



**GÖTEBORG
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Managing strategic communication:

**An organizational case study on internal
communication channels at Ericsson Göteborg**

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Abstract:

Internal communication in a global company can be seen as a challenge in the organizational environment. Communicational objectives such as message efficiency, creating learning networks and sharing knowledge represent guidelines for any strategy that looks at developing a modern distribution of information. In this way, internal communicational channels should be developed as competent tools for carrying out messages to the employees and achieving efficiency at the work place. This research investigates the richness of different internal communication channels in relationship with the processing of an efficient communication strategy at Ericsson Göteborg. The theoretical approach tries to define concepts such as: internal communication, strategic communication, internal communication channels and the use of social media in an organizational environment. The thesis follows the employees' preferences regarding internal communication channels by researching their needs and analyzing their beliefs about the on-going communication processes inside the company. Our main findings support the choice of a rich communication medium validating the media richness theory and the hypothesis that employees have a natural affinity for face-to-face-communication. The social aspect of communication is also taken into account with the introduction of social media as a possible internal communication channel. The research method involves an internal survey and interviews that are used to identify and describe the communication channels employed inside the company (e.g. Intranet, emails, newsletters, Lync, Ericoll, Wikis). Therefore, the thesis looks at analysing the communication practices and concludes with suggestions for improving the communication strategy at Ericsson Göteborg.

Key words: Internal communication/ Strategic communication/ Media richness/Internal communication channels/ Social media

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1 INTRODUCTION

“When we are no longer able to change a situation - we are challenged to change ourselves.”
Viktor E. Frankl

This research aims to describe and analyze the corporate environment in relationship with the communication channels used internally in order to transmit organizational messages to various target groups. Starting with the analysis of the communication routines, understood as daily habits and rituals of communication within the organization, and finishing with the employees’ perception of internal communication efficiency, the thesis tries to emphasize the media richness of the internal channels in relationship with the elaboration of a communication strategy.

This research has been carried out while collaborating with a global company: Ericsson Göteborg, where we combined the scientific data gathering with the development of a local report on the communication routines that take place at a site level in the company. In this way, our analysis is representative as a communication diagnosis of the organization. The related theory in fields such as strategic communication, internal communication, internal communication channels and their richness prepares the background of our investigation by defining general concepts which will be presented later on in the discussion section of our thesis.

Furthermore, as a research challenge we introduced the concept of social media as a possibility in the expansion of internal communication channels, trying to explore the company’s perception on introducing new innovative platforms as a resource for a future communication strategy (the concepts of *platforms* and *channels* are being used synonymously throughout the thesis). This unveiled to us the existing connection between external and internal communication, a link which could be brought to discussion in further research.

While trying to follow the course of our data analysis we brought into light organizational theories such as work bound communication theory (Allwood, 2003) which was used in our discussion section in order to set the organizational frame for the roles and purposes of the communication acts. The theoretical approach helped us analyse and discuss our final results by capturing an insightful perspective on organizational communication.

The importance of internal communication in the development of positive working relationships between employees is enabled through the use of an effective communication routine. By promoting the employees’ understanding of the organizational environment we prioritize the emergence of professional identity with the aid of internal communication channels. This study follows the employee preferences for the transmitting of information inside the company and their contribution in describing the internal communication issues. The benefits of an efficient communication strategy can be stated in the appropriateness of internal communication channels, with employees relying on such channels to spread important organizational information. However, if ignored, the richness of internal

communication channels can harm the organizational environment and create inefficiency through chaos and misunderstanding (Welch, 2012).

1.1 The importance of communication

Even if communication strikes us as one of the most important parts of a daily organizational routine, it always seems left in the shadow of other technical or more business oriented practices. Organizations choose to neglect communicational aspects of their professional practices by taking communicational acts for granted, considering them an element of habit in solving problems and managing team work. Living in an era where we are surrounded by a vast multitude of means of communication and the desire to transmit ideas to our interlocutors with every important piece of information we have, we would struggle to support the unimportance of communication habits. Society is based on social behaviour and on the action of socialising with other individuals, building connections between small or large communities and bringing together people with similar needs and aspirations. The same pattern can be applied to companies, where employees structure their relationship with the workplace by maintaining and developing social interactions with fellow co-workers. Communication, through its simplest form of existence, not only does it help the corporations to construct and preserve a productive friendly work environment, but it also creates a library of shared needs, values and attitudes among the workers.

The idea of communication processes inside a global business environment is nowadays an area of study with increasing interest from contemporary researchers. On the other hand, when dealing with new innovative ways of transmitting ideas inside organizations the perspective changes from seeing communication as a marketing tool, towards communication as the instrument for solving problems and providing efficient solutions. The main idea of this thesis is to describe and analyse the internal processes of communication, comparing different views on the use of internal communication channels in collaborative communication processes. When dealing with a different type of communication, the theoretical perspective changes from the classical marketing approach of using words as promotional instruments, towards communication as a human resource, a self-motivating occupation which leads to positive changes. This aspect also modifies the employee approach to the use of social media as an internal channel. Individuals are more concerned nowadays with solving and discussing differences or even creating new ones by using the multifunctional channels of the internet.

The present thesis is centred more on the richness of various internal media, underlining the qualitative perspective on internal communication inside a global corporation. Defining and introducing new paradigmatic views within the business context encourages a gradual standardization of the communication processes, leaving us little or no space for innovation. To accept the informational change as an established progress means also to admit the dominance of communicational patterns over other corporative practices. This analysis follows the theoretical perspective on internal communication and underlines the nature of the internal communication channels built not only on web platforms as well as the resemblances between them.

The human need of knowledge gives birth to new ways of understanding reality and how to communicate with each other. This creates a platform for cross-culturalization and encourages diversity as a positive business phenomenon. The practical experience of communicating internally in a corporation offers responses to an efficient information flow. This leads to the re-construction of corporate messages.

When talking about organizational routines we can underline the universality of the communicational practices, the individual being an important part of the new social media dimension defined by the motto: *You are what you consume* which today has become *You consume what you are* (Boudon, 1998: 25). The continuous transmission of the same message through different media produces not only an information overload, but also it creates a gap between the organizational mission and the employees. As a result, the individual is subject to a continuous process of receiving and giving information which can affect both the organization and the quality of work. The secret is in balancing the communicational processes by choosing a variety of channels to transmit them.

McLuhan explores the concept of change in relationship to the world's development, with the technological transformation of the communication channels being able to modify the environment. The confrontation between unaltered spaces in the globalization tendency and the spaces that sustain this phenomenon of trans-nationalization of industries could be translated in terms of local identity, a symbol which exists inside global institutions. In this case, the birth of social media and the on-going technological developments sustain the emergence of fresh, innovative ways of communicating with each other. Most of the global companies take this in their advantage by creating their own social stories.

When talking about the globalization of the communicational practices we can say that even if change is brought into the business world by social media platforms, the diffusion of power and the hierarchical structure are always dependent on the leading departments of the company. Also, the information content changes due to different target audiences underlining the need for a very diverse range of media instruments: *"While capital and production are globalized, the content of media is customized to local cultures and to the diversity of target audiences."* (Arsenault & Catsells, 2008).

Therefore we become witnesses of the ongoing development that professional communication has to face on a daily basis; the phenomenon bringing not only media, technologic or economic evolutions, but also an early emergence of multicultural aspects in work bound communication features. By developing the appropriate communication strategies and evaluating the existing communicational processes the research will try to describe the communication patterns and analyse the internal communication channels used at Ericsson Göteborg.

1.2 Defining concepts

Strategic communication is defined as an informational resource, building persuasive, discursive, as well as relational communication in order to achieve the organizational mission (Hallahan & Holtzhausen, 2007).

Knowledge can be regarded as the main source of a company's innovative potential. Accordingly, knowledge can be seen as a power resource that enables companies to develop efficient competitive strategies in creative ways (Vuori, 2012). In today's increasingly complex market, organizations aim for the attention, admiration, affinity, alignment, and allegiance of their customers, employees or investors. In order to gain the necessary status on the world's economy scale, organizations need to make strategic decisions which trigger positive organizational change. In defining **strategic communication** we can underline its focus on communicating how companies transfer information among different organizational endeavours and how an organization functions as a social actor in order to reach its goals (Vuori, 2012). When referring to **strategic communication** we need to mention that it recognizes power and leadership as a fundamental purpose of the organizational communication. The term strategic is associated with power and decision-making, implying all the management functions of communication practices and tactics (Hallahan & Holtzhausen, 2007).

In order to accomplish a high level of communication practices, companies have to involve **strategic planning** and communicating in their everyday working experience by developing ways of introducing newly emerged tendencies and patterns inside their business environment. An issue that might be relevant to modern companies is the lack of knowledge when dealing with an extra flow of information. The over saturation of information can be avoided by using the appropriate communication strategy.

Communication strategies are known to enable dialogues with different target groups and to enhance communication related to company brands. In this way, strategic communication reaches employees and conducts internal ideas by building communities with external stakeholders and engaging them in the idea generation processes (Vuori, 2012). In order to influence behaviours: what audiences know, how audiences feel, how audiences react organizations use a wide variety of methods related to strategic communication. In this way, audiences' perceptions of the organization are represented by the total sum of people's experiences when coming into contact with the company. The role of strategic communication is to improve individuals' experiences and activities by integrating an efficient communication system inside the company's vision (Hallahan & Holtzhausen, 2007).

The term **internal corporate communication** can be understood as a communication process between line managers and various internal stakeholders configured as a way of promoting a strong sense of belonging to the organizational environment and raising awareness of all possible changes (Welch & Jackson, 2007).

Recent research pinpoints the recognition of the medium as being the message in organizations (White, Vanc, & Stafford, 2010). This facilitates the categorization of **internal**

communication channels as: print (accessed on paper), electronic (accessed on a piece of technology) and face-to-face (interpersonal) (Welch, 2012).

Communication channel richness refers to the capacity of the media to transmit a clear message by avoiding ambiguities and thus promoting an efficient communication between individuals. Certain types of communication media have a better capability of transmitting clear messages hence they are named richer media or channels. (The concepts of *media* and *channels* are being used synonymously.) According to the theory, a rich medium is one that allows direct feedback and multiple communication cues as non-verbal expressions, language variety and permission for the messages to be fitted to their receivers (Daft & Lengel, 1986). In this way, when the communication channel matches the message the communication performance increases, the media being selected in relationship with the nature of the communication act.

1.3 Previous research

Previous research in the employee preferences for a certain type of information and choice of internal channel (White et al., 2010) found a predisposition for internal messages from face-to-face communication as the most valued in team projects to electronic communication via email. Friedl & Verčič (2011) argue that the new generation of employees has a preference for traditional internal media at the workplace in spite of having a strong liking for social media in their private lives. Kelleher (2001) discovered that different fondness for a certain communication channel is linked to different organizational roles, with managers selecting face-to-face and email communication in order to dictate a sense of belonging to the organizational community. Woodall (2006) advocates the employees' preference for the adaptability of the message to the appropriate communication channel. This brings into discussion the media richness theory (Lengel & Daft, 1988) which states that richer media are relevant for more ambiguous information and less richer media for very explicit content.

1.4 Purpose and Research questions

Research Questions

- *How do internal communication channels affect strategic communication?*
- *How do employees feel about internal communication channels?*

Literature suggests the following research challenges: *effective communication strategies improve the communication flow inside companies and support innovative thinking* (Hallahan et al., 2007), *internal and external communication strategies are strongly linked to each other* (Vuori, 2012), *choosing the appropriate communication channels is the key to communication efficiency*, (Johnson & Lederer, 2005), *using new social media to communicate with different internal and external target groups is thought to be efficient* (Vuori, 2012).

Research purpose

The research will try to bring together the roles of strategic communication in connection with different communication channels which directly affect the communication practices in an organization. The strategy is to combine successfully two different approaches: the traditional management paradigms with the creative thinking by proposing new social media marketing and modern communication tools as competent replacements for internal emailing routines or chat rooms. Furthermore, one of the main objectives of the thesis is to describe the messages and the media used for transmitting information inside a global company, offering organizational academic insight after analysing and researching the communicational practices.

Moreover, the research works towards a valid results section based on organizational insight from the employees. Most of the suggestions from the discussion section are assigned to information taken from the organizational environment. In this case, the solutions of bringing improvement into the company could be described as general assumptions which could be extrapolated to similar organizational studies. A novelty of our study is present in the nature of working with a very specific example, in our case Ericsson Göteborg, each analysed element being part of a higher scale problem inside various global companies.

The study aims towards a descriptive perspective of the communication patterns inside an organizational environment. The specificity of the case can be found in the particularities of a singular circumstance: the internal communication flow at Ericsson Göteborg. Furthermore, we are investigating the hows of internal communication in a large organization by looking at the employee perception of internal media richness. More specifically, the research targets the case study of Ericsson in Göteborg and its internal communication channels. For this purpose we define specific target groups and channels of internal communication. Additionally, we describe the informational flow inside the organization and provide suggestions in developing an improved internal communication strategy.

Internal communication aims to increase dialogue among organizational units, facilitate the internal information flow and deliver communication consistent with the company's goals (Mazzei, 2010). Another key issue is to create the proper climate for active communication behaviours such as knowledge sharing, collaboration and creativity (Mazzei, 2010). Due to its impact on the organization it is essential to tailor messages for specific target groups.

Our research targets are internally defined groups at Ericsson Göteborg, for instance: frontline supervisors, managers, engineers, assistants and communicators. The study also focuses on describing the internal communication patterns between different units inside Ericsson Göteborg.

By analysing the case study of Ericsson Göteborg, we investigate what is the appropriate way to reach supervisors and employees and what employees think about specific types of internal communication respectively: oral communication through meetings and conversation, written communication delivered via internal newsletters and magazines, electronic communication through intranet and emails, and notice/mood boards. To make the internal communication

strategy a natural part of every-day working life we suggest the use of various social media platforms.

1.5 Limitations of the study

Regarding one of our research limitations, our study presents some methodological difficulties, the qualitative interpretation of results representing a technique that cannot reach all general meanings of the communication patterns. Furthermore, in interpreting qualitative data we always have to deal with subjectivity when interpreting the data which increases the lack of validity in the study's general conclusions.

A specific limitation of our research is the impossibility to reach all existing employees with the selected representatives being a random sample who expressed their opinions about the company. Thus, the results cannot be generalized to a larger degree to an unlimited population of individuals, being representative only for the case study analysed in the research. On the other hand, some conclusions could be applied to other similar companies with a very typical work environment.

Another research limitation we confronted with was the inability to research and analyse all the internal documents found on the intranet, the amount of information existing on the internal web pages being overwhelming. The study concluded in sampling the most recent communication patterns and the important site information.

From an ethical perspective, our attempt was to not disclose important internal information to the general public and to keep these types of messages outside of the research area. In this way, the interviewees were asked just relevant questions, related to communicational tools and already existing organizational practices.

2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

In order to capture the essential meaning of our results and discussion sections, the theoretical approach of this thesis tries to introduce and define main concepts such as: *Strategic communication, Internal communication, Internal communication channels and Social media*. The thesis follows the leads of organizational communication, focusing on a selection of communication theories in analysing the data. *Allwood's work-bound communication model* (Allwood, 2003), *The resource-based theory of the company and the constructive theory of communication* (Mazzei, 2010) and the *Medium Theory* (Qvortrup, 2006) are discussed in the following pages, being a framework for our future debate.

To carry out this study, **Allwood's work-bound communication model** (Allwood, 2003) will be presented as part of our theoretical background when trying to analyse the results of our study. The reason for taking this perspective is that work-bound communication is considered to be instrumental to the nature of the work. Allwood outlines work-bound communication as "*who works with whom, for what reason/purpose, in what manner, with what result*" (Allwood, 2003). We will proceed with this definition and break it down further: "*who*" is shorthand for the people who are communicating, "*whom*" covers the audience to whom they are communicating, "*reason/purpose*" is the content of their message, "*in what manner*" is the choice of channels of communication, "*result*" is the impact of communication upon its intended audience (Allwood, 2003), (Slee & Harwood, 2004). By using this proposed model it is possible to draw a high-level map of key communication patterns in a global organization (Slee & Harwood, 2004).

The thesis will also try to consider **the resource-based theory of the company and the constructive theory of communication** (Mazzei, 2010). The resource based-theory of the company states that "*competitive advantage stems from firm-specific resources that a company owns and that assure its uniqueness in its sector*" (Mazzei, 2010). This theory emphasises that effective communication among colleagues, common trust and shared values enable knowledge creation (Mazzei, 2010), (Snell et al., 2001). The process of organizational learning skills, behaviours and interactions of human resources, forms the foundation for knowledge creation and sharing, both among employees and with external communities (Snell et al., 2001). This "*collective intelligence*" can be communicated by the use of social media which enables workers to create content, online commenting, voting and storing ideas for later use (Mazzei, 2010), (Snell et al., 2001). In the case of organizational communication the creation of new knowledge and bringing in external knowledge can build an atmosphere where everyone has the role of an innovator (Mazzei, 2010).

The constructive theory of communication says that "*communication is a social process of interaction and/or interpretation that gives sense and meaning to social reality, organizational actions, events and organizational roles and processes*" (Mazzei, 2010). The theory points out that each member of a company can "*enact processes to negotiate meanings and make the organization operate*" (Mazzei, 2010). Therefore, it suggests that the responsibility of the effective communication is not monopolised only by managers but by all members of the organization.

Medium theory looks at the interaction between the format of communications and its content. Qvortrup (2006: 351) argues that: “*Successful communication is not a ‘natural’, but a highly improbable phenomenon. Thus, the effect of communication media is to limit the improbability of communication success, and the qualities of media can be measured by their impact on communication success.*”

2.1 Strategic communication

It has become more and more important for social actors and organizations to be intentional and mindful in their communication in order to be heard (Habermas, 1979), (Hallahan et al., 2007). This is particularly valid, as strategic organizational communication has become increasingly virtual and international in today’s world. According to Hallahan *et al.* (2007:27) strategic communication should be a “*focal interest of communication scholarships*”. Studying strategic communication as a social science reflects on real changes in the society and on its organizational principles.

Strategic communication research aims to examine how the organizations create and exchange meaning with others: customers, employees, investors, and government officials and media representatives. Strategic communication also investigates how the organization presents itself in society as a social actor in terms of creating the public culture and in the discussion concerning the public issues (Hallahan et al., 2007:27). In other words, strategic communication focuses on how an organization promotes itself through “*intentional activities of its leaders, employees and communication practitioners*” (Hallahan et al. 2007). Many of the organizations have recognized that various communication disciplines (e.g. management communication, marketing communication, public relations, social marketing communication, and technical communication) share common goals, objectivities and strategies in achieving similar purposes. Organizations are seeking integration, enhanced effectiveness through synergy, efficiencies and reduced redundancies (Hallahan, 2004 in Hallahan et al. 2007). Therefore strategic communication provides organizational leaders and members with the purposeful communication activities to advance the organization’s mission (Hallahan, 2007).

The term strategic was first used in organization theory in the 1950s and aimed to describe how organizations compete in the marketplace and gain a market share (Hatch, 1997 in Hallahan et al. 2007). This modern approach to strategic communication defined the fundamental goals of strategic planning as “*controlling the environment and maintaining the organization’s autonomy*” (Preffer & Salancik 1978 in Hallahan et al. 2007:12). The term strategic communication is also associated with power and a rational decision-making process in organizations (Hatch, 1997 in Hallahan et al. 2007). Thus the process of strategic planning involves: goal setting, strategy formulation and implementation, and evaluation (Porter, 1985 in Hallahan et al. 2007).

Also the two key words that compose the term of *strategic communication* are significant. According to Hallahan et al (2007) strategic communication is a rich and multidimensional concept and must not be defined narrowly. Firstly, the word *strategic* indicates that communication activities are intentional and intended. *Strategic* used in conjunction with

communication, emphasises that “communication practice is a management function”. (Hallahan et al., 2007:12) Authors explained that such an approach is clearly visible if communication is defined as the essential activity of management.

When referring to strategic communication we elaborated a model based on Mazzei (2010) that supports the connection between the internal and external organizational communication practices. On an internal communicational background we have underlined the importance of: sharing knowledge, creating ideas together via different channels by using different communication tools and crossing organizational boundaries by adopting new strategies in communicating internally with employees. The sum of internal communication patterns can be exemplified in the outcomes of external communication: in the creation of external business knowledge, bringing in external knowledge which helps with the development of the company’s business vision and branding the company on a regional and global market.

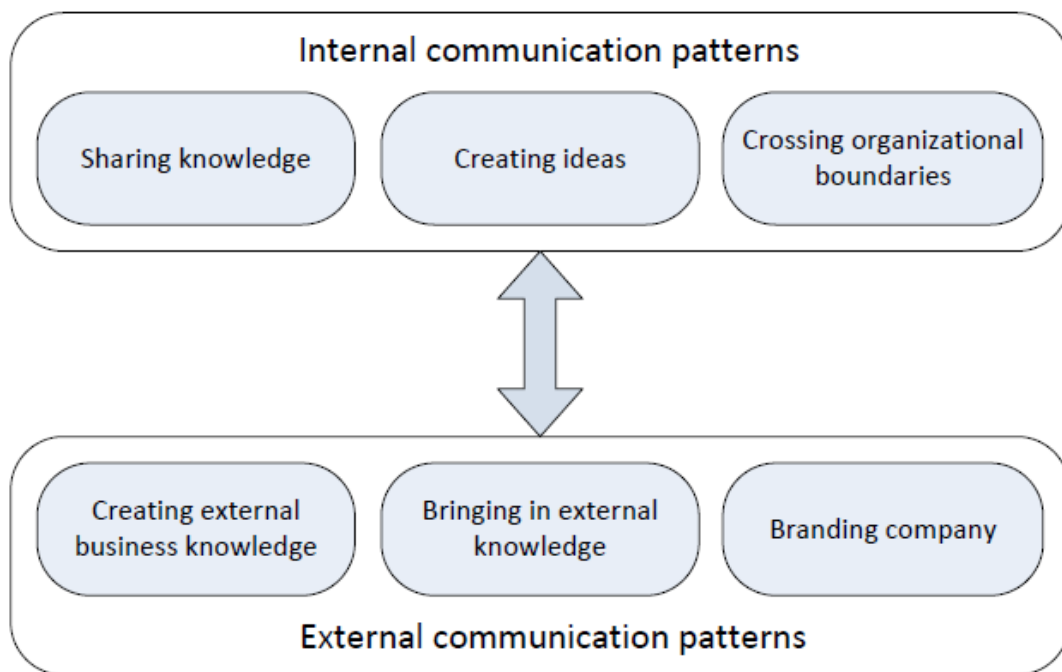


Fig. A: The model of strategic communication

2.2 Internal communication

Internal communication is among the fastest growing specialisations in communication management within the organizations. Communication practitioners perceive internal communication as a challenging area (Fitz & Partick, 2004:30 in Welch & Jackson, 2005:177), which significantly affects the ability of an organization to involve the employees into the environmental changes and understanding its evolving objectives (Welch & Jackson, 2005:193). Quirke (2000:21) claimed that internal communication is the core process by which business can create value. He explained that today’s organizational assets include “*the knowledge and interrelationships of its people*” and the necessary organizational processes in order to produce this value (Quirke, 2000 in Welch & Jackson, 2005: 178). Internal

communication happens constantly and includes informal chats as well as formal, managed communication within the organizations (Dolphin, 2005).

A number of authors (Dolphin, 2005:172, Smidts et al., 2001, Van Riel, 1995 in Welch & Jackson, 2005:178) have provided the identical passage from Frank & Brownell (1989) as a definition of internal communication: *“the communication transactions between individuals and/or groups at various levels and in different areas of specialisation that are intended to design and redesign organisations, to implement designs, and to co-ordinate day-to-day activities”* (Frank & Brownell, 1989:5-6 in Welch & Jackson, 2005: 179). Dolphin (2005:172) refers to this definition and explores internal communication in the corporate context and its communication functions. In the article *“Rethinking internal communication”* by Welch & Jackson (2005) authors pointed out that Frank & Brownell’s (1989) definition actually *“refers to organizational communication as a field of study and practice, not internal communication or employee communication as a part of integrated corporate communication”* (Welch & Jackson, 2005:179). Therefore they develop the internal corporate communication concept, which is defined as *“communication between an organisation’s strategic managers and its internal stakeholders, designed to promote commitment to the organisation, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims”* (Welch & Jackson, 2005:186).

Some of the definitions of internal communication take into account the stakeholders’ perspective. Scholes (1997 in Welch & Jackson, 2005:182) describes internal communication as *“the professional management of interactions between all those with an interests or a ‘stake’ in a particular organisation”*. Welch & Jackson (2005:182) noticed that Scholes’s definition does not distinguish between different types of interests; and what is more relevant, it could be similarly used when referring to external and internal communication. According to Freeman (1984:25) internal stakeholders include: line management, team members and others internal groups as related departments and subsidiary managers. Based on the research of Cheney & Christensen (2001), Welch & Jackson, 2005 suggest that when identifying stakeholders within the organisations three levels of internal communication should be taken into consideration: *day-to-day management-employee relations, strategic-mission and project management, and organizational development* (Cheney & Christensen, 2001 in Welch & Jackson, 2005:1984). As a result, authors proposed the improved definition with a stakeholder approach to internal communication: *“strategic management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders within organisations across a number of interrelated dimensions including, internal line manager communication, internal team peer communication, internal project peer communication and internal corporate communication”* (Welch & Jackson, 2005:1984).

The four distinguished dimensions of internal communication are: internal line management communication, internal team peer communication, internal project peer communication and internal corporate communication. Specifically, the **internal corporate communication** is happening between strategic managers and all employees and considers the organizational objectives, goals, achievements and changes. Additionally the concept includes the

importance of considering the organisation’s internal and external environments and communicating ethically (Welch & Jackson, 2005:190-193).

Internal communication takes place in the climate influenced by organizational culture. The internal environment represents the structure of organisation, leadership and management style, cultures, subcultures and employee relations. Organizational culture involves concepts such as symbols, heroes, rituals, values and practices (Hofstede et al., 1990). Welch & Jackson suggest that internal communication influences the corporate culture “*since it represents the culture*” (2005:192). So, the internal team passes on the corporate rituals and stories (how the previous projects were done), internal line management redistributes routines and controls (performance review meetings) and the channels of internal communication (intranet, newsletters) illustrate the corporate culture by communicating the stories, celebrating the heroes and promoting the corporate rituals.

Defining internal communication as “*the communication transactions between individuals and/or groups at various levels and in different areas of specialisation that are intended to design and redesign organisations, to implement designs, and to co-ordinate day-to-day activities*” (Frank & Brownell, 1989: 5-6 in Welch & Jackson, 2007), we can suggest that internal communication depends on the organizational structure, being the main tool for coordinating activities between working departments (Welch & Jackson, 2007).

On the other hand, Cheney and Christensen simply relate to internal communication as “*employee relations, statements of mission and organizational development*” (Cheney & Christensen, 2001:231 in Welch & Jackson, 2007). The simplicity of this definition covers the idea of internal networking, through mentioning the organizational culture and its evolution through communicational contact with external target groups (Welch & Jackson, 2007).

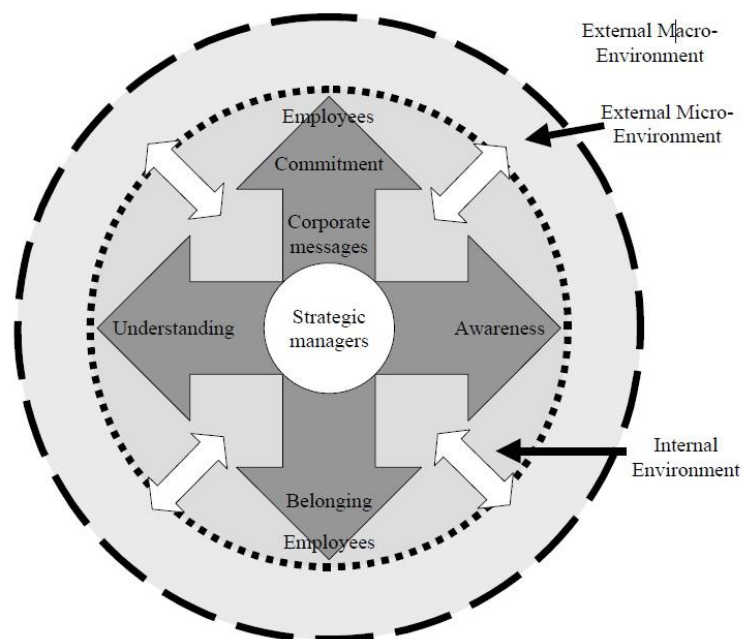


Figure 3.
Internal corporate communication

Fig. B: Internal corporate communication (source: Welch & Jackson, 2007)

As complementary types of internal communication, management communication can be related with all internal resources, especially human resources, while marketing

communication is identified in literature as advertising, direct mail, personal selling and sponsorship (Welch & Jackson, 2007).

In this view, management communication relates to communication concerning access to resources, including human resources. The importance of stakeholders in internal communication management is carried out through Freeman's definition which describes them as "*any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm's objectives.*" (Freeman, 1984:25) When relating it to internal communication, we discover a range of groups that can be considered stakeholders at various levels in the company: general employees, top management or strategic managers (CEOs, senior management teams), day-to-day management (supervisors, middle managers or line-managers), directors, heads of departments, team leaders, division leaders, the CEO as line managers, work teams (departments, divisions), project teams (Welch & Jackson, 2007).

Talking about internal corporate communication, we relate more to a link between the top managers and all the other internal stakeholders, the communication patterns being designed to promote corporate identity through a sense of belonging and understanding of all possible changes that can affect the working environment (Welch & Jackson, 2007).

When referring to boundary spanners (e.g. department heads, customer service representatives) literature conveys them as being the responsible parts for making connections with the external sources, bringing new information inside the organization. They are thought as diffusion markers, having an important role in spreading innovative ideas internally to the target groups (Johnson & Chang, 2000).

Literature suggests that the link between internal and external communication is in the hands of internal stakeholders, which can contribute to the messages intended for the external macro (political, economic, social, technological, environment and legal) and micro forces (customers, suppliers, intermediaries, competitors). So, we can argue that internal communication is the main source for the forming process of corporate culture, influencing the internal strategies for communicating with line management, setting working routines and contributing to the development of rituals and corporate stories (Welch & Jackson, 2007).

2.3 Internal communication channels: Electronic mail and the Intranet

A model of effective internal communication includes a positive communication climate, where a two-way communication is dominant and the relationship between general employees and top management is built on mutual trust and transparency (Hewitt, 2006).

Another contributing factor to a successful communication strategy is in the line managers' capabilities to motivate and support employees, through sharing knowledge and sufficient information about all possible organizational changes. Literature suggests that employees should receive information regarding: *their role in the organisation and their performance and the overarching objectives of the organisation* (Hewitt, 2006).

A strategic internal communication is also based on relational communication and personal influence at the workplace. Toth (2000 in White et al., 2010) suggests that interpersonal

communication influences the essence of public relations, the power of each employee consisting of status, trustworthiness, and credibility of the individual. Employees can be seen as public relations advocates, by having a positive image of the company and enhancing it outside the work environment. They are considered carriers of internal corporate stories and they can positively influence the company’s image by sharing messages with outsiders (White et al., 2010).

Taking into account the fact that employees tend to evaluate communication channels based on their expectations for those channels (Cameron & McCollum, 1993 in White et al., 2010), we can say that emails are a convenient tool for both sender and receiver, though they lack the richness and the particularities of other mediums. Also, the asynchronous aspect of using email communication can create delays in responding in optimal time. Furthermore, delicate, complicated information cannot be portrayed successfully through emails (White et al., 2010).

When stating the efficiency of email use in corporations, its quality to reach out to a large number of participants made it a revolutionary tool inside corporations. On the other hand, researchers argue that the over reliance on technological tools can result into information overload or information leakages (Hewitt, 2006).

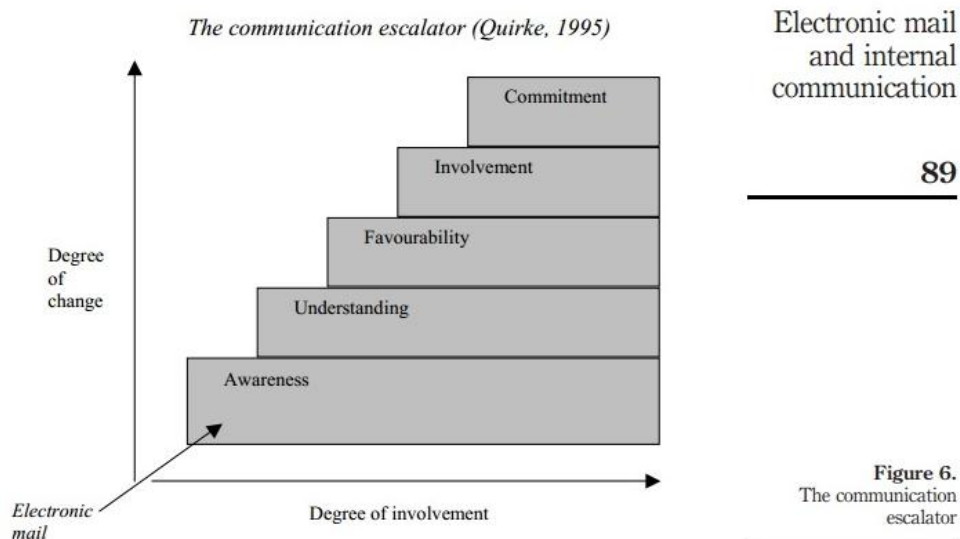


Fig. C: The use of Email in corporation (source: Hewitt, 2006)

De Bussy et al. (2003) found out that the intranet’s role is to support internal marketing solutions and to develop a strong service culture. In this way, the email culture should change into a strategic discipline in order to increase the internal communication performance (Hewitt, 2006).

The information sufficiency relates to finding the appropriate balance between communicating too little, which creates distrust and speculation and communicating too much, which leads to information overload. Literature suggests that effective internal communication is the equitable balance between the amounts of information needed and information received (Rosenfeld et al., 2004 in White et al., 2010). Therefore communication influences the corporate culture and corporate culture influences communication. It’s a two

way process which is dependable on all the decisions made at all organizational levels (White et al., 2010).

Defining the intranet as a part of the organizational internal information system, dedicated to the support of group work and mastering of the organizational knowledge we can assume that its role is to increase the productivity levels inside any organizations by providing a large internal knowledge platform, accessible to all employees (Bottazzo, 2005).

The positive aspects of using the intranet at the workplace can be found in its capacity to spread particular messages to the internal audience, as well as having a restricted access for the outsiders. It also provides a rich platform where employees can access, obtain and share internal materials that contribute to their work quality.

When describing the intranet we can point out some of its main features in relationship to the corporate communication models as: shared access to documents, controlled access on diverse management level, a map for internal events and activities, a reminder for important happenings inside the organization, a sharing board where you can express opinions and ideas, an information stand which provides up to date news (Bottazzo, 2005).

The Intranet as a good base for knowledge creation is seen as a solution to the integration of internal communication standards into employees' daily routines. Furthermore, with the appropriate design it can foster creativity and generate innovative solutions to unpredictable corporate issues (Stenmark, 2003).

The technical characteristics of an intranet are: *the possibility to hyperlink messages, the creation of social networks inside the workplace, the flexibility of sharing knowledge in unlimited time and space and its ultimate connections to the organizational values which can help create strong corporate identities* (Stenmark, 2003).

One important aspect of using the intranet is the possibility of knowledge creation among employees, giving them the chance to express and suggest creative solutions. As predefined structural information is known to hinder the levels of creativity inside an organization, the intranet provides employees with unlimited possibilities of sharing rich messages inside preferred communities. It also enables peer-to-peer information sharing, eliminating geographical distances in global companies and facilitating accessibility between various work teams (Stenmark, 2003).

Nevertheless, although the intranet technology promises to support and enhance creativity at the workplace, the members of the organization have to take an active role in designing the platform as an interactional tool of sharing knowledge and corporate information (Stenmark, 2003).

2.4 The use of social media

Social media is a recent and complex phenomenon and since its development has become a mass of individuals interacting on the web (Mussel, 2012). For many, the web is synonymous

with social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. For instance Facebook claims to have 800 million users, half of which log on every day, Twitter has 100 million users and YouTube has 3 billion views a day (Mussel, 2012). According to Kaplan and Haenlein social media is *“a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content”* (2010:61). In other words, social media depends on mobile and web based technologies in order to create interactive platforms through which people share, discuss, create, exchange or modify the media content in virtual communities and networks.

According to Vuori (2012:157) Web 2.0 technology can be seen not only as a technological phenomenon but also as a *“paradigm shift, enabling a new culture of participation, based on users interacting and collectively sharing and creating knowledge over the internet”*. Peer-to-peer interactions, user-generated content, collaboration and knowledge exchange can be described as common characteristic of Web 2.0 enabled social media. Web 2.0 technologies include blogs, wikis and interactive platforms such as Facebook, YouTube or LinkedIn. Vuori claims that from the perspective of inter-organizational systems (IOS) Web 2.0 social application can be regarded as *“networked information systems, supporting informal exchange of unstructured or semi-structured information and knowledge through human interfaces situated at organizational boundaries”* (2012:157). On the other hand, social media, from the perspective of knowledge management, can be seen as providing a shared virtual environment for collaboration and learning (Vuori, 2012:157-158).

Now, companies are increasingly recognizing the potential benefits related to using social media in a business context. It has been claimed that the exchange of knowledge in networks crossing organizational boundaries is essential for company innovativeness (Noteboom, 2000 in Vuori, 2012). Thus more and more companies are showing their interests in including social media within their internal and external communication, with employees as well as customers, partners and suppliers (Chui et al, 2009 in Vuori, 2012). In the corporate context, social media platforms can be used for content generation, information gathering and community building. Vuori pointed out that the uses of social media which have been particularly prominent in building communities and companies are increasingly interested in *“harnessing the power of online communities in idea generation”* (2012, 157). Companies' efforts to outsource an activity with crowds can be defined as “crowdsourcing” and represents a new business model (Howe, 2006 in Vuori, 2012). *“The crowdsourcing method enables companies to interact with a large number of unknown participants, including suppliers, customers, trading partners or anyone willing to participate in the crowdsourcing activity”* (Vuori, 2012:158). Crowdsourcing also means using collective intelligence, i.e. the ‘wisdom of the crowds’ to enhance innovation and creative thinking.

Recognizing the power of collective thinking and fostering an innovative-oriented organizational culture where everyone can be an innovator, is the main organizational aspect. However, having an idea of how to use crowdsourcing services in the company doesn't necessarily contribute to enhancing knowledge sharing or innovativeness between company's employees and its stakeholders. Referring to Vuori (2012:165) this happens through the user involvement and interaction, enabled by the Web 2.0 technology, the knowledge creation and

innovativeness being displayed in practice. The practice is also gained by using the technological features based on interactivity in the form of online voting, commenting, sharing websites and pictures, expressing likes and dislikes, storing ideas for later use; and the ability to create content and modify the content added by others users (Vuori, 2012:166).

Social media applications support internal communication by enabling employees to discuss, create and share new ideas for products, services and the current communication practices (Vuori, 2012). The company's social networking services can be constructed on the similar features of Facebook, Linked in, Twitter or Yammer and corporate wikis. For example, when employees test the company's own products, social media could be used to collect and gather their feedback and opinions.

The two on-going developments that are influencing the communication patterns inside companies are the ubiquity and expansion of social networks and the increasing value of digital platforms and technologies. As social media is a recent and complex phenomenon, companies are striving to understand how to best capture and utilize social media as part of their business portfolio and service offering (Vuori, 2012). Nevertheless, new technologies allow more interactive communication strategies on different platforms which include features of social media like: online chatting, content creation, tagging, blogging, new opportunities for networking and knowledge sharing (Vuori, 2012).

In the company's context, Web 2.0 enabled social media tools to generate content, build communities and harness information (Vuori, 2012). Thus, the communication focuses on increasing the influence of online communities in generating innovative ideas. When mentioning the role of strategic communication we are keen in expressing that the use of social media enables the creation and exchange of organizational messages and fosters interactions between employees. These communication channels encouraged by social media contribute to the sharing of creative knowledge and an increase in the innovation potential.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 The Research Design: Qualitative approach

The purpose of the study is not to offer generalisations but to offer a rich description of the communication processes by illustrating the phenomenon with a case study: Ericsson Göteborg. The single case study approach was selected due to its strength in revealing unique and deep insight into an emerging phenomenon within the respective context (Vuori, 2012).

In this way, we understand this study as a way of analyzing the organization and its artefacts. The emphasis of rationality in interpreting and analysing data is in connection with the way we understand and theorize organizational patterns. The assumption that researchers have the authority to categorize the social reality is one of the outcomes of applying theory in research areas, like internal communication. To sum up, qualitative analysis appears to be a legitimate method of categorizing data in order to simplify and explain how and what communication takes place in an organization. In this research theory is the base for interpreting and analysing further data and it is indispensable in determining the validity of the work.

To understand qualitative research we have to agree that: *“the core of qualitative analysis lies in these related processes of describing phenomena, classifying it, and seeing how our concepts interconnect”* (Dey, 1993:31). When talking about qualitative research we usually refer to *“any method other than the survey: participant (and non-participant) observation, unstructured interviewing, group interviews, the collection of documentary materials [...]”* (Dey, 1993:31). In comparing the tools used to collect data, quantitative research mostly uses questionnaires and surveys avoiding in depth methods of research.

In this way, qualitative research is more related to in depth methods, the main dissimilarity with quantitative research being the clear, systematic classification of data in the case of numeric results. (Dey, 1993:31). On the other side, quantitative research deals with more structured data, analysing as objectively as possible data *“through closed questions using researcher-defined categories”* (Dey, 1993:31). On one hand, we have qualitative data using various tools in order to describe relationships and ideas and on the other hand, quantitative data which provides ways of testing and validating them.

Interpreting and collecting qualitative data is connected to the meaning of the research study with all the information being related to previous theoretical backgrounds. The context of the collected facts is not very important in interpreting quantitative research with numbers being essential in having a reliable conclusion to a particular research question. Furthermore, quantitative research supplies exact measurements for diverse issues, but we still have to take into consideration that *“numbers are never enough: they have to refer to concepts established through qualitative analysis”* (Dey, 1993:31). So having just a quantitative, mathematical data without a complex, meaningful qualitative analysis will not make this thesis a reliable scientific research.

From another point of view, qualitative researchers argue that “*their aim is to provide rich description so as to achieve understanding*”, while “*quantitative scientists aim for prediction*” (Sechrest and Sidani, 1995). This can be understood as a main dissimilarity between the two approaches: while quantitative data encourages statistical analysis which can be regarded as a way of predicting possible results through the use of numbers and mathematical equations, qualitative data can be seen as an interpretive method of describing in detail all existing research premises. Another characteristic of qualitative research is the relevance of context in investigating the gathered information. Researching organizational behaviour also implies the existence of a scientific and theoretical background, with all the related data seen as context dependent. Nonetheless, in quantitative research context also plays a relatively significant role, being the base for scientific experiments. (Sechrest and Sidani, 1995).

As an optimal method of research, Denzin recommends a mixed strategy of qualitative and quantitative called triangulation, which is thought to be “*the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon*” (Denzin and Norman, 1978:291). This method of research is suggested as a certification process and a way of ensuring the quality and reliability of the analysed data. Vidich and Shapiro mention the relevance of quantitative data selection, noting that survey data reduces bias and increases the validity of the general conclusions (Vidich, and Shapiro, 1955:31). On the other hand, qualitative research is considered a significant element of triangulation, according to Weiss qualitative data being superior to quantitative data in “*density of information, vividness, and clarity of meaning*” (Weiss, 1968:344). In this way, by mixing qualitative and quantitative methods we develop an efficient way of generating reliable scientific data, reducing research bias and increasing the validity of the results.

Even if the differences between the two approaches are more or less evident, the final research has to be the same: a valid, truthful study with an objective interpretation of facts or/and numbers. In the end, the aim is to create a scientific understanding of the present issues with the help of theory: “*science is about theory and theory means understanding*” (Sechrest & Sidani, 1995:79).

3.2 Research Methods

Choice of respondents

In sampling the relevant respondents for our interviews we took into account the same target groups as in the survey: engineers, managers/leaders and communicators/assistants/administrators. We mapped a choice of respondents by randomly interviewing representatives from each category in the course of our eight interviews. The survey targeted all the general employees from Ericsson Göteborg with a response rate of 500 answers from the general target.

Main method: Interviews with key managers

We mapped out an initial interview guide which was based on a semi structured set of open questions with the possibility of having other emergent question during the interview. Each interview took around 30 minutes, being conducted by two interviewers. The individual in depth interview gave us the opportunity to apprehend in detail the organizational issues of the respondent with all the follow up questions being designed to get a deeper perspective of the interviewee's experiences inside the workplace (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). We completed 8 interview sessions with representatives from each target group: engineers, managers/leaders and communicators/assistants/ administrators. Every interview was recorded with the participants' accord with the aid of a computer recording program.

Taking into account that the scope of the interview is to contribute with personal knowledge and experiences to an already existing theoretical base, we can say that our interview situation will emerge as a semi-formal activity with the interviewee.

Knowing that the purpose of qualitative interview based research is to describe and analyse particular opinions about diverse issues, we found ourselves in the position of designing in depth questions for the interviewees, while pre-testing possible answers and research outcomes. During the process of interviewing we focused on following the interview guide, though we used follow up questions to understand and analyse new interesting topics, which could also be debated in further research (Schultze & Avital, 2011).

Having in mind that an interview is an exchange of views and ideas between two parts with the common interest of sharing and discussing experiences, we can say that in our case the role of the researchers was determined by the interaction with the interviewee. Our interest was in finding out in depth information that could be in conformity with our theoretical background (Schultze & Avital, 2011).

The main issue in designing and applying the interview guide was represented by the unpredictability of the respondent's answers. In this case, the researchers had to appeal to theory and previous research in order to design relevant questions before and during the interviews. As an example of design issues, the interview might fall into an artificial dimension due to the lack of trust or personal connection with the interviewer. Also, the lack of time can represent a limit in a company where employees have very fixed schedules, being difficult to limit yourself to just 30-45 minutes of discussions when answers have a natural flow and they are also relevant for your study (Myers & Newman, 2007). Another important aspect is the pre-construction of knowledge, interviewers actively participating in adding informational background without noticing that they are strongly influencing the respondent's ideas (Myers and Newman, 2007).

Survey with general employees

Qualitative research is often represented as a scientific strategy that can emphasise the numeric approach of the research process by underlining new insights and giving new directions to the researcher. In quantitative data analysis, the imaginative application of

techniques can result in new understandings and meanings that can complement the already existing qualitative data (Bryman, 2006).

In our case, we decided to develop a survey to collect and analyse information from the general employees concerning the internal communicational processes that take place at Ericsson Göteborg. Our main scope is to research what communication tools are used inside Ericsson Göteborg and to provide solutions for a more efficient way of communicating with colleagues and managers. Also, we are looking at social media as an external channel of spreading work related information.

Content analysis

Qualitative content analysis is mainly used in qualitative research in order to analyse text data. Other methods that treat the same subject are ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology and historical research. This type of research includes the characteristics of language as a communication platform with attention towards textual meaning and textual design. The goal of content analysis is “*to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study*” (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992:314). In this research, qualitative content analysis is used as a scientific way to interpret the content of official documents, official data from the internal website and internal work presentation for employees. More specifically, we used content analysis inside the organization as a complementary method while browsing the company’s intranet pages with the scope of finding out new information about the communication and the organizational culture. At the beginning of our research content analysis was used intensively to browse internal information (internal documents, surveys, polls, organizational figures, strategies). This pre-research stage helped us to gather relevant information about the company and also guided us in identifying the communication issues inside the organization. Furthermore, we structured our survey questions on information discovered through content analysis and we generated the corporate profile of the company based on internal documents that described the configuration of the organization.

In this way, our research is based on both qualitative and quantitative perspective on human behaviour trying to use all the scientific tools in providing a clear image of a corporate work environment. This qualitative approach will give us the chance to understand and elaborate an efficient communication plan, by reaching into the details of how information is being developed and evaluated inside the company.

Literature review

The literature review represents the first step in developing a valid scientific paper, contributing to the general investigation and helping mapping out the research question. By incorporating theory in the research structure, the paper provides a reliable system for gathering information and drawing conclusions. The use of literature in developing a communication strategy is vital for the validity of the results (Lindlof, 1995). In our case, the theory was based on relevant previous research papers that dealt with organizational communication issues. The main sources were represented by online journals and articles.

Research ethics

Research ethics represent the characteristics of behavioural conduct when interacting with the case study and the respondents. During the present research we tried to take into consideration all ethical norms by informing respondents of the main scope of the paper and asking permission for recording the interviews. The participants were guaranteed confidentiality and complete respect for their opinions. The survey was also anonymous and contained a short explanation of the main purpose of the study and how the future data will be used to build an efficient internal communication strategy. In our case, the respondents weren't influenced by our own construction of reality and we tried to follow their own general view of the organizational environment, without pre-constructed opinions about the research.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Introducing Ericsson

Ericsson Global

As mobile communication changes the way we live and work, Ericsson is playing a key role in this evolution. Ericsson is one of the world's largest providers of telecommunication equipment, data communication systems and services to mobile and fixed network operators.

More than 40 % of the world's mobile traffic passes through the network provided by the company and over 1,000 networks in more than 180 countries use Ericsson equipment. Founded in 1876 by Lars Magnus, Ericsson has been on the telecom market for 136 year. The headquarters of the company is based in Stockholm, Sweden. The current CEO and president is Hans Vestberg. Under his direction, Ericsson has become the main driver toward the idea of Networked Society, where connectivity is the fuel for the new ways of collaborating, innovating and socializing.

Ericsson has a long history of innovation and the pioneering of next generation technologies for more efficient and quality telecommunications. The company mission encourages “*innovation to empower people, business and society*”. Therefore innovation and early involvement in new technologies is an important element of the company's culture. Operating in fast changing global markets, there is a constant search underway for new ways of working and engaging both employees and customers in further development of Ericsson services.

The core values of Ericsson are: **professionalism** (customers first, execution, accountability), **respect** (empowerment, world citizens, diversity) and **perseverance** (change agent, courage, passion to win). In accordance with the core values, the company's vision is to become a prime driver in the communicating world: “*In an all-communicating world, everyone can use voice, data, images and video to share ideas and information wherever and whenever they want. We aim to make people's lives richer and easier, provide affordable communication for all and enable new ways to do business*” (fragment of Ericsson vision statement: “This is Ericsson”). In other words Ericsson aims to connect not only machines and devices but also places and people.

Organizational Structure

The structure of organization has three main business units (fig x): Business Unit Support Solutions (focuses operation/business support systems, TV, media and mobile commerce), Business Unit Global Services (provides services related to telecom) and Business Unit Networks (focuses on mobiles and public telephone networks).

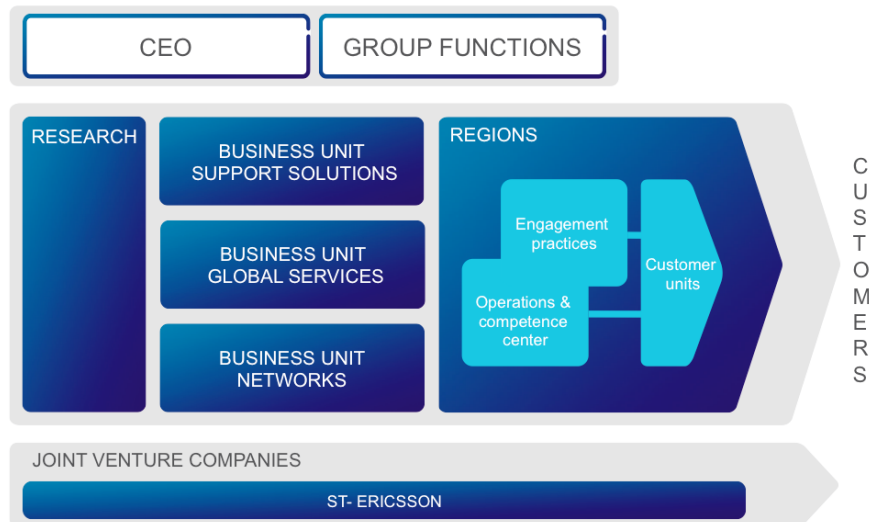


Fig. D: Structure of Ericsson (source: Ericsson group presentation, internal materials; March 2013)

Moreover, there is a valuable research and development area, range of central functions and operational offices located in different regions. Our research takes a place in one of the offices located in Göteborg, Sweden.

Ericsson in Göteborg

Ericsson Göteborg is located in Lindholmen Science Park in Göteborg Sweden and is operating within Region Northern Europe & Central Asia (RECA). There are almost 3000 employees (including external workforce, thesis students, summer jobs and trainees) from 34 different countries, with the average age of 40 years.

The organizational units from Ericsson Göteborg are: Business Unit Global Services and Business Unit Network. Ericsson Göteborg is a core centre for Ericsson Research & Development area and most of the employees are working within Service and R&D. The main areas of research are: Packet Core (product development for mobile technology), Radio Base stations, Power Solutions, Microwave Research, National Security and Public Safety (alarm systems), Service delivery and Antenna development. Additionally there are several group functions such as HR, Business Support, Patent Unit and Ericsson Academy, which provide training sessions for customers and internal employees. Business Support Göteborg is the unit responsible for office facility and security management, sourcing and internal/external communication.

4.2 Corporate profile: internal communication tools used in Ericsson Göteborg

There are a variety of tools for internal communication used by general employees and managers in Ericsson Göteborg. On the daily basis internal communication is maintained through face-to-face meetings, email, phone, video conferences, newsletters, internal platforms for collaborating such as Ericoll, wikis or Mynet and instant messaging/chat Lync. The tool used depends on strategic goals and objectives of the communication, the target audience, various advantages and disadvantages of each tool. The figure below shows the internal communication tools used in Ericsson Göteborg.

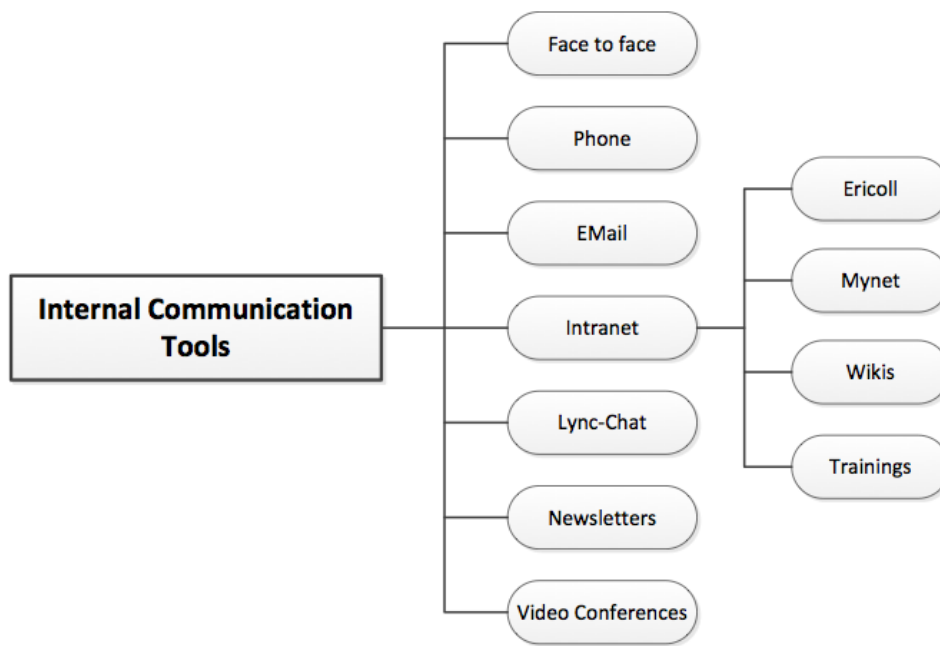


Fig. E: Internal communication tools in Ericsson Göteborg

Despite the dominance of traditional communication tools such as face-to-face, phone and email, Ericsson has been implementing multiple technologies and online services based on the Web 2.0 technologies and aims to support collaboration and knowledge sharing through Mynet, Ericoll, Wikis.

Ericoll is a Web application platform provided within Ericsson’s intranet. This web tool is designed to be usable by general employees and non-technical users. The Ericoll platform can have a variety of uses:

- Provide discussions forums
- Provide work –related information (context may be organizational-wide or specific to a team or unit)
- Creating communities (sharing knowledge or activities)
- Management of document and files (e.g. stored or updated documents)
- Posting internal pools and surveys
- Provide organizational search (e.g. people finder)

In Ericsson Göteborg, **Ericoll** is mostly used to provide the work-related information specific for the team, unit or region. Access to the site is possible only via a link provided by the co-creator.

Ericsson Wiki is another web application (collaborative software) that allows employees to create, add, modify, and delete content in collaborative environment. In Ericsson wikis are widely used by engineers and technical workers. This is due to the possibly difficult (for non-technical employees) web page editing, which requires skills with mark-up language (HTML, syntax).

Mynet is a new business social networking site launched in April 2011 by Ericsson. The application is based on the features of Facebook and Yammer. Mynet allows employees to connect, share ideas, create communities and cooperate. This social media tool is available for all Ericsson employees worldwide and it's automatically installed with access to Intranet.

Lync (chat) is a real time messenger, which allows employees to maintain voice and video communication at corporate environment. Basic features include instant messaging, voice and video conferencing, sharing and editing files, and integration with email.

Employee perception of internal communication channels' efficiency

- Areas of interest in the research:
- How do employees perceive the efficiency of internal communication tools?
- How does the communication take place between general employees and top managers?
- How do employees prefer to receive information?
- In which ways can the communication channels build a sense of community at the workplace?
- How do employees perceive the use of social media?
- Is there a relationship between information satisfaction and the tools used to transmit messages to certain target groups?

4.3 Survey Results

When referring to our respondents 74% are represented by engineers, 22% by managers and 4% of them are assistants, administrators or communicators. (see figure 1)

Finding: The face-to-face preference

Regarding the communication tools used by managers when communicating with employees, the highest scores were reached by face-to-face communication (46%) and the use of emails (29%). The least used ways of communicating inside the company were mentioned as being: newsletters, SMS and Ericsson's internal communication platforms: the Intranet and Ericoll. (See figure 2) Communication with other colleagues inside teams is reached mainly through face-to-face communication (65%) and emails (35%). The same as in communicating with managers, the Newsletters, SMS, Intranet and Ericoll are situated on the list of the least used channels (See figure 3). In mentioning the effectiveness of the communication channels 87% of the employees mentioned face-to-face communication as being the most efficient channel of transmitting messages inside the workplace. To see how regularly face-to-face communication takes place between managers and employees we asked about the number of meetings with managers and most of them (49%) meet with their manager less than once a week, while 46% have 1 or 3 meetings a week. (See figure 4)

The desire for face-to-face communication is consistent with the communication routines inside the organization. The survey found that among the communication-rich channels

preferred by employees we can add the direct, face-to-face exchange of information. This fosters a deeper sense of community and avoids misunderstandings while communicating job related tasks. Furthermore, detailed, in depth information is better received through first hand sources than through other communication platforms at the workplace.

Finding: The e-mail paradox

Regarding communication through emails 96% of the employees find emails critical for getting their work done (see figure 6) and 70% do not find the amount of emails they receive daily as being overwhelming. (See figure 7)

An interesting finding of the study regards the use of emails inside the workplace. When asked how they get the majority of the information, employees' main answer was emails. However, most of the messages received through emails are overlooked or considered an information surplus. Moreover, emails are considered critical to get the work done by the employees, which means that the organization's internal communication is dependent on one certain type of communication tool.

Finding: The social media moderation

Talking about social media usage outside the workplace, 44% of the employees are using Facebook, 21% LinkedIn, 3% Twitter and 7% use no social media. (See figure 5) When asked about interaction with colleagues on social media platforms 41% of the employees do not communicate with other co-workers outside the workplace and also 45% do not follow Ericsson on different social media.

The study also revealed the need for a better relationship with social media tools. Most of the respondents do not have a great connection with their social networks' profiles and are not interesting in following the organizational brand on different platforms. Furthermore, very few respondents actually have their colleagues as friends on social media. This shows a preference for keeping a clear distinction between the private and professional identity, most of the Facebook profiles being considered too personal to be convenient at the workplace. On the other hand, LinkedIn appears more as a professional platform where employees keep in contact, gather knowledge and manufacture a personal brand through their online profiles. The idea of social media at the workplace as an internal communication tool is still perceived as being unsuitable, creating complications in the communication routines already developed by employees.

Finding: The intranet's inefficiency

One of the concerns of the study was to establish the competence of the internal platforms at Ericsson, the Intranet being one of the questioned communication tools, 31% of the employees finding it less helpful than expected. Furthermore, one of the main scopes of using the intranet is mostly for getting news and updates, 64% saying that they don't use it at all for

socialising with other employees. Also, the most used internal platforms are Lync (an internal chat tool) and Ericoll (an internal communication platform).

The internal communication platform which gathers all the information needed from all the top management levels to all general employees is considered inefficient due to the lack of targeted messages and the large amount of knowledge which usually gets lost on the internal web pages. This conglomeration of global and local messages, unclearly distributed on different pages creates a feeling of aversion towards using the intranet on a daily base. On the other hand, the internal communication platform can be seen as an electronic library, full of valuable information for all employees regardless of their professional identity. Another finding of the study is that it is important for most employees to receive information about the organization, even if the information is not necessarily targeted for their daily tasks or job performance. Gathering knowledge fosters a sense of professionalism and increases the feeling of belonging to a community.

4.4 Interview Results

The result section is based on the data collected from 8 interviews with different level employees in the company such as assistants, internal communicators, department managers or engineers with a diverse working background: operational, media and communication, consultancy or electro engineering.

Communication patterns and routines: Local versus global

When discussing the communication routines at the workplace most of the interviewees mention the presence of **local patterns of communication** and **global routines**. Their communication experiences are entirely based on their professional identity and are always task related: *“It always depends on the type of information we have to send out”*.

From a site perspective, inside the company the communication becomes a very elaborated and meticulous act being divided into a variety of specific routines for each different department: *“Some information is even made for a specific floor”*.

This does not ignore the continuous connectivity to a global system with most messages being updated from very high up in the company to very far down. (e.g. *“We are always trying to use emails and newsletters to communicate on a global scale with other departments.”*).

As ways of communicating on global scale the interviewees point out the use of TV screens both locally and globally, the organizing of video conferences and the creation of video wide newsletters which involves the recording of important messages and their conveyance on an international scale. The multimodality of communicating with other teams around the world shows the technological possibilities to expand your work with no limitation to time and space: *“I think everyone should be able to work almost anywhere.”* This involves the broadening of

the work time and space with most global meetings taking place in different time zones in an online frame supported by video conferences:

- i. *“I don’t have any managers here at all- with my managers in USA we have time zone differences. Our management team meetings are always late in the night. That’s the only time when we can actually communicate via video conferences. Otherwise we are using emails or phone messages.”*

Managers as communication agents

One of the codes that describe the ways of communicating is represented by the **communication through managers** understood as a very specific type of transmitting information inside the company:

- i. *“Our communication routine is based on mainly meetings where we present information to managers.”*
- ii. *“If we have a big change we try to have more meetings with the managers.”*

This reveals that managers represent a front line sender for information packages and play a critical role in the communication routines inside the organization. They are the communication agents who spread internal information and reject or accept the elaboration of certain types of messages: *“Every information package we develop is sent to managers through emails and then connected to other employees”*.

From the managers’ perspective their role is defined by the ways they choose to communicate with their team, being responsible for the information supply in the organization and for the communication efficiency between employees:

“When you are a manager communicating is a very important part of your work because you need to filter a lot of information that you need to supply for your employees. Communication is crucial.”

In collaborating with other employees, managers take part in the development of task communication routine, where they elaborate and divide task related messages for their team. This is done mostly through face-to-face meetings:

- i. *“One to one is almost always face-to-face.”*
- ii. *“Guys working with me having great responsibility so my role is more coach them rather than say what do to.”*

Frequently used internal communication channels

In establishing work routines in communication practices the employees constantly use the same type of internal communication channel in order to communicate with their other colleagues. As mentioned in the interviews the most popular choices of communicating on a daily basis are: email utilization, internal phone calls between departments, newsletters and the intranet with the acknowledgement of Ericoll pages and Lync chat room.

On the other hand, at a different level in the company stands the employment of **face-to-face communication** with most of the respondents sharing information through this particular medium:

- i. *“I start every morning with the white board, checking tasks and speaking with each other.” “We are using real time channels – either face-to-face or phone or video.”*

The value of face-to-face communication is constantly stated by employees as being the richest channel of receiving and spreading messages every day:

- ii. *“I think it’s good to go to a real white board and see things and discuss the persons face-to-face. We tried a computer board and it was not as good as face-to-face communication.”*

Furthermore, the respondents assert the informality of face-to-face interaction as a networking quality which encourages the appearance of casual conversation and social bonding between co-workers:

- i. *“I have my team close by so there is a dominance of face-to-face communication (...) informal introductions like hi hello, how are you ?”*
- ii. *“We have informal ways of talking to each other e.g. near coffee machines.”*

Video communication

The next channel that succeeds in conveying rich information by having the most similarities with face-to-face communication and offering the possibility to communicate from different places in the world is represented by video messaging or video conferences:

“We have made one change within our department, usually 4-5 times a year my manager was sending an email to all employees within unit. Now we have made a video message instead, and we’re sending the link to the movie.”

By replacing the over used emailing technique with video messaging employees get a sense of change in their communication routines, ending up with a better understanding of the message and paying more attention to its details:

- i. *“I think it’s much more effective to watch this movie (...). We’re trying to involve a lot of employees to take a part in this message.”*
- ii. *“I think we should put more support into video messages. It feels like it sticks better to your brain.”*

On the other hand, communication failure is one of the main problems of video conferences and this channel has not ceased to create technical issues or miscommunication when used by employees:

- i. *“The internal communication video conferences systems that we have used, have failed. This is why we have adopted a different ways and using the external tools for communication”.*

- ii. *“Almost every time I am trying to use a standard video conferencing system it didn’t work. It’s more like a common problem and it takes like 5 minutes to solve it”.*

The presence of face-to-face communication and the absolute richness of this channel makes it difficult for the employees to find a better substitute in their communication practices: *“Video is good but is not good enough. Face-to-face is always assuring me that they understand what I am saying”.*

The main conclusion when referring to video conferences was resumed by one of the respondents who said that the communication potential of video conferencing is really high if the system would be technically improved (e.g. *“We should work on quality aspects. Personal video conferencing system should be much more accessible; phone conferences’ quality is very low now. We need this tool for our communication.”*).

Email overload

We found that **communication through email is critical** for getting work done and is one of the most popular choices on a daily base. Most of interviewees said that it would be harder to do their work without using emails: *“When it comes to my own unit I am usually sending emails, otherwise I am trying to collect things over the week and present it during weekly meetings”.*

We learned that higher email volume was associated with increased feelings of email overload. Ericsson’s employees perceive that their own use of email has gotten out of control because **they receive and send more emails than they can handle** or process effectively: *“You can’t trust emails. We get it too much, and you kind of feel responsible to respond to it.”* They are having difficulties in dealing with the amount of emails they receive, sometimes missing information and important messages: *“When you send an email with information it often gets stuck in the mailbox because people have their own things to do, their own projects.”*

A rapidly increasing amount of new information is produced and results in information overload at the workplace. All managers admitted to struggling with the amount of information existing on internal platforms and experienced difficulties in reaching their team with relevant information:

- i. *“One of the biggest problems is the fact that there is so much information and one person cannot filter it. I often have people coming and asking why I haven’t informed them about something as a manager. They feel I don’t give them the information they want. There is a lot of interesting information out there but I cannot really do that, I cannot keep up with all the information flow and this is one of the major problems I would say. We have too much information”.*

Along with the description of this problem, employees proposed accurate solutions e.g.: *“Start looking for communication needs by looking at the needs of the team and individuals. Communication should be really specific concerning each department and each audience.”*

This reveals that Ericsson employees not only **don't know how to deal with too much information** but also **notice the importance of launching a new communication strategy** in the company.

Intranet

Ericsson's Intranet portal has a variety of functions such as: providing global & local news and updates, support centre for employees (IT support, e-learning, trainings), a space for collaboration and information sharing (Ericoll, Mynet, wiki) and other administrative activities (calendar and schedule; documents templates). Despite the great capabilities of the intranet, a majority of respondents admitted that they are using only a few of them e.g. *"Few things I look for: time reporting, travel expenses"*. Most of the interviewees explained that their reluctance is caused by experiences with the very inefficient searching tool. Ericsson's Intranet is a large portal which provides a variety of sources for gathering information. The specific complaint from employees was that the general **web search engine has to be improved:**

- i. *"I am using intranet a lot but I think Ericsson could have a better intranet. I think the search engine is not good enough."*
- ii. *"The problem is that the search capabilities of the intranet cannot handle even the local sites I would say...I know there was a lot of effort into designing a better search engine (...)instead they should just develop another platform that could work better."*
- iii. *"The worst thing about the intranet is that I'm not using it. If I'm looking for an answer I decide to go to other ways of finding it."*

Some of the respondents suggested that the **ideal search engine** should be very much alike Google: *"I would like to have the intranet build on similar features like Google. There is so much good information out there but it's difficult to find it"*; *"The intranet is like finding the fish in the pond. I would like it to be more like a Google search engine."*

Additionally some employees have demonstrated some kind of "pessimistic acceptance" when referring to the use of Intranet (e.g. *"Quite often when I am going to the intranet page I want to find something and I know I am not able to find it"*; *"Our Intranet is always two steps behind but you get used to it"*) while others tried to avoid it and instead use other external tools. (e.g. *"I am using intranet on a weekly basis – time reporting, not my primary source of information, there is a lot of noise, if I want to find something I am using an external source."*)

Ericoll

The Ericoll platform is the collaborative part of Ericsson's intranet. Similar to the Intranet's case, the employees were asked to what extent they use Ericoll, their experiences and critical opinions regarding the usefulness of this platform and what they would add or change. We learned that Ericoll could be used for **gathering information and knowledge sharing:** *"Göteborg Ericoll page I use frequently for information gathering and learning processes."*

The vast majority of the respondents admitted, however, that in the last few years Ericoll has become so popular that the number of pages increased significantly. Now it is **impossible to keep track** of them e.g.: *“Ericoll has exploded, I was bookmarking it previously but there are so many pages now and I don’t have time to search through it. I need something like a subscription in order to have notification if there is something interesting(...)”, “The collaborative part of the intranet is Ericoll where people can create their own pages, but then they forget about them and don’t keep them updated.”*

Furthermore, some of the employees complained that Ericoll is too slow to work with, and the system is crashing while they are trying to publish on it. Frequent system failures and slow response rate also led to a general reluctance towards Ericoll’s wiki pages e.g. *“I am not a fan of it, I think it is slow but as a file storage it’s fine”; “Wiki supported by Ericson it doesn’t exist. Wikis supported by Ericoll just crash every time you want to use it.”*

Some of the employees admitted that due to continuous problems with the software they **replaced internal wiki pages by Media Wiki** (external free wiki application): *“Ericoll is too slow to publish on, wiki is too slow to publish on, this is the reasons why we are using media wiki”; “I am not a fan of Ericoll wikis but I am very much a fan of media wiki. I am very much into co creating content.”*

Among the respondents, however, we found some who were satisfied with the system. These employees **appreciated that the information and work-related documents are available in one place** and they support the task performance and teamwork (e.g. *“It’s good to know that information is available.”*) Furthermore, some of them **were responsible for creating and managing wikis or Ericoll pages** and provided us with their strategies to make it more efficient: *“We are trying to make pages more attractive and constantly updated, select important information and avoid the information overload.”*

Mynet

Mynet portal has been introduced to the general employees over two years ago and since then it is accessible for everyone who logs on to the intranet platform. This social media platform is built on features similar to Facebook and Yammer and was created to support and encourage collaboration between employees. However the results revealed that Mynet is **almost practically unused**: *“I have been introduced to Mynet but I don’t use it”; “I don’t see the point of using Mynet, it simply does not reach the people I want to be connected to.”*

Some of the respondents pointed out that **Mynet does not attract many active users**. In addition, employees admitted that their inactivity on Mynet is related to the fact that they have been provided with **too many channels for internal communication**: *“Mynet is similar to other social media tools and I think Ericsson tries to copy that. So should we add more tools even if I don’t have time to use the ones that we already have?”*

We also found that the **resemblance to Facebook may discourage potential users** since Facebook is seen as a channel for private communication: *“Mynet is not as good as Facebook, it doesn’t fulfil my needs, and I don’t have a need to use it. I make a distinction*

between my private and corporate side.” In other words, employees are not attracted by internal platforms which remind them of popular media because they associate it with private rather than corporate communication.

The ideal communication experience

Another topic covered in the interview was that of informational change and improvement of the internal communication experience. When asked about how they receive information and how they would amend the communication routines inside the company most of the employees demanded transparency, collaborative work, inside networking with co-workers and an increased specificity in targeting internal messages.

- i. *“Change the typical ways of communication into a more face-to-face pattern of communication in order to get to know people better, socialise.”*
- ii. *“One of the major problems is to that we need to target information better, instead of just sending email to mass employees. If you could target them appropriate, communication would definitely improve.”*
- iii. *“We have tried to be more specific with sending emails: put ACTION or INFO in the title because when people see action they know they need to do something, take action.”*

Their ideal communication experience includes not only an information transfer but also a reaction in the sender’s behaviour. Also, the highlight is on having a practical experience after following a theoretical presentation and being supported with all the logistic details needed for implementation.

- i. *“Information gets to everyone but it’s more difficult to make people do something.”*
- ii. *“Not only have a presentation saying this is a strategy, but also mention what they can specifically do to support it.”*

Some other important aspect of increasing the communication efficiency in the organization is the social aspect of it, respondents mentioning that involving more employees in a project means an actual growth in internal collaboration between departments and better chances for the project to be accepted as an organizational success.

The negative aspects of being part of a large global organization were stated by interviewees as being the time consuming organizational routines which can sometimes interfere with their work quality, reducing the productivity and consuming the allocated time: *“Ericsson is so big and it has all these routines which is good, but sometimes it’s also a little too hard to manage to be really efficient.”*

The Social Media paradigm

One of the areas of interest in the research is how employees perceive the use of social media at the workplace. Initially respondents were asked to define social media and its purpose. Next, there were questions regarding the impact of social media platforms on the daily work, and the use of external social media platforms as Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter.

When we asked about what is social media, most of the respondents referred to popular platforms as Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn. Some of them also associated social media with internal social media platforms at the workplace such as Lync, Ericoll or Mynet:

- i. *“Social media is Facebook for me. I don’t use any at work and I don’t have many colleagues on it.”*
- ii. *“Social media is like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Mynet. I mainly use Facebook for myself.”*
- iii. *“Social media is Facebook, but also Lync and our Ericoll parts- if they gather more people they become social media.”*

The stated definitions indicate that the majority of the employees are aware of the possibilities, **benefits and consequences of using social media** in their everyday life. Respondents pointed out that thanks to social media channels they can create personal and professional networks, share information & knowledge and get the support they need:

- i. *“Social media is connecting people regardless of the distance. An extension of what I do but not restricted by time or distance.”*
- ii. *“It is a fulfilling basic human need: everybody wants to share and gather information.”*

Interestingly, a few of them also mentioned the **potential risk** associated with active use of popular platforms, as time wastage and the loss of privacy: *“Social media is like Facebook, YouTube (...) where you share things about yourself and your life. So your life is not anymore something that only you have access to; so everyone knows what you are doing.”*; *“Sharing in this way is a bit exhibitionist and people are getting recognition; everybody wants to get positive feedback like well done, I like it, good job.”*

Despite the great awareness of what social media represents and how it could be used, most of the respondents admitted that they are not **using social media at work**: *“We don’t use it in our daily work; you don’t do your daily work via social media.”* More than half of the respondents perceived the use of external social media platforms at the workplace as rather unusual and are trying to avoid it while working: *“I don’t spend time doing my Facebook updates; I am doing this at home. When I am in work I am doing my work. Maybe during the coffee break I would check my Facebook on my phone.”*; *“I have colleagues that check their updates at work and I wonder is that ok?”*

Some of the employees explained that their working environment is rather unfavourable and resistant to change. Therefore internal social media provided by Ericsson is almost unused in the daily working life: *“Social media has been actively discouraged instead of encouraged. It’s a shame. Many people have been working here along time and haven’t seen the need of change.”*

We found out that employees are not socializing on the internal social media platforms. Some of the respondents admitted, however, that they establish connections with their co-workers on external social media platforms such as LinkedIn e.g. *“Social media is something that allows you to connect or keep connected. I use LinkedIn to keep in contact with people I have been working with, establish contact with them and sometimes establish new contacts with others professionals.”* The majority of the connections related to work were established via

LinkedIn (e.g. *“LinkedIn I consider only for professional networks.”*) and Facebook was perceived rather as a private tool for communication and restricted to friends and family.

We asked our respondents if **social media has an impact on the working habits** and to what extent they are influenced by this phenomenon. Most of the interviewees agreed with these statements: respondents noticed that communication became **more direct**; feedback is **immediate**, papers forms are replaced by **electronic data** and information is processed much **faster**:

- i. *“I stopped using paper and pen like 4 years ago.”*
- ii. *“Social media has changed the way we work today from the perspective of collaborating with co-workers. It’s easier to create information and share it.”*
- iii. *“It started to change from email to chat and that changed the way we communicate, everything is more direct.”*

Employees pointed out the advantages of social media use for their professional knowledge and expertise e.g.: *“Twitter and LinkedIn gave me a lot of interesting influences, empowering what I do. Yes I think it does influence the way I work today.”*; *“I think that there is no impact, regarding my daily routine but you can see that people are bringing information and knowledge from outside to the workplace.”*

Another advantage is the possibility to brand their professional identity on various social media platforms: *“You need to have a very clear idea of what you want to accomplish by using social media at work. I think people are using social media for self-promotion, to brand themselves. What I have on my LinkedIn profile reflects me as a person.”*

Ericsson in external social media

In trying to observe the connection that employees have with Ericsson as a global brand on external social media platforms we found out that there is a balance between global and local identity on media platforms. Most of the respondents confirmed that even if they don’t follow Ericsson on Facebook or Twitter they still feel connected to the concept of the *network society*. (e.g. *“Even if I am not using a social media I feel like I am a part of it”*). The idea of a Network Society involves the development of communication platforms to a point that you feel connected to everything and everyone around you, with no borders or limits to your communication experience:

- i. *“Network society is what I’m living in.”*
- ii. *“The network society makes me feel proud of working at Ericsson.”*
- iii. *“Networked society promotes more the ways we will communicate not the way we are doing it now.”*

Professional vs. private identity

With the emergence of social media and the new ways of sharing information some of the respondents feel like their professional and personal identity have merged into a distinct item

characterized by openness on social media platforms, social networking with colleagues outside the workplace, continuous knowledge sharing and learning experience, even after work hours, and a very open schedule due to working in global teams.

- i. *“If I do something privately it would reflect on my professional life.”*
- ii. *“I have an open schedule for work so from that perspective the limit between professional identity and personal identity is a bit blurred.”*

On the other hand, most employees still consider that there is a very specific difference between the two identities and it all consists of personal choices in separating your private affairs from the organizational world: *“There is a strict line between professional and personal identity. I’m leaving my professional identity at work.”*

5 DISCUSSION

The present paper follows some areas of interest in the line of research by looking at how employees perceive the efficiency of internal communication tools and how they prefer to receive information inside the organization. Furthermore, we tried to describe and analyze all communication platforms and observe the general communication patterns between employees and top managers. This led to the concepts of community building through internal communication channels and the relationship between information sufficiency and the channels used to transmit internal messages. Reinforced by the results, this section highlights the main findings in relation with the theoretical background, taking into account the main research questions: *how do internal communication channels affect strategic communication and how do employees feel about internal communication channels.*

5.1 Communication patterns and routines

In searching for communication patterns and daily routines we looked at the relationship employees have with internal communication platforms and other sources of information inside the company. As a way of bringing employees together around the same organizational goal and building a sense of belonging to a common corporate identity the internal communication practices encourage the process of identification with the organization (Dolphin, 2005). In our case, communication routines stand for face-to-face communication inside collaborative teams, specific communication instances with co-workers from the same department and small talk with colleagues as a social networking process. The findings support the idea that communication processes are limited to a certain degree by the task orientation of each department/team and internal communication is often an example of collaborative work between individuals with similar interests and in solving a work related problem.

Furthermore, employees perceive the process of communication as a working instinct more than an elaborated, strategic plan, considering their meetings, video conferences, emailing routines as an incorporated part of their work identity. As shown in their answers, the better the communication processes are, the more comfortable they feel around co-workers and managers and the better they think of their organization (Dolphin, 2005, Unzicker et al., 2000).

Local versus global communication patterns

As a very specific influence on the organizational practices, we identified global patterns versus site communication as one of the main differences when referring to managerial internal communication. Being part of a globally extended company influences the communication routines inside the organization. By managing teams all over the world and dealing with different working schedules, key employees in the company find themselves in a situation where communication is divided into local routines and global practices. While keeping face-to-face meetings and other rich channels to communicate with the site employees, managers find themselves in a position where they have to use only less rich

channels as emails or video conferences in order to communicate with their global teams. This creates a shift in the interest and time they allocate to local communication, with most of the employees expressing significant concern for global interventions and putting a lot of their time and effort in communicating with their global teams in spite of time differences or geographical distances. In order to keep a balance between global routines and local communication practices, managers are using almost the same instruments when communicating such as: emails, video conferences or phone conferences. The main difference is the amount of face-to-face communication they include in transmitting their messages. Dealing with global communication signifies a loss in face-to-face social networking opportunities and in building a personal connection with the person standing at the end of the transmitting channel.

Managers as communication agents

In dealing with communication patterns at the workplace most of the employees confirmed a direct flow of information coming from managers towards other employees and managing teams. This direction of the information inside the company pointed out that line managers are distributors of important messages inside the company. The interesting fact was that both managers and the general employee underlined the managers' decisive role as a communicator. On the other hand, the communication through managerial structures involves a hierarchical pattern in disseminating information inside the company, even if most respondents considered the communication system to be more decentralized than from top to bottom. This conception of a much decentralized information system in global company might be caused by the diversity found inside the organization with many departments functioning as mini-organizations inside a larger one. Also, a hierarchy-free communication system means a more efficient communication flow inside the company and a positive employee attitude towards adopting change (Dolphin, 2005).

Sharing information is known as the most successful way of increasing employee involvement in the company's problems and fostering a sense of belonging within the organizational environment. Managers are seen as ambassadors of the organizational values, creating common goals for the general employees and giving them a feeling of commitment. The more interactions between managers and employees the more transparency and credibility for the messages they carry internally (Dolphin, 2005).

5.2 Frequently used internal communication channels (Communication technologies: intranet, email, video communication, Mynet, Ericoll)

Employees' preferences

When referring to the use of the internal communication channels, the employees have a variety of choices in picking the appropriate medium for transmitting their messages to a receiver. The most common internal platforms used for communicating are: Intranet with MyNet and Ericoll applications, emails and video communication. Excluding the use of

communication technologies, face-to-face communication is in the top list of the employees' preferences.

This suggests a hierarchy in employees' preferences beginning with electronic methods like emails and the use of the intranet, followed by mixed methods like video conferences or phone conferences. This finding is in line with results from other research papers which discovered a great diversity in the employee preference for different media and a higher preference for using electronic communication (White et al., 2010; Woodall, 2006). These types of preferences are valid when referring only to internal communication technologies and exclude a general predilection for a face-to-face interaction.

When asking about employees' orientation towards a certain internal communication medium and how that affects their work, we revealed that their liking is linked to a task related communication and that most of them relate their messages to a particular internal channel. In this way different mediums are appointed for very specific messages and for a precisely targeted audience. As a negative aspect of a strong and strict internal communication strategy we can mention the employees' irritation when subjected to a rigorous routine (Christensen, Cornelissen & Morsing 2007; Llewellyn & Harrison, 2006). For example, some employees mentioned that their exact communication routines are sometimes in the way of solving a problem much faster and avoiding the work bureaucracy that slows the process and increases the chances of miscommunication. This suggests a need to explore a variety of internal communication channels and avoid over using the same communication patterns every day. By considering other communication mediums the employees can connect better with their needs and understand the efficiency of switching the channel for different messages.

The face-to-face preference

As a definite influence on the communication patterns, we discovered a strong employee preference for face-to-face communication, regardless of the technological means used for internal communication. Employed as the main channel on a daily basis, face-to-face communication involves a richness that cannot be supported by other artificial channels. In this way, communication occurs on a personal level. Electronic communication can be an improvement in speed and quantity, but it does not necessarily mean a progress for efficient communication (O'Donovan, 1998).

In our case, the employees disclose the use of face-to-face communication as a daily routine, involving cases of work related communication instances or simple social bonding with other co-workers. The danger of over using communication technologies can be translated into the decline of personal connection with other individuals, electronic messaging being known for reducing some employees' willingness to communicate (O'Donovan, 1998).

The fondness for face-to-face communication can be explained as a consequence of the media richness theory. According to Trevino et al. (1990) rich channels are those with the highest capability to encourage shared meaning between communicators. This includes the: availability of instant feedback, the possibility to transmit multiple cues and a personal focus

of the medium (O'Donovan, 1998). In grading communication channels, face-to-face communication is placed as the richest channel. For example, other researchers rank communication channels in order of richness as following: face-to-face, telephone meetings, videos and e-mail (Rice, 1993).

Furthermore, another cause for the employees' preferences for face-to-face communication originates in the social presence theory. The theory explains the individual degree of involvement in the communication process by including personal details such as facial expressions, posture or other non-verbal cues (Short et al., 1976 in Olaniran, 1993).

Video communication

Video communication appears to be the next appropriate way of communicating inside the organization. As mentioned above, video messaging implies a high richness level according to the media richness theory, being a channel that not only conveys nonverbal cues but also offers the other benefits of technological development: speed and expansion in time and space (O'Donovan, 1998). Using videos for communicating with employees, locally or globally, implicates a certain degree of personal involvement from the participant who connects with the receiver in multiple ways and understands better the message he wants to transmit. Most respondents agreed that interactivity is one of the most appreciated qualities in electronic communication, video messaging being capable of contributing to an interactional and entertaining way of disseminating information inside the company.

On the other hand, this type of internal communication channel can create disagreement and frustration when it displays technological flaws and interrupts communication acts, leading to misunderstanding and time consuming rituals (O'Donovan, 1998). Most employees complained about dealing with bad connections during video conferences or a lack of technical support when trying to set up a meeting. The highlighted need is one for evolved means of communication and for advanced equipment and technology when having to communicate through something else than face-to-face meetings.

The e-mail paradox

Emailing is one of the organizational routines which can keep information flowing around all departments in the company. Being the main channel for spreading corporate messages, the use of emails is seen either as an aid for getting the job done in time or as an obstacle in the way of the employee's productivity level. The paradox is found in the total reliance on sending and receiving messages through emails and at the same time the employees' complaints about receiving too many emails related to their work. This shows that the working routines are contingent on using the same type of medium to put the message out there for all employees. There is also an inclination to believe that employees avoid reforming the medium due to resistance to change and all the follow up consequences. If it helps us getting our job done why change it? This type of question limits the innovation of communication. Also, by using the same channel all the time, the organization faces an information overload.

The strategy involves a messaging routine that takes place daily only through the form of emailing colleagues or managers with important task related messages or other information regarding the organization. Being outnumbered by untargeted messages, work related emails need a coding mechanism in order to be taken into consideration by the reader. In this way, the communicator establishes a system of ranking important messages and directs his attention towards the most urgent email.

A very interesting point made by respondents was about the responsibility that comes with sending and receiving emails, most employees feeling accountable for answering or deciding not to reply to a certain message. This type of technology reshapes the way we communicate, the language we use and it reorganizes the way we understand organization communication (Bordow & More, 1991).

E-mail implies an asynchronous modality of electronically transmitting information inside the organization. The majority of the companies have a personalized system for organizational e-mails based on the importance of the message, and also an internal platform for transmitting them. Most e-mail structures have a broadcast function and provide the sender with advantages such as: speed, low cost and increased access to all employees (Azzi, 1989). Furthermore, e-mails are known to reduce homogeneity levels between individuals, encouraging heterophilous individuals (the degree to which two or more individuals who communicate are different) to interact much more often than they would through other communication channels (Rogers & Allbritto, 1995).

The intranet's inefficiency

According to Holtz (1996) intranet as an internal communication platform offers organizations unique possibilities to communicate and share information. Not only that employees can publish messages, share knowledge and gain access to information from different departments, but the intranet provides employees with continuous contact with managerial teams or other co-workers creating a long line of social interaction and community building. Working mainly as a web browser, an intranet page brings together geographically dispersed teams and creates a sense of security through the feeling of having access to a private library where you can always find the information you need (Gundry & Metes, 1997).

On the other hand, the mere existence of an intranet platform does not simplify the communicational processes or the information finding resources. Most respondents underline the inefficiency of having a virtual library where you do not know how to look for the appropriate message or you cannot find the information you need due to an overcrowded system. The need is for a simplified model of searching information, a tool that resembles the popular Google search engine. Individuals find themselves in the position of creating the perfect internal platform by taking as example a successful external platform. Experience shows that not all external platforms are desired internally, MyNet being built on the features of Facebook and entirely underused inside the organization.

5.3 The Social Media paradigm

The organization has been implementing a range of applications, technologies and online services based on technology Web 2.0. Internal applications such as Ericoll, Mynet or wikis are accessible to all employees via Ericsson's intranet that operates as the access platform for internal discussions. Vuori found that *"the use of social media can be associated with communication, collaboration and connecting purposes"* (Vuori, 2011:164). The variety of communication tools at Ericsson suggests that the company has a strong motivation to engage its employees in online dialogue.

Our study reveals that employees are often unsure whether they can use social media at work and avoid it if it is not the part of their duties. Despite the availability of various social media applications and the general idea of having crowdsourcing services at the workplace, employee involvement in the online internal communities is still very low. According to previous research, the differences between the planned and actual use of technology *"may be the result of the norms related to sharing knowledge across organizational boundaries"* (Vuori, 2011: 166, Orlikowski 2000). This could suggest that, the absence of a formal communication strategy, which clarifies how to use social media, may have an impact on employee's behaviour at Ericsson. The establishment of such rules could have positive effects on employee's involvement and interaction enabled by technology.

Our data shows that despite the fact that most employees are aware of the potential benefits, they are not using social media platforms at work. As argued by Vuori (2011:165), *"The use of technology is shaped by people's experiences, knowledge, meanings habits, power relations and norms. In addition, social structures, authority structures, culture and behavioural norms bear an impact on technology use"*. Vuori (2011) finds that the *"fear of unknown"* may impact on user involvement and willingness to adopt social media for business use. For Ericsson employees, the idea of using social media at work is rather a new organizational practice. Over the years of work, employees have developed their own routines and they are resistant to replace them. Furthermore, our study reveals a general reluctance to use social media platforms at work because of its errors and slow action. In practice, interactivity and general ability to add content and build on content added by other users is difficult due to the inefficiency of internal social media applications. This finding is consistent with the study carried on by Vuori (2011) who argued that the use of social media is shaped by experiences with the new technology's features.

Finally we observed that the use of social media is also related to the way the teamwork is organized. Some of the managers were actively promoting the use of social media on the daily basis for communication and collaboration. Both managers and team members were involved in the creation of communities and knowledge sharing. Orlikowski (2000:411) explains, *"A community of users engaged in similar work practices typically enacts similar technologies-in practice, where through common training sessions, shared socialization, comparable on-the-job experiences, and mutual coordination and storytelling, users come to engage with technology in similar ways"*.

5.4 The ideal communication experience

The need for more communication and for better communication was one of the respondents' requests when asked about ways of improving the communication strategy inside the company. Employees find a feeling of security in being informed all the time by their managers, even if that leads to an overflow of information. The demand for transparency between hierarchical levels can be translated as a request for crucial messages regarding organizational changes and for more interaction with the key change agents (Robson & Dennis, 2005). Another requirement was an increase in face-to-face meetings between managers and team members and a desire to use more interactive channels in building internal communities. The impossibility of having face-to-face communication in all communicative situations makes room for internal mediated communication which uses various tools to reach all its possible target groups. (e.g. *external news release, corporate television advertisement, corporate web site, internal newsletter*). According to Grunig et al, this type of communication is considered symmetrical "*if its content meets the employees' need to know rather than the management's need to tell*" (Grunig et al., 1984).

The absence of a formal strategy in the daily communication practices makes all interaction less efficient in disseminating messages and understanding task related information. This calls for a new communication plan that can incorporate all employees' needs without neglecting the main values and wants of the company. The employees' fondness for a certain amount of information on various internal topics makes it difficult for the communicator to predict which message meets the exact needs of the target group, being a continuous threat of information overload inside the company. The path to an effective internal communication is through an elaborated task communication plan, which can create commitment among the general employees, while a non-task related communication strategy will build a trustworthy work environment (Welch & Jackson, 2007).

As goals of internal corporate communication which can contribute to an ideal communication experience we can mention: *contributing to internal relationships characterised by employee commitment, promoting a positive sense of belonging in employees, developing their awareness of environmental change and developing their understanding of the need for the organisation to evolve its aims* (Welch & Jackson, 2007).

5.5 Related theories

In order to go further into the discussion, with every subtitle offering the chance of additional debate, we will bring into light various communication theories which have been stated already in the thesis. Taking into account not only the practical aspects of a communication strategy, theories such as **medium theory** consider the choice of an efficient communication channel being as similar as it gets to face-to-face communication. The findings prove an appreciation for face-to-face communication practices, most employees showing a preference for this specific type of channels. This validates the idea of media richness in relationship with organizational choices. On the other hand, **the medium theory** states that successful communication depends on planning and strategic thinking, being an improbable phenomenon

on its own. (Qvortrup, L. (2006). By praising the medium of communication into being responsible for the success of the communication act, the theory argues that there is no such thing as natural successful communication. The results show that communication can be seen as a successful process when took on a personal level with many of the internal communication channels proving to be flawed when dealing with information overflow.

Furthermore, the **constructive theory of communication** is the one of the theories which underlines our findings, supporting the idea of social interaction as a meaning of improving organizational communication. Based on the idea that every communication act is a social interaction, we can say that most employees value the social interpretation of communication which cannot always be accomplished through technological channels (Mazzei, 2010). In this way, the richness of each channel is measured through its capacity to bring a sense of social contact between employees, giving meaning to organizational communication. **The resource based-theory** can be applied in our case as a way of emphasising the importance of efficiency in communication. This theory also underlines that effective communication is carried on through shared knowledge and common trust between employees (Mazzei, 2010).

While literature suggests that a rich medium is one that allows real time feedback and a variety of language cues and nonverbal behaviours, in practice it's really hard to find a technological replacement for face-to-face communication. This relates also to our finding which states the employees' preference for very rich media. The next choice in fulfilling the requirements of the employees would have had to be video communication, which was proved to be defective due to its technological restrictions. As the theory states, the best choice can be found in the process of matching the communication channel with the nature of the communication act (Daft & Lengel, 1986).

Furthermore, according to **Allwood's Activity Based Communication**, work-bound communication is communication instrumentally tied to the nature of the profession. Allwood defined work-bound communication as "*who works with what, and with whom, for what reason/purpose, when, in what manner and with what results*" (Allwood, 2003).

This definition can be broke down further: "who" is shorthand for the people who are communicating inside the organization, "reason/purpose" is the content of their messages, "whom" covers the audience to whom they are communicating, "in what manner" are the channels of the communication and "result" is the impact of communication upon its intended audience (Allwood, 2003; Slee, P., Harwood, E. 2004). Using this proposed model, we have drawn the map of key communication instances in Ericsson Göteborg.

WHO	PURPOSE	TO WHOM	CHANNELS	RESULTS
Engineers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about on-going projects Updates related to research new technological developments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team members Managers/supervisors The others collaborative teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face-to-face Intranet platforms: Ericoll, Wikis Lync chat Email Video Conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to the research Tasks and projects are done
Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> News about the decisions Feedback on revised projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff of department for which they work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face-to-face Email lists Video conferences Phone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop understanding of issues Development of the projects
Assistants and communicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic/introductory information Information and instructions about the new service Information about trainings opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newsletters Email lists Intranet: Ericoll, Mynet Lync chat Phone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness of new services

Fig. F: Work-bound communication at Ericsson Göteborg

One of the implications of the present study is that work-bound communication has a message targeting function. For instance, assistants and communicators have a key role in creating communicational relationship (through emails, newsletters, surveys) and provide information regarding new communication platforms and trainings opportunities. This supports the finding that internal communication professionals “*have a key role in encouraging active employees behaviours in addition to delivering messages*” (Mazzei, 2010:231).

For managers in Ericsson, the work-bound communication model implies they must connect general employees with higher hierarchical platforms in Ericsson. They provide information regarding decisions, working guidelines and feedback on the projects. In order to do that, they need to entail a work-flow analysis, which involves encouraging employees to initiate communication behaviours which will improve organizational processes (Mazzei, 2010:231). Mazzei (2010) claimed that managers are responsible to recognize which communication behaviours to activate and which groups of employees are supposed to be active: “*Managers have to create activation strategies to transform inactive publics to active publics. Inactivity derives from the lack of awareness, sensitivity and ability and also from the sense of constraint*” (Mazzei, 2010:231). Therefore managers have to handle these issues with the help of assistants and communicators. They aim to improve the communication efficiency and increase organizational trust by enhancing the motivation and implementing the training and mentoring programs.

According to Mazzei (2010:230) many companies expressed an aim to create a climate for active communication behaviours such as knowledge sharing, collaboration and creativity. The research suggests encouraging communication contact between all members of the organization and asserts that communication is central for all organizational processes (Mazzei, 2010:230). These findings are consistent with the work-bound communication

model at Ericsson. Ericsson provides employees with a variety of communication tools (e.g. email lists, video conferences, Lync, Ericoll) that give them the opportunity to express themselves and encourage their active communication behaviour. Work-bound communication at Ericsson is based on the communication aims and the organizational values. It identifies instruments and activities that match the company’s core values such as professionalism, respect, interactivity and perseverance.

5.6 The Model of Strategic Communication

The model of strategic communication incorporates the interactivity between internal and external communication patterns, with a focus on the role of internal communication in creating and exchanging organizational messages. The model also highlights the channels used in transmitting information inside the company.

In our literature review we have elaborated and presented the model which connects internal and external patterns of communication in organizational context (see figure G). Based on the results of our study we identified how the company establishes communicational routines, by incorporating Web 2.0 technologies in their communicational process and enhancing creative thinking and networking:

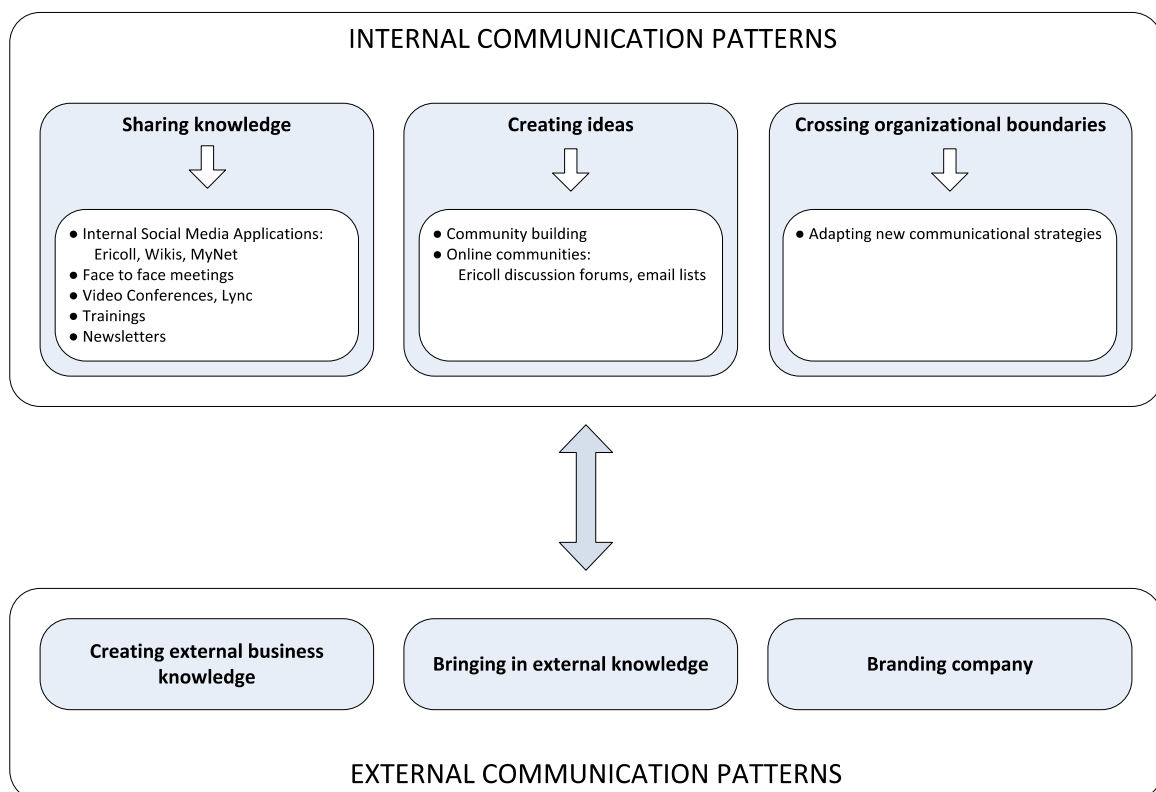


Fig. G: Internal and external communication patterns in Ericsson Göteborg

Strategic communication inside Ericsson Göteborg is keen on increasing the innovative potential of the company by engaging its employees in networking and creative knowledge sharing. For this purpose the company provides employees with a variety of communicational platforms and channels, for instance: training and online learning, newsletters,

weekly/monthly meetings with team supervisors, and Intranet's social media applications- Ericoll, wikis, MyNet. According to Vuori (2012:158) knowledge sharing can be seen as a *"critical and strategic resource that when used in unique ways, enables the company to develop sustainable competitive advantages"*. Literature highlights the importance of user active participation and technology's role in providing a platform for knowledge creation and sharing. Internal social media applications (e.g. Ericoll, wiki) are used for sharing and exchanging various kinds of content and the use of social media contributes to the company's knowledge creation capability (Vuori, 2012:158).

Vuori suggest that high stocks of creative knowledge inside the company, should be considered *"as something that is embedded in practice, constantly emerging and developing as a result of people interacting with each other, interpreting and making sense of their environment in a social context"* (Vuori, 2012:159; Orlikowski, 2002). Therefore, the company should create a dynamic and innovative oriented organizational culture where everyone can be an innovator. According to Swan et al. (1999 in Vuori, 2012:159) new knowledge and ideas are created *"through negotiations, where different people bring together and share their thought worlds, which are exposed for new meanings and interpretations in the networking process"*. When comparing this finding with our results, we discovered that the communication platforms and its online communities (e.g. Ericoll discussion forums, email lists) are fostering communication and interaction among employees. Popular and well-structured online communities with a high number of active users are attracting more and more new members who seek solutions and work-related information and also want to share their expertise and creative thinking.

Consequently, the establishment of internal communication patterns which encourage knowledge sharing, creative thinking and adapting the innovative communication strategies has a positive impact on the company's external operations such as: creation of external bussiness knowledge, branding and promoting the organization and bringing external knowledge inside the organization. All in one, it helps to increase the company's originality and speeds up the collaborative process between employees (Vuori, 2012).

5.7 Providing Solutions

In order to improve the communication practices inside the organization we can propose a list of suggestions, generalized to fit the company's needs and based on recommendations found in the literature review (Bottazzo, 2005).

We can mention as purposes of strategic internal communication the following goals:

- *to improve information flows* by alternating internal communication channels and matching the messages to the appropriate medium
- *to enhance a two-way form of communication* by reducing the communication differences between managers and general employees and allowing individuals to be part of the decision making process

- *to define the values and attitudes inside the organization* by incorporating them in the daily communication practices and in general communication strategies
- *to create personal profiles of all employees* by allowing space for interpersonal communication and social interaction between co-workers
- *to define communication styles of individuals and organisations* by analysing and describing the existing communication practices and choosing to be consistent with the organization's communication styles
- *to encourage an appropriate management style* by improving motivation, responsibility, initiative, affiliation and innovative capability
- *to promote an efficient solution finding system* by providing employees with efficient communication channels and other search related engines.

6 CONCLUSION

To sum up, the thesis researches the field of organizational communication with a specific interest in internal communication such as channels used inside the company and other routines which contribute to the communication practices. By following the employees' preferences and analyzing their personal contributions to the organization's communication strategy we managed to relate our results to findings which bring into light the patterns of communication inside a global company.

Looking at how internal communication channels affect strategic communication, the thesis highlights through its findings that the relationship between the internal communication channels and the strategy that follows is one of dependency with every message on the company's intranet should be strategically matched with the channel of transmission. Validating the medium theory (Qvortrup, 2006), the research agrees that information has to correspond specifically with the choice of channel. In this case, the over utilization of emails for a large variety of information concludes in an overload, a communication blockage which could be avoided by considering alternative channels in passing on messages.

When asking employees about the general functions of internal communication channels we managed to discover and analyze: *their perception about the efficiency of internal channels, the communication patterns between different hierarchical levels, their fondness for certain channels, the existence of a sense of community built through communication and their relationship with social media.* As guidelines for reviewing the organizational behaviour we took into consideration a few communication theories such as Allwood's work-bound communication model (Allwood, 2003), the constructive theory of communication (Mazzei, 2010) and the medium theory (Qvortrup, 2006). Also, we theorized and discussed concepts like strategic communication, internal communication and internal communication channels (Email and the Intranet). This was the base for developing further our debate and helping us describe and investigate the communication practices inside the organization.

Regarding our main findings, we focused on highlighting the communication patterns and routines inside the company where we discovered a difference between the local ways and the global methods of transmitting information. This shaped the communication approach of the organization, dividing the communication choices and strategies into a local, more face-to-face oriented mode and a global perspective where video conferencing and other technological means of communication are often used. Furthermore, another specific finding was the role of the managers as communication agents inside the company with most of the important internal information being disseminated through managers to general employees. In this way, their professional identity switches between communicating within their department and managing other work related tasks. As frequently used internal communication channels based on communication technologies inside the workplace we focused on the following: intranet (Mynet, Ericoll), email, and video communication, as being the most frequently used and debated ones inside the company. As a main point in the discussion we underlined that most of the technological means of communicating inside the company are flawed and thus they become a second choice in the employees' preference list. This validates again the media

richness theory which supports the idea that it is impossible to replace face-to-face communication with other virtual channels.

Another important facet of the research lays in the social media paradigm and the users' approach towards communicating through a new medium inside a professional environment. Being characterized as one of the channels that can replace the social interaction often lost on various other platforms such as emails or video conferences, social media promises the reach of a large audience, the creation of numerous communities and offering everyone the possibility to express themselves through sharing information. Even with all these attributes in hand, social media seems too new to be efficient in a traditional organizational environment, needing to be introduced and programmed to fit the needs and values of the company. On the other hand, all employees expressed a greater need for real social interaction with colleagues from the local site or from all over the world, admitting that social media has the right features to make this need a real opportunity to share and communicate with people.

All this concludes with the expression of an "ideal" communication experience, or at least a communication experience which can be characterized by little misunderstanding, an effective solution finding strategy and the capacity of bringing people together.

6.1 Further research

For further research we suggest a more in depth format with focus on one main finding, the concept of social media in organizational culture being a great platform for introducing and developing new ideas within the area of organizational communication. By following our lead, further research could analyze and discover the consequences of social media use in the organization to a greater degree. Agreeing that the need for social communication is highly expressed in this study among all subjects, we could suggest an additional research with a concern for the sociological aspects of communication.

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Introducing Ericsson

- “About Ericsson in Göteborg” (Ericsson Göteborg Ericoll, internal material)
- “Ericsson group presentation” (Ericsson Global, internal material)
- “Future of communications” by Hans Vestberg, President and CEO Ericsson (internal material)
- “This is Ericsson” (external corporate material): (13th May, 2013) <http://www.ericsson.com/res/thecompany/docs/this-is-ericsson.pdf> -

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8 APPENDIX

Figure 1

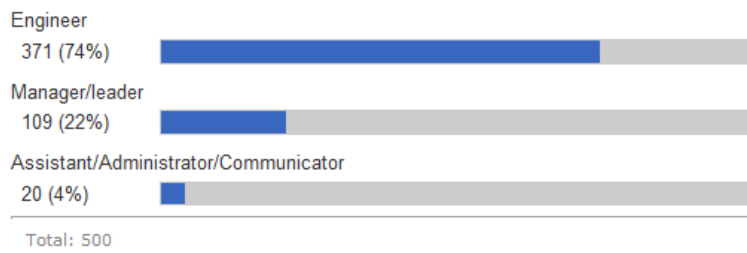


Figure 2

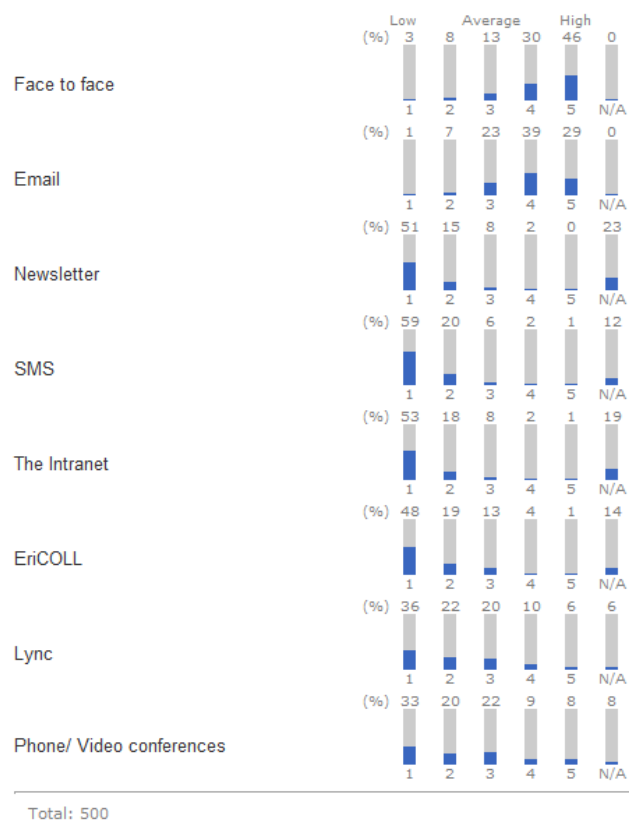
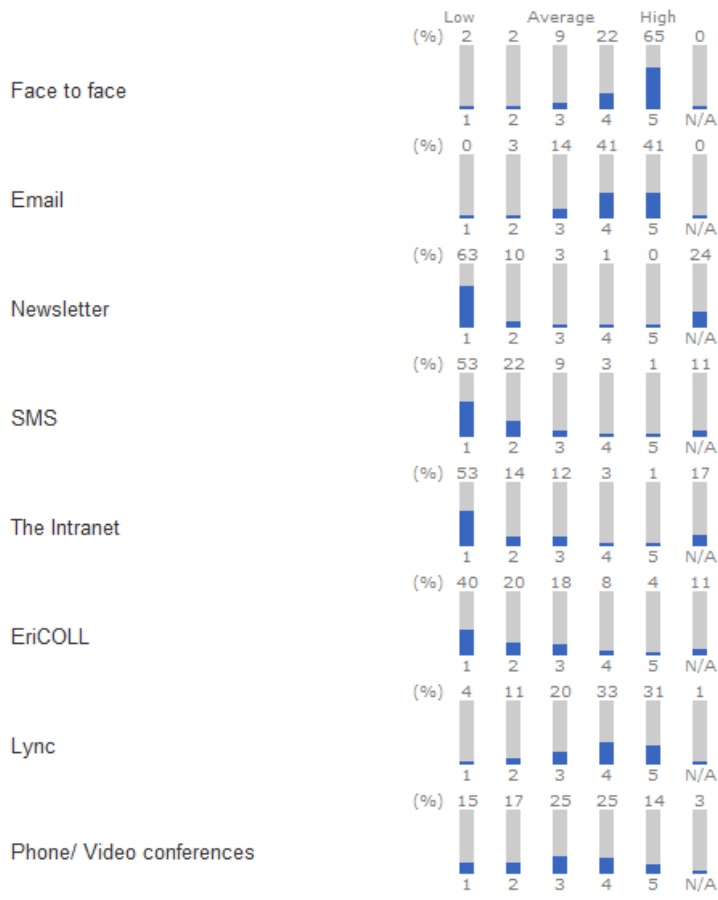
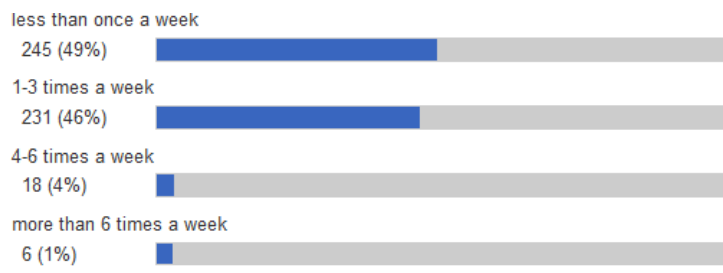


Figure 3



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Figure 4



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Figure 5

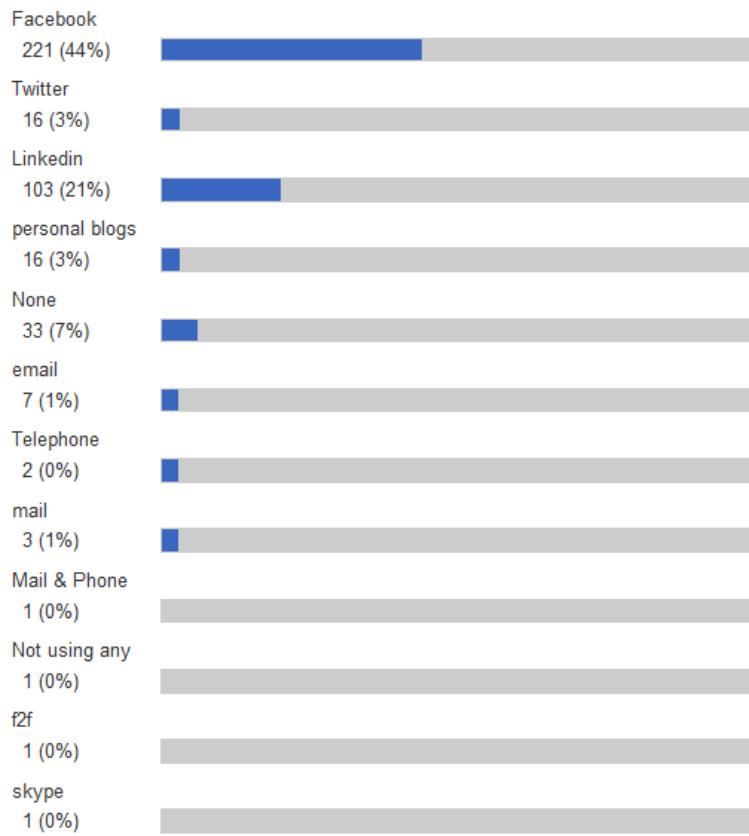


Figure 6



Figure 7

