Where is the heart?

- A qualitative study on how storytelling and transparency can be used to strengthen an organizational culture

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A study by Marielle Dittmer and Mikaela Hutzelmann- Persson
Summary

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Title: Where is the heart? - A qualitative study on how storytelling and transparency can be used to strengthen an organizational culture

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Background: Today’s changing society demands changing organizations. Change is a natural state and in order to stay competitive on the market organizations must develop. During change, the organizational culture might damage, which can affect the organizational environment and employees negatively. Stories and storytelling bring people together and the implementation of this strategy might have positive effects on organizational cultures. In times of change information must spread throughout the entire organization, internal transparency can ease the spread and ensure that all concerned receive the information.

Problem: This study is based on a case company where the culture is damaged due to major organizational changes. How can storytelling and transparency strengthen the present culture and unite the workforce?

Methodology: Hermeneutic and abductive approach, qualitative, semi-structured interviews.

Conclusions: Storytelling and internal transparency is two strategies which may advantageously complement each other in order to strengthen the organization culture and provide a good foundation in the making of a united workforce. By helping the case company illuminate the heart of the organization, their products, they can gather around shared key values.

Key words: Organizational change, Organizational culture, Transparency, Storytelling, Corporate Storytelling.
Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to clarify the prerequisites of working with storytelling and transparency within the chosen case company and find a suitable way of implementing these as an internal strategy in order to strengthen the organizational culture within the case company, and by time, create shared values between the current subcultures. The diversion in forms of subcultures within the organization is a consequence of a major organizational change the case company faced a couple of years ago, a change that still makes itself remindful within the organization.

The results showed that the case company is in a stage today where they need to work strategic internally within their organization in order to move forward in the development of the organizational change they have gone, and still are going, through. The company has, in the current situation the possibility to, by working with storytelling and transparency, create a safer culture, more satisfied employees and find the heart of the organization, they all feel they can gather around. This opens up to a more transparent environment within the organization, strengthening the organizational culture and creates possibilities to move forward from the organizational change and develop a new united culture.

It became clear during the interviews that the respondents values two things more than others; their products and the stories behind their products, which some referred to as the heart of the company, and this inspired the title of this thesis.

As the concepts of storytelling and transparency are continuously emerging due to the changing environment the results of this thesis could go out of date in the nearest future. The findings and the results is as up to date as possible when written, with some reservation for background research on the subject.
Many thanks to...

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Gothenburg, May 2013.

Sincerely,

Marielle Dittmer & Mikaela Hutzelmann - Persson
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1. Introduction

This initial section of the thesis presents the topic of this study, beginning with a brief presentation of the background of the different main areas the study is based upon. The background evolves into a problem discussion that provides the purpose of this study followed by the research questions. Finally, an outline is presented, explaining how the thesis is structured.

1.2 Background

“It is always like that in all kind of changes, big or small, you can become a father, get a divorce, meet someone new or whatever, but you will always have your own path to go, that you try to combine with other peoples path through life, regardless of your relation.”

(Respondent 2, 2013)

Change is a natural component of life, exactly like the quote above states, no matter if you want to be part of it or not. Changes are an inevitable state, necessary for our developments sake, both as individuals and as a society. Thanks to the changing environment we have reached very far in our evolution and change can occur naturally or planned, conscious or unconscious. The importance of change is also part of the organizational life cycle, organizations must adapt to the moving environment in order to keep up and survive; an organization that is completely static will eventually die out by being outcompeted (Bolman & Deal; 2005:119; Cornelissen, 2011: 215). Some organizational changes are planned and some comes naturally, as a result of changes in society, and it is important to keep in mind that organizations are living functions (Schuler, 2002:267; Van de Ven & Sun, 2011:58). Organizations expand fusion and change in order to meet the fluctuations and keep their competitiveness in the market. In change, the employees’, usually safe and steady environment, is affected and tumult might occur (Schuler, 2002: 258). There will always be different reactions towards change and there will be different feelings and opinions by the people involved (Powell & Posner, 1978: 29). Larger transitions and a number of changes in a short period of time are most likely to generate different point of views that are followed by problems (Cornelissen, 2011:215). In some situations there is no more than one option in order to develop, in these circumstances it is important to involve and inform the employees in order to make them feel heard. When involving the employees the chances of making them positive towards the change increases, when keeping them in the shadow they are most likely turning against the change out of fear and anxiety (Cox, Edström & Vidlund, 1970: 40). It is easier to convince an united group of people, with shared values and opinions, since they will be better involved in the change and ensure that the organization's culture is changing along with the organization. This to make sure no change takes place in the old culture with the new culture in mind (Balogun & Hope Hailey, 2004:138).
Organizational culture is often affected by organizational changes, and can be seen as one of the strongest barriers faced during the implementation of change. The potential barriers that the existing culture might create must be taken under consideration, the management must map what the barriers are and how they can come across them (Balogun & Hope Hailey, 2004:138). An organization's corporate culture serves as the glue that holds the organization together, it permeates the organization and both sets the tone in the company and support employees in their work. Over time, each organization develops own values, opinions and patterns. Many of these are at an unconscious level amongst the organizations employees and they are often expressed through stories, rituals ceremonies, myths or other symbolic forms (Alvesson, 2002: 32; Bolman & Deal, 2003: 298; Hofstede, 1991: 227; Bang, 1999: 64-75).

Stories affect the society in how people act and create meaning. What affects the society also affects organizations, not to mention that changes in the market affects the companies operating there. Corporate storytelling may be used as a helping tool for companies to make them unique in a competitive market. If the company is able to find their special history that distinguishes them from their competitors, they get an enhanced competitiveness (Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008:17). Another important strategy that might increase the competitiveness is transparency. Transparent organizations open up to the outsiders, on a certain degree decided by the managerial group, in order to keep them informed and give them an opportunity to give feedback to the organization (Cornelissen, 2011: 65; Florini, 2007:5).

Effectively use of corporate storytelling and transparency does not have to be complicated; it does however require training and a changed way of thinking (Binneman, 2011: 25; Denning, 2006: 43). According to Dennisdotter & Axenbrant (2008) storytelling is a powerful tool in marketing and human relations since a story is easier to spread to a larger crowd and hard for competitors to copy as the quote below states:

“It is just to find the stories and figure out how to set them to work. Whoever tells the best story, wins.”

(Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008:9)

There are many different directions to take when using the strategic tool of corporate storytelling. In order to implement corporate storytelling successfully, different telling patterns needs to be related to different corporate purposes, therefore it is highly important to focus on specific business purposes to be able to achieve them with this strategic tool. Hence, your purpose with storytelling should shape the content of the story (Denning, 2006: 47).
1.3 Problem discussion

Parts of the current market include intense competition where financial problems, tough scrutiny and measurements are a large part of organizations everyday life. Previously, soft approaches have had much larger space in businesses. Employees did not all have sophisticated titles and all companies did not have explicit hierarchy (Bang, 1999: 15-16). The current market demands companies to constantly move forward, by changing and evolving and change has become a common way of life (Balogun & Hope Hailey, 2004:1; Kotler, Wong, Saunders, Armstrong: 2005:33). In order to handle the evolving environment organizations must be creative and innovative; it is therefore of great importance that the management opens up for new ideas and thoughts brought up by the organizational followers, both internal and external (Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009: 256). If the company cannot handle this, drastic action is required in order to secure the company's survival. Mergers and acquisitions have been increasing as well as strategic alliances, in order to compete on an expanding market (Balogun & Hope Hailey, 2004:1; Kotler et al. 2005:33).

It is not unusual with clashes between the different organizational cultures, when a family company, characterized by soft approaches and an entirely flat hierarchy becomes acquired by a larger corporation, with strict hierarchy and where measurements and evaluations characterize the organization (Bang, 1999: 38; Alvesson, 2009: 239-240). Organizations, largely determined by budget and calculations, can develop and reproduce a culture that places great emphasis on the measurable and rituals around them. Culture is receiving much attention in many companies despite that a deeper knowledge of it is missing, it is as important factor, however complex and difficult to understand and use in a meaningful way (Alvesson, 2009: 7).

Culture is a phenomenon that is important to investigate in and understand since it is regarded as a prerequisite for the creation of competitive advantage (Grönroos, 2008:393). Cultures that desperate hold on to old thinking and stories might have a negative effect on the new organization. Retaining the past can be negative among employees when too much focus is taken away from the present and the future. However, to completely let go of the old organizational identification, could lead to an identity crisis. An organization's history defines where the company is today, and important values and norms can be communicated through stories, myths, legends and can also function as cultural taxidermist (Alvesson, 2009: 68). Bringing two different cultures into one and finding common values and beliefs to share within the new organization is highly complex (Alvesson, 2009: 205-206). It is also important to keep in mind that new media channels has resulted in that we every day are bombarded by messages and propaganda which might result in a saturation amongst individuals (Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008:8). Social media is however a good channel to promote the company since it reaches a big crowd. The negative side effect is that the social media is hard to control; companies must work hard if they want to keep up with all the comments that flourish in these channels. A way of provide against eventual negative sayings is to open up and be more transparent. This inspires confidence and trust and if the company shares
both positive and negative information they will most certainly be viewed as a trustworthy organization (Binneman, 2011: 25; Cornelissen, 2011: 59; Garsten & Lindh De Montoya, 2008: 83).

How is the case company going to implement this new organizational approach? In what ways can they spread information? How can they open up and be more transparent? At first internally and in the future, externally? Most organizations suffer from information overload, as a result employees face constant meetings, phone calls, emails, text messages, training sessions, hallway discussions etcetera, all attempting to catch their full attention. It is therefore of great important to find the right channel that captivates the employees and ease the understanding of the communicated message, this may be done by finding something of great value to the employees in order to ensure that the information does not pass unnoticed (Snowden, 1999: 36).

This thesis will hopefully contribute with new, important knowledge within this area. The study aims at illustrating how storytelling can be used as an internal strategic tool to strengthen the organizational culture and contribute to a more transparent information flow within the company. Furthermore, a picture of how the corporate culture looks today, after the major organizational change that the organization faced, is viewed, followed by an analysis of how storytelling and transparency can be used to strengthen the organizational culture. Is there a gap in the organization suitable for an implementation of storytelling and transparency? How are the employees’ sentiments towards such implementations? How can a more transparent environment help improve the information flow? What are the values and stories that everyone in this new organization, can gather around?

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to highlight the prerequisites within the case company, to implement storytelling and transparency as an internal strategy, so as to create shared values between the subcultures that prevails in the organization today, with the aim of enhancing the common organizational culture in order to let it grow into a new culture with features of both ancient history and new contributions.

This study does not seek to provide answers to the effects or practical work with storytelling and transparency, only how the concept of corporate storytelling and internal transparency may be used internally by employees of the case company studied in this thesis.
1.5 Research questions

- How has the major organizational change affected the organizational culture that existed within the company before the merger, and what is the organizational culture like in the present?

- How can transparency and storytelling contribute to a strengthened and improved organizational culture and, with time, create a united workforce?

1.6 Disposition

The thesis aim at highlighting storytelling and transparency, used as an internal strategic tool to find, and then communicate, shared values within the company in order to strengthen the organizational culture and find something to gather around. Below follows a short description of the different chapters and what they comprise.

In order to explain and demonstrate how far the academic research has gone within this area, a detailed description of the theoretical framework and previous research is provided. This chapter presents theories of organizational change, organizational culture, storytelling and transparency. Initially, a short definition of the key concepts is described in order to prepare the reader with some overall knowledge. This section is intended to provide a solid foundation to the following chapters.

The methodology chapter will give a description of the methodological starting points used in this thesis. The choice of the hermeneutic approach, qualitative case study and abductive approach will be thoroughly motivated. It also contains a description of the study object and the selection of respondents.

An analysis of the results will be described in the empirical analysis chapter and the analysis will be discussed in relation to the theoretical basis previously presented. The chapter called discussion will provide answers to the research question based on the findings in the empirical analysis. The final chapter will give a conclusion of this thesis and put the study in a larger context in order to show the thesis contribution to the academic research field. Last but not least, some further research proposals will be presented.
2. Theoretical framework

In this section the theories that outline this study will be presented. Initially follows a short definition of some important concepts connected to this topic in order to give the reader preknowledge about these. Further, the reader is provided with deeper, elaborated information about the main concepts of this thesis.

2.1 Concepts definitions

To facilitate the reading of this study, we describe our approach to some key concepts that arise in the essay. This thesis will be based on the short definitions that follow below.

Organizational change:
Organizational change is a strategic tool, used in organizations, to ensure that changes are being successfully implemented amongst the employees, and to guarantee that the benefits of the change are achieved and lasts (Cornelissen, 2011).

Organizational culture:
The organizational culture of an organization is the shared values, beliefs and behaviors that contribute to their singular environment, both psychological and social. The culture does further include experiences, expectations and interactions with the society, based on attitudes and unwritten and written rules that evolve with the organization (Shein, 1990).

Transparency:
Transparency as a strategy used within a company means that the company lack of concealed conditions and agendas, stakeholders and customers have the availability to receive full information. In other words, a state where the stakeholders image of the organization is similar to the projected and actual conformance of a particular organization (Florini, 2007).

Storytelling:
Storytelling is all about creating stories and mediate pass them on; presented as stories, myths or fables, and it can be oral, written and even in form of pictures (Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008). The concept of storytelling is part of a broader research area called narratives (Boje 1991).

Corporate storytelling:
Corporate storytelling aims at using storytelling to create stories in and about the corporation, either verbally or written, such as myths, fables or images. A good story is an important strategic component of the organizations corporate culture and can be used both with both internal and external purposes (Denning, 2006).
2.2 Organizational change

Organizational change is a long-term effort, controlled by management, made with the purpose of improving the organization's efficiency (Madsen, 2009: 644; Wendell & Cecil, 1990: 17). This state can be viewed from two perspectives, either from the point of view of the people affected by the change or by the point of view of the person behind the decision of making changes. Regardless of starting point it is proved that all organizations are constantly changing and evolving, consciously and unconsciously. It is common that change is followed by problems within the organization and employees might have different perspectives on the transition, especially if the organization is undergoing a number of changes over a relatively short period of time. (Cornelissen, 2011: 215; Mack, Nelson & Quick, 1998: 220; Schuler, 2002: 267; Van de Ven & Sun, 2011: 58) Changes are mostly driven by structural, technological or people related variables, sometimes it is a combination of the three, they can come up by impulse or by accident and, in some cases, even be forced on to an organization (Burnes, 2000: 264; Powell & Posner, 1978: 29). The underlying factors varies, common causes might be expansion or merger, technical changes or low profitability, and it is common that adversity triggers change (Bennis, 1966: 255; Bolman & Deal; 2005: 119; Clegg, Kornberger & Pitsis, 2007: 114; Granberg, 2003: 586; Granberg, 2011: 744; Mack et al. 1998: 220, Morgan & Zeffane, 2003: 57). No matter which factor that triggers the initial change, innovation and creativity is a determinant every organization needs to survive, some cultures can however stanch the development of innovation and creativity within the organization (Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009: 256). A mature organization can no longer expand if the product market is saturated or if the products are outdated. In this situations, a change in the organization is necessary, as well as the shared assumptions and values. This might be difficult since the organizational members prefer to hold on to the current values (Heide, Johansson & Simonsson, 2012: 53).

2.2.1 Reactions to change

Change, in general, usually evokes passive reactions or strong resistance as a result of uncertainty connected to the changing situation (Cox et al, 1970: 40; James & Minnis, 2004: 28; Powell & Posner, 1978: 31). Resistance to change is usually based on uncertainty, when employees no longer know that they have an obvious position in the company they might feel insecure; unknown situations is often connected to fear regardless of the situation. Lack of information regarding the change might lead to a divided picture of the change, which in turn, might lead to rumors developing within the organization (Powell & Posner, 1978: 31). In such situations, change can cause aggression and confusion among employees because they might feel that they are not valued and trusted by the management. It is important to ensure that the employees understand why the change is implemented otherwise it can be difficult to get them involved instead of resistance advantageous (Bolman & Deal, 2005: 129; Cornelissen, 2011: 215; Granberg; 2003: 587; Granberg, 2011: 746; Mack et al. 1998: 221; Morgan & Zeffane, 2003: 57; Rubenowitz, 2004: 118). People undergoing change, whether it is in the workplace or not, has got one thing in common; they often feel that the security they
are familiar with changes and disappears and their reaction is not possible to predict, simply because everyone experiences change differently, and it is therefore important to analyze the differences among employees. Some employees see the possibilities that follow with changes; some do not, because they want things to be like they have always been. Some prefer to stay in the organization whilst some decide to leave (Angelöw, 2010: 11, Bolman & Deal, 2005: 482; Granberg, 2003: 588; Granberg, 2011: 747; Schuler, 2002: 262). When going through organizational change, individuals within the organization will experience a transition phase. Organizations only change if the individuals in it change (Balogun & Hope Hailey, 2004: 140-145). Following figure illustrates the concept of the transition curve and the linking between organizational and individual change.

![Transition Curve](image)

**Figure 1**: Linking organizational and individual change, Balogun & Hope Hailey (2004: 145).

Managers do have an important role in changing situations, if they believe that their employees will resist the change they enter with a narrow mind which might lead to a point where they are not open to hear and interpret the comments communicated by their staff. If this occurs managers might lose respect and trust amongst their employees, a state that is hard to repair and that most often lead to hesitation and skepticism amongst the employees. In this situation it is difficult to turn the employees since they no longer believe that the change might have beneficial effects, not only for the organization, but for the members in it as well (James & Minnis, 2004: 28; Powell & Posner, 1978: 33).
2.2.2 Communicating change

For an organizational change to be implemented pliable, well functioning communication and information is of great importance. The information should be honest, straightforward and fast, and notified to the employees, otherwise they might feel that they are forced into the changing situation, without the opportunity to participate in and influence the process (Angelöw, 2010: 83; Granberg, 2003: 593, Granberg, 2011: 759; Jordan - Evans & Kaye, 1999: 90; Tiong, 2004:32). It might sound very simple but in these situations it may be difficult to determine at what stage the information concerning a change should be distributed. If the employees are notified in a later stage, they might feel left out and experience that they have not had the opportunity to be involved in and influence the decision-making. Nevertheless, it is not good to give them the information too early in the process; then proposed change can be perceived as vague and without significance (Granberg, 2003: 593; Granberg, 2011:759; Jimmieson, Terry & Callan, 2004: 12; Jordan - Evans & Kaye, 1999: 91-92).

An important part of change is how leaders communicate with their employees before, throughout and after the changes. Larger organizations are synonym with a changing environment, ranging from, for instance new ways of working, implementation of new technology or restructuring. All of these affect the employees working in the organization and it is therefore important to keep them updated in order to avoid crucial outcomes (Cornelissen, 2011: 220). Existing organizational cultures could be very strong barriers to the implementation of change, because the organization may be operated by the existing culture instead of the new desired (Balogun & Hope Hailey, 2004:138). Skillful leaders and managers choose words, sentences and stories carefully in order to inform their staff in a beneficial way. Changes are most often uncertain and stories regarding the change may improve the understanding amongst the individuals, ease the process and diminish the anxious feelings, and as a result reducing the resistance (Cornelissen, 2011: 225-226; Rhodes & Brown, 2005: 173).

2.3 Organizational culture

In today's society, increased competition, financial problems and difficult market conditions is part of organizational life, and these circumstances demands change. Organizations consist of individuals with feelings, opinions, thoughts, goals and preferences, which have high demands on what they can and cannot do, and what they need to accomplish and achieve. Employees expect more out of work than just salary (Bang, 1999: 16, Grönroos, 2008, 392; Hofstede 1991: 66). When spending more than half of your waking hours at work, it is believed that the workplace should be a place where you feel happy and have the opportunity to satisfy several needs (Bang, 1999: 15; Kane-Urrabazo, 2006: 193; Morgan, 2006: 116).

“Organizational culture is the set of shared norms, values and perceptions of reality that are developed in an organization where members are interacting with each other and the outside world”

(Bang, 1999: 24).
Organizational culture is a concept used to describe a set of values and norms shared by the employees in the organization (Alvesson, 2002: 43; Bang, 1999:24; Grönroos, 2008: 392; Wortmann, 2008: 134). The term ‘organizational culture’ was first seen in English literature in the 1960’s as a synonym to the term ‘climate’ and in the 1970’s, the equivalent term ‘corporate culture’ was born (Hofstede, 1991: 223, Schein, 1990: 109). Culture is a general concept that explains why people within the same organization think and act similar, follow the same routines, share resembling goals, and in some situations even laugh at the same jokes (Grönroos, 2008: 392; Kane-Urrabazo, 2006: 189). In short, organizational culture can be described as patterns of shared values and beliefs that give the organizational members meaning and provides them with rules of conduct within the organization. Cultural meanings is not always visible but constantly present, it is a result of the organizational history and it brings meaning, stability and predictability to the organization, and strong organizational cultures can act as a strong and powerful glue that keeps the company united (Grönroos, 2008: 392; Wortmann, 2008: 135). These interactional patterns have usually developed over time and may be affected by protruding individuals within the organization, such as the founders. People might act out differently and in new ways, but they always tend to fall back into old patterns (Bloor & Dawson, 1994: 277). Newcomers learn and adapt to the organizational culture by studying a range of sources available in the organization, for instance official documents and higher positioned colleagues (Bloor & Dawson, 1994: 278). A weak organizational culture, where shared values are few or absent, results in uncertainties about how the newcomers should react in various situations and events (Grönroos, 2008: 393). According to Schein (1990: 111, 2004: 11-12) culture can develop in each group, provided that the group has been together long enough for experiences and significant problems to be shared and solved. The group must have seen the effects of these solutions and acquire new members and socialize them into the organization, in order to develop a culture (Schein, 1990: 111; Schein, 2004: 11-12).

2.3.1 Subcultures

Within organizations, it is natural for subcultures to arise when many people collaborate with each other for a long time in various constellations and divisions (Bang, 1999: 44; Forslund, 2009:152; Schein, 2004: 274). Subcultures often occur between groups of people that have regular and close contact, which might result in a tendency to develop common feelings and perceptions (Bang, 1999: 31; Heide et al. 2012: 49; Schein, 2004: 74; Alvesson, 2009:215). As organizations develop they most often need to form a new structure and that is when subcultures evolves, usually due to one of the following bases: (1) Occupational/functional differentiation, (2) Divisionalization, (3) Differentiation by technology, market, or product, (4) Geographical decentralization, or (5) Differentiation by hierarchical level (Schein, 2004: 74). Subgroups share common experiences which they have had to face together during their time as a group, and it is also a common state for subcultures that personal characteristics and segments are shared within the group. Furthermore, groups develop common norms and values in which their reality is reflected (Alvesson, 2009:221-224; Bang, 1999: 31; Forslund, 2009:152).
An organization can be considered to have a great organizational culture, but also several subcultures (Bang, 1999: 31; Forslund, 2009: 152). Hence, a specification of what is aimed at is appropriate; the use of the term organizational culture could, according to Bang (1999:31), mean "the sum of all the subcultures in the organization", "interaction between organizational subcultures," "what is common throughout the organizers of", or "the dominant culture".

Nursing- and social health care work is examples of organizations with clear departmental divisions and where it is often viewed how work is important for ratings. Not infrequently visitations between colleagues are a key component to job satisfaction which characterizes the culture. Furthermore, fixed cliques occur where staff is not working across departmental boundaries to even out the workload (Alvesson, 2009:211). Different work tasks between departments develop at least partly different subcultures. Differences in background, education, information and work process are aspects that matters (Alvesson, 2009:212; Forslund, 2009:152). There are risks with trying to influence perceptions of organizational cultures. Trying to impose on all employees in an organizations culture as a market strategy risks reinforcing negative conceptions between departments and widen the distance. It can go wrong if managers base the perceptions on what is important to themselves rather than what is important to their subordinates (Alvesson, 2009:214).

According to Bang (1999:32), conflicts may arise between subcultures when the different culture’s perception of reality, values and norms are contrary to each other, and consequently prevent these groups from achieving their goals. Conflicts between subcultures often occur in response to their need to maintain and strengthen their group culture in defense against threats of destruction of their own culture (Bang, 1999:43; Heide et al. 2012: 49, 51). These conflicts between subcultures can be based on many different, underlying differences and can arise between different functional units of the organization, since they are characterized by different perceptions of reality regarding the perception of the company’s main focus (Bang, 1999: 32; Forslund, 2009:153; Heide et al. 2012: 51). Conflicts between different layers of the organizations are also commonly found when the working organizational culture and the leadership culture have great differences in their approaches (Bang, 1999: 33). A distinction can often be made between the older and the younger generation of the company and it is not unusual that conflicts arise between these subcultures since values and norms often differ greatly from each other (Bang, 1999: 37).

Organizational cultures, amalgamated with each other, often encounter some problems during the merger. A merger between two organizational cultures can lead to coexistence where both cultures are permanent and work side by side with each other. It is also possible that a new culture with new cultural traits is created from the two previous cultures. It may also be the case that one culture is assimilated into the other culture and accept the values and standards of that culture. One result of the merger may however be that one of the cultures crumble when the members of one culture quit (Bang, 1999: 38-39; Schein, 1990: 117).
According to Alvesson (2009:208), both organizational culture research and management practices would benefit by sacrificing less attention on symbols that are loosely associated with everyday social and material conditions, and instead pay more attention to the core features, where a cultural approach can shed light on important aspects of organizational life. A greater interest in work processes and the everyday working life context for interaction could make cultural approaches better equipped to understand the things people believe are important in organizations (Alvesson, 2009:208). Important values and norms could be communicated through stories, myths and legends told in the organization, thus stories and myths can function as a cultural taxidermist (Alvesson, 1999:68).

2.4 Transparency

Values and norms should flourish throughout the entire organization in order to make sure that everyone partake and identify with them. A transparent environment, with open communication between departments, might ease the spread. Even though the term “transparency” is broadly used, it is seldom defined correctly. There is no stated definition of the concept and no provision of how transparency should be measured. The definition might also vary from culture to culture, organization to organization, and depends on in what context transparency is current (Florini, 2007:4, Simon, 2006: 1030). A general definition is although:

“the degree to which information is available to outsiders that enables them to have informed voice in decisions and/or to assess the decisions made by insiders”

(Florini, 2007:5).

Transparency in this matter aims at allowing outsiders, such as stakeholders and customers, to have access to internal information, meaning that the decision makers must release new information, both on request from outsiders but also proactively (Cornelissen, 2011: 65; Florini, 2007: 5; Grafström, Göthberg & Windell, 2010: 33, Vaccaro & Madsen, 2009b: 113). The managerial group, or those making the decisions within the organization, must understand why they should work with transparency and why this strategy is wanted and estimated, and finally, what this strategy aim at accomplishing. Only when the managers do understand the background of the implementation of this strategy, they will be able to make decisions regarding the degree of transparency they should relate to (Binneman, 2011: 24; Florini, 2007: 338).

Transparency as an organizational strategy is a good way of mediating honesty, trust and integrity to stakeholders and customers since it implies for communication, accountability and openness against those (Baines, Fill & Page, 2008: 618; Binneman, 2011: 25; McKay, 2008: 25; Street & Meister, 2004: 477). Implementing the strategy of being transparent in an organization does not work as a guarantee for customers’ loyalty and trust, but it might help improving the trustworthiness of the organization (McKay, 2008: 26, Vaccaro & Madsen, 2009a: 101). Because of the increased competition,
When organizations share good information this affects their customers in a small extent, if the consumers already have a positive image of a company or a product they do not need further conviction (Fung et al. 2007: 56). Poor information, on the other hand, shared by the company, might have a positive effect on the consumers because this kind of information might enhance the trust because customers realize that the company is an honest organization that even reveals the bad things, not only the good things. Instead of leaving poor information in the dark and handle times of crisis with silence, a lost confidence might be restored by plead guilty (Cornelissen, 2011: 59; Garsten & Lindh De Montoya, 2008, 80-81; Madsen, 2009: 647; McKay, 2008: 27; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009: 253). Transparency signals that the organization is taking their social corporate responsibility and reveals that they do not hide any skeletons in the closet. By voluntarily disclosing resources, decision-making processes, financial accounts etcetera they signal a willingness to share information with outsiders, which usually strengthens the organizational legitimacy (Garsten & Lindh De Montoya, 2008: 83). Transparency also includes listening to suggestions, feedback and complaints from customers and stakeholders - the company must therefore be open for receiving, as well as sharing, information (Grafström et al. 2010: 22; Madsen, 2009: 640; McKay, 2008: 28, Vaccaro & Madsen, 2009b: 115).

2.4.1 Internal transparency

While external transparency focuses on the communication towards outsiders, internal communication corresponds to the same factors, but from an internal perspective. Internal transparency might for instance be meetings, frequently held by the managerial team in order to share information with all departments and thereby ease the productivity. But communicative behavior can also diminish transparency; if the information is communicated wrongly it often leads to difficulties in making decisions, especially between work teams (Garsten & Lindh De Montoya, 2008: 89; Street & Meister, 2004: 477). Internal transparency can be defined as;
Internal transparency is important in decision making situations, both decisions that affect the organizational internally and externally; the decision makers must have all information at hand in order to be able to make good resolutions. Today’s society, often referred to as the information society, is overloaded with information and it is for that reason impossible for humans to perceive and understand everything, metaphorically it is sometimes described as background noise because it is that overwhelming (Simon, 2006: 1029, Street and Meister, 2004: 477). Further, employees need information in order to be able to cooperate in achieving the organizational goals, managers must therefore not forget about their employees. They need, not only, to listen to their stakeholders feedback and complaints but also their own workers in order to meet their suggestions (Cornelissen, 2011: 163). If managers succeed in involving their employees to a greater extent this has been proven to have good effects, especially on the organizational identification since the employees feel like a part of the organization rather than just a cog to drive the production forward (Cornelissen, 2011: 167). Internal transparency is likewise an important and helping tool in changing environments, once again because the more the managers involve their employees, the more the employees feel trusted (Madsen, 2009: 645).

Because of the evolving technology, it might in some extent, be hard to distinguish internal from external transparency since the advent of new communication channels open up to a more fuzzy line between what is aimed as internal communication and what is aimed as external information. This makes companies vulnerable and implementing a more transparent communication strategy is consequently at hand (Cornelissen, 2011: 164, Madsen, 2009: 640, Vaccaro & Madsen, 2009b: 114; 118). Internally, implemented transparency can strengthen the organizational culture by giving the employees a greater responsibility and by letting them have a better insight in the organizations operating expenses, productivity etcetera. Further, transparency can enhance the proliferation of the organizational identity by making the organizational history available through stories (Madsen, 2009: 646).

2.5 Storytelling

Stories have always been a part of humanity and a tool to clarify, motivate and entertain (James & Minnis, 2004: 26). Stories started to become of interest for researcher during 1980, when the interest for organizational culture and organizational identity was significantly increased (James & Minnis, 2004: 23). Through a story or fable, organizations can show which mentality or background the company or its product has, which creates a differentiation, and uniqueness that is priceless, and distinguishes the company from its competitors. This is especially important when the company does not have unique products (Brady & Haley, 2013: 41; Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008: 19; McLellan, 2006: 19). Storytelling is a highly creative tool that can be applied to any
corporation regardless of market or size, and many organizations use storytelling as a tool to, in effectively ways, leverages their human capital (Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008: 25; McLellan, 2006: 17). Companies can establish and strengthen their values through storytelling and build loyal bands within the organization's culture (Brady & Haley, 2013: 42; Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008: 27; James & Minnis, 2004: 26; Kaye & Jacobson, 1999: 48). When managers and employees communicate organizational stories about the company’s history and its products, they can disseminate and create shared meanings (Kaye & Jacobson, 1999: 46). According to James and Minnis (2004: 24) the use of symbolism could create a unique interpretation of reality. Stories can contribute to create the existing social world, and not just making sense of it.

“Storytelling is all about picking up the stories of the company and convey messages from them in an educational, understandable way, easy to appeal to several senses and adds value to company's goods or service.”

(Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008: 12)

Academics view the concept of storytelling as a natural trait and humans have used stories to send messages as long as we have been able to speak (Boje, 1991: 106; James & Minnis, 2004: 23; Snowden, 1999: 31). Practitioners, on the other hand, view storytelling as a corporate strategic tool that can enhance the understanding amongst the employees in several situations, such as changing environments or in order to strengthen the organizational culture (Denning, 2006: 47; Fog, Budtz, Munch & Blanchette, 2010: 132-160). Denning (2006) express the concept of storytelling with the following words:

“The way a story is performed can radically change its emotional tone in the mind of the listener. The art of performing a story to achieve a business result is however quite different from telling a story for the purposes of entertainment.”

(Denning, 2006: 47)

As the quote claims, the concept of storytelling has different purposes depending on the situation. In ordinary conversations, storytelling is a way of sharing and mediating emotions and events in an entertaining way, whilst in business related situations it is a strategy used in order to reach a specific result (Denning, 2006: 47; Forslund, 2009: 141). Storytelling is an occurrence that is essential to all cultures, societies and nations (Denning, 2006: 42-47). Irrespective of the cultural background, stories have the power to surpass genders and age-groups and captivate the attention and imagination of, regardless of the listeners’ background (Forslund, 2009: 142; Gabriel, 2008 in Gill, 2011: 18).

Stories of the company are a key part of the company's existence and corporate storytelling can be used as a strategic tool or as business support activities in and around the organization. Research has shown that storytelling can develop a greater loyalty to the organization. Strong brands start with the organizations employees if the purpose is to create a long-term effect internally and externally. Based on the history of the
organization, employees get a perception of the company and its values which creates engagement (Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008: 17; Fog et al. 2010: 63; James & Minnis, 2004: 31). Stories, collected from the organizational past, can work as reminders and the past experiences might prevent that the same mistakes are made again. Further, they are also serving as an effective way of creating an understanding of the organization’s culture and build and maintain the corporate identity (Kaye & Jacobson, 1999: 46). This also increases the management control since the stories behaviorally strengthens the commitment and promotes a positive attitude among the employees (Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008: 17; Fog et al. 2010: 139; James & Minnis, 2004: 31).

2.5.1 Storytelling as an managerial tool

When managers are about to make decisions regarding the organizational future, old stories is at hand as a reminder of good and bad choices made in the past (Boje, 1991: 106; Boje, 1994: 435, Harris & Barnes, 2006: 350; James & Minnis, 2004: 28). Through changes, employees usually share stories about the past and the present and rumors might spread in the hallways which can lead to an unstable and anxious environment. Even in times of a stable environment stories are told and retold, and employees spread the word to different audiences whom are then telling different versions, as they retell their interpretation of the stories. Consequently, stories are never original but influenced by the storyteller’s own interpretations, and are thus part of a never ending flow of stories (Boje, 1991: 106; Boje, 1994: 435; James & Minnis, 2004: 28). In order to spread information in an efficient way within organizations, storytelling can be used as a strategic tool. Information must be inspiring, not only informative, to make sense and stories can enhance the personal understanding amongst the employees, and thus, create greater connection to the information (Adamson, Pine, Van Steenhoven & Kroupa, 2006: 2; Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008: 13; Fog et al, 2010: 133; Harris & Barnes, 2006: 351). Further, stories can help developing relationships by crystallizing common beliefs and values and it is therefore a valuable and effective, managerial tool when used as part of the internal corporate strategy. Stories ease the implementation of new strategies on a personal level amongst the employees and they are often used with the aim of achieving business purposes (Adamson et al, 2006: 2; Denning, 2006: 42; Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008: 43; Gill, 2011: 17). A story that makes a positive contribution to strengthening the organizational culture and the internal marketing is a story that testifies about a company’s important cohesion (Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008: 43; Fog et al, 2010: 133-134; Snowden, 1999: 36). Stories improve team building and develop unity and relationships by putting beliefs and common values into a common issue, and they might ease the building of strong work-forces and enhance the sense of belonging and community within the organization. Stories are inviting, and encourage employees to bring both their head, but also their heart, into work, this context make the employees feel more appreciated and valued in their position (Adamson et al, 2006: 2).

Managers can learn to implement their own stories when sharing important information within the organization (Harris & Barnes, 2006: 350). Change can be highly emotional for employees and lack of commitment is a common problem causing failure in
organizational change. By triggering emotions, stories can help transform an employee’s opinion and motivate to a desired point of view (James & Minnis, 2004: 28). There should always be an awareness among the company that stories are dynamic and in a constantly, ongoing process and that cultural stories evolve by time (Brady & Haley, 2013:41; Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008:70).

According to Fog et al. (2010) there are four elements of storytelling to focus on. The first mentioned, is the message of the stories told; without a clearly defined message there is no reason to tell stories in a strategic purpose. The second one is a conflict, the driving force in the story. It becomes dull with too much harmony in a story. You will also need compelling characters in the story, which is the third element. The fourth and final element mentioned is the plot, how the story should progress further (Fog et al, 2010: 32-46).

“All companies have authentic raw material for telling their own stories. Your corporate brand must be built on the real-life stories told by the employees, customers, and working partners. Only in this way the stories can be anchored in the corporate culture, thereby creating a solid and authentic brand for your company. “

(Fog et al. 2010: 104)

Companies that manage to implement the four elements of storytelling will most probably end up with a strong strategy that gives them good competitive advantages in the market (Fog et al. 2010: 63).
3. Methodology

In this section the case company is presented in order to give the reader insight in the current situation. Information regarding the study is structured under different chapters in order to provide the reader with a clear view of how the data collection was performed. Throughout the following chapters the case company will be referred to as Company X, and the large concern owning Company X today, will simply be referred to as the concern. The company who merged with the case company, for a partnership, will be referred to as Company Y.

3.1 Case company

When choosing a case company suitable for this study, the main criterion was to choose a company without an explicit external storytelling strategy. Company X appeared to be a good choice and the empirical data, collected through deep interviews, contributed with new interesting angles to this study, such as the implementation of internal transparency as a complementing strategy besides storytelling.

Company X started in 1987 and immediately took place as the market leader, and ever since the beginning it has been a success story. The company sells delicacies derived from intriguing regions in countries where traditional recipes are passed down from generation to generation. Company X does also manufacture their own products with interesting stories behind. This organization is in other words filled with capturing stories, waiting to be intermediated. Because of the rapid success the owners of the organization eventually understood that their non-structured, non-hierarchic, familial way of leading the company started to hinder the progression and they decided to sell the company to a large concern. Company X went from being a company focusing on soft approaches to a company driven by titles and structures.

Before the merger, storytelling and transparency permeated Company X as a natural part of the corporate culture, rather than as an implemented strategy. Since the business was so small they shared a lot of memories together that flourished within the organization. Most stories originated from travels and therefore focused on the organization, but a lot of stories also emerged around the products and their origin. After the fusion the Company X went through major changes and the entire organization stopped, new employees entered and this caused internal confusion and stress. The cooperation between the departments was nonexistent due to the overall puzzlement and the former community was lost within the company.

Today, the employees state that they are finally starting to get back to their original organization climate even though they still have a long path to go. Even the new recruits, that entered the organization after the merger, acclaimed the confused environment and states that they feel the difference.
3.2 Scientific approach

This study is built on a hermeneutic and abductive approach. Hermeneutic is one kind of interpretation perspective used within social science research, related to methodology and theory in conjunction with the interpretation of human actions. This incompatibility reflects a distinction in focus of either an explanation of human behavior or in understanding of human behavior (Bryman, 2002: 25-26; Patel & Davidson, 2003: 24-29). The hermeneutic approach creates possibilities to study regularity, connections, discrepancies and differences at a deeper level, which is suitable for this study since it aims at finding a reality picture and the connection between values and factual information (Andersson, 1979). Further, an abductive approach was used when collecting the theoretic and empirical material needed. The abductive approach is often referred to as the “golden middle way” within the scientifically research approach because it is partially a deductive working and partly a inductive working. (Bryman, 2002: 26-28; Patel & Davidson, 1994: 21). Abduction is similar to induction, by starting with the collection of the empirical material, but still closer to deduction because it does not reject the theoretical notions (Fejes, Thornberg (ed.), 2009: 25; Ryen, 2004: 16). This study is built on a theoretical basis while the empirical data subsequently reformatte the theory after the performed interviews. Within this study the chosen approaches was the most suitable because the study is not aiming at generating a result applicable on organizations in general but a result based on the case company. The intention with this study is to create insight in Company X and partake in their organizational culture, in order to get a better understanding of how the implementation of storytelling and transparency can function as a strategic helping tool, so as to strengthen the damaged and confused culture seen in the organization today. The hermeneutic approach is suitable because it put focus in either understanding or in bringing an explanation to human behavior. Further, the abductive approach is suitable because the performed deep interviews may provide new insights, and in this case the interviews reformed the theoretical framework.

Company X is currently in a position where they are considering beginning working with the concepts of storytelling and transparency, primarily from an external perspective. However, it is the employees of the company who will, by acting as ambassadors, communicate the storytelling alongside market communication and open up the organization to outsiders. They are the ones who, in their daily work tasks, will implement these new approaches in which they will communicate stories about the organization and about their products and, by that, show transparency against the society. In order to manage this strategy in a successful way the storytelling must first work internally within the organization and it is therefore of great importance to make sure that the stories permeates all departments, and the desired state is that this should turn out as spontaneous and natural stories.
3.3 Qualitative case study

Qualitative case studies give the researcher a deep descriptive result based on individuals’ attitudes, views, feelings, beliefs and perceptions, but also their behavior and interpretations given to certain things and occurrences (Hakim, 2000: 34). It gives this research a clear overview of the coherency between the respondents’ attitudes and their behaviors as well as their conflicting feelings and motivations, and explains and resolves their actions, which is important for the aim of this study. Qualitative studies are characterized by data in the form of images and words, rather than numbers, the empirical material is collected through observations and unstructured or semi structured interviews (Ryen, 2004: 16). Within the qualitative research field, hypotheses are constructed rather than tested (Ryen, 2004: 25). A case study deals with only one case, according to Bryman (2002: 74), as does this study. In this case it is only relevant to look at this particular organization, Company X, since the implementation of storytelling might be a strategy they are planning on implementing in their company. While interviewing the respondents it became obvious that the information flow within Company X needs improvement and this study will therefore suggest an implementation of internal transparency as a complementing strategy besides storytelling.

3.4 Qualitative research interviews and selection

The purpose of qualitative, depth interviews has not traditionally been to generate statistically generalizable knowledge, as in the quantitative research; there is therefore no reason to make random selections (Ryen, 2004: 77). In this study all respondents were contacted via email, carefully selected by the researchers in order to create variety and breadth in the study and with the aim and believe that this would give a broader spectrum and a more credible result. The qualitative research method is considered the most appropriate choice if the researcher has limited knowledge about the theme the thesis is based on (Holme & Solvang, 1996: 92-98). This was not entirely the case in this study since the researchers had very good prior knowledge regarding the research area but limited knowledge about Company X and their situation. According to Bryman (2002: 127) and Ryen (2004: 95) semi structured interviews allow the discussion and the thinking amongst the respondents to take different directions; this means that the respondent share knowledge about what he or she considers relevant in order to answer the question. This was important in this study since it relies much on the respondent’s present knowledge of the concept of storytelling and transparency. According to Jacobsen (2007: 99) the interviews require a certain time span in order for the researcher to get relevance in the collected material, it is important though, to keep the interviews within 30-60 minutes so that the respondents do not lose their focus. The interviews held in this study never exceeded 60 minutes with the intention of what Jacobsen (2007) claims. This was a good time span because the respondents kept focus during the entire interview.
Semi structured interviews means that the researcher has a list of themes to be touched, but the respondent has freedom to form the answers (Bryman, 2002: 301, Robson, 2007:74). Semi structured interviews require a pre structure, like an interview guide, as a support. In order to collect relevant answers this method was used in this study (See Appendix 1). Interview guides can reduce the risk of excess material, which may affect the analysis power, gathered during the interviews. A well-structured interview guide might also assure that no questions that might be important for the result, is forgotten. The interview guide is supposed to guide the interviewer into the right topics, not necessarily direct the conversation (Ryen, 2004: 44-45). The questions does not necessarily have to be compelled in the same order and questions that come up during the interview can also be asked, if it is connected to something the respondent said. Overall, the questions will be compelled in the original order and in the original ordering (Bryman, 2002: 301). This was the situation throughout the interviews performed in this study, overall the interviews follows the same pattern, but arising from the different answers some additional questions were added in order to collect more information. The interviews performed in this study was recorded, after approval by the respondents, and then transcribed in order to compile the material into written, documented material. To secure the quality of the recordings, four different recording sources were used. This also eliminated the risk of losing the files, if one by mistake was deleted, three more was available as backup.

Qualitative interviews aim at collecting and generate events and actions seen as relevant to the thesis’ research questions, rather than to generate a generalized knowledge as in quantitative analyses. The availability to respondents and their answers is the main purpose, not the amount of people sharing the same view of things (Hennik, Hutter & Bailey, 2011: 88, 131; Ryen, 2004: 77). When performing depth interviews as part of qualitative studies, the number of respondents is usually relatively small because the answers provide a lot of information, meaning that the saturation is reached with less people involved (Hennik et al. 2011: 88). When choosing the respondents a stratified selection was used. This kind of selection is suitable when the researcher has access to relevant information (Bryman, 2002: 107). In this thesis the researchers had knowledge about the organizational structure and this selection was therefore appropriate. The respondents are carefully selected from different departments within Company X in order to create a broader perspective and collect a more truthful picture of the current situation. The choice of keeping the respondents anonymous is based on the researcher’s opinion that their names do not provide anything to the result. Anonymity can create a more secure base for the respondents and they might dare to give more truthful answers. (Bryman 2002: 449) The researchers of this thesis managed to contact all respondents without any help from a spokesperson of the organization. Respondent 1 to 5 was part of the organization before the merger, they have all worked here for several years and they were a few of those who decided to stay in the organization despite the shattering changes. Respondent 6 to 10 has been recruited after the merger and their view of the previous organization is based on stories they have been told by their colleagues. After ten performed interviews, the collected material was very equivalent and a decision to settle was made by the researchers.
All interviews were held in Swedish since this is the mother tongue of both the respondents as well as the interviewers, which made this the most natural choice when the respondents, more relaxed, could answer the questions and do not let possible language barriers prevent the data collection. All interviews were transcribed into Swedish and have subsequently been translated in the empirical chapter. Hence, all quotes are thereby translated from Swedish to English by the authors.

3.5 Reliability and validity

The validity of this thesis is considered good since the made conclusions is based on the empirical data. The respondents proved to be of good character since all seemed to be comfortable with the interview questions and all interviews were relaxed and the relation between respondent and interviewer was easy going - this is a sign of, according to Bryman (2002: 43-44) and Ryen (2004: 62), a good internal validity. A high validity shows that the interviews has been relevant in relation to the topic of the thesis treats (Bryman, 2002: 44; Robson, 2007: 72; Silverman, 2005: 211).

As mentioned initially, this thesis does not aim at presenting a result that is applicable on all delicatessen organizations in Sweden. Further, Company X is still changing and evolving and therefore there is a chance that the result might come out differently in a review of the study. Therefore, reliability might be considered as low since this refers to the level of consistency within qualitative and quantitative studies (Silverman, 2005: 224).

3.6 Methodological critique

When performing interviews as part of a qualitative study there are some problems outside of the researchers control: (1) Understanding - sometimes the respondents misinterpret the purpose of the question; (2) Respondents trying to give the answers they believe the researcher wants - due to inaccuracy of memory, behavior, boredom, respondents lying, respondents trying to influence the study results etcetera. The risks with the chosen research method have been taken into consideration by asking follow-up questions when a sense of misinterpretation between interviewer and respondent occurred. The second risk mentioned above, has also been taken into consideration, but this is hard to interpret and the researchers has thereby focused on what the respondents contribute with instead of speculating in their inner feelings (Fejes & Thornberg (ed.), 2009: 159) Further, tape recordings and transcriptions of interviews may weaken the reliability if the interpretation of the transcript is affected by, trivial but often crucial, failures in the material, such as overlaps and pauses (Silverman 2005: 222).

As earlier mentioned in the purpose, does this thesis does not seek to provide a general theory to be implemented in various organizations, it aims at showing how storytelling and transparency is working as an appropriate tool to strengthen organizational cultures and how companies can impose new aspects to focus on in their corporate storytelling
strategy. Hence, this study does not seek to provide answers applicable to companies in general and the result might vary if tested in other organizations.

Further on, the choice of respondents can be discussed since the chosen respondents only represent Company X, and not Company Y and the concern. However, despite the merger with Company Y and the concern, Company X is still in many aspects, independent and it is within Company X they want investigate the employees sentiments regarding an implementation of storytelling and transparency. Involving the concern and Company Y would be later independent studies.
4. Empirical Analysis

This section presents the results of the qualitative research interviews. The results derives from the ten, semi structured interviews conducted in Company X. The empirical data is structured in the same order as the theoretical framework but presented under new headings. Below each theme, the data presented from the respondents is interspersed with quotes and analytical contributions.

4.1 From flat organization to highly hierarchical

- A new era for Company X

Company X faced a major organizational change in 2008 when a large concern bought the company from its previous owners, at the same time as they merged with Company Y. This was an end of a very unique and liberal organization, where work and leisure flowed together and where the workforce was built up by family members and friends which resulted in a familial atmosphere. Organizations change incessantly, it is a natural and important part of their life cycle, necessary if the organization want to survive. There are several different underlying factors behind changes in organizations and mergers, and acquisitions are common reasons, in example with the aim of improving the organizational efficiency (Bennis, 1966: 255; Bolman & Deal; 2005: 119; Burnes, 2000: 264; Clegg et al, 2007: 114; Mack et al, 1998: 220, Morgan & Zeffane, 2003: 57; Wendell & Cecil, 1990: 17).

Even though the merger came as a shock to many of the employees, they still understood that it was the next step in Company X’s life cycle. Change is synonymous with resistance; there is not one organization that has experienced change without evoking strong feelings amongst the employees. Usually the emotions are connected to some degree of resistance as a result of anxiety and stress in organizational change processes (Balogun & Hope Hailey, 2004: 145; Cox et al, 1970: 40; James & Minnis, 2004: 28; Powell & Posner, 1978: 31). Some of the employees in Company X decided to leave the company because they could not adjust to the new controlled environment, a reaction like that is not unusual (Angelöw, 2010: 11, Bolman & Deal, 2005: 482; Granberg, 2003: 588; Granberg, 2011: 747; Schuler, 2002: 262; Van de Ven & Sun, 2011:58). Some decided to stay and give the new organization a chance even though it was a big adjustment that caused a lot of positive as well as negative changes, as respondent 4 claims:

“It is like two completely different companies. It is not at all the same company today, everything has changed. Some things to the better and some things has changed into something very different but it is hard to say that something has changed into the worse because time has also changed both us and the company itself”

(Respondent 4, 2013)
The biggest change that the old employees found hard to adjust to was the new organizational structure. From being a flat organization without divisions into becoming a hierarchically managed organization with titles, divisions and different departments, they faced a completely new organization. This created a lot of uncertainty amongst the employees because they no longer knew their place within the organization, a new feeling to them in spite of the fact that they were used to an organization without positions. When employees no longer feel that they have a certain place in the organization, the risk of them feeling resistance increases because unknown situations is, instinctively, connected to fear (Powell & Posner, 1978: 31). The merger resulted in regulations on all levels and on trivial things, such as what car they were allowed to lease, before, it was not a matter of what title you were positioned in as the quote below states:

“I’m not allowed to have a certain car model anymore without having a certain title. Everything became divided... but we just laughed”

(Respondent 4, 2013)

Even though this new controlling came as a surprise to many of the employees, the ones that decided to stay within the organization did understand why it was necessary. Many of the respondent mentioned that it was confusing, at first, when the concern divided people into departments and added titles on everyone, but they accepted it, and the trivial changes such as the car regulations became something they made fun of rather than fight about. Like the quote below claims, titles were not necessary before because everyone worked under their own responsibility, there was no need to name the employees with titles because everyone knew what their main tasks and main responsibilities were;

“All of a sudden it became managers and titles on everyone, but before, we knew what we did and that was enough for us... but now it is many titles and it is very important what you are named on your business card for some... and I think it is silly but it is obviously important... [...] In certain periods in life titles is important... when you are a little more into making a career... and at the time you get a title there might be opportunities to get a better salary or a better car, that is certain standards that surely must be followed when you get a title”

(Respondent 3, 2013)

There is an understanding amongst the old employees regarding this matter even though some of the old ones think it is unnecessary with titles on each and everyone. The various functions was affected in different ways, even though the office went through some major changes with the new hierarchical structure, the biggest change was experienced by those who worked in the production. Overnight, the decision of moving the production to another city was determined by the concern and a lot of workers were affected by this. Many of them did not have the opportunity to follow and only three out of seventeen moved along; the disappointment was great and it was a very tumultuous period in the organization, much because of insufficient information. In order to avoid anxiety and ensure that the employees understand the underlying reasons of why some
things are changing, managers must ensure that they explains why the change is implemented (Bolman & Deal, 2005: 129; Cornelissen, 2011: 215; Granberg; 2003: 587; Granberg, 2011: 746; Mack et al. 1998: 221; Morgan & Zeffane, 2003: 57; Rubenowitz, 2004: 118). Respondent 3 describes this period with the following words:

“For the entire production the merger was terrible... There were tears and misery... There were not too many who had the opportunity to move with to the new location... they could if they wanted to, but many took the bus to work and had no driver’s license, and whatever it may take to reach the new location but it takes a good few hours anyway so it was many who became unemployed..”

(Respondent 3, 2013)

One of the main reasons why this came as such a shock for the employees was the fact that the concern had made an agreement with the previous owners that they would not move the production, which of course created anxiety within the organization, not only in the production department. One thing common for everyone facing changes in life, regardless of background, is the lack of security that comes with. It is therefore very important to follow up the employees and be aware of and prepared for different reactions amongst them. If the managers are not prepared enough they might face a situation where the change do not continue smoothly, in order for the organization to change the individuals within it must follow, otherwise trouble might occur (Angelöw, 2010: 11, Bolman & Deal, 2005: 482; Granberg, 2003: 588; Granberg, 2011: 747; Schuler, 2002: 262) Respondent 5 describes the situation in the following way:

“It was as everything abruptly stopped... I have never really seen something like that before... it became a break from day one, and then they began with the production that they should not mess, it was with the agreement... it was the first decision they took, to move the heart out of Company X .. It began with the move followed by a lot of troubles...”

(Respondent 5, 2013)

When the concern broke that promise, the environment within the organization went from uneasily to a place where no one felt safe in their position. This is a common state during changes, when employees do not get updated information they will most certainly feel anxiety and uncertainty which, in some cases, also might lead to resistance (James & Minnis, 2004: 28; Powell & Posner, 1978: 31). This kind of situations, as the one mentioned above with the production transfer, can cause strong feelings like confusion and anger because the employees feel forgotten and not trusted by their managers (Bolman & Deal, 2005: 129; Cornelissen, 2011: 215; Mack et al. 1998: 221; Morgan & Zeffane, 2003: 57; Rubenowitz, 2004: 118). This transfer changed a lot for all employees, not only the ones working in the production, and many express the move as causing confusion and tears. The changed environment included harder controlling, measurements and reporting, a completely different focus from before when soft approaches was put before statistics.
4.1.1 Broken promises and disappointments

Before the merger, no one but the company owners knew that Company X was supposed to be sold. The only information about the merger communicated within the organization was that the owner should investigate their options, but nothing decisive. Since the concern buying Company X is a publicly listed company, it was important that no information concerning the purchase leaked out before the purchase was completed. The current situation was therefore difficult to handle as the owners had to keep all information to themselves to the end even though the best way is to stay honest and straightforward with the employees in times of change, otherwise the staff might feel forced into a situation they have not been able to participate in and influence on (Granberg, 2003: 593, 2011: 759; Jimmieson et al. 2004: 12). The employees received an email from the owners, one hour before an information meeting, saying that the company was sold and that they intended to step down from all managerial positions. The meeting was held as an oral presentation in which the employees were informed about what was about to happen. Even though the employees were slightly prepared, the merger still came as a shock to them, as respondent 3 describes:

"We didn't know anything, only that they had looked into it.... but nothing decisive. It was probably a bit of a shock to all of us."

(Respondent 3, 2013)

The fact that the concern buying the company is public listed affected how the change was communicated to the employees and explains that, but even so, this confidential maintenance is probably what caused the shock and negative feelings among the employees that the respondents mentions in the interviews (Angelöw, 2010: 83; Balogun & Hope Hailey, 2004: 145; Jordan - Evans & Kaye, 1999: 90; Tiong, 2004:32 By keeping the employees updated, from the first information release regarding the owners investigation of opportunities, to the actual sale, the change would probably evolved more gently for everyone involved, since they all would have been prepared to a greater extent than seen in this particular case (Cornelissen, 2011: 220).

“There has been a tremendous change and I can tell you that if you don't like change, you have not liked what has happened here. But I think that if you like change, you have enjoyed this quite good.”

(Respondent 2, 2013)

“I think many became very lost in all of this and felt very unsafe in where we were going...”

(Respondent 2, 2013)

All changes made during this period were at first communicated to the employees by email, later on followed by meetings with more detailed information. They employees was told in the beginning that everyone would be able to keep their job, however a few months later they received a new email saying that the production would move and that just a few selected employees was offered to follow with to the new location and keep
their jobs. There were many that did not have the possibility to start commute this distance and most of them that were employed in the stock department and in the production lost their jobs. Soon, there was slowly but surely significant changes made in the office as well. New employees was hired and according to some respondents, the old employees was given work tasks beyond their competence, resulting in an untenable situation, which in most cases led to employees being forced to leave the organization.

“There was a lot of sorrow and tears and bitterness from the staff who had been working for a very long time in the company, and many dear colleagues disappeared.”
(Respondent 4, 2013)

Managers do have an important role in changing situations; in this case they entered with a narrow mind which led to a point where the staff was not heard, and hesitations and skepticism regarding the change spread among the employees. In this situation it is difficult to turn the employees since they no longer believe that the change might have beneficial effects, not only for the organization, but for the members in it as well (James & Minnis, 2004: 28; Powell & Posner, 1978: 33). The broken promises, mistreatment and foreclosed attitudes that top managers showed the employees in the beginning of the change process did so much harm that it is still affecting Company X today and makes itself reminded.

The general way of how information and change is communicated within Company X today, described by the respondents, is still through email or, if it is regarding something more extensive, by meetings. According to the respondents, the information share is quite regulated, not everyone receives the information. The others receive information regarding the organization by managers in what the respondents refers to as, “house meetings”. Larger organizations are synonym with a changing environment, and it is therefore important to keep them updated in order to avoid crucial outcomes (Cornelissen, 2011: 220). This dissemination plan may be something Company X need to look over together with the concern and Company Y, in order to develop a best practice, and ensure that information reaches everyone.

4.2 Genuine passion for food

Statements about the organizational culture vary depending on whether the employee has been in the organization before the merger or not. Those employees that have been a part of the organization for a long period of time, claims that there is a huge difference between now and then. Since the organization was a flat organization before, without hierarchical structure and titles on each and everyone, all employees participated in all projects and conferences, as the quote below prove:

“Let’s say like this... just for the fact that when we went to conferences, trips abroad, we closed. The receptionist was invited, the secretary, I believe that even the cleaning lady joined the conferences. No one was left out, everybody joined the train. I thought it was
Some of the employees express that they miss the old environment where everybody was on board in all projects, and a feeling of curiosity reflects some of the respondents. They feel that they are, in some way, excluded and they wish to get more insight in the ongoing projects. These desires is especially seen in the respondents that was a part of the company before the merger, and those are also the ones that express the differences the most, which is natural since the newcomers only know what the organization was like from the stories they have heard from their colleagues. Organizational culture is a result of the organizational history and it brings meaning, stability and predictability to the organization (Grönroos, 2008: 392; Wortmann, 2008: 135). The organizational culture in cultures that have been amalgamated will be changed and it appears different in how this changes take place, but regardless at least one of the cultures will sense this change significantly. In this case, the old culture of Company X has been deprived of a lot of their former basic values and those who identified it (Bang, 1999: 38-39; Schein, 1990: 117). Many of the respondents experience that the organization is much more divided into smaller groups, which in turn creates their own culture, mostly reflecting their own department, and in some parts the entire organization. As organizations develop, they most often need to form a new structure and this is when subcultures evolve (Alvesson, 2009:221-224; Bang, 1999: 31; Forslund, 2009:152). Alvesson (2009:211) discuss that one severe result of a division into subcultures can be a result of really tight groups formed within the culture, with their own values and where they work hard for each other within the subculture, but not between departments, not even to help with overload. When the organization was flat, there were no such things as divisions but people had their responsibilities, and when they were done with their tasks they asked if someone else needed help. As respondent 2 explains and respondent 5 underlines:

“We had a culture where everyone had responsibility and the right to make decisions. But no one had formal responsibility and thereby no powers... which is both good and bad, we were all very driven in this and we always got the chance to do... if you had an idea you were allowed to drive it and it really got the chance to drive it yourself too. It was very positive and we were very quick.”

(Respondents 2, 2013)

“It was a bit more lively cross-borders before...”

(Respondent 5, 2013)

Before, the organization opened up for creative thinking amongst the employees and they worked under their own responsibility. They knew their boundaries and they were trusted by their leaders. Furthermore, some of the respondents describe the former organization as a workplace where the borders between leisure and work time was hard to distinguish. It did not matter if they threw a party on a Wednesday or if they worked on a Saturday, their job was their interest and their colleagues was friends and family. When spending the majority of your time at work, it is important to feel happy and satisfied (Hofstede,
1991: 66; Kane-Urrabazo, 2006: 193; Morgan, 2006: 116). Even though many seems to miss this period of time they all realize that the organization needed to change in order to survive and they do all understand and agrees with, the merger. What they do seem to have a hard time understanding is all the changes that came with the big change, those things that turned everything upside down and completely impacted on their former, familial culture. One result of the merger is that one of the cultures crumbles when members of one culture ends which may explain this sort of feelings among the respondents, since many of the old staff quit in the merger and many of the employees in Company X are new recruits (Bang, 1999: 38-39; Schein, 1990: 117).

“I believe the two first years after the merger... at that time you did not even know what to do... the organization was divided into departments and they were all closed.. no one worked together in any kind of way but that is starting to change now.. Sales and purchase start to talk again instead of sales just running of selling things that do not exist... but at a time.[...] people were losing the edge... and everyone was like... what is happening tomorrow?”

(Respondent 5, 2013)

As the quote above claims people within the organization did not resist the change, at least not the ones that decided to stay and the ones that got recruited. They understood the change but what they had a hard time to accept, was the uncertainty and the lack of information and support from the concern. Somewhere along the way, according to the respondents, they also lost their strongest competitive advantage, the one that made them popular amongst customers and consumers; they lost their spirit of innovation. Company X has always been a very innovative company, mixing all kinds of tastes and surprising commodities to new, exotic delicacies. This was the company's special niche and what both their customers and consumers expected from them. In order for companies to survive the tough market competition, develop and innovation are crucial factors (Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009: 256). When the production was located in the same building as the office the innovation had a central part in the organization. It was easy for everyone interested to visit them, taste new inlays and give response. When the production moved, much of that innovation disappeared, which resulted in a collective freeze, as the quotes below describes:

“IT was probably still the first two years after the merger... it was abruptly stop, we did nothing with inlays... or nothing at all it was just abruptly stop, and that is the bang that made our sale sank...”

(Respondent 5, 2013)

"I think that many persons got very lost in all of this and felt very unsafe in where we are going... and that's completely natural!"

(Respondent 2, 2013)

When the production moved, this somehow disturbed the structure within the organization. Not only because of the fact that many of the organizational members lost their jobs, but also because they moved out the heart of the earlier organization. One
The reason why the innovation disappeared was the fact that the old knowledge was connected to the old employees. When they replaced them with new, green staff, with lack of the certain feeling that was synonym within Company X, they lost a lot that certain mentality that used to flow in the company and especially a lot of very valuable knowledge, knowledge that was integrated into the walls. The production, products and innovation was the organizational culture. According to both Grönroos (2008, 392) and Wortmann (2008, 135) organizational culture is always present and brings meaning, stability and predictability to the organization. When many of the old employees quitted, a change in the work setting appeared and when the heart of the organization was moved from the building, several people quitted and the flat hierarchy disappeared, it was like everything stopped for a while. It takes time to build a culture and when one gets demolished consequences occur within the organization. This is something Grönroos (2008) discuss, weak organizational culture, where shared values are few or absent, results in uncertainties about how organizational members should react in various situations and events (Grönroos, 2008: 393).

“I think that many persons become really, really insecure and even though we are on our way back to where we were, it still takes a long time to build a culture...”

(Respondent 2, 2013)

When newcomers join an organization, they will learn and adapt to the culture (Bloor & Dawson, 1994: 278), but what happens when that culture is on the decline? According to Schein (1990, 2004) a culture can be developed within a group when the group have shared experiences and significant problems, have had the chance to solve these problems and have acquired new members. Hence, developing a culture takes time and work to develop and may be affected by protruding individuals within the organization (Bloor & Dawson, 1994: 277).

Differences within the organization or not, it seems to always have been some sort of pride among the employees, over working in the company. This pride still exists within the new organization, a pride over the organization history and before all, the products. It seems important for all respondents that the organization provides good products that everyone can feel proud of, which can be connected to research regarding organizational culture and how employees in today’s society, expects added values in their work besides regular benefits and salary. It is important for a person’s work to fulfill several needs since the majority of time is spent on work (Bang, 1999: 16, Grönroos, 2008, 392; Hofstede 1991: 66). Among the respondents a lot of this pride and interest in the work revolve around the company’s products, where they come from, how they are produced and how they taste. It is something that the respondents highly value and that somehow gathers around them. According to Alvesson (2009), there are benefits with focusing on core features within the organization instead of loosely associated symbols and within Company X this core feature may be their products. Respondent 7 and respondent 10 comment on this in the quotes below:
"It becomes much more personal when there is a story behind and you work with it. It provides a sense of pride in well... background and a bit like that..."
(Respondent 7, 2013)

“When people ask me what I work with... I want to be able to tell them and at the same time be proud... I want everyone to feel that way... And I think that the history... or the organizational history... plays an important part... It is a feeling...”
(Respondent 10, 2013)

The general interpretation amongst the respondents is that more or less everyone in the organization shares the passion for food and delicatessens. This genuine interest is something that brings people together when they have tastings or presents new products, and when being asked about the organizational culture this was also something that seemed to describe the culture as the quote below tells:

“A genuine interest for food and delicatessens. Everyone is very involved and loves that around here, and tastes and comes up with ideas irrespective of what position you have in the company.”
(Respondent 7, 2013)

Many of the respondents see this shared interest as an opportunity to unite everyone in the building and in some way make it a situation where you get to talk to employees working in other departments. The respondents, both old and new employees, claims that the cultural environment is getting better but they also emphasize that it is a matter of interest and responsibility amongst the members of the organization. A greater interest in work processes and the everyday working life context for interaction could make a cultural approach better equipped to understand the things that people believe are important in organizations. A cultural approach can shed light on important aspects of organizational life (Alvesson, 2009:208).

4.2.1 A sum of several subcultures

It emerged during the interviews that subcultures are something that occurs within Company X in different constellations, a natural state when a group of people have a regular and close contact and collaborate for a long time (Alvesson, 2009: 215; Bang 1999: 31, 44; Schein, 2004: 74, 274; Heide et al. 2012:49). As organizations develop, they most often need to form new structures which often lead to formations of subcultures which have been the case in Company X (Schein, 2004: 74). The subcultures most commonly described by the respondents, is a partition between employees from the old organization and new employees as well as a distinct division between departments. Both of these sort of subcultures can be explained by research from in example Alvesson (2009:221-224), Bang (1999: 31) and Forslund (2009:152). These groups have, in different ways, shared experience regarding happenings in the company over the past years, not least experiences regarding the merger. Further, the subcultures do have similar segments in education and interest within departmental work tasks. If referring to Bang (1999:31), Company X has developed a culture that, according to him, could be
described as the sum of all subcultures within the organization. Different work tasks between departments develop at least partly different subcultures, which seem to be part of the case within Company X; differences in background, education, information and work process are aspects that matters (Alvesson, 2009:212; Forslund, 2009:152). These different functional units are causing some conflicts within the organization, since their cultures different perceptions, contrary to each other. Like in these two types of subcultures occurring within the company, distinctions between older and younger generations is a common problem, but also between cultures that have been amalgamated with each other, as several researchers noted (Bang, 199: 38-39; Schein, 1990: 117). The division is seen between old and new employees of the company, but mainly, the distinction between the departments is clearly reflected in the respondents’ answers. Communication between departments is markedly more fixed than earlier as the respondents claim in the quotes below:

“Sometimes I can talk to someone, but I can't meddle somewhere... This is where the pros are... but I think that one forget the simple pieces and makes it hard at times... and then it's done. I have no problem saying what I think but if someone would come to me, telling me how to do my task, I would probably not appreciate it...”

(Respondent 1, 2013)

"I think it was the first year or the first two years after the takeover... it was so... you didn't even know then, like no one knew in two years what to do. Everyone was just in these sealed departments where no one worked together, but that's what we're starting to get together now..."

(Respondent 5, 2013)

“We who are real adults here now, are a group.”

(Respondent 4, 2013)

There are some underlying conflicts between the subcultures where the groups seem protective of their own culture, supported by research by Bang (1999: 43) and Heide et al. (2012: 49, 51). As Bang also claims, it is not unusual that conflicts arise when values and norms differ between subcultures and not unusual between groups of older and younger generation (Bang, 1999: 37). In this case, the conflicts most often regard opinions about how the different departments work and how information flows within the organization. Conflicts between generations are mostly a question of how the old organization was functioning compared to the new organization. According to Bang (1999: 38-39) and Schein (1990: 117) a merger between two organizational cultures can lead to a coexistence stage, where both cultures remain permanent and work side by side with each other, this is the stage where Company X is today. A desirable place would be a new culture with new cultural traits combined with elements from the previous culture. A strategy that, irrespective of present subcultures, elicits an interest among all unites the members of the organization (Gabriel, 2008 in Gill, 2001: 18).
Many of the respondents wish to take a greater part of the events happening in Company X as well as the company's strategies and information about the company's products. Before the acquisition this kind of information was open to all employees and it was part of the corporate mentality, everyone was a part of the same family and hence had the right to share the same information. Today this has become a question of cost and only a few selected ones gets invited to conferences at which this information is presented.

“They are so efficient these days, so it becomes so narrow who is allowed to follow along and who is not... It is very carefully selected who is allowed accompany or not. It’s all about saving as much money as possible...”
(Respondent 3, 2013)

“A seller may be in greater need of a conference educationally than one who works in the warehouse, but the social- and entertainment part should be just as important...”
(Respondent 1, 2013)

Previously, Company X celebrated its success by offering the whole company dinners, parties and travels. This has changed after the merger into more cost effective solutions, with a new sort of focus. According to several respondents, both new and old employees, all measurements and statistics, made in the company, has become yet another stressful factor.

“It doesn’t really become like that... we are so tired when meet now. There are so many demands and involves very much measurement... There is so much to be proved and what is achieved and then there are many who haven’t achieved their results... If you aren't among the top five, then it's not fun to be at the conferences.”
(Respondent 4, 2013)

“The old soul of the company, to be a little crazy and daring... to produce some crazy stuff that gives us a different image or stamp... we still want to be that company. Then from times to times it is a wrestling match against the concern since there sometimes occurs a collision, when there is a large concern, everything should be reported to the right and to the left. There are much measurements and different goals that takes a lot of time from things you would rather develop or from what is the core. So it may be a slight clash sometimes but you have to comply to it... the situation...”
(Respondent 10, 2013)

Respondent 4 and respondent 10 confirms this statement and they are not alone in their way of thinking regarding this. They all understand this as being an important part of larger organizations, but they also pinpoints that it is important to receive good feedback once in awhile in order to keep up with the, nowadays, more stressful environment. However, some respondents expressed a concern of being forced into further things to adjust to. There are, according to them, constant new ideas and strategic concepts to work with, and it could easily feel enforced to share and communicate stories and as respondent 6 and respondent 4 expresses:
"I don't think people have the energy to get involved neither has the time to spend... People are already stressed out as it is now and when it comes to these things, it can easily become just another element..."

(Respondent 6, 2013)

"It would be really weird for me, but that is my personal reaction. It's like, this is my story and now I'm supposed to go and tell something to someone else that isn't consistent with my story."

(Respondent 4, 2013)

The respondents express that there are risks with trying to influence perceptions of organizational cultures. Trying to impose on all employees in an organizational culture as a market strategy, risk reinforcing negative conceptions between departments and widen the distance. If the management put their own interest before their employees’ they will most probably fail in creating unity (Alvesson, 2009:214). In the end, it narrows down to developing something that everyone in Company X want to stand by and identify with, something that express the values flowing within the organization, that does not step on anyone’s toes and that does not feel like that burden respondent 6 describes in the quote above (Denning, 2006: 42-48). A lot of the expressed differences within the organization seems to be grounded right here, the organizational cultures’ core values are incorporated with the new work directives. What used to be openness, creativity and innovation is now striving every day against closed doors. The old culture, as expressed by all respondents, both old and new employees, described as Company X being a company where everyone was welcome to bring their ideas to the table and more often than not, pursue them.
4.3 From an open organization to a closed one

Before the acquisition, Company X was very open to its outsiders. Customers were invited in on a regular basis, almost daily, and it was not rare that retailers were invited in on cookery evenings. Many of the visitors also paid a visit to the production, back in the days this department was located in the same building as the office. The organization was in other words very transparent before. Florini (2007), states that transparency is the degree to which an organization is open to its outsiders, and Company X was in the forefront before, it was part of their mentality. The purpose with transparency is to give stakeholders and customers access to internal information, both on request but also as a proactive working (Cornelissen, 2011: 65; Florini, 2007: 5; Grafström et al, 2010: 33, Vaccaro & Madsen, 2009b: 113). Company X worked very proactive with this even though the respondents gives the impression of this as being a natural part of the organizational life before, and in many ways a result of friendship between the owners and their customers, rather than a pronounced strategy. Since they worked very close with their retailers at that time this became a natural state and many of their customers got shocked when they dropped the information about the acquisition, as respondent 4 describes about one certain retailer:

“They had been here, they were personal friends with the owners. They were here and were always invited to VIP events, it was champagne, cooking, and we visited them with nice events regularly, especially selected for them. They became ambassadors for the rest of the country. In the new organization they took all that away, there is just no room for that anymore...”

(Respondent 4, 2013)

In the current situation, things are completely different from the present. Customers are no longer invited in as they were before; the production moved to another location and the reception is hardly used, as respondent 4 further explains:

“We used to have the production here in the building and at that time the company was very transparent. We had customer visits and cookery evenings as i mentioned... but today, we do not even have a reception welcoming our guests. I would say that we are a much closed company today.”

(Respondent 4, 2013)

Even though Company X did not work with transparency deliberately as a strategy they were a very transparent organization by the means that they opened up for everyone. This proves that, at least in smaller companies, this is possible even though the theories stresses that the managerial group must understand why their company should work transparent and also, what this strategy aim at accomplishing. According to Binneman (2011) and Florini (2007) managers must understand this setting in order to be able to make decisions regarding what degree of transparency they should aim at. Company X went from being an open organization to a closed one.
One reason why Company X could be more transparent before might be the fact that they were not listed. Today they are so through the concern and this is probably one reason of why Company X is now closed to outsiders. It might be a good strategy to implement this working in the organization again because it is a good way of mediating trust and integrity to outsiders, something that is becoming more and more important, especially as a food supplier since they are strictly controlled (Baines et al, 2008: 618; Binneman, 2011: 25; McKay, 2008: 25; Street & Meister, 2004: 477; Vaccaro & Madsen, 2009a: 101). Recently there have been a lot of scandals hitting the surface and food suppliers are under constant watch and must therefore be very careful in their promoting. Transparency can, on the other hand, be a way of ensuring honesty and show of corporate responsibility. In this case, a transparent strategy would improve the feeling of good quality if Company X shared the amazing stories behind their very carefully selected delicatessens. Respondent 7 shares an opinion regarding this:

“Transparency becomes more and more important. We as a company has an advantage of being transparent because I believe we are one of few companies that, I mean we work with delicatessens, good stuff and we are very careful when selecting our delicatessens... we have traceability on all products and this is an advantage for the company. People get more insight. And as it is today with communication, one must be pretty transparent to be seen and be interesting.”

(Respondent 7, 2013)

Further, Binneman (2011) pinpoints the importance of effective communication, both internally and externally, and that communication in some extent can be more meaningful than an effective production as to maintain the ongoing relationship with outsiders. Therefore it might damage the organization that it went from being such an open environment to a closed one with no insight.

With today’s developed techniques, information flows more uncontrolled and it is hard to keep up with all comments and sayings that consumers spread about companies today, in example orally and in social media (Simon, 2006:1029). Further it is important for companies to promote themselves and appear in different contexts by using new communication channels (Fung et al. 2007: 59). Company X works a little with this, they have a homepage and they do have a page on Facebook where they promote challenges and share some information about their products to a small extent. Binneman (2011), claims that manages must choose wisely when using new communication channels because of today's information overload. It is of great importance to choose the most appropriate channel based on what target group you are aiming at. At this point Company X’s web page is aimed at customers and consumers in a highly unstructured way. Information about the company's history is to be found, as is information about their products, but at the same time they promote campaigns aimed at their retailers and expose article numbers and such. It is the same thing with their Facebook page; it is hard to figure out whether it is directed to their consumers or their customers, something respondent 9 is well aware of:
“I am pretty sure that few of our consumers visit our web page. It is not aimed at the consumer; it is aimed at someone else. The content they used to share... I am not saying that it is better today but they have not even thought about what kind of material they publish, they just throw some information out, same as they give the retailers, and it is completely different announcements.”

(Respondent 9, 2013)

If they find a way to structure their social media channels they have a good chance of improving their communication with outsiders and improve their external transparency.

4.3.1 Tear down the walls

Before the merger Company X was transparent in ways of a flat structure. Everyone in the company was involved in all activities at all time even though they all had their certain responsibilities. This open environment contributed to an organization where the information reached everyone; at that time they had such a small staff and everyone could gather when it was time for meetings. There were no such thing as department meetings in the company but no matter what the topic was, all were invited and expected to be there as respondent 3 states:

“Back in the days when we were less employees, we had presentations and meetings every Monday... all were held around the conference table at that time... […] today we have to divide into groups... the fewer you are the easier it is...”

(Respondent 3, 2013)

This is a sign of a very good internal transparency according to Street & Meister (2004), the quote above tells that the employees had a good level of access to information within the previous company. The information flourished within the entire organization and all employees were counted in, regardless of position. Today, the most commonly used communication channel within the organization, except from face-2-face communication and “house meetings” held once a quarter, is emails and phone calls. Before the merger, “house meetings” were held once a week. Employees need updates and information in order to be able to work against the organizational goals (Cornelissen, 2011:163). It might therefore be a good idea to gather everyone in the building more often to make sure that everyone is up to date regarding new releases, changes and other important information that the employees has the right to know. It might not be necessary to meet every week, but often enough to make sure the employees know the latest news. It might have good outcomes according to Cornelissen (2011), if and when managers involve their employees to a greater extent they seem to identify with the organization to a greater extent because they feel valued. Poor communicative behavior can thus diminish transparency and it is therefore important that the managerial group is well prepared when sharing information; otherwise it most probably causes confusion instead of clarity (Garsten & Lindh De Montoya, 2008: 89; Street & Meister, 2004: 477).
Within the departments, most employees prefer face-to-face interaction before emails and phone calls. Most departments start the week with a department meeting to clarify upcoming and ongoing events, as respondent 10 tells in the quote below:

“In our department, we have our Monday meetings weekly; we can draw some general info that may be useful to know as well as... ‘Now we have done this or we are doing this on Facebook’... or ‘we need to work together to get through this’... Thus... miscellaneous stuff in our group, we take on Mondays... but regarding the whole house, it's “house meetings” or mail then...”

(Respondent 10, 2013)

It seems like, as the quote states, that the communication within the departments is working properly and that the preferred way to communicate is through interpersonal communication rather than through technological channels, aside from sales, where emails and phone calls most often is the only way to communicate since they are working in the field and spend very little time located at the office.

Communication between departments evokes different opinions amongst the respondents. Some claims that there is no need for improvement while others says that this is something that every department needs to work on. Many respondents request a more transparent organization, where the information flourishes between the department boundaries. This is a request both out of curiosity of what the company is working with at the moment, but also a request needed in order to enhance the efficiency within the communication. When important information does not reach the affected, misunderstandings arise that most probably slow down the productivity and, as a result, difficult the achieving of the organizational goal (Cornelissen, 2011: 163; Fung et al. 2007: 59). One of the reasons why the opinions vary seem to be the matter of interest, some respondents have a greater interest in knowing what is going on in the company while others mean that they do not have the interest in taking part of department related information. Many departments keep their information within their group which results in situations where important information, that concerns other departments as well, never reaches the receiver as the quotes below describes:

“I feel that it is a little like each department are sitting and holding on to information... such as to wait a bit with complaints. If there has been something wrong with this ham so long, ‘why did you not say something to me right away’? It is the same thing when you have had campaigns that have slipped a bit between the cracks... ”

(Respondent 8, 2013)

“Usually you don't get to know more than what you need... thus, it's enough to check on my department, you don't keep track on everything that happens there. I do not know what my colleague has planned and such as. My boss might say something like 'well didn't you know that?' But i mean, if you don't work with that person or that manager, you won't know that much about it.”

(Respondent 9, 2013)
If one department is keeping information from other departments, it will not only create problems for the other departments that do not receive the information, but the department holding the information as well. Since the other departments might not know anything about the situation, they cannot request information in order to solve a certain situation which will affect the department holding the information as well. This is something that according to some respondents has become like a vicious circle. Internal transparency is a helping tool in all kind of situations, and by involving the employees to a greater extent they feel trusted and thereby work harder in achieving the goals (Madsen, 2009: 645). Respondent 8 comment about this:

“... one should probably think a bit longer on the fact that it concerns all.. or at least all departments who is involved in that product, so to speak. If we do not know it, it is also difficult for us to flag when we have not received all the information. Yeah, a little better at spreading information between the different departments...”

(Respondent 8, 2013)

Even so often, all departments are gathered in a “house meeting”, but none of the respondents seems to have the correct information of how often these meetings are held. It seems that they are planned every third month or so. During these meetings, information regarding changes etcetera that concerns all employees, are presented. All respondents were referring to the “house meetings” at some part of the interview, but more like a must than a possibility of exchanging feedback and vent ideas.

Many of the respondents in the company wishes to take a greater part of what is happening in the company, the company's strategies and information about the company's products. If this information is open to the employees, managers have a chance of enhancing the united organizational identification and make employees feel involved to a greater extent (Cornelissen, 2011: 167). Before the acquisition this kind of information was open to all employees and it was part of the corporate mentality, everyone was a part of the same family and hence had the right to share the same information.

4.4 Build stories where the heart is

Telling stories used to be a natural part of the organizational culture within the company in the early years, which is not that odd since storytelling is a natural part of life in all cultures (James & Minnis, 2004: 26). It was not a pronounced strategy the employees took part of during strategy meetings, but rather a result of all the events that the founders insisted everyone to be part of. Dennisdotter & Axenbrant (2008) claims that storytelling and stories can make positive contributions in order to strengthen the organizational culture, which is proved by many of the respondents. Since storytelling was not a pronounced strategy in the old organization it would be misleading to claim that Company X used to tell stories in order to strengthen the culture. What is stated by many respondents is though that the events and conferences contributed to the natural making of stories. These stories became part of the organizational culture and created a
united workforce. Further, the previous owners shared a lot of their stories and experiences with anyone who would listen and the respondents describe this with fervor in the quotes below:

“The previous owners created stories that in some way proved that we were different...”

(Respondent 2, 2013)

“The previous owners could all of a sudden just sit down and share their stories and we laughed until we cried”

(Respondent 3, 2013)

After the merger the shared stories disappeared together with many of the employees that decided to leave the organization, and today, most of the stories told are shared between the old employees as memories. Back in the days telling stories came natural to everyone in the organization since it was such a familial atmosphere, where people were friends rather than colleagues. This is something that seems to be missed among the employees according to the respondents. Everyone agrees upon that, however, it is important to remain stories about the company’s history in the organization. Through stories, the old employees could teach the new employees the historical mentality that used to flourish in the organization, something that many researchers claim as important for organizations in order to stand out in a competitive market (Boje, 1991: 106; Boje, 1994: 435; Brady & Haley, 2013: 41; Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008: 19; McLellan, 2006: 19).

However, some of the respondents are under the impression that telling stories is something that is starting to come back into the organization. They note that it is not a matter, rather an interest in some of the departments where they wish to implement storytelling as a strategy. This raises assorted feelings among the respondents where most of them feel that it is important to remain the company’s history within the organization, but at the same time they are feeling anxious to secure the organization in the past instead of focusing on the future. There seems to be a distinction between those respondents who were in the company before the merger, and those who entered in later, in whether they see problems with preserving the old histories or not, as the following quotes claims:

"...that you might end up remaining in old paths in how it used to be before and such, it can be negative... The existing stories are highly associated with the founder and he is not with us in the company anymore which can make us quite vulnerable if... I don’t know... anything should happen."

(Respondent 7, 2013)

Focusing on preserving the organizational history might be an effective strategy for those companies that do not manufacture products (Brady & Haley, 2013: 41; Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008: 19; McLellan, 2006: 19). Company X is however a company filled with exotic products of all kinds, competing with the, in many ways unique, background and in order to find a balance between the two it might be a good idea to focus mainly on either the historical background or the products. In this particular case, with the overwhelming change Company X has been through, it might be wise to somehow find a
new focus, different from the old one, and thereby also involve all employees, new as old. By focusing on the history of their products the employees, regardless of the numbers of years worked in the company, would get a good chance of becoming part of the stories and the old stories, about the organization, can instead flourish on a natural and spontaneous level rather than as a strategy. It is after all important not to completely leave the old stories behind since they can work as reminders, and thereby prevent that the same mistakes are made again (Kaye & Jacobson, 1999: 46). One of the respondents addresses the risk of holding on to the old history by adjourning that the old stories should be a natural part of the organization rather than a strategy:

"It becomes a little contrived if you have a lot of stories about the company from how it was before and it gets a bit like... now should you sit down and write all your stories, it will not be reasonable. I do not think it will never be the same... the feeling gets lost in the way."

(Respondent 6, 2013)

This is strengthened by another employee, well aware of the organizational background, but at the same time the respondent underlines that it is a completely new organization today after the merger:

“"It's a bit difficult... I would say that it's very difficult. Somewhere there is the soul, this with our founder and how he started the company, but in the same time there's not really that company as it was back then. Many of the stories is still alive, which could lead to something negative as well if you have different view of it. We are now a part of an concern, but obviously you still want to remain the vision of the little delicacies company but... it is a completely different company today than the one once started, so this is a bit difficult...”

(Respondent 7, 2013)

Company X must figure out where they want to begin, and how they should spread the stories within the organization. When they have sorted that they can work on communicating this externally, as a future strategy against stakeholders and customers. Storytelling is a good strategy when companies aim at strengthen and establish their values, both internally and externally (Brady & Haley, 2013: 42; Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008:27, James & Minnis, 2004: 26; Kaye & Jacobson, 1999: 48). Sharing stories within and outside of the organization, about the products and the organizational background, creates shared meanings according to Kaye & Jacobson (1999), and at this point Company X needs to focus on creating shared meanings in order to create a united workforce that in time will function as living marketers. There are some respondents who also see the backside of using storytelling, who adds that there are risks with using too much stories within the company; that the content gets watered down. The respondents are worried that it might become tedious and that too much information might have a negative effect, by the means that it might be overwhelming and tiring. For both new and old employees, it is important that the stories feel authentic and are told with empathy and credibility, as respondent 4 and respondent 6 expresses:
"I haven't the same personal approach. I am more neutral to some products today. It is like I can't think anything about it myself."

(Respondent 4, 2013)

“I think it's really fun to hear stories from before, but they're actually almost all verbal and that is when you partake in them. It's not the same thing reading about how the founder started this business, like hearing someone tell the stories with empathy and become interested in knowing more.”

(Respondent 6, 2013)

Something unique in this company seems to be the love of their products, all respondents mentioned this during the interviews, they congregate in some way about the products, and this might therefore be a new thing to focus the stories about. When listening to the respondents’ stories, it soon became clear that this way to congregate is something that has always been a part of the company, both before and after the merger. According to Adamson, Pine, Van Steenhoven and Kroupa (2006) stories can develop a unity amongst employees and that improves team building activities. This, by putting the organizational values and beliefs into a context that is easily understood by everyone, and improve the construction of strong work-forces, by enhancing the sense of belonging amongst the employees (Adamson, Pine, Van Steenhoven and Kroupa, 2006: 2). Even though the wish is to gather around the products and make everyone feel involved there are, however, many of the respondents that feel that they are lacking information about their products and that they do not know that much about them. They claim they have too many products to be able to keep track of all of them and that those products they know more about, is because they have been working specifically with those. Storytelling can hereby be used as a way of educating and inspire the employees within the organization in a relaxed and easy context (Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008: 12; Harris & Barnes, 2006: 351). Today, the employees that wants information about any product within the product range, must find the information themselves, it is their own responsibility. This used to be a natural part, being familiar with the products and have great knowledge about them, before this was something that was expected of the employees, as Respondent 4 states:

“That was a knowledge that sort of was required. You could not work here if you didn't know, you had to go to these trips, and you had to know how it worked. It was not something you did because you wanted or not... but everyone wanted! It was the best job in the world and with the best employers!”

(Respondent 4, 2013)

Most respondents agree upon one thing - stories behind their products make it easier for them to relate to and remember their characteristics. The story behind a product is what makes it unique and this is what makes it stand out in a strong competition. Most respondents claim that they believe it is the same thing for them as for the customers; that a story is what makes you get to know the products and also informs about the high quality. Respondent 7 describes it like this:
"The story behind a product's identity is what makes it unique, that makes it possible to take it to heart, what prevents it from being lost in the crowd, what makes it.... there is a history, a heart behind something."

(Respondent 7, 2013)

When you get to know your products and, as a result, get to know their identity it becomes something more than just an article number or a name and you also find it easier to remember them, as with most things in life. Further, respondent 7 says:

"If you have a story behind a product, it becomes so much easier to remember it, and since there is a little heart, you might be a little more passionate about it. There is greater value in the product when you know how it was manufactured by this small producer down in Italy and you remember how the pictures from there looks and how the farm was, and what the yard looked like."

(Respondent 7, 2013)

The referring to the products and the stories behind the products, as the heart of the organization, is what inspired the title of this thesis. It is obvious that many of the respondents share these thoughts, regardless of what department they belong to. A company’s stories is what binds people together and make them loyal to the organization and its values (Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008: 17; Fog et al, 2010: 63; James and Minnis, 2004: 31). Loyalty is something that characterizes Company X; during the interviews with the respondents, many of them describe their passion for their work and how happy they are to be part of this organization. A lot of them also express a wish of receiving more information about the organization and its products because they are proud of being part of Company X, they want to promote their products when they get the chance and this wish is something that the managers in the concern should really hold on to and encourage. According to the theories employers are the most valuable promoters, both internally and externally, and based on shared stories within the organization they create their own opinion about the values which, in the long-term, creates engagement and loyalty (Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008: 17; Fog et al, 2010: 63; James and Minnis, 2004: 31).

Potential benefits to reach by linking to specific products through storytelling before loose elements, may be stories that contribute to strengthen the organizational culture and the internal marketing. This kind of stories testifies that cohesion is a valuable factor in the organization (Dennisdotter & Axenbrant, 2008: 43; Fog et al, 2010: 133-134; Snowden, 1999: 36). If Company X wants to implement storytelling as a strategy to ease the learning of the products amongst their employees they need to set up a good structure in order to reach good results. There are four important elements to focus on when talking about storytelling (Fog et al, 2010: 32-46). To begin with it is important that the one responsible make sure that the information told regarding certain products is a clearly defined message. If not, there is no reason to share this information in the organization in a strategic purpose according to Fog et al. (2010). Further it is important to express not only the basic facts but also the dramatic parts that contributes with some
driving force and makes the story more interesting. For instance the story behind one of Company X’s products shared by respondent 4:

“Take the fennel salami as an example... They forgot it in a carriage with fennel and when they found it a while after they felt “oh this is so good”. And then the Pata Negra, such a wonderful product that everyone is getting so fascinated about when you present it and tell the story behind.”

(Respondent 4, 2013)

It is the small contributions that make most stories memorable and most of the products distributed by Company X have amazing stories behind. The third element according to Fog et al. (2010) is the importance of finding compelling characters in the stories, something that is possible in most of Company X’s stories, since their producers are found in small villages abroad, most often small family owned businesses that have been passed down through generations. The final step in this strategy is to plan how the story should progress according to Fog et al. (2010), and in this case it is important to find a way to mediate the story and then keep it interesting. This is also somehow the big challenge, because it is not easy to share the stories on the packings, because most often they have to contain information specified by Food Agency. Respondent 10 explains the challenges in the quote below:

“In all of our products is it very important but at the same time very difficult... Most often there is not that much room to play with... I mean... you might have an adhesive label, a shelf edge... but you are not allowed to put up any kind of material in the stores either...”

(Respondent 10, 2013)

This information is also important to mediate, as a future strategy, to consumers in order to make them understand the difference between available products and understand the value behind the more expensive products distributed by Company X.

".. it is really important for us to truly try to convey it to the consumer who is standing in the store, in order for whom to understand why it costs 10-15 SEK more than the product lying next to it so that the consumer can asses however that is what that person want or not...”

(Respondent 10, 2013)

At this point, Company X needs to focus on spreading the information internally in order to make sure that all employees possess the stories behind their products. This will hopefully lead to a stronger organizational culture and a more transparent environment. Then, when this is solved, they can start focusing on their wish to implement the storytelling strategy externally.
5. Discussion

In order to clearly answer the problem discussion, this chapter will discuss the result of this study by answering the research questions. The discussion will be based on the analysis presented earlier.

5.1 Answer to research question 1

How has the major organizational change affected the organizational culture that existed within the company before the merger, and what is the organizational culture like in the present?

The organization culture that used to flourish within the company is described among the respondents as an open, familiar and transparent culture. It becomes very clear in this study that the merger represented a new era for Company X and that the result of this is two completely different organizational cultures before and after the merger. It appeared early on during the interviews that the merger came as a shock to the employees of the old organization, and there are still some hard feelings regarding broken promises and poorly managed communication in the organizational change, flowing within the new organization even though the merger now have been accepted among the employees. The company went through an extensive restructuring, going from a completely flat organization to a highly hierarchical structure - which became a new era for Company X. Many of the employees within the company quitted and instead there were managers appointed to the newly created departments. The company's core, the production, moved from the building to another city which is described as an traumatic process with broken promises and disappointments. According to the respondents this was a period in which the company just stopped since no one really knew what the company was evolving into and where many felt lost both among existing- and new employees. This is an example of an organizational change where the link between the organization and its individuals became problematic. Lack of information and uncertainty is in fact something of a red line through Company X entire organizational change process.

The merger, and end of the old organization culture, has resulted in an organization functioning as a sum of several subcultures that has been formed during the testing and searching phase in the change process. The organizational culture described by the respondents within Company X today, is friendly with a genuine passion for food, but also closed doors and trouble with communication between departments. Company X could be seen as a relatively new organization trying to form a new culture, but at the same time they are still trying to hold on to many of the old values and beliefs from the old culture which seems to have created confusion. The respondents describe how they, in today's organizational culture start to rediscover some of the old manners that used to be in the company and seem hopeful when imagining the company's future. All of the respondents want to preserve elements from the old organization in some extent, but it is also important to many of them that Company X does not get stuck in any old rut, but
rather forms a new version of the old organizational culture. This is something that Balogun & Hope shows in their research (2004), how existing cultures can be strong barriers to the implementation of change. This is because the organization operates by the existing culture instead of the new, desired (Balogun & Hope Hailey, 2004:138). The existing culture within Company X is based on the old organizational culture that fell apart in the merger and became a weak culture where shared values was few or absent, which has contributed to the uncertainty that currently exists in the company amongst different individuals. This study shows that the culture is still rather confused and that the organization still remains in the search phase. The employees within Company X never seem to enter the integration phase because they need greater support in their new individual roles in order to be able to move forward.

Company X is today strictly controlled by the concern which results in that much focus in the company is located externally with sales figures and marketing materials; everything revolves around the products while the organizational culture and the internal work in some extent has been forgotten. The pride that exists in the company is therefore in some extent still partly directed towards the old organization that used to be and still is especially directed towards the products, rather than the very culture of Company X itself today. The pride for the old organization is thereby still existing among the employees today, this is however something that remains among those who became employees after the merger, while several of the employees from the old organization appears to simultaneously living in what used to be and feel disappointed rather than proud of Company X. The old organizational culture is described with love and pride among the old employees and many of the stories told by them, is today retold by the new employees. These stories are thus important to maintain within the company as they are of value among all employees in order to make the existing divisions in subcultures towards open up more to each other. At the same time, this show how important it is for Company X to build new stories around the core value of the company, which is the genuine passion for food, and work towards open up between the subcultures that have formed the company. Storytelling can be used as a reminder of previous mistakes made in the organization as well. However, in order for the organization to advance into the integration phase of the organizational change and start working as a cohesive culture they need a strategy as to succeed with the implementation of internal transparency and storytelling.

5.2 Answer to research question 2

_How can transparency and storytelling contribute to a strengthened and improved organizational culture and, with time, create an united workforce?_

Internal transparency can be used as a strategy with the aim of creating an open information flow which is needed in Company X. At present, the information stays within the department which causes problems in ways of misunderstandings. In order to avoid misunderstandings, the walls between departments must be torn down; this will not only reduce the mistakes and misunderstandings but most probably also strengthen the organizational culture.
Internal transparency would ease the decision making process, especially concerning decisions that relies on, and concerns more than one department. A more transparent environment might also tear down the walls and increase the unity and the willingness of working towards one mutual goal. In order to increase the transparency, “house meetings” held more frequently would most probably improve the information flow within the organization. Managers that open up the organization to all employees, despite title, enhance the interest and loyalty amongst their staff by showing trust and confidence in their working force. This might lead to a united front, not only within the department, but between departments. In the past, when Company X was a flat organization, the employees helped each other out and worked as one team rather than small teams, metaphorically seen, the present workforce can be described as a team playing the same game, where everyone is on the pitch struggling, but as individuals rather than as a team. Bad news is toned down and instead of sharing the information right away the departments wait and keep the information within the group which causes problems. This might also be one of the reasons why the information stays within the departments. When this works out properly within the organization Company X can start focusing on ways of implementing this as an external strategy in order to promote and open up the organization amongst outsiders.

Further, by implementing storytelling as a strategy within Company X they have chances of creating a new, strong and united workforce. The organizational change resulted in new stories and it might therefore be better to focus on the new story, instead of holding on so tight to the old one, since the majority of the staff is new recruits without any experience from the old culture. Their knowledge about the organizational history is limited, based on stories they have heard from the old employees, and it is clear that some of the new employees is trying very hard to appear as well briefed, while others distance themselves from the old history in order to make a statement that ‘this is the present and this is what the organization should focus on’. If the old company was still intact, the previous owners’ stories would most certainly be in focus, but the acquisition somehow put an end to the old culture. The elements of the old culture that lives on should of course be preserved because it is a natural part of the organizational identity, but at the same time it is important to keep in mind that new factors are added to the present culture, and the merger is now part of the organizational history and identity. The stories cannot be fixed in the past because then there is a risk of the old culture suffocating the opening into the new culture, the old stories must evolve and make room for new experiences and events the organization has gone through. This to ensure that all employees feel part of the organization, instead of feeling like intruders that damaged something very valuable to the old employees. When the old employees share memories about the old organization they express so much love which might provide a picture of the old culture as a lot better than it actually was. The organizational history can instead be used as an ending story shared by both old and new employees. The organization must work harder with their culture in the current situation, simply because they are a much bigger staff than before the merger, which means that they have a lot of different personalities within the company today compared to the past when they worked much closer, and the employees were friends rather than colleagues.
During the interviews it is obvious that more or less everyone in the organization share the passion for food and delicatessens and that Company X’s products is something they all feel very proud of. In view of the prevailing situation, where the employees still experience confusion, it might be a good strategy to focus on the products instead of the organizational history. They do have such strong brands in their organization, and at this point the interest amongst the employees is greater when it comes to the goods compared to the interest of the organizational background. At the present time it is obvious that not all employees receive information regarding the products, in this situation it is only meant for the departments involved in the information, even though there is an interest in knowing the stories behind the products among other departments as well. With enhanced transparency, stories can flourish more vivid in the organization and the employees can gather around their shared passion for food. Further, united core values can unite the employees and strengthen the organizational culture. If they are linked to the common interest for food it becomes a natural part of the culture instead of forced and contrived. Shared core values might also enhance the organizational identity, when employees identify themselves with the organization they tend to be more loyal and feel a stronger connection towards their tasks.

By implementing the use of internal transparency and storytelling Company X can strengthen the organizational culture. When the employees feel trusted in terms of greater responsibility and insight in upcoming operating expenses they identify with the organization on a deeper level. A more transparent environment might also open up to an environment where the employees feel empowerment and safety in their tasks, in the current situation there is an uncertainty regarding what the employees can do and what they cannot do for the concern. Storytelling and transparency can also be used in order to diminish the forming of new subcultures. By opening up the internal parts of the organization and create shared meaning, the boundaries between the subcultures within Company X will dilute and unite into a shared, strong culture. Subcultures will always be a part of organizational life, it is inevitable, but it is possible to make them more open to each other. Within Company X two kinds of subcultures is to be seen, (1) departments against departments and (2) old employees against new employees. These formations will probably always be more or less apparent, but by creating shared meanings these subcultures will hopefully open up more against each other.
6. Conclusion and further research proposal

This chapter concludes the answers to the research questions and presents the findings of this study. Further, the contributions to this academic research field are recited as well as propositions for further research, both within Company X as well as in Company Y and in similar organizations.

6.1 Conclusion

In the present moment Company X is constructing a new organizational culture based on contributions from old and new events and employees. The environment is still characterized by confusion and strong barriers between the prevailing subcultures seen in the organization. There is an awareness of the barriers amongst the respondents, and even though they view this problem from different perspectives they all underline that the present information flows need improvements.

All respondents are positive against the implementation of storytelling and transparency as a strategy to strengthen today’s organizational culture. However, they expressed a fear that the implementation would imply another operation and emphasizes that they prefer it to be a natural part of their culture. Storytelling around the products, instead of around the, in the current situation, extensive history, would generate new stories shared by all employees regardless of previous organizational experiences. Many of the employees talks about their products with warmth and it is obvious that the products is the heart of the organization. Further, all of the respondents agree that the employees within Company X share the passion for food and that this is something they believe would strengthen the bonds between the employees and improve the cohesion. Internal transparency would ease the information flow within the organization and tear down and diminish the barriers between the existing subcultures and eventually open up to the making of the new culture, and the spread of stories connected to their products.

Built on the findings of this study a conclusion can be stated; storytelling and internal transparency would in all probability solve the obstacles Company X manage today and the change this implementation would entail is seen positively by the respondents and would therefore unlikely cause additional problems.

6.1.2 This thesis contribution to the academic research field

Storytelling and transparency are two different strategies used with different purposes and most often known as external strategies. However, after performing the depth interviews within Company X the authors saw the need of both strategies. Since the organization is divided into many subcultures and closed groups they need to open up the internal environment in order to create a better collaboration. Collaboration between
storytelling and transparency can be used in this case to build a strong community with clear core values in the organization in order to strengthen the culture.

The organizational change in Company X has been prolonged and Company X does not seem to really be able to make that final leap out of it. They have instead continued on from the stage they are in now, and get on with their external work and made great efforts in order to increase their sales numbers. It is clear that they must put an end to their organizational change and move on and begin working as the new company they actually are.

Earlier published theory suggests that internal transparency as well as storytelling can be advantageously used in internal work with both building and strengthening the organizational culture. There is a lot of academic research about these fields and more practitioners starts to advocating appropriate strategies to work from. This study has however shown potentials in which storytelling and transparency can be used to operate parallel in a common strategy in order to get the company to move forward, to strengthen its culture and start work as an united workforce. This is a must for Company X in order to be able to reach those results as both the company itself and the concern is expecting. Initially in this study, the problem with clashes between organizational cultures, division into subcultures and organizational identity crises, was discussed. This is something that this study have connected to these two strategies and by working with storytelling and transparency this opens up opportunities to solve these problematic situations in order to get Company X to move out if the organizational change phase.

This thesis provides new knowledge to the field by showing this interconnection between two earlier distinguished strategies and illustrates how storytelling and transparency can be used as an internal strategic tool to strengthen the organizational culture and contribute to a better information flow within a company.

6.2 Further research proposal

Further research on transparency and storytelling within Company X would be to follow up the results of the implementation of these strategies internally in order to see if they succeeded. By time, it would also be of great interest to examine whether an implementation of external storytelling and transparency would enhance the sales numbers since some of the respondents see the possibilities. A similar study within Company Y, the one Company X merged with in conjunction with the acquisition, could also bring interesting contributions to the study and bring greater understanding to the result found in this study. This does however require more time and money since Company Y is located in another city.

Viewed from a general perspective it would be intriguing to perform the same study in similar companies in order to see if the results become similar or completely different. As mentioned before, this study do not aim at finding a general strategy applicable on companies in average, thereof it is not certain that it is impossible.
7. List of references

7.1 Articles


7.2 Books


8. Appendix

8.1 Appendix 1 - Interview guide

1. Kan du berätta lite kortfattat vem du är?
*Can you tell us shortly about who you are?*

2. Kan du berätta för oss om dina arbetsuppgifter? Hur länge har du jobbat här och vad är din roll i företaget?
*What are your work tasks? How long have you worked here and what is your specific role within the company?*

3. Hur ser en vanlig arbetsdag ut för dig?
*How does a regular workday look like for you?*

4. Kan du berätta lite om Företag X? Vad är företagets historia?
*Can you tell us about Company X? What is the history of Company X?*

5. Hur upplever du företagskulturen här på Företag X?
*How do you perceive the corporate culture in Company X?*

6. Hur flödar historier och berättelser inom Företag X?
*How are stories flowing within Company X?*

7. Vad vet du om historier bakom era produkter?
*What do you know about the stories behind your products?*

8. Vad för berättelser och historier om Företag X har du fått berättat för dig sedan du började på företaget? Hur blev de berättade för dig?
*What kind of stories and history about Company X have you been told since you joined the company? How was these stories communicated?*

9. Vad får du för information angående era produkter idag?
*What kind of information do you receive about your products today?*

10. Vad för typ av information är då det? (T.ex. Produkt specifikation/ historia/ ursprung?)
*What kind of information is that? (E.g. Product specification / history / origin?)*

11. Hur cirkulerar denna informationen runt i företaget?
*How does this information flourish within the company?*
12. Hur förmedlas generell information vanligen ut på företaget?
How is general information usually communicated within the company?

13. Vid olika sorters förändringar som sker i företaget, hur brukar det kommuniceras ut på företaget? Får alla ta del av informationen?
How are various kinds of changes communicated in the company? Is everyone included in the information share?

14. När du ska kommunicera ut något eller gör någon förändring hur går du då till väga?
When you need to communicate something or make a change how do you then do?

15. Vad vet du om konceptet storytelling? Kan du försöka förklara det för oss eller gissa dig till en beskrivning av det?
What do you know about the concept storytelling? Can you please try and explain it to us or guesswork a description of it?

**Interviewers provide respondents with a definition:**
Storytelling is about using stories in order to create history within and about the company. It could be stories, myths, fables, oral as well as written and / or images.

16. Vad är dina tankar om konceptet storytelling ska implementeras i Företag X och arbeta aktivt med? (både internt med historian men också med produkterna)
What are your thoughts about implementing the concept of storytelling in Company X and actively work with?

17. Hur tror du att det skulle påverka/ inverka på ditt arbete? Hur skulle du kunna arbeta med storytelling i dina arbetsuppgifter?
How do you think it would influence / affect your work? How could you work with storytelling in your work tasks?

18. Hur tror du att Företag X skulle kunna börja arbeta med storytelling och transparens?
How do you think Company X could start working with storytelling and transparency?

19. Vad vet du om konceptet transparens? Kan du försöka förklara det för oss eller gissa dig till en beskrivning av det?
What do you know about the concept transparency? Can you please try and explain it to us or guesswork a description of it?

**Interviewers provide respondents with a definition:**
Transparency as a strategy used within a company means that the company lack of concealed conditions and agendas, stakeholders and customers have the availability to receive full information. In other words, a state where the stakeholders image of the organization is similar to the projected and actual conformance of a particular organization.
20. Hur skulle du kunna arbeta mer transparent i dina arbetsuppgifter?
   *How would you be able to work more transparent in your work tasks?*

21. Hur hade du sett att din avdelning skulle arbeta för att implementera storytelling & transparens i Företag X?
   *How would you have seen that your department would work to implement storytelling and transparency in Company X?*

22. Vad för material eller kunskap eller dylikt känner att du hade velat ha som hjälp för att kunna ta till dig denna nya strategi i dina arbetsuppgifter? Varför det?
   *What kind of material or knowledge or the like, do you feel that you would have wanted in order to help bring this new strategy into your personal work duties? Why is that?*