hall" meetings (i.e. large employee meetings where senior managers announce and explain key corporate decisions or developments). Also corporate TV and digital broadcasting systems are used for reaching employees around the world. Clearly, Cornelissen's definition of CIS is closely related to the concept of mediated internal communication.

Another way of differentiating forms of internal communication is taking the viewpoint of different stakeholders. This multidimensional stakeholder approach to internal

communication is proposed by Welch & Jackson (2007) in their Internal Communication Matrix. The four dimensions of the matrix are:

1. Internal line management communication
2. Internal team peer communication
3. Internal project peer communication
4. Internal corporate communication

The fourth dimension, internal corporate communication, is defined as the communication between organizations strategic managers and its internal stakeholders, designed to promote commitment to the organization, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims.

To summarize, both of these definitions include the use of some sort of communication media and informing about corporate matters. Also, the sender of the messages is either the top management or the corporate communication function, not line managers or employees. It is also worth noticing that although neither of them mentions strategy communication as such, it seems that strategy would clearly be one of these 'corporate matters' (Cornelissen) communicated to promote 'understanding of organization evolving aims' (Welch and Jackson). As such, these definitions paint a picture of a communication process which is one-way, top-down and focused on information dissemination rather than building of shared understanding.

According to Grunig (1992, p. 487), this does not need to be the case. He claims that internal mediated communication can be considered symmetrical (two-way) if the content meets the employees' need to know rather than the managements need to tell. Furthermore, internal corporate communication should be underpinned with symmetrical communication to provide opportunities for a dialogue. The concept of symmetrical communication is discussed further in the last section of this subchapter. But first, a look at communication media is provided in the following section.

2.1.1 Communication media

Communication channels can be grouped according to different variables. Åberg (2000) groups the channels of internal communication to four groups based on whether they are:

- Close or distant channels. Close channels (lähikanavat) serve a working unit or personally a member of a work community. Distant channels (kaukokanavat) mediate messages to the whole work community.
- Direct mutual communication or mediated communication to a selected group and web communication. Mutual communication (keskinäisviestintä) is based on personal intercourse. Mass communication to a selected group (pienjoukkoviestintä) uses the techniques of mass communication, but the messages coming across are to a more finite target group than in mass communication, where the target group is wider and more random. Web communication uses intranet and other electronic communication applications.

Using these two dimensions Åberg forms a matrix presented on Figure 1 (on p. 14) and gives examples of channels belonging to each category. As can be seen from the figure, web communication can be found in two slots: both in close and distant channels on the mediated communication row. The former refers to web communication within a unit, for instance the unit intranet. The latter, then, would be a company intranet. Åberg explains that web communication can be used for informing purposes in three ways: (1) Email can be directed to one person or, by using distribution lists, to groups of different sizes. (2) Passively, to mediate notices which are in an electronic form (for instance electronic newsletter). (3) Discussion groups aim for interaction and therefore are equivalent to meetings and briefings.

	Close channels	Distant channels
Direct communication	Immediate manager Other managers Department meeting Insight plazas (Ahaa-aukiot) Close colleagues and friends at work	Informative meeting Collaborative organs and elected officials Meetings and negotiations Direct communication from the top management Colleagues and friends in other units
Mediated communication	Unit notice board Circular letters within unit Factory bulletin Web communication	Notice board Circular letters Staff newsletter Customer magazine CEO's review Annual report Web databases Video news Internal radio Telephone news Web communication Communication to selected group by a union Mass media

Figure 1. Channels of internal communication (Åberg 2000, p. 174)

It is worth noticing that in this context Åberg has a management of communication perspective and perhaps therefore his focus seems to be more in informing of employees than two-directional communication. A more interaction-based orientation to the grouping of communication channels can be sensed in Juholin's (2006) four categories:

- Face-to-face communication, where the parties are present in the same place at the same time, talking and seeing each other
- Phone, where the parties talk at the same time but cannot see each other.
- Computer mediated and mobile communication, where parties read and write, but usually in different places and at different times.
- Printed communication, which is read with a delay.

Although Juholin's grouping at first sight seems clear and makes sense, her approach does not seem to adequately consider advanced web communication technologies, such

as virtual meetings. They tend to fall to the middle ground between phone and computer mediated communication, because the parties talk at the same time (as on the phone), but the communication is computer-mediated. Actually, virtual meetings fill all the criteria for the face-to-face communication category, except for the fact that the parties are not in the same place.

2.1.2 Media choice

This subchapter discusses the various aspects related to media choice. Earlier studies have, for example discussed the vital skill of using the most appropriate channel for the type of message. Tourish & Hargie (1993), summarize the essence of channel selection in the following way: “A skilled communicator will select, and maximize the use of, the channel most appropriate to the achievement of the goals being pursued, bearing in mind that employees tend to prefer face-to-face communication with managers.” As can be seen, their view also emphasizes the role of face-to-face communication, which is quite common in organizational communication literature. Having perhaps a more practical or realistic approach, Quirke (2008, p. 284) points out that “the choice of channel is often for the convenience of the sender rather than the convenience of the receiver.”

Today we have a myriad of communication channels at our use. Anyone who wants to communicate can use first-class mail, express mail, voicemail, e-mail, SMS text, fax, electronic bulletin board, video-conferencing, intranet, newsletter, poster, business television, webcasts, or the telephone - not to mention face-to-face meetings. Juholin (2006, p. 161) points out that it is easy to think that the large number of different communication channels makes communication more effective and increases satisfaction. In the busy work life, however, easy availability of relevant information is a value as such and the existence of competing channels may result in information overload and time wasted in finding the required information.

Quirke (2008, p. 157) has similar views as he claims that the proliferation of technology has increased the options for communication but has created a new problem - how to choose from all the alternatives? A study of Fortune 1000 workers found that corporate staff are inundated with so many communication tools - email, teleconferencing, videoconferencing, postal mail and voice mail - that they don't know which to use for which tasks.

Having a sense of which channel is the most appropriate for a given communicative act is important, as wrong choices may create information overload and confusion, and waste time. As a solution some companies provide a simple guide to channels, others provide toolkits which provide greater detail on when to use which channel, its strengths and weaknesses, and who to contact for advice. Quirke (2008) advises that each channel should have a clear purpose, a clear objective, a definition of the audiences it is aimed at and an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses.

Juholin (2006) discusses similar issues as she speaks about planning the structure of internal communication. This means defining one or two main channels for the communication of each subject matter. For instance, subjects related to the team or unit can be defined to be communicated primarily in team briefings and by the team manager. Email or intranet could serve as secondary channels. Juholin argues that several channels can be used to communicate the same issue (intranet, weekly meeting, internal newspaper), but it is also important to know where to find the latest information and where to get more information related to the subject.

Among the body of research examining communication media selection, the media richness theory by Daft & Lengel (1986) has probably received the most attention from scholars. Media richness theorists argue that media choices are a function of matching the complexity of a message with the richness of a medium. Figure 2 illustrates how media can be arranged along a continuum of richness based on four criteria: potential for immediate feedback (interactivity), multiple cues, natural language, and a personal focus. Richer media are important for creating shared understanding where the risk of

misunderstanding is high and there is a real need for minimizing ambiguity. If this need is low, leaner media are both more effective and efficient. A general rule is: the less the chance of misunderstanding or misinterpretation, the leaner the media that can be used.

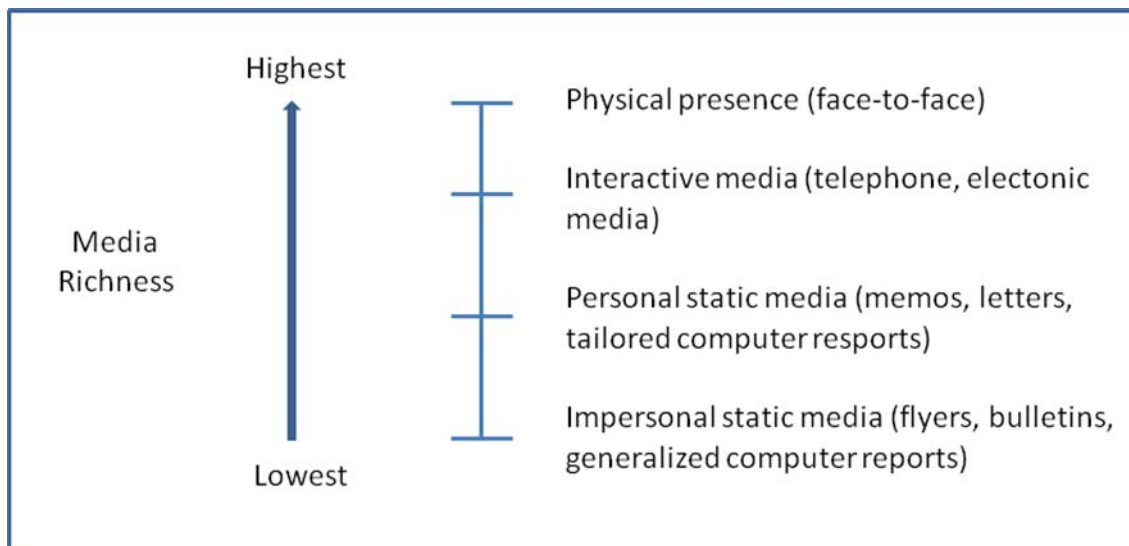


Figure 2. Media Richness Hierarchy (Daft & Lengel 1986)

Although influential, these early studies on computer-mediated communication have also been criticized, mainly for their selective approach to the study of communication. Gimenez (2009, p. 136) argues that in trying to isolate features of the media, these studies ignored more compelling factors that influence users' choice such as context, power, identity and gender.

The views of media richness theorists are further discussed in section 2.2.4 on strategy communication channels. It is perhaps not surprising that they recommend using rich media in strategy implementation, preferably top management visiting relevant groups to discuss strategy with them. However, as Quirke (2008, p. 243) confirms, even when communicating sensitive information which will have an impact on people, face-to-face communication isn't always possible. There are problems of geographically scattered employees, different time zones and having to synchronize internal communication with external communication - especially when information is share price sensitive. Where face-to-face channels aren't possible, the next best is at least a 'live' channel. This means

using the telephone, video-conference, teleconference, dial-in audio or radio - any channel that allows people to hear the message directly from 'the horse's mouth' at the same time.

Similarly Tienari & Vaara (2003) discuss the challenges related to geographically scattered working teams from the manager perspective. They note that extensive travelling may bring about less efficient work time and deteriorating quality of work, fatigue, as-well as more long-term effects on physical fitness. An alternative practice of conducting meetings over telephone or video conference, they argue, is a two-edged sword. On the one hand, such solutions are about creating and establishing practices that take physical strain off individuals while maintaining the business momentum. On the other, conducting meetings over the telephone or video conference is never a perfect substitute for face-to-face human interaction. The potential technical problems are well-known. Even more importantly, the managers interviewed by Tienari & Vaara in Nordea after a merger pointed out that the constant restructuring in the organization mean that people in the responsible positions must keep travelling "*to meet people in order to put the organization in place*". In other words, they were referring to the initial 'getting together' -period in cross-border mergers, which they considered as requiring a lot of face-to-face interaction.

O'Kane, Hargie & Tourish (2004, p. 88) confirm that the pressure is on managers to take informed choices about channel and media selection, depending on a multitude of variables. These include the purpose of the information exchange, the existing level of uncertainty on the items under discussion, and the extent to which people are savvy with the various communication options available. Furthermore, the multitude of new options opened up by the technology make the acquisition of communication competence more difficult than in the past.

Finally, when discussing the channel choice, the matter of personal preferences and habits should not be overlooked. Åberg (2000) found that employees use communication channels selectively and that the usage habits form during the years,

guided by personal experiences and the prevailing ways of using the channels in the work community. Mahdon & Bevan (2007, p. 48) agree by highlighting that we must work with preferences that people have established over years of working in certain ways. Preferences for meetings over emails or telephone conversations to text are part of personal preferences as well as cultural work practices which must be taken into account when planning internal communication strategies. Moreover, if people are likely to accept the message they want to hear, they may also be more likely to accept the messages that arrive through their preferred channels, Mahdon & Bevan (2007, p. 48) aptly formulate.

2.1.3 Leveraging new technology

Constantly changing communication technology adds complexity, creating both opportunities and constraints. Berry (2006) remarks that effective communication is critical to business success and in coping with increasingly complex environment, yet individuals, teams and organizations are often challenged in finding processes that enable effective communication practices. This subchapter examines the impact of new technology on internal communications.

For more than a decade, e-mail, Internet, and intranet technologies have been available to enhance communication, collaboration, and resource sharing. These, as well as emerging technologies help ensure the availability and free flow of information across the enterprise. At present Web 2.0 developments are being widely introduced into companies. Quirke (2008, p. xiii) refers to a study by Forrester Research in 2006 reporting that out of 119 chief information managers 90 per cent had adopted at least one of six prominent Web 2.0 tools - blogs, wikis (user-editable websites), podcasts, RSS (the syndication systems used in the blogging world), social networking and content tagging - with over a third already using all six of them. The respondents saw "relatively high business value" in RSS, wikis and tagging, but relatively low value in social networking and blogging. A recent study in Finland (DiVia 2010) suggests that social media is entering mainstream in digital marketing. The respondents – 286

marketing decision makers – saw that social media, such as blogs and communities are increasingly utilized in marketing and replacing traditional marketing methods, instead of just complementing them.

Some studies suggest a clear correlation with technology adaptation and communication effectiveness. For example Quirke (2008) claims that companies with highly effective communications are, relative to their less effective peers,

- More than twice as likely to use technology to facilitate internal communication
- More than twice as likely to have documented intranet/Internet communication strategies
- Nearly seven times more likely to use leading-edge communication tools—for example, blogs, wikis, and discussion boards

However, the older styles of communication should not be overlooked either. The findings of a study about the role of internal communication in 596 large organizations in United Kingdom (Mahdon & Bevan 2007) suggest that although new technologies are being used for internal communication, for example employee intranets and email, a mix of new and old styles of communication were found to be associated with higher performance. This supports previous research findings that although information communication technology may transform ways of working, it is unlikely to ever replace the importance of conversations and face-to-face meetings as the main form of internal communication.

De Bussy, Ewing & Pitt (2003) investigated the impact of new media, specifically Internet-related technologies, on internal marketing communications.³ The authors note that effective two-way communication is widely viewed as an essential component of successful internal marketing strategies, but still little research has been conducted on the relative merits of different communication media. Their research contributing to this

³ Internal marketing is closely related to internal communication. The main idea of this approach is that it requires employees be treated with respect as 'internal customers'.

gap indicates that the use of new media in the workplace, particularly intranets, has a positive impact on effective internal marketing communications.

De Bussy et al. (2003, p. 150-151) see remarkable potential for new media enhancing communication with stakeholders, specifically dialogic communication. "Stakeholder communication is no longer unidirectional and it is becoming more complex", they predict and continue that the interactive nature of Internet-related technologies offers considerable scope for enhanced two-way (or dialogic) communication with key stakeholders. One of their findings was that although e-mail and intranet are often accused of contributing to information overload (Sanchez as cited by De Bussy et al. 2003), they also appear to be facilitating effective two-way communication within organizations.

Looking forward, Luukkonen (2006) predicts that digital communication will diversify and become more significant. Communitality, sharing, stories and dialogue are the key words in describing the future of digital communication. "We are living in a communication reality that is just starting to open the door to new possibilities. To cope in this new environment, a change in one's mindset from linear thinking to interactive and associative mindset is needed", Luukkonen (2006, p. 273) claims.

After reviewing the role of technology, the role of line managers and top management in relation to mediated internal communication is discussed next.

2.1.4 The role of middle managers

Internal communication is changing. In many organizations, messages from top management can now go directly to employees and in many cases are allowed to go directly to senior management. The role of line managers in the communication process could therefore easily be overlooked. Furthermore, the new technologies viewed in the previous subchapter allow quick and direct mass communication; email and intranets in particular remove the need for cascade systems. According to Mahdon & Bevan (2007)

this creates a challenge of how to manage internal communications to ensure that the right message gets through to people in the way it was intended. Line managers may still have an essential part to play in this process.

The middle manager has always acted as a distribution channel for information, for example through team briefings, and has also often been suspected of blocking and holding back information. In internal communication, line managers can be seen as one of the communication channels among all the other communication channels in use. Differing views exist on whether these channels compliment or compete with each other. For instance Quirke (2008, p. 170) expresses concern that technology is now being used in some organizations to bypass middle managers, thereby removing from the communication chain the one person who is best placed to turn information into meaning for the employee.

Mahdon & Bevan (2007) have similar views on the importance of middle managers in the internal communication process. Even if internal communication no longer needs to go through middle managers, they still play a crucial role in providing the interpretation of the messages and signals as to how to respond. The way each employee understands the culture and values of the organization is through their direct line manager. Although direct communication with employees may offer an apparent way round any limitations in the line managers' abilities, it remains self-evident that line managers will always have a strong and immediate impact on any employee's experience of the workplace.

Furthermore, it could be questioned whether direct communication of the top management with employees could actually obviate line manager communication. At least, in this context, the concept of 'communication' should be discussed further. Surely it is possible for top management to *inform* all the employees, but when it comes to genuine, interactional, two-way communication, the possibilities are quite limited.

CEOs interviewed by Mahdon & Bevan (2007, p. 33) were convinced that line managers play a crucial role in internal communication. They can either be strong

advocates of the messages or filter and adapt the messages to protect their own reputations. One CEO in the study highlighted that "line managers need to communicate the *spirit* of what the company says as well as the *letter* of it" (Mahdon & Bevan 2007, p. 33, emphasis on the original).

Other demands for line managers were reported by Aaltonen, Ikävalko, Mantere, Teikari, Ventä & Währn (2002, p. 23), who looked at the middle managements' role in strategy communication. They found that the middle managements role is significant in a gradual strategy communication process, where top management communicates strategy to middle management and they take it further down to their subordinates. In such circumstances managers function both as filters of information and supporters for their subordinates. This role is challenging for several reasons, including:

- Middle managers need to understand and select the integral parts of the top management's message from their particular responsibility area's point of view.
- A further challenge is to communicate the strategy in an intelligible and illustrative manner to subordinates. Aaltonen et al. (2002) mention that verbal and interactive communication was experienced as the most functional method, but written communication was also used.
- Furthermore, it is not enough to be able to talk or write well. It is also important to have the ability to listen and understand what you hear.
- Finally, in order to transmit feedback on the communication process upwards in the organization, middle management needs to communicate their subordinates' views on the strategy to the top management.

For facilitating the strategy implementation process, Aaltonen et al. (2002) recommend offering middle managers more support from their own superiors in interpreting the strategy, as well as more time and opportunities to communicate both upwards and downwards in the organization.

All in all, proper support is crucial in helping the line managers to succeed in their communication task. Particularly in large organizations where there is often a distinction between the human resources function and the internal communication function, the question of whose task it is to support line managers in the communications process is common. Although supporting line managers may typically be included in the role for human resources, instead the internal communicators, this may not be the most effective solution. The findings of a study by Mahdon & Bevan (2007) revealed that internal communications employees in private sector organizations, whose profits had increased over the last three years, were more likely to see their role as supporting the line managers, compared to internal communication employees in organizations who reported decreased profits. In addition, most internal communication employees believed supporting the line manager was less central to their role than helping the staff understand the business, or internal PR. Mahdon & Bevan conclude that the challenge for communication professionals is to work out exactly where line managers fit among all the other communication channels in use, and to ensure that they are properly supported in those roles.

After discussing the role of line managers we next turn to examine the role of top management in internal communication.

2.1.5 Top management communication

Top management communication - the extent to which top management communicates openly with employees - has been found to be strongly related to employee satisfaction (Pincus et al. as cited in Grunig 1992, p. 554). In fact, a factor they called "trust and influence" explained job satisfaction more than superior-subordinate communication. Furthermore, one of the most interesting findings of this study suggests that "...as individuals rise in the organizational hierarchy and get closer to the top, their desire for communication with top management may increase. Concomitantly, the importance that supervisors attach to communication with their immediate supervisors may drop off accordingly" (Pincus et al. as cited in Grunig 1992, p. 554). This desire that employees

have, especially those in managerial ranks, to communicate openly with top management is an interesting issue from the point of view of effective internal communication, and should not be overlooked.

According to Åberg (2000, p. 175) personal visibility of the top management is important when there are several organizational levels or when the company is geographically dispersed. Suggested forms of communication are for instance an interviewing hour or a monthly lunch hosted by the top management. Also Grunig (1992) considers communication with the CEO and others in top management as being an integral component of the symmetrical communication system in internal communication. In the following section the concept of symmetrical communication is presented in more detail.

2.1.6 Two-way symmetrical communication

According to Grunig (1992, p. 231), symmetrical communication takes place through dialogue, negotiation, listening, and conflict management rather than through persuasion, manipulation and the giving of orders.

The two-way symmetrical model was introduced by Grunig and Hunt in 1984 as an approach to public relations that provides a normative theory of how public relations should be practiced to be ethical and effective. The ideas as such were not new: symmetrical concepts such as trust, credibility, openness, relationships, reciprocity, network symmetry, horizontal communication, feedback, adequacy of information, employee-centered style, tolerance for disagreement, and negotiation pervade the literature on organizational communication.

Grunig (1992) claims that excellent programs of employee communication are based on the concepts of strategic management, an integrated communication function, the top management communication and the two-way symmetrical model of public relations.

The main claim is that communication must be two-way, from management to employees and employees to management.

Dialogic communication is another term used to describe a similar approach to communication. Botan (as cited by De Bussy et al. 2003, p. 149) claims that dialogic communication is characterized by a relationship in which both parties have a genuine concern for each other. In contrast, monologic communication is more manipulative in nature: communicators say whatever suits their short-term goals even if this results in deception or has other adverse consequences for those with whom they communicate.

According to De Bussy et al. (2003, p. 152) dialogic communication demands more than effective communication alone. A true dialogue requires an atmosphere of mutual trust: participants must have a genuine concern for the needs and interests of the other parties involved.

Turning attention to the channels of two-way symmetrical communication, it is evident that interpersonal communication is an essential part of Grunig & Hunt's model. Face-to-face communication makes symmetrical communication easier, although Grunig et al. (1992, p. 559) argue that mediated communication can also be symmetrical if its content meets the employees need to know rather than the managements need to tell.

The role of mediated communication, according to Grunig et al. (1992), is to back up and complement interpersonal communication. "Mediated communication can be symmetrical as long as it addresses the needs of employees to make sense of how they fit into the organization, to communicate openly with top management about plans and policies, and to understand the activities of the organization in the outside environment" (Grunig 1992, p. 569). Internal communication, then, can be seen as the catalyst, if not the key to organizational excellence and effectiveness.

2.2 Communicating strategy

This subchapter discusses the concept of strategy communication. After justifying the importance of strategy communication, the concept is defined and the role of employees in strategy work discussed. The following section reviews channels of strategy communication and finally the role of the corporate communication function in strategy work is addressed.

Rapert, Velliquette & Garretson (2002, p. 303) argue that most research in the strategy domain has placed too much emphasis on the formulation of strategy when the real challenge lies in implementation. Indeed, even the best-formulated strategies can fail to produce superior performance for the firm if they are not successfully implemented. According to Rapert et al. (2002) a shared understanding of middle management and those at the operational level to the top management's strategic goals is of critical importance to effective implementation. Communication is the way to enhance this strategic consensus.

The results of a study based on 300 interviews in Finnish companies (Hämäläinen & Maula 2001) revealed that according to top and middle managers, issues related to communication were the most focal area of difficulties in strategy implementation. More than three out of four considered issues related to communication problematic in strategy implementation. The reported communication problems related for instance to a breakdown in the flow of information in some organizational level. Another problem was an assumption by the management that the strategy was already known.

Similar findings were reported already in 1985 when Alexander (as cited by Yang, Sun & Eppler 2008) showed that communication was mentioned more frequently than any other single item promoting successful strategy implementation. According to Alexander, the content of such communications includes clearly explaining what new responsibilities, tasks, and duties need to be performed by the affected employees. It

also includes the ‘why’ behind changed job activities, and more fundamentally, the reasons why the new strategic decisions were made.

2.2.1 Defining strategy communication

According to Aaltonen & Ikävalko (2002) strategy communication is both written and oral communication moving in the organization usually from top to down. Mustonen (2009) is a bit more precise stating that strategy communication is communication moving from the management of a company to employees, telling about the content of the strategy as well as those strategy implementation actions that the implementation of the strategy requires from the employees.

Taking a wider view, Hämäläinen & Maula (2004) see strategy communication as consisting of three fields:

1. Communication about the content of the strategy. This includes both informing the stakeholders of the content and creation of common understanding about strategy.
2. Communication that supports the implementation of strategy. Here strategy communication is close to the everyday work of the members of the organization, supporting them in performing their tasks.
3. Communicating about the strategy process, i.e. the various systems, roles, responsibilities schedules and processes related to strategy work.

Strategy communication can also be formal or informal, ranging from corporate level briefings to day-to-day coffee room talk. Thus, considering strategy communication as something that management does in order to inform people in the organization would be a limited view.

Hrebiniak & Joyce (1984) present two methods of communicating strategy, “cascading” and “all at once” (see Figure 3). They categorize employees who should receive information concerning implementation to two groups: (1) individuals directly affected

by the change and (2) individuals indirectly affected because they must support or work with those directly affected by the implementation.

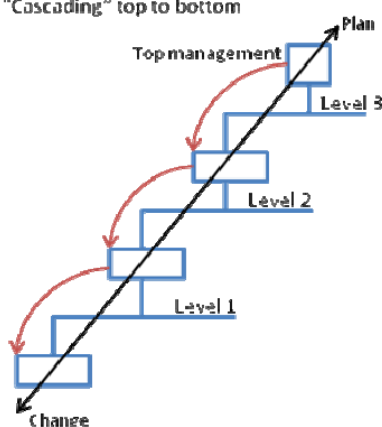
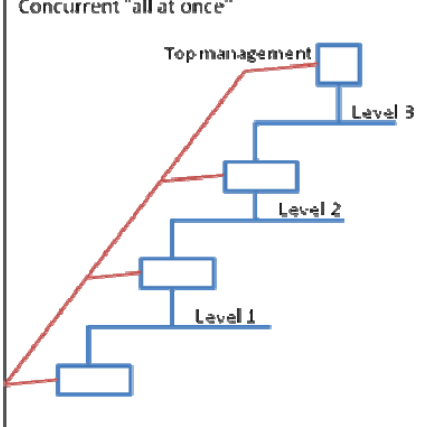
Who should be communicated with	Directly Affected	Indirectly Affected
Organization of the communication process	 <p>"Cascading" top to bottom</p> <p>The diagram shows a hierarchical structure with three levels: Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3. A box labeled 'Top management' is at the top. Red arrows point downwards from Top management to Level 3, then to Level 2, and finally to Level 1. A black arrow labeled 'Plan' points from Top management to Level 3. A black arrow labeled 'Change' points from Level 1 to a box below it.</p>	 <p>Concurrent "all at once"</p> <p>The diagram shows a hierarchical structure with three levels: Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3. A box labeled 'Top management' is at the top. Red arrows point from Top management to Level 3, Level 2, and Level 1 simultaneously.</p>
Medium	Face to face with focus on implementation plan	Mass: Memoranda, company news, group meetings
Quality	Participation concerning local implementation	Informational

Figure 3. Communication planning (Hrebiniak & Joyce 1984, p. 237)

Hrebiniak & Joyce (1984) suggest that individual directly affected by the implementation should be communicated with on a face-to-face basis, usually in a private meeting with their supervisor. In the meeting it is ensured that a common message is being delivered to all employees. Communication flows from top down within the affected areas of the organization until all directly affected workers have been informed of the content of the implementation plan and have had the opportunity to participate in the local design and application of the plan. As Hrebiniak & Joyce consider such a procedure costly and time consuming, they recommend using it only for those directly affected by the change. Individuals indirectly involved can be informed using more cost-effective procedures, such as company memoranda, mass meetings and company newspapers.

Mustonen (2009) criticizes Hrebiniak & Joyce's model for its ambiguous description of the target group, as well as not taking the receiver of the message into account. It is true

that both the methods described are top-down and not particularly tailored to receivers needs. However, Hrebiniak & Joyce recommend participation in the cascading procedure and give the participants a chance to influence local implementation. This is not self-evident in all the cases when cascading is used.

In organizations today strategy implementation is seen so important that rarely any group of employees is considered as not directly affected by the strategy. Therefore it would seem ideal to consider these two methods, not as exclusive options, but rather as channels complementary to each other in strategy communication.

2.2.2 Involving employees

According to Åberg (2006), there are three basic ways of constructing strategy for a work community. In a *Top down* model top management defines the content of the strategy and implements it. In a *Bottom up* model everybody participates in the composition of the strategy, which is assembled from their inputs. In between *interactive* model exists, where strategy is iterated in strategic arenas.

Today many companies acknowledge that the involvement of the employees in strategy work would be the ideal way of working, but plead that in many cases it is not feasible. Although the situation is slowly changing, still in many large organizations strategy formulation is usually top management's territory in which personnel contributes only little due to time and cost constraints.

According to Hämäläinen & Maula (2004) this usually results in top-down strategy communication. A so called cascade method is used when strategy is "trickled" from organizational level to another top down. Big town hall meetings can be useful because they enable all the employees to get the information at the same time in the same form. At the same time it is the line managers' responsibility to make sure their subordinates understand what the strategy means to their department and each one's tasks and duties. Hämäläinen & Maula claim that in large corporations a centralized model like this is

often the most functional way to ensure that information about the new strategy reaches the whole personnel.

At the minimum, especially in large organizations, where all the employees cannot be involved in strategy work, it is possible to keep them informed on the progress of the planning process and give everyone a possibility to influence their own work. At the same time the personnel gets prepared to considering strategy and the feeling of participation enhances motivation.

However, Hämäläinen & Maula (2004, p. 56) suggest that strategy communication can also be based on genuine interaction within the organization. In interactive strategy communication constant dialogue takes place between the management and the employees. In addition, different business units, functions and people interact with each other. Continuous discussion results in its best in flowering of ideas and a strong commitment, as well as personnel being able to take part in strategy development. The traditional idea that strategy should be first throughout deliberated and formed, followed by execution and implementation, is replaced with an idea that strategy is in constant evolution, in which case attempts and failures as well as learning may well become the essential factors.

Ideas related to interactive strategy communication described by Hämäläinen & Maula can be found in Timmerman's (2003) concept of adaptive approach to change implementation. Timmerman provides a descriptive framework for understanding and predicting media use during planned change implementation.⁴ He identifies two alternative approaches to change implementation - programmatic and adaptive. Programmatic implementation approaches involve development of a coherent plan for implementation and following the plan throughout. In contrast, adaptive change approaches involve the monitoring of a developing change effort and the modification

⁴ Planned change is characterized as a set of activities and processes designed to change individuals, groups, and organization structure and/or organizational processes (Timmerman 2003, p. 304). As such it has similar goals as strategy implementation and is therefore reviewed here.

of practices as new information about progress is gathered (Berman as cited by Timmerman 2003, p. 305-306).

In relation to communication channel selections, Timmerman suggests that (1) programmatic implementation approaches will be characterized by the use of formal, non-interactive media for the dissemination of implementation messages and (2) adaptive approaches will be characterized by the use of formal and informal interactive media. Timmerman (2003, p. 327) argues that the use of interactive media for disseminating change announcements provides greater potential to elicit user feedback. As a result of this feedback, new information feeds back to implementers, and the efforts may be adapted. In contrast, the use of non-interactive media for disseminating implementation messages reinforces programmed approaches and stagnates adaptive approaches.

Finally, Timmerman (2003, p. 334) stresses that media are an essential component of the densely communicative implementation process and may be tied to the eventual success or failure of an implementation effort. He concludes by noting that considering the centrality of communication issues to processes of organizational change, it is surprising how small body of literature focuses on the use of communication media during the implementation process. This leads us to the topic of the next section, channels of strategy communication.

2.2.4 Channels of strategy communication

In order to get the strategy message through to the stakeholders, selecting right communication channels is crucial. The channels available are numerous, from intranet and newsletter to senior and line managers, who can also be seen as strategy communicating channels. This subchapter examines views on channel selection in strategy communication.

Media richness theorists, discussed in chapter 2.1, recommend using rich media in strategy implementation, for their ability to generate powerful images that will change

behavior. The implementation of strategy is perhaps the greatest role for executives as communication artists, aiming to influence the values and actions of all employees within the corporation. Daft & Lengel (1986, p. 230) recommend top executives to personally communicate new strategy by visiting relevant groups and discussing the strategy with them. In this way, also their intensity and commitment to the new strategy can be perceived, they claim.

In the case when a personal visit to all employees is not feasible, Daft & Lengel (1986, p. 230) advice managers to turn to the richest medium available. As an example they mention videotapes and satellite hookups, which have greater social presence than written directives. Now, more than 20 years later, technology has proliferated to offer plenty of feasible rich media, such as web-casts and corporate TV. Daft & Lengel conclude by reminding that there is no electronic substitute for face-to-face discussions when issues are non-routine and that a wise top manager must continually seek ways to preserve rich channels of communication.

Another popular method in strategy communication is cascading, as defined in the introduction, where line manager discusses the strategy with subordinates on each organizational level. The common view here is that face-to-face discussion enhances understanding of strategy.

Interestingly, also factors beyond face-to-face communication play an integral role in the understanding of strategy. When studying which communication inputs can affect understanding of strategy, Sinickas (2006) found that the level of face-to-face communication appears to be a good, but not infallible, predictor of how well informed employees are about the organization's business strategy. Sinickas' study revealed that high information levels on strategy correlated positively with

- (1) senior management's frequency on explaining strategy,
- (2) access to an intranet,
- (3) access to a frequent newsletter (either printed or electronic) and
- (4) supervisors' frequency on communicating strategy.

One of the most interesting findings of the study was that the impact of senior management communications on employees understanding of strategy was twice as significant as supervisors.

Jones (2008, p. 33) states that in strategy communication the purpose of communication channels is three-fold: to reach as many of one's target group as possible, to do it as reliably and quickly as possible, and to get maximum feedback. To achieve this, he presents six main criteria in choosing the channels:

- (1) Does it provide feedback or is it one way?
- (2) Is it reliable? Can I control the message that passes through it?
- (3) Can I communicate a rich message or only a simple one?
- (4) Will it go to many people or only a few (broadcast or narrowcast)? Will it be personal or an impersonal message?
- (5) How long does it take to prepare?
- (6) How long does it take to communicate, once it is ready?

Jones splits the channels to three main groups: Face-to-face communication, electronic channels and more traditional channels, such as newspapers and notice boards. He points out that often the best route may be a combination of channels that mix face-to-face communication, electronic channels and other, more traditional approaches.

2.2.5 The role of the corporate communication function

The final section of this subchapter touches the role of corporate communication function in the strategy process. Argenti & Forman (2005) found that the best practice companies in strategy implementation all give considerable importance to internal communication and to the connection between internal communication and the successful implementation of their firm's overall strategy.

Today many organizations value the input into their strategic planning from corporate communicators. Dolphin & Fan (2000) studied the role and tasks of corporate

communication executives and their impact upon the formulation of strategy. They claim that corporate communications has a key role to play in the strategic planning of an organization. At the highest level the role of the communication executive has changed to having a great responsibility for the formation and implementation of agreed strategies.

Mahdon & Bevan (2007) claim that the main strategic contribution of internal communications activity within any organization is in creating common purpose. "All good leaders recognize the need to ensure that their organizations or teams share a clear sense of common purpose. Yet having a compelling strategic vision is no use unless it is communicated and debated within the organization" (Mahdon & Bevan 2007, p. 12). Their study suggests that common purpose is one of the central drivers of high performance in organizations. Hämäläinen & Maula (2004, p. 151) have the same outcome in mind when pointing out that the purpose of strategy communication should not be seen as merely top-down informing of the employees but two-way building of shared understanding.

2.3 Theoretical framework

The previous subchapters reviewed literature related to mediated internal communication and strategy communication. To be more precise, studies on communication channel selection, new technology and symmetrical communication were presented. In terms of actors, the roles of employees, line managers, top management and the communication function have been discussed in relation with strategy and mediated communication. This section synthesizes this knowledge to construct a theoretical framework for this study.

Figure 4 presents the theoretical framework by illustrating the connection between communication channels and strategy communication from the cross-border manager perspective. The cross-border manager is presented in the centre, standing on a step of organizational hierarchy (modified from the model by Hrebiniak & Joyce illustrating cascade communication). He is surrounded by a sphere of communication channels and media through which the messages reaching him and sent by him are communicated. All the messages to and from him move through the sphere, as there is no communication without a channel. This sphere, in other words the chosen channel, affects the interpretation and impact of a message, as McLuhan (1984) argues.

The two-way arrows through the sphere illustrate the two-way communication of the cross-border manager with his subordinates, colleagues and immediate manager. Strategy messages from the top management, on the other hand, cascade from the top to the bottom and are mainly one-way. In this process, the cross-border manager is a channel or a transmitter of the message himself.

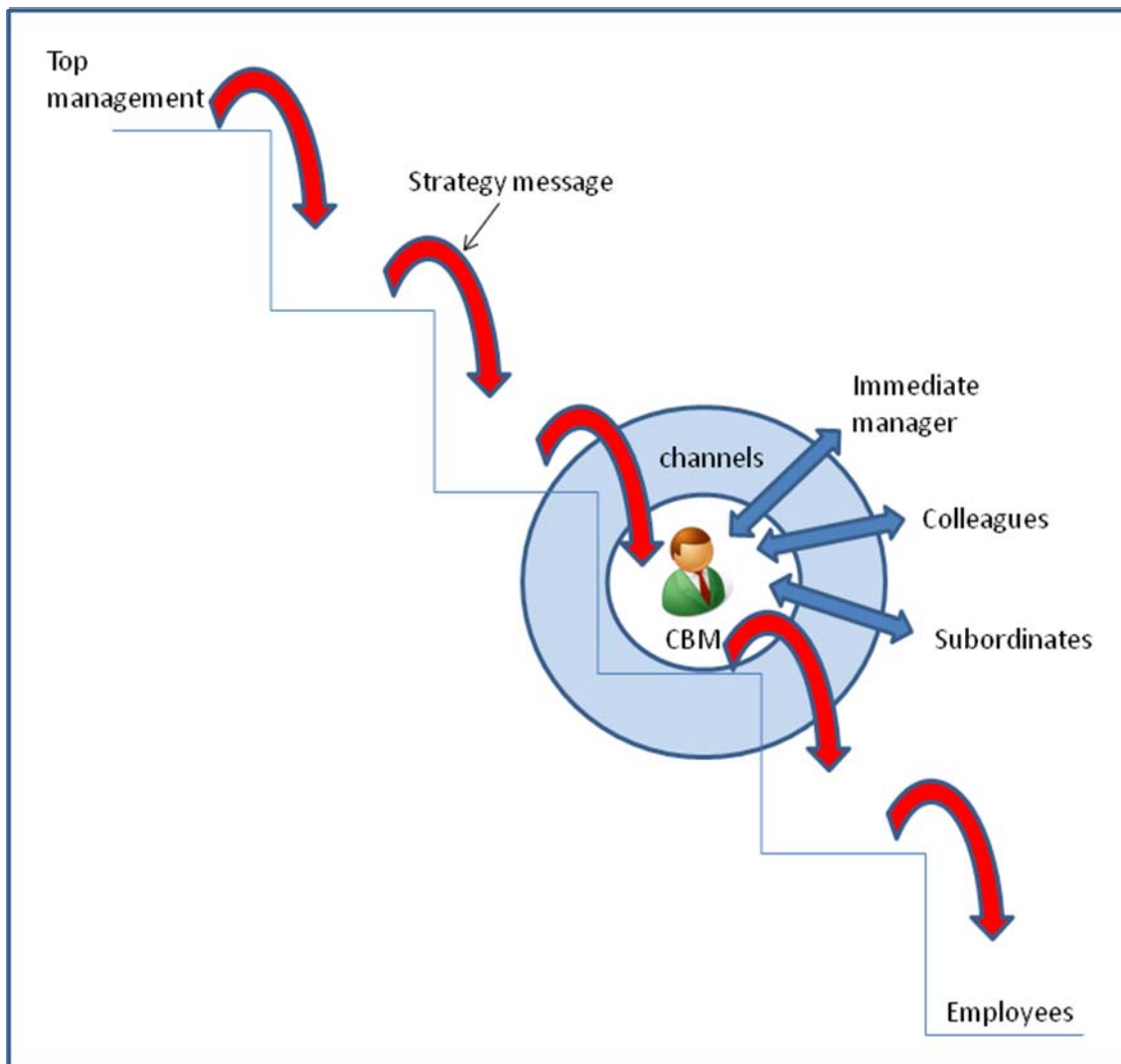


Figure 4. Theoretical framework: mediated and strategy communication from the CBM perspective

The theoretical framework figure illustrates how a cross-border manager is both an active selector of communication channels for his communicative acts and at the same time a channel himself used in the cascading to distribute information coming from the top management further down to his subordinates. This view of a cross-border manager as both an active user of communication media and, at the same time, as a channel himself, is the key point of the theoretical framework used in this study.

3 METHODS AND DATA

This chapter introduces the research design and the specific methods used in the empirical part of the study. First, the case setting and units of analysis are introduced. Second, the chosen methods are described and justified. The third subchapter reviews the data collection methodology in detail, and the fourth explains the methods of data analysis. Finally, the trustworthiness of the study is considered in the fifth subchapter.

3.1 Case setting and units of analysis

The case organization in the present study is Celo⁵, one of the leading banking groups in Scandinavia. The units of analysis are cross-border managers working in the company.

Celo offers financial services in Northern Europe and operates through three business areas: Retail Banking, Corporate and Institutional Banking and Asset Management & Life. Celo has around 10 million customers and approximately 1,400 branch offices. The number of employees is about 37.000 (1 January 2009). The gender distribution is 62% female and 38% male; amongst managers the numbers are, respectively, 42% and 58%.

Due to the cross-border nature of the case company, many of its units are organized according to function, not by country. As a result of globalization, transnational mergers, acquisitions and general cost savings, virtual organizational structures have become common in Celo. Out of all managers in Celo, 350 (about 10 per cent) are cross-border managers, i.e. all the subordinates and the immediate manager are not situated in the same country. Out of the 350 cross-border managers 36% are Danish, 28% Swedish, 23% Finnish and 13% Norwegian. The gender distribution of cross-border managers is 75% male and 25% female. When comparing to local managers, the

⁵ A pseudonym

percentages are 56% male and 44% female. This can be explained at least partly by the fact that there are more cross-border manager positions (compared to local manager positions) on the higher levels of organizational hierarchy, where there are also less female managers.

The case company believes that their leaders play an important role in the development of Celo, its values and its employees, as can be seen from the following quote: "It is through great leadership that our corporate culture is turned into everyday actions and results, and we believe there is a crucial connection between good leadership and business results. We put a lot of effort into developing our leaders." (Celo website 2010).

However, although people in the case company have been working under virtual leadership conditions for the last 10 years, the issue has not been addressed in Celo until recently. During the research phase of this thesis another study by a Celo employee on virtual leadership came out. The aim of the study was to enhance the understanding of virtual leadership in Nordic banking industry and to see and utilize the full potential of cross-border managers in the case company. The researcher conducted a survey focusing on challenges of being a cross-border manager. Interestingly, although communication was not the focus of the study, 60% of the open field comments of the survey related to communication. This suggests that communication is in central role in the work of cross-border managers and deserves to be studied more.

This background makes Celo an ideal case company for the purpose of this study, i.e. examining internal mediated communication and strategy communication from the cross-border manager perspective.

3.2 Strategy communication practices in Celo

This section describes the current practices of communicating strategy in the case company. The information is based on an interview with the head of internal

communications in December 2009. All the views and citations in this section represent her views.

The case company can be characterized as a very traditional, top-down organization. The large size of the company, organizational culture and leadership style a great deal affect the way strategy work and communication is conducted. In Celso, the formulation and discussion of strategy is clearly a territory of the top management, and the strategy communication is one-way, top-down.

The communication of the strategy usually starts with a big event called "Group senior management seminar", where the strategy is shared with 270 managers on the top levels of the organizational hierarchy. This yearly meeting is of great importance in Celso, and it is made sure that everyone in the company knows that the strategy is being discussed. In the meeting, the CEO basically tells the direction where the company is heading.

The one-day meeting is the kick-off for the strategy communication process, where the strategy is presented and put into action. Local meetings follow, and after them employee meetings. The cascading method is used to communicate the strategy by trickling it down step by step through each organizational level. This is how everyone in the company eventually gets to know what the strategy is. In practice this means that most people do not know the details of the strategy, but the overall strategic approach everybody knows.

In Celso, the communication department's role in strategy implementation is mainly to help the top management and create the messages in a way that they are understood. The department is very much involved in the planning of the seminar, with three people working for this yearly meeting. However, those who actually make it happen are the line managers, as emphasized in the following citation by the head of internal communications.

“If you think when strategy is implemented, it is implemented when it is lived and acted upon. As I see it, corporate communication [function] has very little to do with it. It is a pity because I think that is the most important part, but we sit here. Those who implement, they sit far away. The role of the line managers is extremely important.”

Also other channels are used to communicate strategy. For instance the intranet is an important channel, and intranet content personalization according to user roles will shortly enable distributing differing materials to managers and employees. Already now the information for different units can slightly differ depending on their focus areas. The intranet is used also to promote and distribute videos, which are used on different occasions to get people’s attention.

Considering the goals of strategy communication, everything has really only one goal, “to reach the results that the company has set”, but it is also important how the goals are reached. According to the interviewee, employees should be more involved, more dialogues should take place and tools for feedback and participation should be provided. “It is not only about the company but of how everybody can contribute”.

The effectiveness of strategy communication is measured in a yearly employee satisfaction survey. The questions posed in the survey are for instance: “How well informed do you feel about the changes in the company?” and “How well do you think you find information about the company strategy?”. These questions have been a part of the survey for many years already, but only a couple of years ago the communication function has started to look for ways to evaluate specific communication issues.

To summarize, the process of communicating strategy is to a large extent one-way in the case company. Efforts have been made to collect feedback from lower levels previously, but it was found sometime that the feedback was so detailed that the managers in the very top did not really benefit from it. Therefore, the feedback from very low to the very top is sometimes considered too detailed to be value adding. However, at all levels the dialogues taking place between immediate manager and

his/her employees are encouraged. Another natural place to discuss strategy is in staff meetings in connection with quarterly results, but the large number of employees in those meetings prevents an active dialogue with the representative of the top management.

Attitudes may be changing, however, as the company has recently recognized that other means than the traditional one-way communication are needed. It is acknowledged that discussion and dialogue are necessary for meaning creation and therefore the focus is now moving to providing tools that encourage discussion. At the moment, there is still little experience and uncertainty about success.

Finally, the communication of strategy is perceived as working well. Compared to other areas that might be less well-structured in such a big company, the strategy communicating process is well taken care of. For this the credit is given to the current reporting structure, where the head of Group Communications and Identity reports to the CEO, as well as the fact that the CEO considers communication issues important.

3.3 Research methods – mixed method approach in a case study setting

For the purpose of the present study a mixed method approach in a single case study setting was initiated. This subchapter discusses and justifies these methodological choices made for the empirical part of the study.

Single case study

This study focuses on a particular phenomenon in an organization and therefore makes use of case study research design. According to Gerring (2007), we gain better understanding of the whole by focusing on a key part. Sometimes, in-depth knowledge of an individual example is more helpful than fleeting knowledge about a large number of examples. In short, the product of a good case study is insight (Gerring 2007, p.7).

Yin (2009) identifies three circumstances, when case studies are the preferred method:

- 1) "how" and "why" questions are being posed,
- 2) the investigator has little control over events, and
- 3) the focus is on contemporary phenomenon in a real life context.

In the research setting of the current study all these three circumstances apply. First, the main research question is *How* cross-border managers experience internal mediated communication and use communication tools. Second, the researcher has practically *no* control over events. Third, virtual leadership is very much a contemporary phenomenon in a real life context. Consequently, a case study setting is a very suitable method for this study.

The type of the case in this study is what Bryman (2004, p. 51) calls an exemplifying case. Exemplifying cases are characterized by the notion that these kinds of cases are often chosen, not because they are extreme or unusual in some way, but because they will provide a suitable context for certain research questions to be answered. As such, they allow the researcher to examine key social processes.

Bryman (2004, p. 49) claims that the exponents of the case study design often favor qualitative methods, such as participant observation and unstructured interviewing, because these methods are viewed as particularly helpful in the generation of an intensive, detailed examination of a case. However, Gerring (2007, p. 10) argues that although the case study has been traditionally associated with qualitative methods, to study a single case intensively need not limit an investigator to qualitative techniques. Consequently case study research may be either quantitative or qualitative, or some combination of both. The choice to combine methods in the present study is explained in the next section.

Multi-method research

This study combines qualitative and quantitative methods to understand better the phenomenon under investigation. This is in line with Greene's (2007, p. 20) statement

that the primary purpose of a study conducted with a mixed method way of thinking is to better understand the complexity of the social phenomena being studied. Greene claims that a mix of methods will generate a better understanding than will a single method alone. Silverman (1985) points out that multi-strategy research can also be useful in giving sense of the relative importance of the themes identified in qualitative research. Indeed, some quantification of findings from qualitative research can often help to uncover the generality of the phenomena being described.

In this study, the status of qualitative and quantitative methods is equal. The stance adopted is that the two paradigms are importantly different but not incommensurable. On the one hand, the approach of the study can be called qualitative in the sense that it focuses on exploring the study's topic rather than testing a particular hypothesis. On the other hand, it shares the objectives of a typical form of a case study with a quantitative research strategy (that is a survey study on a single case) with a view to "revealing important features about its nature" (Gerring 2007, p.). Where qualitative research approaches emphasize words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data, this study uses both words and quantification to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon.

In practice, several ways of combining quantitative and qualitative methods (see e.g. Hurme & Hirsijärvi 2000, p. 28-33) were used both in data collection and data analysis phases. In the data collection phase, qualitative results from the interviews guided the design of the quantitative survey. In the data analyzing phase, qualitative findings were used as examples when describing quantitative results. Furthermore, qualitative findings were used to explain quantitative results.

3.4 Data collection – semi-structured interviews and a survey

To explore the areas of interest of this study and to answer the research question, the study collected empirical data to pin down the cross-border managers preferences for

communication tools and to map their views on two-way communication, strategy communication and being a cross-border manager. This subchapter introduces the data collection techniques used in the present study, i.e. semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire survey.

Semi structured interviews

In the planning phase of the thesis project in October 2009 three semi-structured interviews were conducted in the case company. The main purpose of the interviews at this point was to gain knowledge of the topic under investigation to be able to focus the study in a relevant manner.

Table 1. The interviewees

Interviewee	Unit or function	Place of work
A	Internal Communications	Helsinki
B	Workstation services	Stockholm
C	Outsourcing	Copenhagen

The interviewees were selected according to the recommendations given by the head of internal communications, who was also the advisor of the thesis project in the case company. In this way it was assured that the interviewees were people who knew about the phenomenon under investigation. Table 1 presents the working unit or function and the place of work of the three interviewees involved in this study. The interviewees were cross-border managers, one situated in Finland, one in Sweden and one in Denmark. The Finnish cross-border manager was the head of internal communication herself, and her interview was the first one carried out. This order served a purpose as the interview could be considered also a pilot providing the interviewer useful experience and a possibility for getting feedback.

Prior to the other two interviews an email invitation was sent to the participants (see Appendix 1). The email opened with a short introduction of the interviewer and her

study project, which was followed by a description of the objectives and practicalities of the interview.

Instead of detailed questions, two broad themes (in addition to background information) were designed for the semi-structured interviews. As can be seen from Appendix 2, the framework for the interviews was built on the following two themes:

- 1) Working as a cross-border manager
- 2) Communication channels

These particular themes for the semi-structured interviews arose from the need to understand the cross-border managers work setting from the communications point of view and to hear about their media preferences. The objective of the interviews was to uncover the interviewee's views regarding these two themes. Each theme was covered on the terms of the interviewee thus emphasizing the interviewees' perspective. Additional questions were also planned in advance to ensure that relevant areas of each topic were covered.

In addition to these three interviews, one more interview with a different focus provided information for this study. This interview was conducted in December 2009 with the head of internal communications. The theme of the interview was strategy communication in the case company and the purpose was to gain knowledge about strategy communication practices and methods, the role of corporate communication function in the strategy process and strategy work in the case company in general⁶. The framework for this interview can be seen on Appendix 3.

The interview themes, dates, places, durations and languages of the four interviews are presented in Table 2. As can be seen, the interview setting varied, as the first and the last interview took place in a meeting room at the interviewee's office in Helsinki and the two other were phone interviews with the interviewees situated in Copenhagen and Stockholm. Desk phone numbers were given as the contact information, so it can be

⁶ The interview data was used also for a course on strategy work taught in Helsinki School of Economics. Therefore some of the questions designed had a wider scope than that of this study.

assumed that the interviewees were sitting at their own offices when the interviewer called them. Thus, the setting in all the cases was familiar to the interviewees and free from distractions.

Table 2. The interview settings

Interviewee	Theme	Date	Place	Duration	Language
A	Cross-border manager & communication	October 8, 2009	Helsinki	1h	Finnish
B		October 19, 2009	Phone interview	1h	English
C		October 21, 2009	Phone interview	45 min	English
A	Strategy communication	December 1, 2009	Helsinki	1 h	English

Each of the interviews lasted from 45 minutes to one hour. The language was English in the phone interviews and in the strategy interview and Finnish in the first interview with the head of internal communications. The interview conducted in Finnish was translated to English according to the researcher's best ability. All the interviews were recorded which allowed the interviewer to focus on listening instead of taking notes. Furthermore, no details were lost as the interviews could be transcribed from the tapes afterwards verbatim. The transcription was done in the same or the following day of the interview.

According to Hirsijärvi & Hurme (2000) the interviewer has several roles, such as those of motivator, participant and researcher. This was kept in mind during the interviews by encouraging the interviewee to talk by signaling interest and by remaining objective although taking part in the conversation as a person. At the same time, it was ensured that the interviews remained adequately structured, i.e. on relevant topics.

Survey questionnaire

The data from the interviews proved valuable in further defining and focusing the scope of the study. After reviewing more literature from the field, a questionnaire was designed in December 2010. The design was inspired by the findings of the interviews as well as the theoretical background. The aim of the questionnaire was to map out the views of a larger population.

The questionnaire (see Appendix 5) was designed to be clear, unambiguous and relatively short. It consisted mainly of multiple choice questions and had one open field. The questionnaire was approved by the company and tested before publishing. The technical implementation of the questionnaire was done by the researcher using a web-based survey tool called Webropol.

The survey was conducted in January 2010. The respondents were given 8 days time to answer the survey. The invitation to take part in the web survey was published as a news article on the case company intranet (see Appendix 4). The article was visible to managers who had subscribed to a news channel called "HR news for managers".⁷ The channel has close to 2000 subscribers and in the case company there are about 350 cross-border managers, so only a small part of people who were able to see the news article were actually the target group of the study and were asked to participate.

The title of the news article was "Voice your opinion as a cross-border manager". The short article asked cross-border managers to take part in the study by answering to a

⁷ The content visible in the Celo intranet can be personalized according to users' needs and interests. One of the functionalities of this technology is news channels that employees and managers can subscribe to according to their interest. All managers in Finland, Sweden, Norway or Denmark can subscribe to "HR news for managers" -channel. The news articles are published in English and have a Nordic, instead of local focus. Therefore, the channel can be seen as attractive for cross-border managers who have employees in several countries.

questionnaire. The aim of the study was briefly explained and a link to enter the survey provided.

To summarize, the study uses mixed method approach in a single case study setting to describe the phenomenon of mediated internal corporate communication, with semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire survey as the techniques for data collection. The next section describes the process for data analysis where the findings from both qualitative and quantitative data integrated to form a multi-perspective view of each of the themes of the study.

3.5 Data analysis

This section describes the process for data analysis which was based on the theoretical framework and the elements of the interview themes. According to Ghauri & Gronhaug (2005), data analysis which is based on theory allows the researcher to have prior assumptions and hunches about critical factors and relationships. This was the case in this study, where certain results were anticipated and hunches guided to look for relationships in the data. As Greene (2007, p. 163) puts it, "All analyses [in methodological traditions] are in part detective work and insight."

The data collection for this study stemmed from four areas of interest: Being a cross-border manager, mediated communication, strategy communication and two-way communication. Table 3 (on p. 50) presents the interest areas and the sources providing information for them.

First, the earlier academic research reviewed on chapter 2 concentrated on mediated communication and strategy communication, also introducing two-way symmetrical communication. Second, the three interviews with cross-border managers had two themes: being a cross-border manager and mediated communication. The one additional interview with the head of internal communications concentrated on strategy communication. Third, the data collected using the survey was of two kinds: numerical

data generated from the multiple-choice questions (number 1-18) and textual data from the open field question number 19. Question number 19 read ‘Please feel free to express any comments or ideas related to the topics covered on this survey’. The comments elicited with such a general question proved very valuable, as the respondents could freely express the opinions they had and discuss the theme they considered most important. Nearly one third of the respondents used this opportunity to voice their thoughts. During the data analysis, these 20 comments were categorized according to the interest areas to shed light to the research questions.

Table 3. Sources of information in relation to research areas

Area Source	Being a cross- border manager	Mediated communication	Strategy communication	Two-way communication
Academic literature		✓	✓	✓
Semi-structured interviews (n=3)	✓	✓		
Strategy-related interview (n=1)			✓	
Survey numerical findings (n=65)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Survey open field comments (n=20)	✓	✓	✓	✓

The number of web survey responses was 69. Four responses were removed from the data, because of their answers to question number 2 (which was a control question) indicated that all their subordinates were situated in the same country as they were themselves, and therefore they were not within the target group of the survey. Consequently the final number of responses constructing the data set was 65.

The numerical data from the survey was analyzed in following ways. First, the number of respondents to each question was noted down. For the questions with 1-5 Likert scale the number of responses for each answering option was calculated to see their distribution percentages, the average and the median. For other questions, the

distribution of the responses to each answering option was calculated and converted to percentages.

The data from the interviews was transcribed verbatim. After that, the interviews were read through several times, during which categories started to emerge. Then the data was organized to categories, which were partly interview themes, partly specific questions. This way, it was possible to compare the answers given by all the interviewees to a specific theme or question.

Finally, the findings from all the sources concerning a particular theme was integrated to form a multi-perspective view.

3.6 Trustworthiness of the study

The multi-method approach chosen for this study combines a number of methods and is therefore able to explore a particular phenomenon from different perspectives. When discussing the trustworthiness, such a multi-method approach provides for triangulation which enhances the trustworthiness of the investigations. As Greene (2007, p. 100) explains, the classic rationale of triangulation is to increase the validity of construct and inquiry inferences by using methods with offsetting biases, thereby counteracting irrelevant sources of variation and misinformation or error.

Bryman (2004) notes that the evaluation criteria for the research design are not straight forward in the case study setting. According to him, it depends to a great extent on what the researcher feels are appropriate criteria for the evaluation. Where some consider carefully measurement validity, internal validity, external validity, ecological validity, reliability and replicability, others barely mention them at all.

According to Hirsijärvi & Hurme (2000, p. 184), trustworthiness of interview research data can be improved by developing an accurate interview framework and transcribing

the interview data as soon as possible. In this study the interview framework was carefully developed and the transcriptions were made within 2 days after the interviews.

Where quantitative research emphasizes reliability and validity to guarantee rigour, in qualitative research rigour is achieved by verification. In other words, describing very explicitly everything that was done in the course of the study. Bryman & Bell (2003, p. 288) note that what they call external reliability is the degree to which a study can be replicated. In this study, the reliability is enhanced by the effort made to carefully report the course of the study.

Locke, Silverman and Spirduso (2004) define internal validity as concerning whether the research has been designed so that it truly deals with what is examined. Can the data collected actually be used to answer the questions being posed? The validity of this study is enhanced by the fact that the researcher has worked for the company, as explained in the introduction. This experience enabled me to know what to ask and from whom.

External validity, on the other hand, questions whether or not the results will remain truthful when subsequently applied to people, situations or objects outside the original investigation. In the case study setting the question of external validity or generalizability is an interesting one. How can a single case possibly be representative so that it might yield findings that can be applied more generally to other cases? The answer provided by Bryman (2004, p. 50) and acknowledged by the researcher of this study, is that they cannot. The fact that there are not typical cases that can be used to represent a certain class of objects is important to acknowledge.

4 FINDINGS

In this chapter, the research findings from the interviews and from the web survey are presented. The findings from both methods are combined to provide answers to the research questions, which were:

1. How do CBMs perceive communication media?
 - 1.1. In what ways do CBMs use communication media?
 - 1.2. What media do CBMs prefer and why?
2. How do CBMs perceive strategy communication?
 - 2.1. How do CBMs see their role in strategy communication?
 - 2.2. What are CBMs' views on strategy communication?

When the findings are discussed, the term 'respondent' refers to the web survey respondents. 'Interviewee', on the other hand, refers to the cross-border managers interviewed for this study. Letters A, B and C after quotes refer to a particular interviewee (see Table 1 on page 45). Word 'participant' is used when referring to both the survey respondents and interviewees.

As explained in the previous chapter, one section of the web survey entailed statements that used a five point Likert scale. When presenting the findings, the responses to those statements are – for the sake of simplification - mostly reported here by giving the percentage of respondents agreeing and/or disagreeing with a particular statement. These percentages are generated by combining answering options 1 and 2 (strongly disagree and disagree) and options 4 and 5 (strongly agree and agree). In other words, if a certain percentage of respondents are reported to disagree with a statement, that percentage combines both responses 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree'. The precise distributions of responses on the 5 point scale to each statement are presented in Tables 3-7 and can also be found on the survey findings summary on Appendix 6.

4.1 Demographics of the participants

The survey attracted responses from all the Nordic countries and all managerial levels of organizational hierarchy. Figure 5 illustrates where the respondents (n=65) were situated and compares it to the country distribution of all the cross-border managers in the case company (about 350 managers). As can be seen, the survey respondents represent all the Nordic countries and their distribution is quite similar to the general distribution of all the cross-border managers by country. This indicates a representative sample.

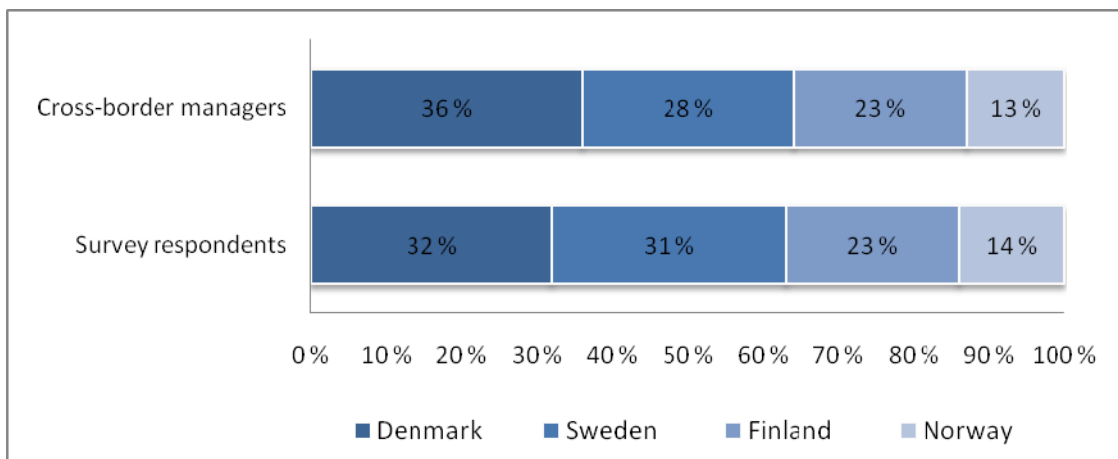


Figure 5. Country distribution of the respondents versus all CBMs

The majority (60%) of the respondents were on level three or four on organizational hierarchy, with 35% of respondents on level five, six or seven⁸. Only one of the respondents was on level one or two in organizational hierarchy, indicating a member of Group Executive Management (GEM) or a manager reporting to a member of GEM.

The age distribution of the respondents is illustrated in Figure 6. As can be seen, about half of the respondents were in the age group 36-45 years; one third in the age group 46-55 years and 14% were 56 years or more. Only two of the respondents were under 35 years old.

⁸ There are usually 5 to 7 levels of hierarchy in Celo.

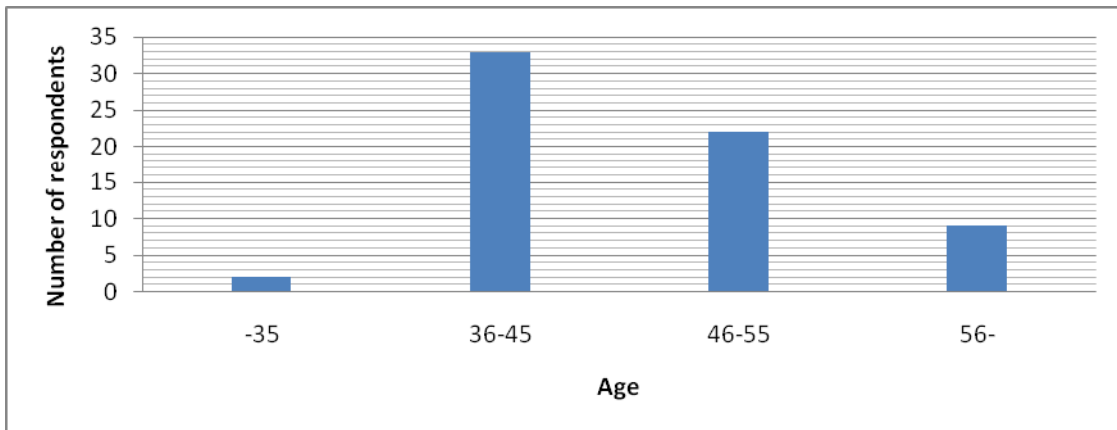


Figure 6. The age of the respondents

The characteristics of the interviewees can be summarized as follows. There was one from Finland, one from Sweden and one from Denmark. They were all in their forties or fifties and on level 3 in hierarchy. They had worked for Celo from 3 to 30 years and as cross-border managers from less than one to six years. All of them had also a cross-border manager as their own manager, and he/she was situated in another country.

4.2 Being a cross-border manager (CBM)

This subchapter presents the findings relating to the first area of interest, being a cross-border manager. Although no research questions stemmed from this area, it was considered necessary to collect information about this area as well, since the understanding of how cross-border managers experience their role was necessary for answering the research questions.

Table 4. presents the level of agreement of the survey respondents with the statements concerning their work as cross-border managers on a 5-point disagree-agree scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

Table 4. Views on being a CBM

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average	Median
All in all it is more demanding to be a cross-border manager	0	3%	5%	27%	65%	63	4.5	5
I think we have good support for working at a distance	11%	19%	40%	27%	3%	63	2.9	3
Differences related to people's cultural background are not an issue in cross-border teams	16%	43%	18%	16%	8%	63	2.6	2
The challenges of being a cross-border manager relate mainly to less face-to-face contact	5%	11%	21%	42%	21%	62	3.6	4
Succeeding as a cross-border manager just requires the right mindset for the job.	3%	5%	31%	40%	21%	62	3.7	4

As can be seen, an overwhelming 92% of the respondents feel that it is more challenging to be a cross-border manager (than a local one). There are various factors that add to the requirements of the role. For instance recruiting and initiating a manager/employee in a foreign country was mentioned as one of the most challenging tasks. The following citations from the interviews illustrate some the other challenges experienced.

“It is more challenging. When you are a local manager, it is easier to stop by. Now you need more monitoring on what people are doing, reporting systems need to be in place and so on.” – B.

“I think the challenges are that we are in different locations, and we are from different cultures – there are different rules for communication. The further you are, the bigger these problems are. Because you don't solve the problems when they happen but they tend to be kind of pushed in front of you. You have to be aware of that, I would say.”

–C.

The way corporate support was experienced varied. About the same number of respondents, 30%, agreed and disagreed with the statement that the support for working at a distance is appropriate. For instance interviewee B commented:

“We have a Nordic organization and all the divisions are very Nordic, I think we have a very good support for working on a distance.”

However, it should be noted that 11% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, indicating that they are very dissatisfied with the current support. Training was suggested by the interviewee A as a means to improve the situation.

“Managers need to be trained for cross-border role, so that they understand the importance and the special characteristics of the role. There needs to be commitment and time allocated for this. I have a feeling that we are given the same work as local managers, but it is not taken into account that it takes so much more time. Starting from the travelling, this is a whole different world.”

Differences related to cultural backgrounds are an issue in cross-border teams according to 59% of the respondents. Less face-to-face contact was acknowledged as the main contributor in making the role more challenging by 63%. Success as a cross-border manager seems to be largely about the mindset, since only 8% of the respondents disagreed with the statement “Succeeding as a cross-border manager just requires the right mindset for the job”.

According to 39% of the respondents, the time spent communicating (email, telephone, meetings, face-to-face conversations etc.) was over 75% of their working hours. Nearly as many (38%) responded spending somewhat less than that, 51-75% of their time in communication-related tasks.

Interaction with subordinates can take differing forms in cross-border teams. Interviewee A told about his subordinate who is never in the office himself and who she

mainly communicates with text messages. This subordinate also makes video clips and sends them to his superior. The following quote displays what kind of ponderings such a situation may evoke in a manager.

“In principle I have nothing against it. But I have had guilty conscience about it and set a meeting just to have a longer contact with him. But you got to consider the effectiveness too. Are the meetings of any use if neither of us experiences a need for them?”

All in all, the importance of communication skills for the managerial role seems to be acknowledged among cross-border managers, as is illustrated in the following open field comment.

“As a manager you are supposed to be a good communicator. If you are a good communicator when having your people sitting next to you - you most likely are as good as a distant manager. Unfortunately we have quite many managers being poor communicators - both local ones and cross-border :)”

4.3 CBMs and communication media

In this section the findings related to the second area of interest, i.e. cross-border managers as users of communication media are reported. The findings are organized according to the research questions.

4.3.1 In what ways do CBMs use communication media?

Cross-border managers in the case company seem to be accustomed to using a variety of communication media fluently and switch between them flexibly according to purpose, as illustrated in the following quote from the interviewee C describing the communication practices in his team:

"We have weekly meetings [on the] phone or using Live Meeting⁹ with web cameras and headsets. There is a need for a lot of face-to face communication, and that we do on this Live Meeting. And we use the phone and lot of emails, but the emails are more to distribute and review information. They are mainly for information exchange. Difficult problems tend to be solved more on the phone or face-to face. Emails are not good for problem solving. Messenger we use for fast questions. When I can see that Thomas (name changed) is online I just ask a quick question. It's like sending an SMS. I also send text messages, if I know that people are in meetings and I just want to remind them of something."

It is interesting, how the interviewee here refers to conversations using Live Meeting as face-to-face discussions. This could be interpreted as suggesting that live, interactional video connection comes close to having the feeling and benefits of an actual face-to-face discussion where the participants are in the same room. Also some of the open field comments praised LiveMeeting with video, voice and application sharing.

Table 5 presents the level of agreement on a 5-point disagree-agree scale with the statements concerning communication tool usage and attitudes. The most striking is the fact that cross-border managers seem quite unreserved when it comes to experimenting with new communication tools. A total of 79% agreed with the statement "I am eager to try out new communication technologies and tools." Nevertheless, for some this willingness was seen as a prerequisite of the job, as this open comment suggests:

"A cross-border manager has to be willing to use many more communication tools than a locally based manager."

⁹ Live Meeting is a Microsoft tool that enables the participants to see each other on the computer screen, with web cameras view switching automatically to the one who is talking. The participants can also interact by sharing documents and applications on the screen.

Table 5. Views on communication tool usage and attitudes

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average	Median
In general, I am satisfied with the communication tools available	0	10%	33%	48%	10%	63	3.6	4
I use the intranet mainly to reach other tools and solutions (phonebook, Time & Travel etc)	3%	24%	37%	35%	2%	63	3.1	3
It is difficult to select which communication tool to use	24%	35%	22%	16%	3%	63	2.4	2
I suffer from an e-mail overload	0	24%	21%	32%	24%	63	3.6	4
I think that that tools for social media, for instance Facebook, would result in diminished effectiveness, if actively used at work	13%	27%	30%	13%	18%	63	3	3
I'm eager to try out new communication technologies and tools	2%	5%	14%	33%	46%	63	4.2	4

However, sometimes it is not enough that the cross-border managers themselves are able to use the communication tools without an effort. A change of mindset in the whole organization was demanded by some of the respondents. The following open field comment illustrates that the adoption of new technology may face obstacles.

"I experience a lack in willingness to utilize the tools we have got for communicating electronically. There is resistance to web camera, communicator etc. as a means for having meetings and it's used only by a few as part of their "daily" toolbox and way of communicating. A changed mindset in Celo regarding the effectiveness and usefulness of communicating via e.g. communicator and webcam - would save a lot of traveling and time. A prerequisite for this is an effective network that can handle the load. "

In general, nearly 60% of the respondents were satisfied with the communication tools and the same percentage had no difficulties in selecting which communication tool to use. However, the large selection of tools can also lead to difficulties in finding information, especially in the case of tools for document sharing. One of the

respondents felt that although Celo utilizes tools such as Nordic Place¹⁰, PSDM¹¹, common file areas, SharePoint¹² etc., all these have their shortcomings and information is spread across all places.

Despite the general satisfaction in tools, also concerns and obstacles in leveraging the new technology were voiced in the open field comments of the questionnaire. The technical difficulties (headset not functioning well, noisiness if there are several people in the same room) and lack of support from the corporate level were indicated as the main disadvantages.

"It should be stated clearly if Celo Group wants to support the office communicator for video conferences and pure telephone meetings/net meetings¹³ as the technology does not seem to deliver, meaning people are dissatisfied and moving back to good old desk telephone meetings. Sad as it would be such a good chance to get a picture in an easy way."

A couple of respondents suggested that encouragement, reimplementation and training are needed to get more people to use the existing communication tools enabling virtual meetings.

"Ways of communicating cross-border ("video" or web conferences etc) should be encouraged and made easier to obtain/use."

¹⁰ Nordic Place is a web based tool for sharing documents within a team or project.

¹¹ PSDM is a tool for managing project and system documentation.

¹² SharePoint is a web-based collaborative platform for file sharing. At the moment, it is mainly used as a team tool for file sharing within teams and projects. Some teams may also use other SharePoint fetures, like a discussion forum or a commenting feature.

¹³ Netmeeting is a web conference solution for Internet collaboration enabling audio-conferencing and screen sharing. However, there is no video connection, so the participants cannot see each other.

Social media

So far social media is not very much used in the case company. However, cross-border managers seem to have opinions concerning it — contrasting ones. The following comments, first one by the interviewee B and the second one by a respondent, illustrate opposite views.

“I know many managers who are afraid of letting those new tools loose. Because they are afraid that people will make social chatting instead of work.”

"Social networking in our organization is not understood / taken seriously. Communication tools should be available to use with external partners (messaging, video meetings, etc). Our bank can't continue living in a bottle. "

The general opinion, on the basis of the answers to a statement "I think that tools for social media, for instance Facebook, would result in diminished effectiveness if actively used at work." seems to be on the positive side, since 40% disagreed with the statement and 29% agreed. A comment by the interviewee C illustrates how opinions of social media often aren't strictly for or against, but both positive and negative aspects can be found.

"Facebook and that type are of course good if you don't know what to do and are bored. But in business context... it's good for people selling things but it's extremely disruptive because you have to relate to people you don't want to relate. (...) Maybe having those tools and having them developed... it's a bit like messenger, at the beginning nobody used it and now everybody uses it (._) Of course if you have something like Facebook where you can put up your good ideas and describe what you are doing that would be nice. "

Email and instant messaging

When asked about their email usage, half of the survey respondents replied sending 21-40 emails per day on the average. Nearly as much, 40% sent 5 to 20 emails. Regarding the amount of email they receive, again half of the respondents received between 21 and 40 emails, one fourth less than 20 and one fourth more than 40. Thus the respondents receive roughly 30% more email than they send. According to 44% of the respondents, about half of the emails they receive require some action or reply, whereas 33% said that as much as about 75 percent required an action or reply.

Cross-border managers seem to feel that they receive too much email. More than half of the respondents agreed with the statement "I suffer from e-mail overload". Interviewee A pointed out that email is misused with large distribution lists. "It is perhaps most suitable for managerial communication", she suggested.

The interviewees reported that some information exchange is now moved from email to instant messaging. The messenger (or office communicator) is a relatively new tool gaining more users and it is experienced as a good addition to the communication tool selection. It is used for quick questions and answers instead of sending an email or calling. The interviewees described instant messaging as convenient and less distracting than a telephone call. One can also see if the other person is available or not (a green or red dot next to the person's name indicate their availability). This functionality is also used before calling people, to see if they are in or not. However, not everything can be moved from email to messenger, as the following comment by interviewee B illustrates:

"The only consequence, which can be both good and bad, is that the communication you do there is not saved. If there is something would like to have in writing, I use the email."

Intranet

The company intranet seems to be actively used but also criticized. The intranet was visited several times during a day by 53% of the respondents, 30% visited the intranet a few times and 16% once or twice a day.

Describing their daily intranet usage, the interviewees told that they scan the first page for news and read the interesting ones. They use intranet to find information and to access other solutions. A functionality called 'shortcuts' is used to access the pages needed frequently. However, the information on the intranet is experienced as being quite general and not directly aimed at the user. Cross-border managers also feel that there is too much information and one is not able to 'take care' of all of it.

The main criticism focused on two aspects: The difficulty of finding information and the visual design of the intranet. For instance, interviewee C described the intranet as boring and suggested using a web site of a newspaper as an example of how the intranet should be. He was discontent with too short articles on not deep-enough level and the lack of colors, pictures and video. Some of the other opinions voiced about the intranet are illustrated in the following quotes from respondents and interviewee C.

"Intranet is not efficient — people too often refer to 'intranet' and it is really difficult to find [the information referred to]. The new search functionality is not good. "

"Intranet is old fashioned having big brother type 'read and obey' mentality."

"The way most people use intranet here is just to retrieve information, organizational chart or having access to travel system. (...) it is not effectively used to convey the messages from top management to people to drive change. "

According to the survey, for more than one third of the respondents reaching other tools (such as the phone directory and travel system) was what they used the intranet mainly

for. The intranet was not regarded as effective for communicating strategy by 37% of the respondents, with 30% arguing the opposite.

Face-to-face meetings

Face-to-face meetings in a cross-border manager context often require travelling. It is quite typical for a cross-border manager to meet face-to-face with his/her team from two to four times a year. Somewhat mixed feelings concerning the travelling could be detected from the responses of the participants. On the one hand, CBMs seem to make efforts to avoid travelling because it consumes so much time. On the other hand, some amount of face-to-face contact is considered necessary for instance when meeting new people, for teambuilding and creation of trust. The following citations illustrate this matter.

"We have face-to face meetings two times a year where everyone is present. We're trying to avoid travelling. We have had video meetings so that everyone can see each other. I feel it's loose; the sense of togetherness in the team is difficult to attain." –A.

"The lack of travel budget (both for managers and employees) is a big problem when looking at the long term strategy, because the "soft" values are depending on face-to-face meetings. In one or a few years time this will result in a lot of problems." –Open field comment

"The team has to be somehow brought together before taking the electronic channels in use. The creation of team spirit is difficult through electronic channels." –A

4.3.2 What media do CBMs prefer and why?

To explore the channel preferences of the survey respondents, they were asked to evaluate each medium on three criteria: 1) considered most useful in daily work, 2)

preferred as a sender of a message and 3) preferred as a receiver of a message. To gain an overall impression of the channel preferences of the respondents, Figure 7 combines the three preference aspects according to which the channels were evaluated.

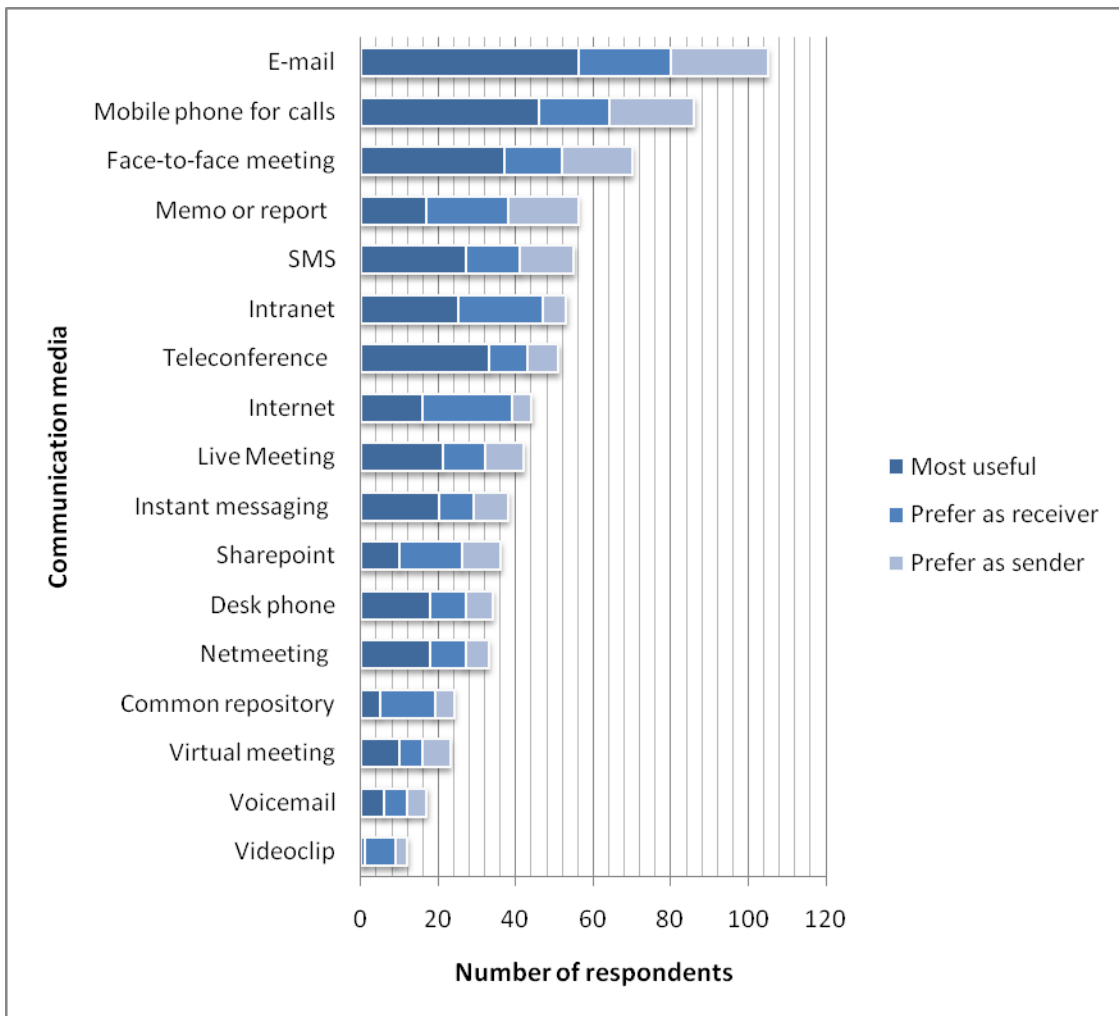


Figure 7. Communication media preferences

As can be seen from Figure 7, email, mobile phone for calls and face-to-face meeting were the three most preferred communication media among the respondents. Memo or report, SMS and intranet were also among the most preferred channels.

Examining the channel preferences more in detail, it can be seen that the preferences as a sender and as a receiver differ to some extent. These differences are illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6. Comparison of receiver and sender preferences

Prefer as receiver	N	Prefer as sender	N
E-mail	24	E-mail	25
Internet	23	Mobile calls	22
Intranet	22	Face-to-Face meeting	18
Memo or report	21	Memo or report	18
Mobile calls	18	SMS	14
SharePoint	16	SharePoint	10
Face-to-face meeting	15	Live Meeting	10
Common repository	14	Instant messaging	9
SMS	14	Teleconference	8
Live Meeting	11	Deskphone	7
Teleconference	10	Virtual meeting	7
Netmeeting	9	Intranet	6
Desk phone	9	Netmeeting	6
Instant messaging	9	Voicemail	5

As can be seen from the left-hand side of the Table 6, the most preferred channels as a receiver of a message were email (24 respondents), Internet (23), intranet (22) and memo or report (21). The common feature to these channels is that the information is in a written form. Furthermore, all of them except for the email are also channels where considerable effort from the sender is required in formulating the content, compared to, for example, instant messaging, where the written message is usually much more ad hoc.

From the sender side the preference list looks different. This is obvious, because the intranet and the Internet are available as channels of sending information for only some of the respondents. But there are other differences as well. After email (25 respondents), mobile calls (22), face-to-face meetings (18) and memo or report (18) were the most preferred channels when sending messages. From these, mobile calls and face-to-face meetings both involve oral communication. One way of interpreting this finding is that cross-border managers as senders put more weight on being able to explain the matter orally and adapt the message according to the immediate feedback that interactional oral channels enable. Whereas as receivers, they appreciate the pros of a written message, such as that they can decide when to orient to it and the possibility to refer to it later.

The third aspect the respondents were asked to evaluate was the usefulness of the channels in daily work. Table 7 presents the findings by listing the channels in the order of their perceived usefulness.

Table 7. Most useful channels

Consider most useful in my daily work	no
E-mail	56
Mobile phone for calls	46
Face-to-face meeting	37
Teleconference	33
Mobile phone for SMS	27
Intranet	25
Live Meeting	21
Instant messaging	20
Net meeting	18
Desk phone	18
Memo or report	17
Internet	16
Virtual meeting	10
SharePoint	10

Again, some differences compared to sender and receiver preferences can be detected. First, teleconference, here on place 4, appears to be a channel which is considered useful but not particularly preferred as either sender or receiver. On the other hand, we can see that although the traditional memo or report was one of the most preferred channels both for sending and receiving, it was not considered very useful in daily work. Figure 8 further illustrates the differences between communication channels based on the three criteria used in the survey.

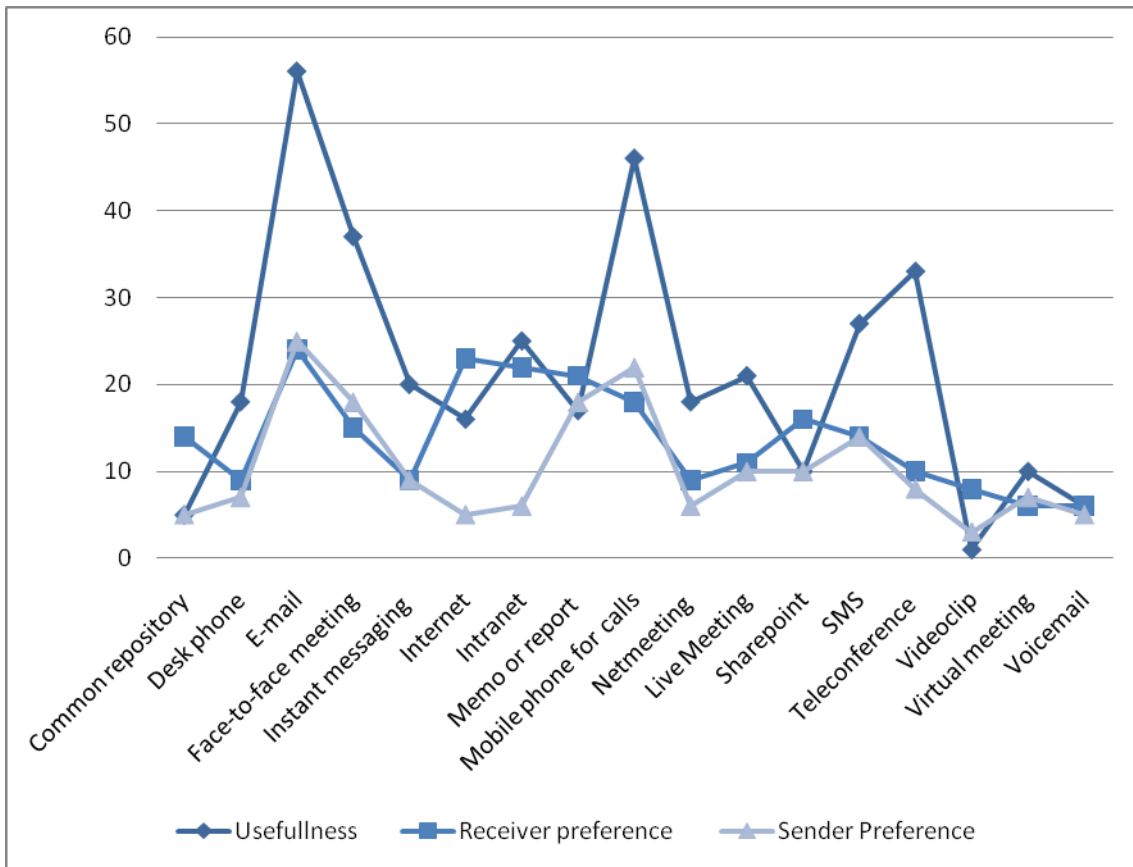


Figure 8. Comparison of channel preferences

Future trends

Since the communication tools are today developing extremely fast and with them the ways of working, the survey respondents were also asked which of the communication media they expected to be using more in the future. Figure 9 (on p. 70) portrays the findings about the number of respondents expecting to use the medium more in the future on the horizontal axis.

As can be seen from the figure, Live Meeting was seen as the tool most likely to be more used in the future with 62% of the respondents expecting to use it more. Another tool that more than half of the respondents consider as a future promise is SharePoint, a web-based tool for file sharing between teams and projects.

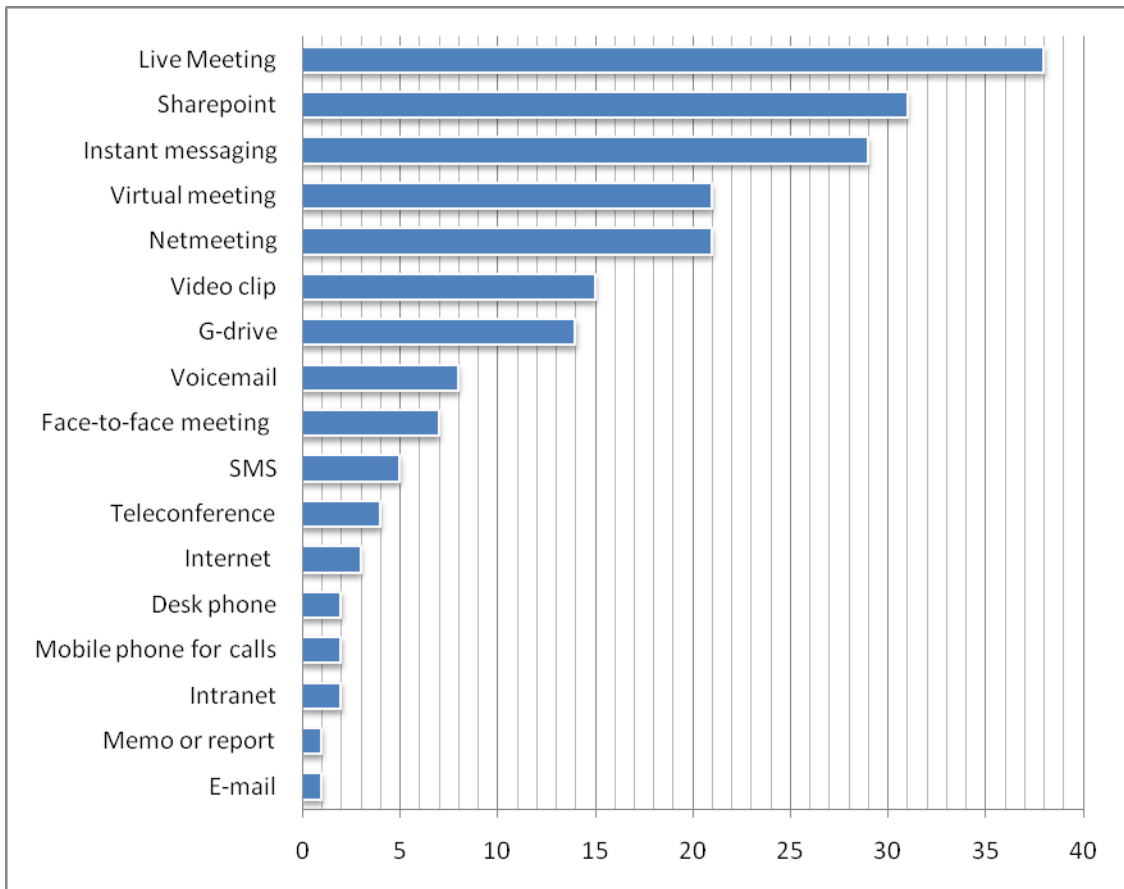


Figure 9. Communication media expected to be used more in the future

Instant messaging was the third tool that 48% of the users predicted as having an upward trend in popularity. Many seem to like this tool and experience it as complementing some of the existing tools, such as phone and email. Also net meeting and virtual meeting were selected by a third of the respondents as tools to be used more in the future.

When comparing Figure 9 with the list of the most preferred and useful media (Figure 7. on p. 67), it can be detected that the order in which the tools are listed is almost reversed. The top five future tools are on places 9-11, 13 and 15 on the most used and preferred list. This can be interpreted to indicate that the respondents envision a change in their tool preferences and usage in the future. Time will tell if email can be superseded by SharePoint, telephone by instant messaging and face- to-face meetings by Live Meetings.

4.4 CBMs and strategy communication

This section presents the findings related to the third area of interest that examines the link between cross-border managers and strategy communication in the case company.

4.4.1 How do CBMs see their role in strategy communication?

As explained in section 3.2 describing the strategy communication practices in Celo, the case company is very committed to using the cascading method in communicating strategy. Although the method may be slow, the company wants to involve the managers and ensure the understanding of the strategy by enabling discussion and increasing dialogue. Cascading is even considered as being part of Celo's culture.

Cross-border managers take their responsibility in communicating the strategy seriously. As many as 85% considered it the line manager's responsibility to make sure their subordinates understand the strategy.

4.4.2 What are CBMs' views on strategy communication?

Table 8 (on p. 72) illustrates the respondents' views concerning strategy communication. As can be seen, the CBMs seems to have high information levels with 84% feeling well informed about how they can contribute to achieving Celo's goals. Every second respondent felt that they can contribute to strategy formation. In terms of methods, cascading was considered as an effective way of communicating strategy by half of the respondents, whereas 17% felt the opposite.

Some of the views considering strategy communication were voiced in the open field comments, which are quoted in the following.

“By strategy communication I mean it is my responsibility to translate the strategy to my unit's reality. Still, I think cascading is sometimes a challenge as the employees feel

we do not have the time to have so many meetings which should be needed to communicate properly.”

“Cascading is effective, if it does not go to the lowest level: in those cases it seems to be more rumors than facts if the message has flown through too many levels.”

“Too much emphasis is placed on immediate manager as the only communicator of strategy. This leads to uneven communication and sometimes also to different messages. We need more focus on long-term strategy (not just numerical short-medium-term targets and activities) and we need that to be communicated by executive level so that we all get the same understanding of what we are trying to achieve.”

Table 8. Views on strategy communication

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average	Median
The Celo intranet is effectively used for communicating strategy	5%	33 %	32%	27%	3%	63	2.9	3
I feel I can contribute to strategy formation at Celo	5%	23%	23%	45%	5%	62	3.2	4
Cascading (team meetings with manager at each organizational level, starting from the top) is an effective way of communicating strategy	8%	10%	30%	37%	16%	63	3.4	4
It is the line manager's responsibility to make sure their subordinates understand what the strategy means to their department and everybody's tasks and duties.	0	3%	11%	44%	41%	63	4.2	4
I feel well informed about how I can contribute to achieving Celo's goals	0	5%	11%	73%	11%	63	3.9	4

As these comments illustrate, cross-borders managers are well aware of the crucial role they play in strategy implementation. The downsides of cascading – message distortion and the time it consumes - are recognized. Even the head of internal communications

admits that the message gets distorted in the way in cascading, but asks ‘what is the other way?’

It should also be noted that CBMs seem to wish to have more strategic information from the highest levels of organizational hierarchy, as indicated in the following open field comments.

“I miss information about what is on the agenda on GEM and the level just below.”

“There are too many silos in this organization and too much secrecy. Very few, if any strategies should be kept secret – all customer and business strategies should be shared so we can work towards them together.”

Finally, the survey respondents were asked from who and how they would like to receive information about strategy. A meeting was considered as the best channel for strategy information by 65% of the respondents, with intranet selected by 27% of the respondents. As reported earlier, the intranet was not regarded as effective for communicating strategy by 37% of the respondents, with 30% arguing the opposite.

The perceptions of the respondents polarized when they were asked from whom they preferred to get information concerning the case company's strategic approach. Where 49% preferred CEO or a member of Group Executive Management, nearly as many (46%) considered their own boss as the best person to deliver this kind of information. A couple of respondents pointed out that the preferred source depends on the situation. CEO or GEM member was preferred in holistic issues, own superior in specific issues.

4.5 Two-way communication

Finally, the findings related to the fourth area of interest, two-way communication, are presented in this section. The respondents’ levels of agreement with the statements concerning two-way communication are illustrated in Table 9.

Table 9. Views on two-way communication

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average	Median
Upward communication (from lower levels of hierarchy upwards) is encouraged and appreciated at Celso.	2%	19%	30%	37%	13%	63	3.4	3
We have communication channels to put forward comments and get feedback on suggestions	6%	21%	43%	29%	2%	63	3	3
More channels for open dialogue within the bank should be offered	3%	6%	25%	43%	22%	63	3.7	4

As can be seen, nearly half of the respondents felt that upward communication is encouraged and appreciated in the case company. Still, only one third found that the communication channels to put forward comments and get feedback on suggestions existed and two thirds felt that more channels for open dialogue within the bank should be offered. The following open comment probably summarizes the point of view shared by many:

“In theory we have good tools to cater for upward communication – in practice I’m not sure. The ‘your comment’ - functionality on the intranet is not used very often – probably because it is not anonymous.”

The communicating functionality this respondent refers to is the possibility to comment on some of the news published in the intranet. The head of internal communication tells that when they started to pilot this feature, they saw that the company culture needed to develop some more to mature for public discussion in the net. People did not want to discuss openly when everyone could see the discussion. She gave an example of a case where an employee wrote a critical comment on a news article. The employee was criticized about the fact that she had publically posted a critical comment on the intranet and the employee soon asked the comment to be removed. According to the head of internal communications, cases like this suggest that people in the case company do not yet think that it is ok to express critical views openly in the net.

As discussed in Section 3.2, feedback from the lower levels is not systematically collected and shared throughout the organization. However, the head of internal communications explains that in a way storytelling is used as a feedback form across the company. It is considered efficient if one can discuss true examples of how values influence the way they work. The CEO, who is very involved and engaged in values, asks the employees to come up with concrete examples on how they live the values. According to the head of internal communications, it is naturally very effective when it is the CEO who asks for examples, and people start immediately thinking whether they have a story to tell or not.

5 DISCUSSION

This chapter combines and discusses the main findings presented in Chapter 4 and connects the findings to the theoretical framework presented for this study in Section 2.3. The present findings are also discussed in the light of previous research findings, whether they are supportive or present counter-claims.

The main goal of this thesis was to examine internal mediated communication and strategy communication within a multinational company from the perspective of a cross-border manager. This was further defined by two main research questions and four sub-questions, which were:

1. How do CBMs perceive communication media?
 - 1.1. In what ways do CBMs use communication media?
 - 1.2. What media do CBMs prefer and why?
2. How do CBMs perceive strategy communication?
 - 2.1. How do CBMs see their role in strategy communication?
 - 2.2. What are CBMs' views on strategy communication?

In Chapter 2, the literature review presented previous research related to mediated communication and communication of strategy. In Chapter 4, the findings of the survey and the interviews were reported according to four interest areas, i.e. being a cross-border manager, communication channels, strategy communication and two-way communication. In this chapter, answers to the research questions are provided.

5.1 Perceptions of communication media

This section discusses the findings related to the first set of research questions concerning the cross-border managers' perceptions of mediated communication. As discussed in Section 2.1.2, the multitude of new options opened up by the technology make the acquisition of communication competence more difficult than in the past

(O’Kane et al. 2004) and may lead to difficulties in selecting which tool to use for which task (Quirke 2008). However, the majority of cross-border managers do not seem to experience such difficulties. The findings of this study portray cross-border managers as unreserved and flexible users of versatile communication media who consider themselves as keen on experimenting with new tools.

Nevertheless, the most preferred tools are not the newest and most advanced ones, but well-established media such as email, telephone and intranet. This finding can be interpreted as supporting the findings of Åberg (2000) and Mahdon & Bevan (2007) (see Section 2.1.2), according to which channel preferences change slowly because they are affected by cultural work practices and personal usage habits established over the years.

In general, CBMs are quite satisfied with the tools available but would like to see more support provided for the implementation and use of the modern tools. The main findings considering cross-border managers’ views about some of the most central communication tools are summarized and discussed in the following.

Email

According to the findings of the present study, email is the number one communication channel in the daily work of cross-border managers. An average cross-border manager sends about 20 emails per day and receives about 30, out of which 15 require some action or reply. Email is considered as the most useful channel and it is also the most preferred channel when both sending and receiving messages. However, at the same time most of the cross-border managers report that they are suffering from email overload. This finding seems to support the argument by Sanchez (see Section 2.1.3) that although email and intranet are often accused of contributing to information overload, they also facilitate effective two-way communication within organizations. It seems that email remains the double-edged sword in business communication – the most useful tool also causes most stress.

Telephone

For a cross-border manager, mobile phone is the second most useful communication tool. The traditional desk phone, in comparison, is on place 10. This is understandable, since cross-border managers often travel, attend meetings and are out of reach of their desk phone. Mobile phone is also used for text messages: SMS is the fifth most useful channel. Teleconference, a tool enabling several people to discuss on the same telephone line, is also considered useful (place 4). Interestingly teleconference – although an older, simpler and less 'rich' channel than Live Meeting, net meeting and virtual meeting – is considered the most useful of these four. Perhaps, as one of the participants suggested, technical difficulties with the more advanced tools have led people to rely on the 'good old' teleconference as a reliable and simple-to-use solution. Other possible explanation is that CBMs consider the preferences of the people they are communicating with, and thus, when detecting resistance for instance to LiveMeeting, use teleconference instead.

Intranet

Intranet is the third most preferred channel of incoming information. It is used daily for reading news articles, reaching other solutions and finding information. The experienced problems relate mainly to finding information. Recently, Celo has tried out new functionality that allows users to comment on news articles. At the moment, the comments posted are not anonymous, which is probably holding back the users. The commenting feature seems like a good functionality increasing the dialogue inside the case company and reshaping the intranet towards a more equal communication tool. This kind of development of the intranet is important. For instance Lehmuskallio (personal communication, March 23, 2010) argues that intranets today should be vehicles for dialogue, giving employees a possibility to participate: publish something, write blogs or comment on news. However, according to Lehmuskallio, there should be clearly separated sections for commenting, so that people can always tell apart the 'official' news and the views of individual people. Lehmuskallio claims that intranets should offer similar possibilities to interact as the tools employees are using on their free time today - such as for instance Facebook.

Face-to-face meetings

Although time-consuming and costly, face-to-face meetings are considered necessary for the building of trust and team spirit in virtual teams, as well as for communicating complex issues. This finding is consistent with Daft & Lengel's (1986) argument that effective managers use rich media for complex or sensitive issues (see Section 2.1.2). Travelling has been argued to be a potential source of managerial stress (e.g. Tienari & Vaara 2003). However, it does not seem to be a big problem in the case company, where cross-border managers appear to be more concerned of the limitations on travel budget than their work-life balance.

Instant messaging

Instant messaging seems to be enhancing its popularity among cross-border managers. It is considered a convenient complement to the communication tool repertoire. Instant messaging and Live Meeting are the two tools both considered useful today and anticipated to be used more in the future. This suggests that their usage is likely to increase.

Social media

Unlike many other large MNCs today, the case company does not have a Facebook-profile nor is the CEO active in blog-writing. This could be interpreted to mean that the top management does not signal that social media should be taken seriously. The contradictory findings concerning social media are not unexpected. According to Kauppalehti (Savaspuro 2010), the recent boom of social media is a good example of a major change affecting the way employees, competitors and customers act and forcing companies to rethink and change. Social media has given not just for customers, but also for employees an amount of power that they never had before. Embracing social media means giving up control, and this is hard to accept for a traditional business manager, the experts of digital communications interviewed by Kauppalehti say. The only way to learn to understand social media is to be present. Therefore, managers should have their Facebook-profiles, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts and write blogs. This seems necessary because the fact that executives don't communicate on the same

level with their customers, employees and other stakeholders may send a message that the company is distant, uninterested and unmotivated to engage. Furthermore, as usage of leading-edge communication tools is found to correlate with highly effective communications (Quirke 2008, see section 2.1.3), social media adaptation would most likely be beneficial.

Future trends

Finally, the future expectations of the cross-border managers regarding the use of communication tools indicate that the channel preferences are changing. The top of the list consists of quite recent tools, such as LiveMeeting, SharePoint and instant messaging. Respectively, the tools used the most today are at the bottom of the list. On what time span the shift in actual tool usage is likely to happen, is difficult to say on the basis of this study. As discussed earlier in this section, changes in preferences and in actual behavior may happen quite slowly. However, these findings illustrate a positive attitude and confidence in modern tools that is a great soil for introducing and leveraging new technology.

5.2 Perceptions of strategy communication

The second set of research questions related to cross-border manager perceptions on strategy communication in the case company. In this section the main findings answering these questions are summarized and discussed.

To summarize the communicative context explained in section 3.2, Celo uses cascading as the main method of communicating and implementing strategy. Cascading is used to involve the line managers and to enable discussion on the strategy. The strategy communication process is mainly top-down and employee dialogue about the strategy with the top management is not actively facilitated. Knowing that the strategy formation in Celo is a territory of the top management, it is actually rather surprising that as many as every second of the survey respondents felt that they can contribute to strategy formation.

As discussed in Section 2.2.2, although centralized model like this is often the most functional way to ensure that information about the strategy reaches the whole personnel, involving employees in the strategy process more would probably enhance motivation and feeling of participation.

The role of middle managers in a gradual strategy communication process such as this is significant and very challenging, as discussed in Section 2.1.4. A shared understanding of middle managers and those at operational level to the top management's strategic goals is of crucial importance for effective implementation (see Section 2.2). The findings of this study suggest that cross-border managers are well informed about the strategy and are committed to turning the information into meaning for their subordinates. While a scant majority perceives cascading effective, it is also criticized, mainly for possible message distortion.

Another finding that questions the value of cascading as the main method of communicating strategy is that cross-border managers prefer to get strategy related information directly from the top management. In cascading, the immediate superior delivers the strategy information, and although this option was nearly as much supported by the respondents as the top management, it was not their most preferred source. Since most of the respondents were on level 3-4 on the organizational hierarchy, this finding is consistent with Pincus et al.'s (see Section 2.1.5) finding that a desire to communicate with top management increases when individuals get closer to the top. Furthermore, as discussed in Section 2.2.4, the impact of senior management communication on employees understanding of strategy is found to be twice as significant as communication by supervisors. Based on these findings it would seem justified to increase top management communication on strategy in the case company.

As anticipated on the basis of earlier research (see Section 2.2.4), face-to-face communication was confirmed to be the preferred channel in strategy communication. Actually, the fact that as many as every fourth respondent preferred the intranet over face-to-face communication, might be considered unexpected.

At the moment, the Celo intranet is found not to be effectively used for communicating strategy. In the light of Lehmuskallio's (2009) study this finding is not surprising. Lehmuskallio found that only 10% of corporate intranet news articles published actually included the words "strategy" or "strategic". Lehmuskallio argues that the exclusion of these distinct words may make it difficult for intranet users to link the issues covered in the news to corporate strategy and to recognize the issues as important ingredients affecting the company's success. Likewise, the intranet in the case company may be used to communicate strategy to some extent, but not explicitly enough to evoke this impression in the users.

Two-way communication

The findings of the present study suggest that two-way communication could be enhanced in the case company. Two thirds of the respondents thought that more channels for open dialogue should be offered. Whether the content of internal mediated communication in the case company, as characterized by Grunig (1992) 'meets the employees' need to know rather than the managements need to tell', is difficult to say on the basis of the present study. However, the comment of the head of internal communications – "you need to be able to ask questions to get them answered" – can be interpreted as willingness to find out what the needs of the employees are.

As discussed in Section 2.1.6, Grunig (1992) suggests that internal corporate communication should be underpinned with symmetrical communication to provide opportunities for dialogue. This is at least to some extent understood in the case company. However, the opportunity for dialogue is embedded in the cascading system, and therefore dialogue takes place with the immediate manager and close team members only. Furthermore, the top management does not seem to appreciate feedback from the lower levels, as the development and implementation of modern web-based tools to generate dialogue is not actively encouraged. Consequently, the employees seem to feel that they rarely have opportunities to get their voice heard by, communicate with, or even be directly informed by, the people on the highest level of the organizational

hierarchy. Collecting and publishing success stories is one effort towards this direction, but the shortcoming of using storytelling as a feedback method is that it calls only for positive messages from the lower levels. Constructive, critical and questioning comments remain in the conversations with the immediate manager, if, in the first place, voiced at all.

To conclude the discussion in this chapter, it seems obvious that today corporate communications faces a challenge keeping up with the changing ways people are using communication technology. For best results, companies should offer their employees similar tools for communication that they are already using in their private lives. The recent boom of the social media has shown that many of the matters we used to consider needed personal presence can be attended to online.

However, this should not be taken to mean that mediated communication can fully replace face-to-face communication. As discussed in section 2.1.3, a mix of old and new styles of communication has been found to be associated with higher performance. In some cases, for example when implementing strategy and building trust, some face to face communication will be needed. As Lehmuskallio (personal communication, March 23, 2010) says, “At some point of strategy implementation you need to go to an employee to explain what is expected of him or her. You cannot implement strategy without face-to-face communication.” The same could be argued about top management communication. Although top management should communicate to the employees directly, eventually it is always the line manager who should be there for the people to answer the questions ‘what does this mean to me?’ and ‘what should I do?’ The CEO, obviously, cannot do that for everyone.

6 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter concludes the thesis by presenting a research summary, suggesting practical implications, discussing the limitations of the study and suggesting further research.

6.1 Research summary

The purpose of this study was to accomplish a better understanding of cross-border managers' views and preferences regarding communication media and strategy communication.

The study was motivated by the general lack of internal communication media research that would consider both virtual leadership conditions and strategy communication. Another motivator was the fast development of communication technology that calls for continuous research in the field of communication media studies. Furthermore, being aware of the media preferences of the audience has become increasingly important and corporate communications need to keep up with the preferences in order to communicate efficiently with the internal stakeholders and get their message across.

The review of previous research in the field of mediated communication created a basis for investigating such questions as how communication channels can be classified, what factors influence channel choice, what is the impact of new technology and what are the roles of line manager and top management communication in relation to other communication channels. Earlier work on strategy communication offered knowledge on strategy communication definitions, methods and channels, as well as the roles of different players inside the organization in the strategy communication and implementation process. The theoretical framework drawn from these studies presented a model of mediated and strategy communication from the cross-border manager perspective. The framework presents the cross-border manager as both an active user of communication media and as a channel in the communication of the strategy.

A mixed method approach was chosen to investigate the perceptions of cross-border managers in a single case study setting. The methods employed for data collection were a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews. The collected data consisted of 3 semi-structured interviews and 65 web survey responses.

The main findings of the study are presented below and they are preceded by the research questions.

In what ways do CBMs use communication media?

The findings of this study suggest that cross-border managers use a variety of communication media, switch between the tools without an effort and also utilize the most recent tools, such as Live Meeting and instant messaging. They are eager to try out new communication tools and quite satisfied with the tools available.

What media do CBM's prefer and why?

The media considered the most useful in daily work are email, mobile phone and face-to-face meetings. The same three media are the most preferred by CBMs as message senders. As receivers, on the other hand, CBMs prefer email, Internet and intranet.

How do CBMs see their role in strategy communication?

The findings of this study suggest that CBM's consider it as their responsibility to make sure their subordinates understand what the corporate strategy means to their department and everybody's tasks and duties.

What are CBMs' views on strategy communication?

One of the main findings of this study was that CBMs prefer the strategy to be communicated by the executive level to everyone in the organization. This was indicated in two ways. First, CBMs prefer to get the information about strategic issues from the top management instead of their immediate supervisor. Second, while half of

them consider cascading as an effective way of communicating strategy, also problems related to message distortion were voiced.

6.2 Practical implications

Cross-border managers are a key asset for Celo. They live one of the corporate values, “One Celo team”, acting as the glue that makes Celo a truly integrated multi-national company where different nationalities work together towards shared goals. Recognizing the challenges of CBMs’ work and supporting them is therefore important for internal communications, the HR-function and to every manager whose subordinates include cross-border managers, starting from the CEO.

The findings of this study suggest that more attention should be paid to supporting the adoption of new communication tools and providing support in their use. This includes communicating corporate support for active utilization of these tools, offering training and solving technical difficulties.

Another implication is that top management communication about strategic issues should be increased. Cross-border managers prefer to be informed about strategic issues by the CEO or Group Executive Management. Therefore, it is suggested to continue the current method of cascading in the implementation of the strategy as it offers arenas for dialogue about more specific aspects of the strategy. However, to offset the main limitation of this method, message distortion, and to increase the dialogue between the top management and line managers, top management communication could be increased.

It is also suggested to utilize the intranet more effectively in strategy communication. Efforts could be made to develop the company intranet towards a more strategic tool. As Kuivalahti & Luukkonen (2003, p. 49) point out, intranet allows sharing the same exact contents and quality of strategy communication among all employees. To get the full benefit, this means not only utilizing the intranet better in introducing and

communicating the content of the strategy, but also in communication that supports strategy implementation. As discussed in section 2.21, according to Hämäläinen & Maula (2004) this kind of communication consists of three things: (1) everyday work communication through which members of the organization are supported in their work tasks and every day activities are aligned with strategy; (2) communication about the strategy-based changes in the organizational structure, processes and working practices (3) the collection of initiatives and feedback from the employees.

The final suggestion is to make efforts to increase opportunities for dialogue in Celo. Gathering success stories and piloting the commenting-feature of the intranet are a good start; the company could, however, go one step further and for instance organize chat-sessions with the CEO, as interviewee B suggested.

6.3 Limitations of the study

Although the number of participants in this study, 65, is quite a good sample size, it is still a small number (19%) in comparison to the number of cross-border managers working for the company, which totals about 350. However, as was shown in Section 4.1, the sample seems to represent the entire population fairly well. It can be argued that as the participants represented all the Nordic countries, age groups and organizational hierarchical levels, the generalizability of the findings to the entire group of Celo CBMs could be discussed.

The data collection method of the survey may have affected both the number and characteristics of the participants in this survey. The most common way to approach the target group of a web survey would be to send an email invitation. In this study, since the case company wants to avoid survey fatigue by restraining the use of email invitations only to the annual employee satisfaction survey, this method was not an option. Instead, an intranet news article was used to approach the target group. The limitations stemming from this method are twofold. First, we do not know if all cross-border managers in the company are subscribed to the 'HR news for managers' -news

channel, where the invitation was published. Even if they are, the news is only visible for a couple of days after it is published. After that, the constant flow of newer news has pushed this particular news article out of sight. A cross-border manager could have been on a work trip for those days, checking the intranet only occasionally and might have missed the survey. Second, although all cross-border managers in Celo have access to intranet, one could argue that some less active intranet users may have missed the survey.

Another limitation of this study relates to the survey design. It turned out that question number 10 in section C of the survey, which asked about communication tool preferences, was not completely unambiguous. Feedback from four respondents expressed in open comments stated that the question was misleading, had strange scale definitions and was difficult to fill in. The question was designed in a way that the actual 'questions' were on the vertical axis, and the respondents were advised to choose proper options from the list of communication media provided on the horizontal axis. It seems that this distracted some of the respondents, who perhaps were used to having the scale on vertical lines and questions or statements on the horizontal lines, causing them to misinterpret the instructions and mislead their answers. Consequently, the findings from this question may have been distorted and should be interpreted with caution.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

The present study suggests at least three directions for further research. First, a similar study with another internal stakeholder group (for instance employees or local managers) in focus would offer useful insight about their perceptions and preferences that could be compared with the findings of this study. This would be useful in understanding better the findings of this study. For instance, perhaps the most unexpected finding of this study was that CBM's prefer top management over their immediate manager in delivering strategy message. As the role of line managers as a communication channel is often emphasized, this raises a question whether communication by line managers is in general losing its favorability in the eyes of

subordinates or if this is a special preference of cross-border managers, or managers in higher hierarchical ranks (as suggested by Pincus, see page 25). In the case of CBM's, a possible interpretation of this finding could for instance be that they are less 'attached' to their immediate manager, who in most cases is situated in another country, and therefore do not favor them as much as communication channels. But in order to make such suggestions, the area would need to be researched more.

Second, possible further studies could apply McLuhan's (1984) ideas to company internal communication and concentrate on how the communication channel exactly influences individual user's perception of the message. Third, as new technological solutions continuously change the way communication channels are perceived and used, further studies of mediated communication are needed to keep up with the developments.

To conclude, the topic of the present study has proved to be current but at the same time, will, to some extent, become obsolete in a few years time. However, just like the fax machine was an evolutionary step in the development of electronic communication and studies concerning it are today credited for contributing in the development of the Business Communication field of research, it is hoped that this study can also take its place as a small building block in the discipline of International Business Communication by offering a small piece of knowledge for business research and practice.

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Appendix 1 – Invitation letter to semi-structured interviews

Hi

My name is Päivi Blom and I study International Business Communication at the Helsinki School of Economics. Currently I am on a study leave from my work as a training manager in Contact Centre Finland to finish my master's degree.

For my master's thesis I am conducting a research on Celo's internal communications and will use cross-border managers within the company as my primary data source. The research will be done in two phases

A) Semi-structured interviews (October 2009)

B) eSurvey (January 2010)

For the first phase, I would like to interview you for one hour by phone on the date and time specified in this calendar booking.

The objectives of the interview are

- to gain a better understanding of the work of a cross-border manager in Celo today especially from the communications point of view.
- to explore their opinions of the challenges of their work and the special needs they have
- to find out about their media preferences and their views of the contents and channels of incoming information
- to look for any findings that could be used for improving the internal communications in the future.

The aim is to express your opinion and ideas about internal communications and working as a cross-border manager, instead of replying to specific questions.

The interview session will be informal and the results will be used anonymously in the research. The interview will be recorded. The results of the research will be used when planning the future internal communication activities in Celo.

Looking forward to having the possibility to talk with you.

With best regards

Päivi

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Appendix 2 – Interview framework for cross-border manager interviews

1. Background information

- Name
- Age
- Nationality
- Title and Position
- Responsibilities
- Job history at Celo
- Level of hierarchy

2. Working as a cross-border manager

- Describe your current team (how many, in what countries etc.)
- Differences compared to being a local manager
- Challenges for managerial work and communication
- How these have been or should be taken into account
- What kind of support, if any, would be needed

3. Information channels

- Name the information channels you prefer / consider most important
 - a) for receiving / finding information
 - b) for communicating with your subordinates, boss and colleagues
- How does the subject of the message affect the channel you choose/prefer?
- How should internally used electronic media develop in order to support your work more?

4. Any other matters worth highlighting

Appendix 3 – Interview framework for the strategy-related interview

1. STRATEGY WORK

Please tell us about the strategy work in Celo.

- Who does the strategy work? Are the employees involved, and if, how?
- Is there only one big strategy or also different local strategies?
- When was strategy last formulated or modified? Have you made any major changes on the strategy after the financial crises and if, what?
- How does the CEO see the role of communication in strategy formulation and implementation?

2. CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS FUNCTION

- Do corporate communications play a role in the strategic planning? Has a communication executive a seat in the executive committee?
- Is there a communication strategy, and if there is, can you provide it to us or share the main points?
- Is there an internal communication strategy?
- Would you say Celo has an integrated approach to communication?

3. STRATEGY COMMUNICATION

- What is the goal of strategy communication?
- Describe the strategy communication practices in Celo (concepts, tools, techniques, social routines etc.)
- Hämmäläinen & Maula (2001) state that there is three aspects of strategy communication:
 1. Communication about the content of strategy
 2. Communication that supports the realization of the strategy
 3. Communication about the strategy processWould you agree? What kind of practices related to these you have?
- Is storytelling used in strategy communication? If, how?

4. STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

- How is strategy implemented? What is the role that each of these groups play in strategy implementation
 - CEO / top management
 - Line managers
 - Communication function
 - Are there other important players?
- Which communication channels are used in the implementation? Are they one-way or two-way? How are the appropriate channels chosen?
- If cascading technique is used in the implementation, how is it ensured that the message does not change along the way?

Appendix 4 – Intranet news article about the survey

Published in 'HR news for managers' –news channel on Monday January 18, 2010

Voice your opinion as a cross-border manager

Dear manager,

We turn to you in order to find out about communication preferences of cross-border managers. If you have people reporting to you in another country, please give us 10-15 minutes of your valuable time and answer the questions through the attached link. The results will help us to further improve internal communication tools at Celo.

The aim of the study is to find out how cross-border managers use communication tools in their daily work and what their preferences are about communication channels available today. In addition, the survey will ask about your views concerning new media, two-way communication and strategy communication. Most of the questions will be multiple choice and relatively quick to answer. Your responses will be anonymous. The survey is available only in English.

Thank you in advance for taking the time for providing this important information to us. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact N.N., Internal communications.

Enter the survey by using the link below. Please answer as soon as possible, 26.1.2010 at the latest.

(Link to the survey)

Appendix 5 – Survey questionnaire

1 of 4 pages

Communication survey for cross-border managers

Welcome to a survey for cross-border managers in . The survey has four parts and takes about 10-15 minutes to complete. Please answer all the questions and click the "Submit" button on the last page. Thank you!

A. Background information

1) Where do you work? *

- Finland
- Sweden
- Norway
- Denmark
- other

2) Are the people reporting to you (i.e. your subordinates) *

- all situated in the same country as your place of work
- some or all situated in other country/countries than your place of work

3) On which level of 's organizational hierarchy are you situated? (1=GEM, 2=people reporting to GEM members, 3=people reporting to level 2, etc.) *

- 1 or 2
- 3 or 4
- 5, 6 or 7
- I don't know

4) What is your age? *

- Under 35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56 or over

Next-->



Communication survey for cross-border managers

B. Communication activity

5) How many emails per day do you send on average?

- Fewer than five
- Between 5 and 20
- Between 21 and 40
- More than 40

6) How many emails per day do you receive on average?

- Fewer than five
- Between 5 and 20
- Between 21 and 40
- More than 40

7) How many percent of them (received emails) require an action or reply?

- About 25 %
- About 50 %
- About 75 %
- Close to 100 %

8) How many times during a day do you visit the Intranet?

- I don't use it daily
- Once or twice
- A few times
- Several times

9) What percentage of your time at work do you spend communicating (email, telephone, meetings, face-to-face conversations etc)?

- Less than 25 %
- 25-50 %
- 51-75 %
- Over 75 %

Next -->



Communication survey for cross-border managers

C. Communication media usage and preferences

10) Please select 1-3 options from the list of communication media for each question.

	Consider most useful in my daily work	Prefer as sender of information	Prefer as receiver of information	Will be using more in the future
Common repository / G-drive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discussion forum (Sharepoint)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E-mail	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Face-to-face meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instant messaging (Office communicator)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Intranet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mobile phone for calls	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mobile phone for SMS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Net-meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shared web-based workspace (Office communicator and Live Meeting)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Telephone (desk phone)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teleconference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Traditional memorandum or report (a Word file or a PowerPoint)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Virtual meeting (Video- connection)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Video clip	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Voicemail	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11) From whom would you like to get information relating to HR matters?

- From your dedicated HR partner
- From the local HR Services organisation
- From your own boss
- From an appointed administrative head in your unit

12) How would you like to get information relating to HR-matters (i.e. matters relating to human resources, your employees, union agreements, organisational changes etc.)?

- Intranet
- email
- phone
- meeting

13) From whom would you like to get information relating to _____'s strategic approach?

- From your own boss
- From _____'s CEO or a GEM member on video or live presentation
- From an appointed administrative head in your unit
- From somebody else, who

14) How would you like to get information relating to _____'s strategic approach?

- Intranet
- email
- phone
- meeting

Next -->



Communication survey for cross-border managers

D. Your views

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements on a scale 1 to 5, where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree.

15) Communication tools usage and attitudes

	1	2	3	4	5
In general, I am satisfied with the communication tools available	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use the Intranet mainly to reach other tools and solutions (phonebook, Time & Travel etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is difficult to select which communication tool to use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I suffer from an e-mail overload	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think that that tools for social media, for instance Facebook, would result in diminished effectiveness, if actively used at work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm eager to try out new communication technologies and tools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16) Being a cross-border manager

	1	2	3	4	5
All in all it is more demanding to be a cross-border manager	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think we have good support for working at a distance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Differences related to people's cultural background are not an issue in cross-border teams	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The challenges of being a cross-border manager relate mainly to less face-to-face contact	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Succeeding as a cross-border manager just requires the right mindset for the job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17) Two-way communication

	1	2	3	4	5
Upward communication (from lower levels of hierarchy upwards) is encouraged and appreciated at	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have communication channels to put forward comments and get feedback on suggestions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More channels for open dialogue within the bank should be offered	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18) Strategy communication

	1	2	3	4	5
The Intranet is effectively used for communicating strategy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel I can contribute to strategy formation at	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cascading (team meetings with manager at each organizational level, starting from the top) is an effective way of communicating strategy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is the line manager's responsibility to make sure their subordinates understand what the strategy means to their department and everybody's tasks and duties.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel well informed about how I can contribute to achieving 's goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19) Please feel free to express any comments or ideas related to the topics covered on this survey.

Submit

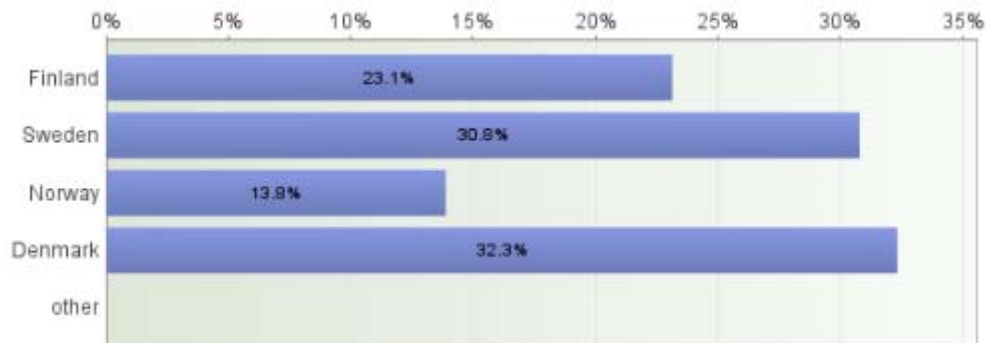


Appendix 6 – Survey findings summary

Communication survey for cross-border managers

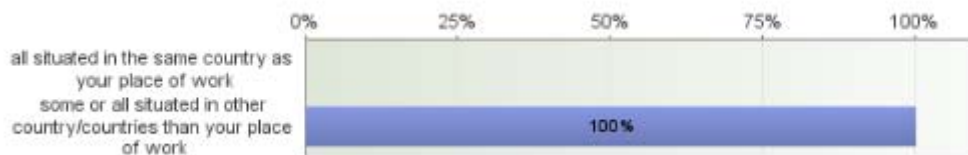
1. Where do you work?

Number of respondents: 65



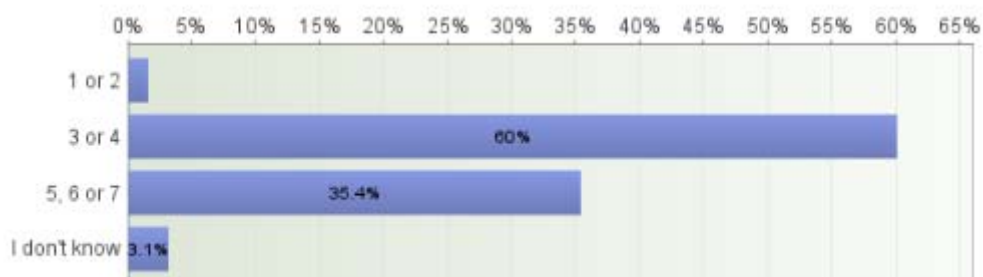
2. Are the people reporting to you (i.e. your subordinates)

Number of respondents: 65



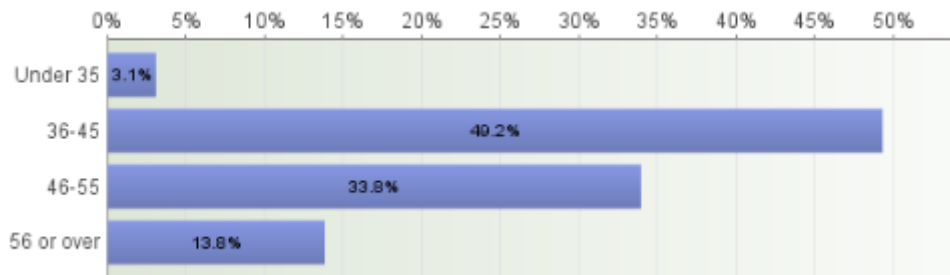
3. On which level of Celo's organizational hierarchy are you situated? (1=GEM, 2=people reporting to GEM members, 3=people reporting to level 2, etc.)

Number of respondents: 65



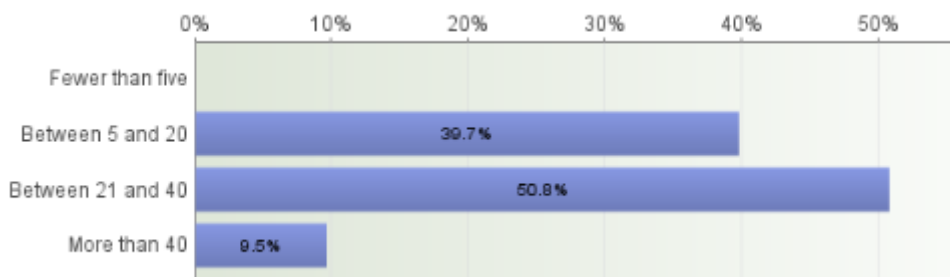
4. What is your age?

Number of respondents: 65



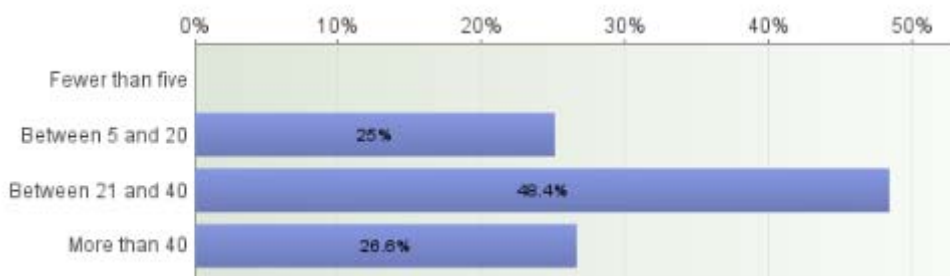
5. How many emails per day do you send on average?

Number of respondents: 63



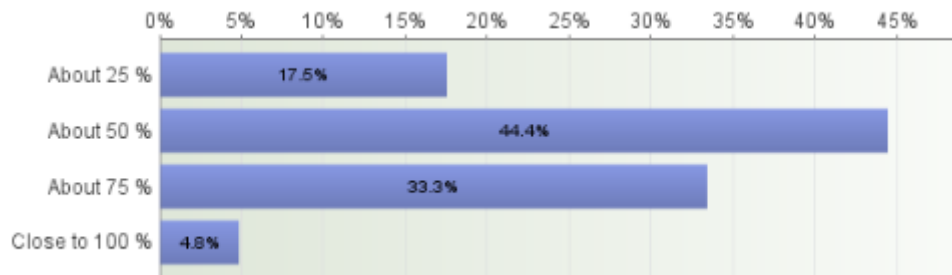
6. How many emails per day do you receive on average?

Number of respondents: 64



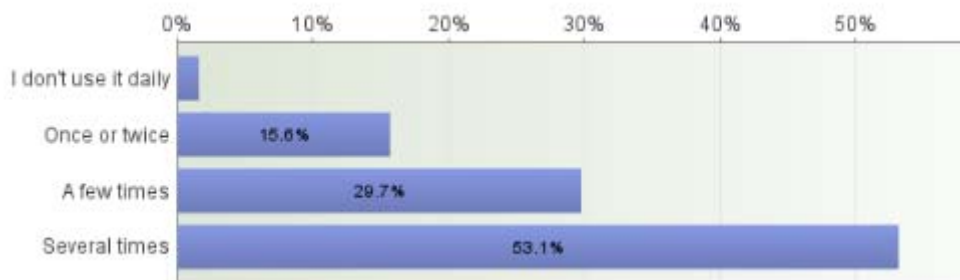
7. How many percent of them (received emails) require an action or reply?

Number of respondents: 63



8. How many times during a day do you visit the Celo intranet?

Number of respondents: 64



9. What percentage of your time at work do you spend communicating (email, telephone, meetings, face-to-face conversations etc)?

Number of respondents: 64



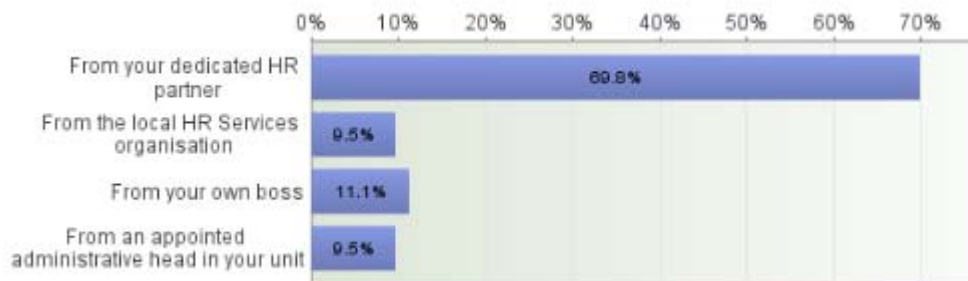
10. Please select 1-3 options from the list of communication media for each question.

Number of respondents: 61

	Prefer as sender of information	Prefer as receiver of information	Will be using more in the future	Consider most useful in my daily work	Total
Common repository / G-drive	5	14	14	5	38
Discussion forum (SharePoint)	10	16	31	10	67
E-mail	25	24	1	56	106
Face-to-face meeting	18	15	7	37	77
Instant messaging (Office communicator)	9	9	29	20	67
Intranet	6	22	2	25	55
Internet	5	23	3	16	47
Mobile phone for calls	22	18	2	46	88
Mobile phone for SMS	14	14	5	27	60
Net-meeting	6	9	21	18	54
Shared web-based workspace (Office communicator with a Live Meeting)	10	11	38	21	80
Telephone (desk phone)	7	9	2	18	36
Teleconference	8	10	4	33	55
Traditional memorandum or report (a Word file or a PowerPoint)	18	21	1	17	57
Virtual meeting (Video-connection)	7	6	21	10	44
Video clip	3	8	15	1	27
Voicemail	5	6	8	6	25

11. From whom would you like to get information relating to HR matters?

Number of respondents: 63



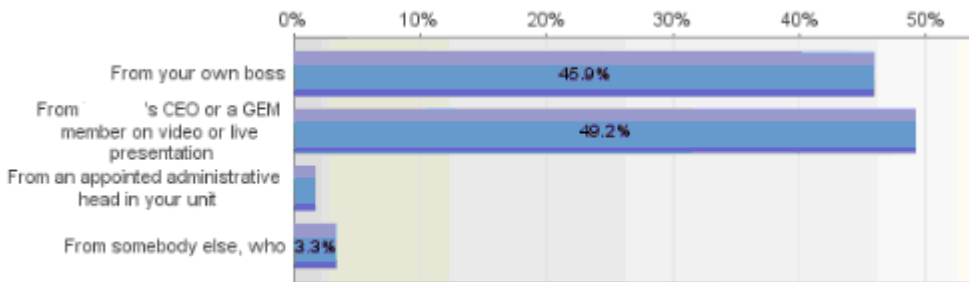
12. How would you like to get information relating to HR-matters (i.e. matters relating to human resources, your employees, union agreements, organisational changes etc.)?

Number of respondents: 63



13. From whom would you like to get information relating to Celo's strategic approach?

Number of respondents: 61

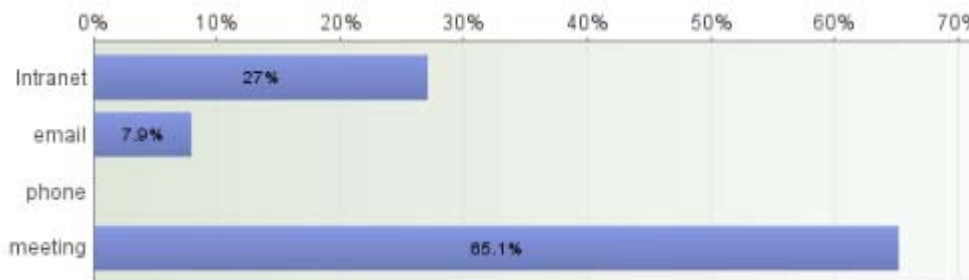


Open text answers: From somebody else, who

- depending situation. CEO/GEM member on holistic terms, in specific terms from own boss
- own boss and CEO/GEM

14. How would you like to get information relating to Celo's strategic approach?

Number of respondents: 63



15. Communication tools usage and attitudes

Number of respondents: 63

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	av.	Median
In general, I am satisfied with the communication tools available	0 %	9.5 %	33.3 %	47.6 %	9.5 %	63	3.6	4
I use the intranet mainly to reach other tools and solutions (phonebook, Time & Travel etc)	3.2 %	23.8 %	36.5 %	34.9 %	1.6 %	63	3.1	3
It is difficult to select which communication tool to use	23.8 %	34.9 %	22.2 %	15.9 %	3.2 %	63	2.4	2
I suffer from an e-mail overload	0 %	23.8 %	20.6 %	31.7 %	23.8 %	63	3.6	4
I think that that tools for social media, for instance Facebook, would result in diminished effectiveness, if actively used at work	12.7 %	27 %	30.2 %	12.7 %	17.5 %	63	3	3
I'm eager to try out new communication technologies and tools	1.6 %	4.8 %	14.3 %	33.3 %	46 %	63	4.2	4

16. Being a cross-border manager

Number of respondents: 63

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	av.	Median
All in all it is more demanding to be a cross-border manager	0 %	3.2 %	4.8 %	27 %	65.1 %	63	4.5	5
I think we have good support for working at a distance	11.1 %	19 %	39.7 %	27 %	3.2 %	63	2.9	3
Differences related to people's cultural background are not an issue in cross-border teams	15.9 %	42.9 %	17.5 %	15.9 %	7.9 %	63	2.6	2
The challenges of being a cross-border manager relate mainly to less face-to-face contact	4.8 %	11.3 %	21 %	41.9 %	21 %	62	3.6	4
Succeeding as a cross-border manager just requires the right mindset for the job.	3.2 %	4.8 %	30.6 %	40.3 %	21 %	62	3.7	4

17. Two-way communication

Number of respondents: 63

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	av.	Median
Upward communication (from lower levels of hierarchy upwards) is encouraged and appreciated at Celo.	1.6 %	19 %	30.2 %	36.5 %	12.7 %	63	3.4	3
We have communication channels to put forward comments and get feedback on suggestions	6.3 %	20.6 %	42.9 %	28.6 %	1.6 %	63	3	3
More channels for open dialogue within the bank should be offered	3.2 %	6.3 %	25.4 %	42.9 %	22.2 %	63	3.7	4

18. Strategy communication

Number of respondents: 63

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	av.	Median
The Celo intranet is effectively used for communicating strategy	4.8 %	33.3 %	31.7 %	27 %	3.2 %	63	2.9	3
I feel I can contribute to strategy formation at Celo	4.8 %	22.6 %	22.6 %	45.2 %	4.8 %	62	3.2	4
Cascading (team meetings with manager at each organizational level, starting from the top) is an effective way of communicating strategy	7.9 %	9.5 %	30.2 %	36.5 %	15.9 %	63	3.4	4
It is the line manager's responsibility to make sure their subordinates understand what the strategy means to their department and everybody's tasks and duties.	0 %	3.2 %	11.1 %	44.4 %	41.3 %	63	4.2	4
I feel well informed about how I can contribute to achieving Celo's goals	0 %	4.8 %	11.1 %	73 %	11.1 %	63	3.9	4

19. Please feel free to express any comments or ideas related to the topics covered on this survey.

Number of respondents: 20

(Responses to this question are referred to as open field comments and discussed in Chapter 4.)