

# **Employee wellbeing, team spirit and motivation at company X**

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<p>The aim of this thesis was to gather understanding of the current state of employee wellbeing, team spirit and motivation and how to further improve these aspects in the commissioning company that remains anonymous and is referred to as company X. The research was expected to identify and resolve any problem areas in the organizational environment.</p> <p>Employee wellbeing is a living entity that goes through various changes over time. It's affected by several physical, psychological and social dimensions that determine whether a work community is in fact in the state of a high or a low wellbeing. The reason why contributing to healthy levels of wellness is crucially important, is because the physical and mental state of the employees is directly linked to productivity, motivation and engagement within the company. These for one influence the overall performance of the organization.</p> <p>On the other hand, the mental and physical state of an individual that ultimately form wellbeing, is alone too narrow of a point of view to identify whether a work community is indeed functional. One of the dimensions of corporate wellness, the social environment as in team spirit, also considerably influences a company's performance. Therefore, it was presented as a second focus point of this thesis.</p> <p>To create appropriate guidelines for future reference in terms of wellbeing and team spirit, the most suitable leadership style for the commissioner had to be discovered. The people of company X should be led accordingly in such a way that supports their perception of healthy work settings.</p> <p>The research was executed as a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods through an online questionnaire. Based on the results, the employees are highly dedicated and passionate about their work, and they enjoy their social environment. However, definition of common goals and values, flow of information, lack of clarity of instructions and training were amongst the major areas of improvement to be considered. With regard to team spirit, the employees felt a rather close connection to each other, but the multiple locations of company X complicated the unity of the company.</p> <p>Overall, the thesis project achieved its goal by identifying the problem areas that needed further attention. The results will be utilized to ensure that also in the future the employees will be able to rely on a healthy work environment that supports wellbeing and positive relationships between employees.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Employee wellbeing, team spirit, motivation, leadership, belonging, meaningfulness	

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# 1 Introduction

Employee welfare is the equation of managers and employees working for a mutual goal to accomplish a safe and productive work environment. The ideal environment can be considered a place where meaningful work is produced, and the employees feel like their share of the work matters and is valuable to the community. When the meaningfulness of the work is recognized, and the environment is autonomous enough for individuals to have space for creativity and independency, the chances of high employee wellbeing are probable. However, the basic physical human needs such as nutrition, exercise and sleep are equally important, and they must be taken care of for the employees to be in the right state of mind to handle responsibilities and find meaning in their jobs. (Edenred Finland 2017, 1.)

In other words, workplace wellbeing is one of the most crucial aspects of organizational culture. It's directly linked to employee motivation, productivity and loyalty. When the company provides a positive and open-minded work environment where employees feel appreciated, the company is more likely to perform successfully thanks to motivated employees with high productivity and work-morale levels. When employees feel cared for and appraised, they want to give something in return to the company and put more effort into their work. Thus, by ensuring a healthy environment for employees to develop themselves to their full potential, the company invests in a future with a committed staff that are likely to remain a part of the company's success story. (Workplace wellbeing 2017.)

In fact, this thesis focused on workplace wellbeing at the commissioning company X, which remains anonymous throughout the thesis due to the sensitivity of the research topics. The company had never executed a wellness research before, which drove the company to commission such thesis. Until recently, the wellbeing of the employees had only been reflected on verbally at the annual performance reviews, which are held once a year. Therefore, it was an urgent priority to investigate the staff wellbeing on a deeper level to identify any problem areas that would require more attention.

Furthermore, the social environment and team spirit were also investigated as another research topic. As the company is spread into four separate offices across the country, the overall team spirit is slightly scattered. Therefore, this thesis aimed to study how team spirit at company X could be fostered not only amongst each office, but in the whole company specifically.

The thesis project aimed to find answers to the following questions:

1. **Do the employees feel physically and mentally well at work?**
2. *What are the risk factors potentially threatening their wellbeing?*
3. *What could be improved to make company X a better place to work?*
  
4. **Do the distances between offices affect team spirit?**
5. *If necessary, can team spirit of the whole company somehow be repaired?*
  
6. **Are the employees motivated about their work?**
7. *Which leadership style would enhance their motivation?*

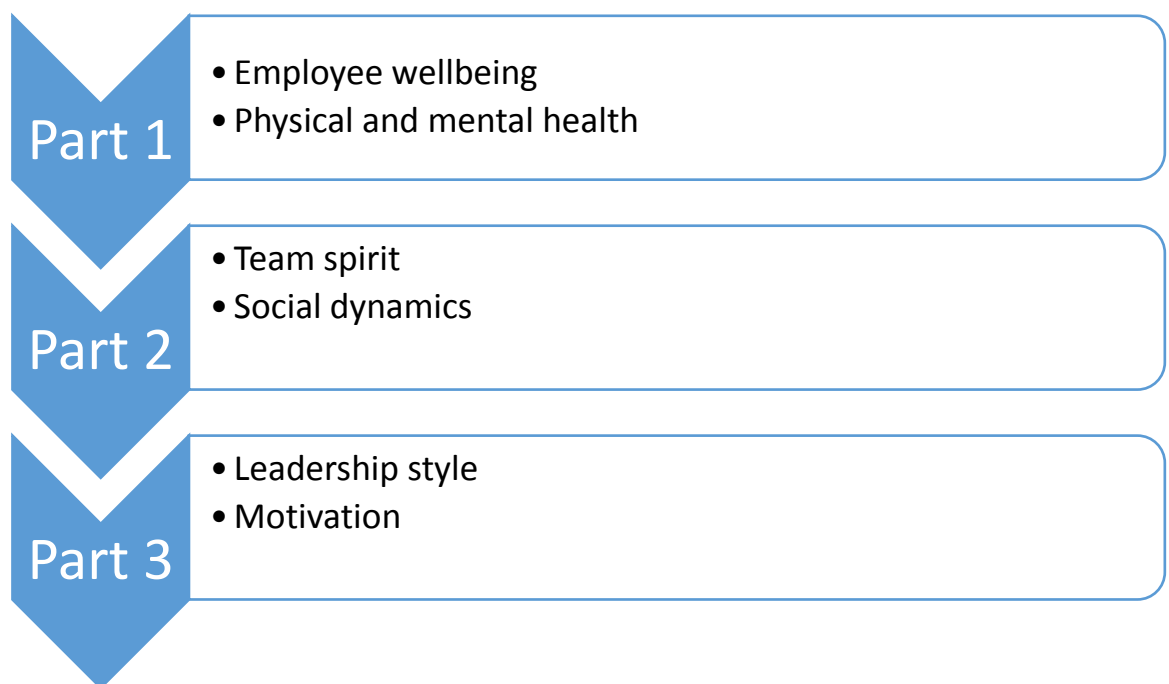


Figure 1: Key research topics of the thesis

As demonstrated in figure 1, the key research topics that were examined in the following chapters include three dimensions; wellbeing, team spirit and motivation. These dimensions are quite separate yet still linked to each other in a sense that they can all be found in ideal work environments – the people working there feel physically and mentally well, they have built a sense of a team spirit with each other and they are motivated about their work. Hypothetically, when all three aspects are aligned in the company, it can be considered an ideal place to work and develop one’s professional career and skills.

The previously mentioned trilogy was of strong interest to the commissioner, which led to the initiation of this thesis. The CEO of company X wants the company to be a place

where people can live up to their fullest potential, exceed their own expectations and conquer new territory and responsibilities. Therefore, he wants to gather such people together that can create a functional workplace where there's constant development, innovation and future-oriented mindset and most importantly, a group of people who want to hold on to these aspects together. He values the people who make his company a success, and wants to provide them with an environment that supports their work and contributes to their wellbeing.

Thus, the idea of clarifying the employees' thoughts on the current state of workplace wellbeing, social dynamics and motivation seemed most certainly relevant to be able to identify any areas of improvement. In other words, if something could be done differently to make the employees feel better, more motivated or more comfortable with each other, the source of the dissatisfaction had to be discovered first. Hence, the purpose of this thesis was to measure the current state of employee wellness, team spirit and motivation, and if any of these aspects could be improved, probable solutions were to be suggested for future reference.

The chosen approach for the thesis proceeded in the following manner; first of all, the commissioning company was introduced in general. The following chapter covered the theoretical framework relevant to the research topics, starting off with employee wellbeing, followed by team spirit and concluding in motivation. Each section defined the most important variables within the framework, and some current trends and professional observations related to the topics were introduced. In addition, the current situation of the company in terms of wellbeing and team spirit was summarized. The third chapter, motivation, depicted motivation from the point of view of a chosen leadership theory. The point was to discover how the leader could impact the work motivation of the employees by his or her own behavior or leadership approach.

Once the theoretical framework was covered, a questionnaire studying the three research topics was distributed to the employees. The questions were based on the findings discovered in the theoretical section. When all the answers had been achieved, the data analysis was conducted. The final results of the questionnaire along with theoretical findings were used to create suggestions and improvement ideas for future reference. In addition to merely answering the research questions, the point was to establish how a high level of wellbeing, great team spirit and motivation could be achieved in the future.

## **Company X in a nutshell**

The commissioner of the thesis preferred to remain anonymous and is therefore referred to as company X throughout the research. It is an electrical engineering company with a staff of 24 people (including the managers), founded in 2015. The enterprise is specialized in the lifecycle management of power, communication and lighting grids, and it provides several high-quality services that include planning, inspecting and managing projects in the previously mentioned areas. Within the past two years the company has grown from a single person start-up to a successful specialist company of 24 employees. Regardless of the young age of the enterprise, it possesses a great deal of expertise and innovation. (Anonymous 26 May 2017.)

The headquarters of company X is in Porvoo, while the other offices are located in Joensuu, Imatra and Seinäjoki. Co-operation between the offices takes place daily, mostly through online interaction tools such as Skype. In fact, digital solutions are of high importance to the company as all the data is accessible on the internet, which allows all the employees to work on the same material regardless of their geographical location. In fact, some of the employees work regularly from their own home, as the work doesn't necessarily require physical attendance. This cost-efficient solution to the company and a convenient situation to the employee might, however, distance the employee from his or her co-workers due to a lack of physical human contact. Some employees go for weeks without seeing their colleagues in person, whereas others work closely together daily. (Anonymous 26 May 2017.)

In the words of the CEO, the staff is certainly the most valuable asset of the company. Each employee has their own specialties and unique features that contribute to the company's performance. The backgrounds of the staff members are different, as some have several years of experience in the industry while others are recently graduated engineering students. Nevertheless, the managers value each subordinate equally regardless of the age or previous employment background. The experienced professionals obviously bring significant know-how and expertise to the company, while the recent graduates have the benefit of easily adapting to new organizational environments and ways of working, and are determined to develop their skills and gain valuable experience. As a diverse, dynamic and youthful team the company has a special place for every one of its employees. (Anonymous 26 May 2017.)



## **2 Employee welfare**

Contrary to common belief, employee welfare expands beyond company recreation days, fringe benefits and corporate healthcare. In fact, wellness is a daily matter that should be considered constantly. It's connected to how the company performs in the business, as the effect of healthy employees on the business success is significant. As a matter of fact, corporate welfare is the result of employee wellness, which lies behind mundane details that will be explained in this chapter. (Edenred Finland 2017, 9.)

The following subchapters cover the major components of employee wellbeing that came up repeatedly in the chosen online sources as well as books and articles. Employee wellness is an immeasurable phenomenon that cannot be limited to a certain number of dimensions, therefore this thesis has been narrowed down to study the dimensions that came up repeatedly in the sources that seemed most fit for purpose.

### **2.1 Meaningfulness of the job**

According to interviews that Edenred conducted with Finnish HR specialists, workplace wellbeing is considered a trend as it is. Organizations are aware that wellbeing is personal and depends on several factors affecting the life situation of an individual, yet it can be influenced by offering the ideal environment and tools for the individual to succeed at their job and experience positive vibes. Contrary to old-fashioned beliefs, today's specialists believe that workplace wellbeing cannot be created from side-line products such as fringe benefits or salary etc., but wellbeing comes the job itself. (Edenred Finland 2017, 2.)

Thus, the latest shift in employee welfare has been towards acknowledging the content and meaning of the job. The idea is that wellbeing at work comes from jobs that serve an important purpose and meaning to the employee as well as the community. People want to feel like their jobs matter and that they somehow help others and the community by what they do. Feeling proud of one's job and acknowledging its purpose creates motivation and job satisfaction. (Edenred 2017.)

The leader can have a significant impact on how meaningful the employees feel their jobs are. Sharing knowledge of how their work matters and benefits the whole organization as well as the overall community is a positive way of helping employees experience pride of their jobs. Acknowledging how one's own qualities are unique and important to the team or the organization also fosters a healthy sense of pride. Pride makes people go out of their ways to reach common goals and genuinely support one another to get there. In addition to support, teams who feel proud of their work also generally celebrate their success

together or stop to reflect on why something didn't turn out as expected and what could be improved next time. Pride leads to greater employee efforts, as feeling proud of the company's products or services is passed on to the core organizational values. (Burchell & Robin 2011, 128; 134-136.)

A meaningful job is something that every company should provide their employees with, if they would like to see a staff with high dedication and commitment. If a person is aware how his or her share of the work impacts the organization and the community, he or she is more likely to fully dedicate to the work in order to reach a positive outcome that makes a difference. There's a sense of common good in the company, and people go beyond their work titles and descriptions to reach common goals and help fellow colleagues succeed as well. Such behavior is the aftermath of true appreciation of one's job and the company. (Burchell & Robin 2011, 138.)

Employees tend to appreciate the meaningfulness of their work when there's a clarified path for them to develop and gain more responsibility within the company. When they know their work is valued and important, they are more likely to trust that they have a place in the company even in the future, which deepens the employee's commitment to the organization. (Burchell & Robin 2011, 148.)

## **2.2 Autonomy**

A good starting point to feel like one's job matters is involving the employee in the decision-making process and enabling them to exercise a level of self-governance in their work. Providing freedom to clarify one's own working path and method is often more effective than giving autocratic orders or putting the employee under constant supervision. The lack of autonomy might cause feelings of frustration and lack of appreciation. Instead of being micromanaged and constantly observed by a manager, employees tend to work more effectively when they're involved in the process and can witness the results of their efforts. What's more, given autonomy and responsibility employees feel encouraged to think more creatively and develop their skills to prove competent and worthy of the authority. (Burchell & Robin 2011, 130-131; Crane 2017, 197.)

When employees are given space to take control, employer's role is to provide them with the right tools and goals and be available in case of obstacles or doubts. As hierarchical, autocratic management has expired from many of today's organizations, the new starting point is that employees are skilled and productive, and they thrive in creative tasks when given trust and responsibility. (Edenred Finland 2017, 2-10.)

However, individual differences must be considered. Not everyone fits in the same mould, which is why flexibility cannot be emphasized enough. Some employees might appreciate more self-governance and freedom of work whereas others might require more support and guidance from their leaders. When each employee can take control of their own path, the company maximizes its performance level provided that the whole staff works in a way that allows them to be at their highest potential. (Edenred Finland 2017, 15.)

### **2.3 Trust**

To be able to promote autonomy within an organization, mutual trust between the employer and employee must be present. The employer must be able to trust the employee to succeed as expected, and the employee must be able to rely on the employer to provide sufficient guidance and support. The behaviour of other people is always unpredictable and risks are involved when relying on another person with certain responsibilities, but trust indeed enables people to take these risks and rely on each other, no matter of the unpredictable consequences. (Laine 2009, 17-19.)

However, the behaviour of others can be influenced to promote the expected or wanted outcome. Forcing or directing the individual to perform in a certain manner might not be the most reliable way to encourage desired actions, but by addressing sincere trust in the employee the employer maximises the probability of high dedication on behalf of the employee. Mutual sense of trust cannot be forced or manipulated, but it can be encouraged by initiating a relationship based on trust. (Laine 2009, 20-21.)

In working life, trust is often based on adequate professional and social skills as well as attitude. Therefore, it's potentially placed on individuals who have the required skills and expertise necessary for the job, while they also perform well in teams and communicate openly with others. Their attitude is positive towards their company, and they sincerely care about reaching its goals. The co-workers and employer of such individual can count on him or her to have the company's best interest at heart, which facilitates the expectancy of successful results. (Laine 2009, 24-25.)

Even though placing trust in another person is a cognitive decision to some extent, trust is also driven by emotions. When it's present in the community, both employers and employees feel comfortable to let their guard down, discuss feelings and own up to mistakes. They feel as if they can express their true opinions and feelings without the risk of being judged or turned on, because they feel accepted and appreciated in a trusting environment. Such an environment also promotes security, which increases the employees' readiness to disclose weaknesses. The reason why this is important in a community of high

level of wellbeing, is because when weaknesses are openly discussed they can be dealt with by providing accurate guidance or training. This in return boosts the individual's self-confidence and trust in his or her ability to perform accordingly in his or her appointed tasks. (Laine 2009, 33-34.)

## **2.4 Health**

As already stated in the introduction of this thesis, wellness at work is initiated at the basic level of mental and physical health. People who feel positively about both aspects tend to succeed better at work than those who feel out of place in their body and mind. In other words, creating a healthy work environment starts by offering the right tools for employees to maintain good health. As most jobs consist of sitting for hours, bouncing back from the unnatural sitting position is important. Maintaining regular exercise habits obviously improves health, but beyond that it affects the ability to learn, memorize and handle stress. "Emotional built-up requires physiological relief", addresses R. Friedman (Friedman 2014, 60-61). Recovering from work stress is significantly more attainable when exercising, thus it can be concluded that physical activity results both in physical and mental health. Thus, more companies are trying to implement sports into their daily routines. (Friedman 2014, 60-62.)

Many companies have indeed taken office exercise routines to the next level by introducing different ways of motivating their staff to move. Having a gym at the office settings or offering recreation cards that can be used to pay gym memberships are traditional ways of offering motivation boosts, but now companies have equipped their meeting rooms with treadmills and stationary bikes, so people could exercise while having meetings. In addition, owning company bikes that employees can ride on their lunch breaks or when running errands has become a trend, the intention of which is to motivate the employees to ditch their cars. Another phenomenon is having the meetings outside while going for a walk or run. A change of scenery and the right amount of exercise enhance creativity and coming up with fresh ideas. (Friedman 2014, 63-64.)

## **2.5 Balance of work and personal life**

An effective way to maintain a healthy staff of high level of wellbeing is by ensuring a balance in their personal life and work. Investing in employee wellness contributes to the performance of the company in the long run; Healthy workers are likely to stick around when the risk of sick leaves, mental problems and other issues of the sort can be avoided by not dealing with work pressure around the clock. Most jobs are bound to get stressful at times,

but the key is to find the right ways to handle stress without it overwhelming the individual. (Burchell & Robin 2011, 80-81.)

Managers should carry responsibility of monitoring their employees and any possible needs to take a break from work when stress becomes too overwhelming. Employees might need a push from their managers to take a day off, since the amount of stress and work might make it unclear for the person him or herself to realize when to slow down. Even the most hardworking and determined employees are still people who need their own quality time outside work with family, friends and hobbies to unwind. Unloading work pressure through such healthy channels gathers energy for facing challenges at work. (Burchell & Robin 2011, 80-81.)

There's several means of unwinding and recharging from work, but they can roughly be divided into four categories. First of all, *mental unwinding* is a conscious choice of excluding work-related thoughts and engaging in activities that act as distraction. *The state of relaxation* mostly helps to recharge physically from work strain by either doing nothing at all in contrary to a hectic day at work, or engaging in light functions such as social interaction or going outdoors. *Challenging oneself by skills accumulation* helps the individual gain new skills that are not related to work, which enhances the feelings of satisfaction and relaxation through self-development. *Free-time control* is a way of unwinding by feeling in control of one aspect of one's life. A person might not feel in control of their work, but when they can decide how they spend their free-time, it provides a balancing satisfaction and restores energy to face work challenges. (Hakanen 2011, 100-101.)

Each employee should identify the most suitable means of unwinding that best helps them find balance in their work and personal life. The means that results most effective should be converted into a routine that would be held onto even when work gets exceptionally stressful. In such occasion, engaging in recharging activities is even more important to maintain job satisfaction and the ability to handle challenges. Against all odds, unwinding during holidays doesn't restore energy for later use, which is why recharging should be included in one's daily or weekly routines. (Hakanen 2011, 100-101.)

## **2.6 Stress relief**

In the recent years, stress has been observed as the consequence of mental strain rather than only physical strain that can be fixed with ergonomics. Stress is caused by multiple factors, but a common observation is that when an individual has no time to recover from work between shifts, signs of stress are bound to resurface. When there's a constant workload of projects and deadlines and no time to take a breath between those deadlines,

the individual rarely feels in control. In order to feel in control, the individual should have some decision-making power over the appointed tasks. Even in the middle of an overwhelming pile of work, the workload can still be manageable when the employee can affect his or her working methods. (Jabe 2010, 52-53.)

To understand the main sources of stress at a workplace, a few issues can be reflected on. The work environment, social dynamics, unstructured or unclear tasks, division of work, leadership style and constant rush can often be amongst the major causes of stress. The way that people treat each other at work and whether the atmosphere is negative or positive can have a huge effect on employees' mental health. Then again, if the work between colleagues isn't divided clearly and the tasks and roles remain unclear, it's hard to feel in control of the situation which leads to dissatisfaction. (Jabe 2010, 53-54.)

Moreover, the leader can also do his or her part to relieve employee stress tendency by offering appropriate awards, physical or mental, for work well done. When efforts and achievements don't go unnoticed, employees learn the causal connections between accomplishments and awards, which can further enhance their dedication to work even in stressful circumstances. Appreciation and respect contribute to wellbeing at work, which helps employees deal with challenges even when it gets extremely busy. (Hakanen 2011, 44-47; Jabe 2010, 53-54.)

On the other hand, feeling stressed isn't always necessarily negative. When adrenaline kicks in and the employee feels a healthy level of pressure, work feels more pleasant. Positive stress might result from interesting tasks and the ability to influence one's work, as well as from supportive and encouraging co-workers who share enthusiasm for common organizational goals. On the contrary, if the job lacks challenge and is very repetitive and simple, it can be experienced just as stressful as jobs with a busy schedule and heavy workload. Thus, being able to work according to one's own methods and handling stimulating tasks is the key to obtaining positive stress that can maximise work motivation. Furthermore, solving unfamiliar tasks can often lead to discovering new qualities of one's self, which is also likely to enhance motivation. (Jabe 2010, 63-64.)

## **2.7 Office design and utilities**

Moving on to physical characteristics of wellness trends, office space plays a vital role in an appealing work environment. The way PhD psychologist R. Friedman sees it;

*“We tend to assume that employee engagement is about the work, that so long as we give talented people challenging tasks and the tools to excel, they will be happy. But that formula is incomplete. Our mind responds to the signals in our environment. And the less comfortable we are while doing our work, the fewer cognitive resources we have available.”* (Friedman 2014, 37).

In addition to providing satisfying tasks and necessary tools for employees to succeed at their job, the role of the physical surroundings is equally important. If the basic settings at work haven't been invested in, the harder it is for employees to thrive in their work. (Friedman 2014, 37.)

Each company looks different and there's no right or wrong way to design the company space, but a great starting point is creating open spaces that enable employees to work together. Especially the millennials think highly of collaboration and sharing the workload, as well as casually bouncing ideas around and brainstorming with fellow co-workers. Consequently, providing spaces for open communication and team work is recommendable, as it makes collaboration between colleagues physically easier and a mundane part of life at the office. Meeting rooms can take different shapes and sizes, and the atmosphere of each room can be influenced by the design. The idea is to create an effective space that encourages coming up with innovative ideas and solutions, therefore creating a space that fosters creativity is the key. (Burchell & Robin 2011, 78.)

Another key issue to consider in office design is the general aesthetics of the office. For instance, green plants and natural lighting have been proven to affect productivity and employee health. Such small details as plants can foster creative thinking, as well as ultimately improve the air quality at the office. Furthermore, good lighting and smart office design help maintain a clear and active mind, and concentration eases up when working in a presence of a window. Several studies have affirmed that the presence of natural light and green elements at a workplace improve the quality of sleep, which consequently improves brain functions, memory and concentration amongst other things. (Blueprint Interiors 2017; Friedman 2014, 35-36.)

Previous research has also proven the effect of colours on work efficiency. Colours that are considered connotations of nature, such as green and blue, seem to boost imagination and enhance a relaxed workspace where imagination can run free. Better yet, working in a room with actual signs of nature, be it a window or a painting, fosters fresh ideas and innovations within employees. In hectic office surroundings having a touch of nature

is proven to have a positive impact that facilitates handling stress and recovering from one's duties. (Friedman 2014, 36.)

Having mentioned the millennials, another important motivator especially for this generation is up-to-date technology. Mobile applications, cloud-based systems and data and other high-tech equipment inspire the younger generation and facilitate their work routines. A workplace that keeps up with modern innovations is considered appealing and dynamic, as people can work more productively with the help of high-tech solutions that enable repetitive routine tasks to be done automatically rather than manually. (Blueprint Interiors 2017.)

To summarize, the appearance and physical objects of a workplace influence employee's work output, concentration and creative thinking as much as any psychological factors affecting employee wellbeing. The office equipment, technology, as well as design aren't simply there for convenience or aesthetics, but their purpose is to support the work of the employees. When they have the appropriate tools and a pleasant environment that supports their wellbeing, the consequences can be seen in their performance.

## **2.8 Current workplace wellbeing at company X**

When it comes to workplace wellbeing at company X, it's an already existing matter that the employers have paid attention to and wish to take to the next level in the future. To establish wellbeing at work, the company has wanted to create a laid-back environment where people can be accepted as themselves, create bonds with their colleagues and be motivated to take care of their personal health.

A national survey carried out by Edenred Finland in 2016 discovered that 84% of the respondents (1029 employed Finnish citizens) thought that recreational benefits are of significant value. It was thought to affect both wellbeing at work and the positive image of an employer who provides recreational benefits. (Edenred 2017.)

In spring 2017 company X joined the network of companies that provide these benefits to their subordinates. With a recreational Edenred TicketDuo-card the employees can fund their physical and cultural after-work activities. The expected result is to motivate the staff to do more physical exercise and to enjoy cultural experiences such as concerts and the cinema, in order to create a healthy work and personal-life balance. When an individual adds more sports and cultural stimulation to his or her free-time, he or she is more likely to



recover from a heavy workload and maintain good physical and mental health. Consequently, a healthy and active staff is more likely to perform well at work and face challenges with an open mind. (Edenred 2017.)

Creating a safe and healthy work environment is one of the key goals that a company should consider, if they wish to maintain a healthy and motivated staff. The physical equipment can have a huge effect on the productivity, quality and commitment at a workplace. When the employees are able to work in a comfortable posture and all necessary equipment and utilities are available and up-to-date, employees are inclined to create better work results. Tiredness is also expected to fade when the right working position is taken care of. Additionally, employees tend to appreciate when their managers take their health and welfare into account, which makes them want to commit to a company that cares for its own. (Middlesworth 2017.)

The CEO of company X has made it a key priority to update all the office equipment to the latest versions that are proven to have a positive impact on wellbeing. For instance, as the job mostly consists of sitting down by the computer all day, the chairs have been selected so that they are comfortable and provide a good posture. In addition, all the tables have been updated to modern electrical tables that can be adjusted to a standing position. Lastly, the office space was introduced to new water machines that offer fresh and chilly water to the employees. Thus, the intention to create healthy physical conditions at work has already been put to practice.

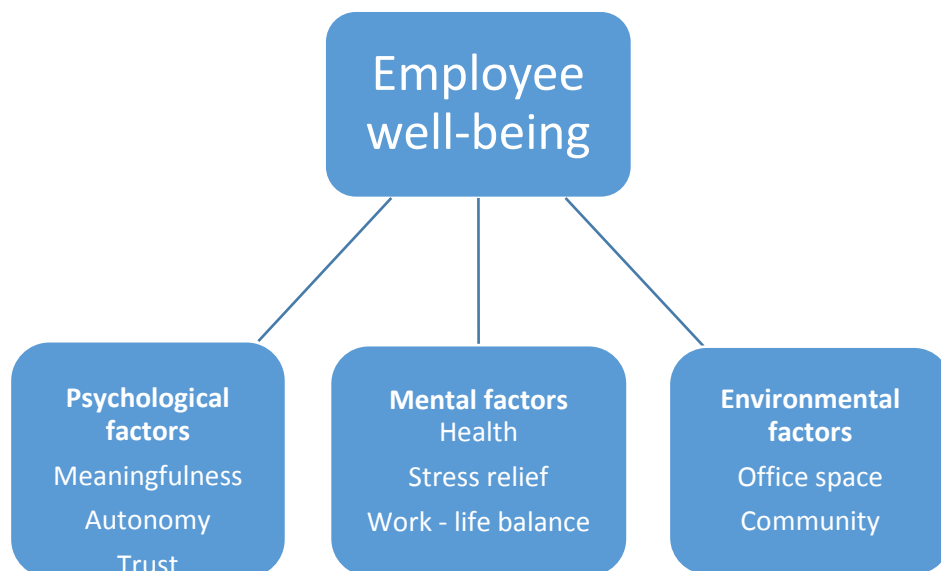


Figure 2: Dimensions of employee wellbeing

In conclusion, employee wellbeing is a holistic entity that consists of different dimensions, three of which were discussed in this study; psychological, environmental and mental factors. In order to really feel well at work, the job should provide satisfactory content and meaning to the person as well as be considered meaningful to the outside community. In addition to the meaningfulness of the job, work satisfaction is also born from having autonomy in one's work, as in being involved in the decision-making process and having the liberty to influence one's own working style and method. For autonomy to be an option, trust needs to be present; employers need to trust their employees to succeed on their own terms.

An organization based on meaningfulness, autonomy and trust often lead to a positive mental outcome. Mental factors are more probable to be covered when the psychological factors are in place. Health, stress relief as well as work and personal life balance are essential criteria of an individual at a high level of wellbeing whose mentality and health are in the ideal state to function at work.

Lastly, the environmental factors affecting wellness at work can be divided as following: physical factors of the environment, such as the office space, and the social environment that consists of the people working there. The physical settings of a workplace can at best maximize employee motivation, concentration and creativity, as well as support one's work through providing all necessary tools and equipment to perform one's duties. The social environment on the other hand is one of the most crucial aspects of employee wellness, as people who enjoy working together often feel satisfied with their jobs as well. However, the social environment can just as easily cause dissatisfaction or anxiety if the human dynamics are out of place. That said, the so called *team spirit* is in direct causal connection with employee wellness, which will be further explained in the following chapter.

### 3 Team spirit

Human contact indeed remains one of the most essential parts of wellness at work. People working together naturally form a sense of team spirit, which can be anything between considerably strong or weak. To define team spirit, it can be regarded as “feelings of camaraderie among the members of a group, enabling them to cooperate and work well together” (Oxford dictionaries 2017). With a strong sense of team spirit, individuals tend to share the same morale, as in positive attitude, towards mutual missions and goals, which they work hard for with determination and enthusiasm. Additionally, they respect one another and share the same sense of ideology of reaching achievements by working together as a team. With such team spirit work becomes a place of inspiration and success, where going back to feels pleasant. (Klann 2007, 7.)

Creating a work environment where employees feel belonging to the company and to each other starts from the hiring process, as managers might seek candidates who besides their professional qualities would be the right fit for the team. (Burchell & Robin 2011, 10.) Building meaningful bonds with co-workers creates an environment where people feel comfortable to be themselves and accept each other as they are. In fact, the importance of team spirit shouldn't be underestimated under any circumstances, since it's the team that one spends a significant amount of their time with. Attitude towards work is exceptionally more positive when the people at work care about each other, and might consider each other a family even. (Burchell & Robin 2011, 158.)

Like in the previous chapter, the chapter of team spirit has been limited to cover the themes that appeared most repetitive in the chosen literature and online sources. The characteristics and content of great team spirit are quite infinite, but the ones that appeared most relevant to the chosen point of view are introduced in the following subchapters.

The theory has been constructed from distinct sources that the author found most relevant to the purpose of the thesis. To comprehend how team spirit is initiated, the basics of group behaviour have to be introduced. This is why the theory begins with code of conduct, which acts as an introduction to typical formation of group behaviour. Secondly, the dimensions that determine the level of team spirit are depicted as essential guidelines to analyse the social environment of company X. Lastly, team spirit is studied from a point of view of companies based in multiple locations, since company X is in fact located in four cities across the country, which is a potential threat to the unity of the company.

### **3.1 Code of conduct**

Firstly, team spirit depends on the people working together and it is everyone's responsibility as well as opportunity to influence by one's own behaviour. Based on a theory by Sigmund Freud (1921), people that work together constantly seek signs from each other of what is appropriate. They would rather behave similarly than the others than stand out from the crowd by abnormal behaviour, even if it would contradict their usual conduct or ideology. Thus, the so called ideal self of the individual is abandoned and replaced with the code of conduct of the team. (Heiske 2001, 149-150.)

To create a positive code of conduct for the team, the leader should lead as an example. If the leader behaves and performs poorly, followers are likely to lower expectations of their own performance as well. In other words, the leader can impact the standard behaviour of the work community by his or her own actions. By acting as a competent role model who treats others with kindness, possesses excellent work morals and attitude, the values of the company are more likely to develop towards the same direction. (Heiske 2001, 150.)

Truly, code of conduct is driven by the values and ethics of an organization. It reflects on how co-workers treat each other, which is often the outcome of how they are treated by the management. A healthy behaviour policy based on fairness, equality and respect is prone to promote positive rapports between employees and employers. The leader should implement clear guidelines on how the employees are expected to behave in such a way that aligns with the core values of the company. From day one of a new hire, open communication and collaboration should be presented as a normal policy of the company, so that it would ultimately reflect on the overall social environment that promotes positive team spirit. (Workable 2017.)

### **3.2 Camaraderie**

A functional code of conduct within a team creates an open-minded environment where employees treat each other as equals, with kindness and respect. This kind of behaviour enhances experiencing feelings of success and celebrating each other's success together. Commitment to the organization is heightened as well, when people enjoy working with their co-workers and they share the same goals, motivation and organizational values. In fact, when co-workers regard each other as friends, the level of commitment is significantly high. Feeling a mutual sense of belonging and being in it together enhances motivation to sincerely make one's best effort to reach mutual goals. (Friedman 2014, 102-103.)

Being friends with one's colleagues is proven to decrease sick leaves, other absences and changing of work places. Evidently, friends increase each other's enthusiasm and loyalty to the company which makes them want to avoid causing any harm to their workplace, such as being unnecessarily absent or leaving it abruptly. Studies also indicate that friends' work output is more efficient and productive than if people who aren't well acquainted with each other were to complete a task together. This can be explained by open communication, courage to point out each other's mistakes and sincere positive cheering of one another, which are qualities that friends share most likely. (Friedman 2014, 102-103.)

Building friendships at work starts from the management level. Managers act as examples to their subordinates, and if people notice their employers show signs of caring and interest in the employees, they are more likely to accept camaraderie as a normal policy of the company as well and behave similarly themselves – in a friendly and caring manner. The way that people treat each other becomes a part of the organizational culture, and when the leaders indicate that friendships at work are positive and having fun together is acceptable, employees feel encouraged to react to each other not only as co-workers but also individuals who have different interests, hobbies and life situations. (Burchell & Robin 2011, 159.)

### 3.3 Belonging

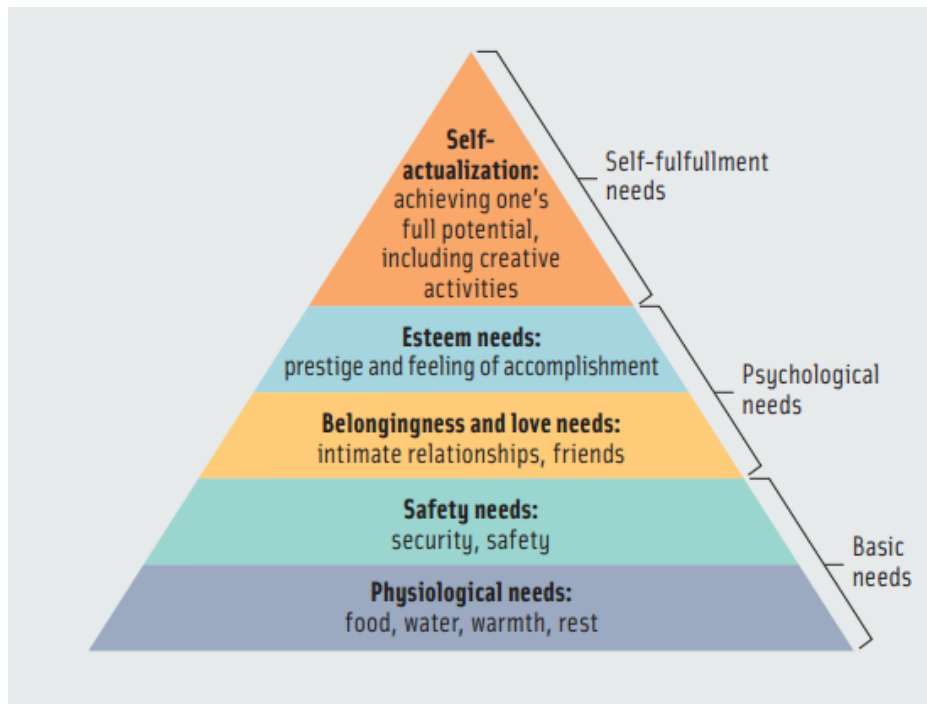


Figure 3: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Poston 2009, 348.)

According to Dr Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the need for belongingness is one of the core needs of a human being, along with basic physiological-, safety-, esteem and self-actualization needs. Proceeding ahead in the hierarchy of needs, one cannot achieve their full potential if the need for belonging hasn't been met. Safe to say, most leaders want their followers to be at their highest capability, so strengthening human relationships within the company can both foster team spirit as well as individual performance. As such, taking the time to bring employees socially closer to each other and generating a sense of belonging is the first step at creating a functional workplace with a highly productive staff. (Poston 2009, 349.)

*"If leaders do not understand the need to incorporate a set of values that employees can relate to and identify with into their missions, employees feel deflated and disconnected. As a result, they can easily lose sight of the larger meaning of their work and will withdraw their emotional commitment and its pursuant energy"* (Dranitsaris & Dranitsaris-Hilliard 2012).

When people feel that they are a part of the organization's community, achieving common goals grows deep into their mind-set and a genuine caring for the company's performance is generated. Employees want to relate to organizational values and share the same ideology and objectives. "We're all in this together" kind of thinking becomes a motto or even a mission statement, when all the individuals of the company identify with the same values and hopes for the future. (Dranitsaris & Dranitsaris-Hilliard 2012.)

To create this kind of belonging, the leader must take time to get to know the employees and discover how they could establish emotional bonds and commitment. The idea is to establish a connection between organizational values; the culture and purpose of the company, personal values; the individual's own passions and ethics as well as social values that determine the social code of conduct in the company. When all of these three value aspects are in balance, the individual is most likely emotionally connected to the organization and feels to belong there. (Dranitsaris & Dranitsaris-Hilliard 2012.)

To summarize, fostering belongingness and engagement within the company is amongst the most intelligent implementations an employer can do. When employees are aligned with the organizational culture, its core values and each other, they are willing to do extra efforts for the common good. Belonging to the company is a part of what makes a job meaningful, which generates joy and satisfaction. Ideally, all the employees share the same sense of belonging, which means they enjoy working together and offer support and

encouragement for each other to benefit the whole company, rather than the individual him or herself. (Baldoni 2017.)

### **3.4 Hospitality**

To get to the point of belonging, people need to feel comfortable in the team and like they have a place in it, which is where hospitality steps forward in terms of *enjoyment* and *welcoming*. Enjoyment is established from the social atmosphere of fun and friendliness, and it's reflected on how employees treat and react to one another. In fact, the everyday happenings and routines are strongly related to enjoyment. For instance, the shared coffee- and lunchbreaks or annual company events can be something the employees highly appreciate in a social context, as these occasions fulfil social needs that people seek in a workplace. Safe to say, work is a place of productivity and achievement, but the breaks between achieving and producing are what help the individual find enjoyment, connect with fellow co-workers and recharge themselves to keep going as a productive employee. (Burchell & Robin 2011, 162-163.)

Welcoming, on its behalf, concentrates on the initiation process of a new recruitment. For those who have stayed with a company for a longer period, feeling like a part of the team is more natural than for the new hires. That's why companies should plan welcoming new members to the work community in such way that creates a warm and welcoming first impression, and that the welcomed individual would feel like an accepted and valuable addition to the community. (Burchell & Robin 2011, 162-163.)

To make the welcoming process run smoothly, it can be planned in advance and turned into a routine that would be repeated every time a new recruitment takes place. Introducing the new member to the etiquette of human relations is especially important to be able to adjust to the social norms and know what to expect of others. In some companies human relations might function more formally, whereas in other companies it could be more acceptable to joke around and share personal conversations. (Burchell & Robin 2011, 162-164.)

In general, friendly and heart-felt behaviour facilitates adapting to a new workplace, regardless of how casually or formally people address each other. Co-workers are encouraged to take the time to get to know their new colleague, familiarize with his or her interests and be there for guidance. If the organization is large and based in multiple locations,

posting an introduction or a welcome in the company's intranet or any other social platform is highly advisable. That way the whole staff may welcome the new employee to the community, even if they couldn't meet in person. (Burchell & Robin 2011, 162.)

### **3.5 Team spirit in companies based in multiple locations**

In fact, in today's companies it's rather usual that the offices are located in various places across the country or even globally. Thanks to modern technology, communication can take place regardless of the geographical location, and co-workers from different offices can work together as if they were in the same place. Various online platforms enable associates to work on the same material simultaneously, and even larger meetings can be executed via online webinars.

However, a nationally or internationally spread out company is challenging to team spirit. Online meetings are convenient, yet they lack physical human contact and gestures that are only present in person. Mundane social events that enable friendly chit-chat between colleagues over lunch and coffee often remain absent in the online communication sessions. Moreover, factors that demonstrate emotions, such as tone of voice and facial expressions, cannot be transferred through emails. Consequently, the risk of misunderstanding increases, especially if the people in question don't really know each other and can't imagine the way the other would normally express a certain thing. (Kopakkala 2005, 34.)

In order to foster team spirit between separate offices, it's important to hold on to any possible gatherings in person. Even though routine meetings might serve a better purpose online, any special occasions could be used to gather the whole company together and organize cross-office visits whenever possible. Provided that these events are few and far between, casual catching-up could be then included in the online meetings before the actual meeting. Thus, colleagues as well as managers have a chance to familiarize with each other on a more personal level, and conversations go beyond work-related matters. As the associates from distinct locations don't have any daily social encounters, it's recommendable to add some personal context to the otherwise business-concentrated meetings. (Telia 2015.)

"The more you can use "we" to describe people in your organization, the more people understand themselves to be part of a larger team" (Burchell & Robin 2011, 173). Medium to large sized companies may consist of several departments and teams working under the same roof, yet they might differentiate one another in regards to whether they classify themselves as "we" and "they" or simply "we". When the whole company is considered to belong to the same side and "they" is only referred to people outside the company, it



seems team spirit within the organization is on solid ground and the sense of equal belonging is felt significantly. When teams and departments consider each other separate from the rest of the organization, they've mostly established a sense of team spirit between their own team members rather than the whole company. In this scenario, it's up to the leaders to encourage cooperation and team work between departments to create one unified team within the company. (Burchell & Robin 2011, 175.)

### **3.6 Team spirit at company X**

The challenge of the commissioning company is indeed the multiple locations that it has spread into. The sense of unity is at risk when the whole staff seldom interact in person. In order to create a mutual sense of belonging, the first step is to strengthen team spirit at each office and then concentrate on the company as a whole.

The headquarters in Porvoo is the daily workplace of 11 of the employees. Based on my own observations, the atmosphere is open and relaxed, and people share casual conversations and laughter daily. The lunchbreak is perhaps the social highlight of the day, as the employees get to talk about personal topics and develop friendships. However, all the staff members seldom sit down together. Certain number of employees habitually eat lunch at work whereas the rest go out to eat. The people who spend lunchbreaks together obviously have more time to get to know one another more profoundly than the ones who only run into each other in the hectic office surroundings. So far, the staff hasn't committed to any mutual after-work activities, but plans have been initiated to form a floorball-team and have weekly practices.

Moving on to the other offices, Joensuu is the second largest office with a team of four. According to them, the office has a pleasant atmosphere where the colleagues act openly towards each other. Even in the middle of busy work days they joke around, share meaningful conversations and don't take work too seriously. Constructive criticism is given if necessary, without offense however. Such an open environment helps the employees deal with work with a healthy attitude even when it gets hectic. (Anonymous 11 September 2017.)

The team in Joensuu values mutual lunch sessions, and they always eat together. They have also discussed having some mutual after-work activities, which is yet to be carried-out due to long days at work. However, two of the employees are friends from before, so they regularly spend time together outside office hours. (Anonymous 11 September 2017.)

The most recently opened office in Seinäjoki has also extended to a workplace of three employees. They work closely together and spend their coffee and lunch breaks with each other. Similarly than in the previously mentioned offices, the idea of spending time together after work has been on the agenda, but hasn't been got around to yet. (Anonymous 10 September 2017.)

The remaining office in Imatra was a challenge in terms of team spirit, as it only employed one employee until recently. The work environment of this office cannot be described in detail yet, as the second employee was only recruited in November 2017. Given the recentness of the change from a one-man office to a team of two, team spirit in the office of Imatra isn't discussed in detail.

To strengthen co-worker bonds and camaraderie in the company, company X has committed to organizing annual events that gather the whole staff together. The nature of these events is unofficial and laid-back, and the purpose is to let the employees get know each other on a personal level, create a sense of belonging and develop relationships.

The whole company gather together at least twice a year for these events. First in summer and later in Christmas time, the members of the company are invited to a recreation day or a Christmas celebration with fun, team-building activities and a summary of the company performance and future goals as well as a look into what each office has been doing. The whole day is easily spent amongst these activities, and later in the evening the agenda is usually less structured, which gives space for meaningful conversations that wouldn't happen in the hectic office surroundings. Furthermore, colleagues from other offices have the chance to get to know each other and talk face to face, which they otherwise do through Skype. Thus, these events foster team-building in the company, and enable the co-workers to meet each other in a more casual environment.

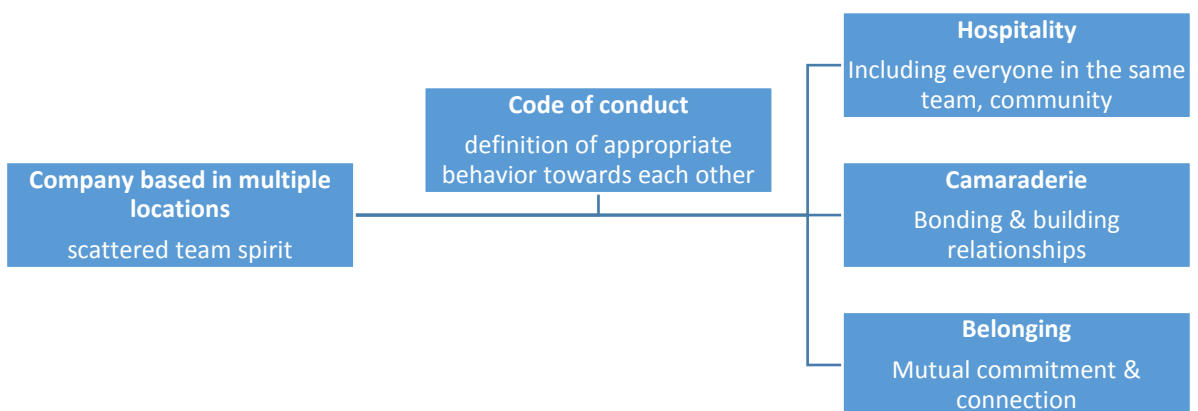


Figure 4: Team spirit

To conclude the chapter of team spirit, the issue that mostly concerns the commissioner is the fact that the company is based in multiple locations around the country. Face to face interactions within the whole company are limited, hence the employees mostly hear from their colleagues from other cities through Skype. The teams working in the same offices are quite intimate and they might acknowledge a presence of team spirit, but the whole company of 24 employees might not be considered a unified group of people with a sense of team spirit. Ultimately, the employee questionnaire was expected to clarify whether this is true or not, and any further thoughts on the issue.

Building a sense of team spirit in any organization, under one same roof or in many locations, requires the people to have some sort of a policy to look up to and relate to. They seek for cues from their leader and from each other on their behavior and how to react to fellow employees. If a company has a strict policy of all work and no play, a new employee is likely to adapt to such behavior as well and avoid joking around or talking about any non-work related topics. On the contrary, if a company has a warm atmosphere where people treat each other as friends, the new employee would most likely try to find common ground with the others by getting to know them personally, beyond their work status, and share some laughter and personal passions and stories.

Once an appropriate code of conduct is created for the team, a natural shift from separate individuals to a unified team working for the same goals, under a certain set of behavioral rules, is established. Depending on how the team treats one another, they have a chance to create themselves a work environment where every one of the team members is equally valuable and appreciated, and new-comers are welcomed to such an environment where they have a place in the team right from the start. When colleagues treat each other fairly and with kindness, share something personal and show signs of interest towards each other, high chances of building relationships and bonds between colleagues are evident. Co-workers might even turn into friends, and a deeper connection to the social environment as well as the company is formed through camaraderie.

If human interaction takes the form of camaraderie inside the organization, heightened connection to the fellow employees and the company often result in high level of engagement and commitment. When people are engaged in their work community and genuinely care about its future, the next level of team spirit deepens in belonging. In this state co-workers exceed fulfilling their own work responsibilities but instead, they sincerely care about what happens in the company and to their peers, and they're willing to go the extra mile to support and help each other for the sake of the common good. In all simplicity, people feel they belong to the company, are a part of its team and have a responsibility to

contribute to the common good, so that the company would remain successful and the people there could continue working together and achieve common goals in the future as well.

Achieving common goals is indeed where the next chapter steps forward. Companies might pass the test in providing necessary tools for wellbeing and fostering team spirit, but if their leaders have a hard time defining the right way to lead, all the valuable motivation triggered by wellness and social dynamics go to waste. Leadership is in direct causal connection with motivation, and knowledge is power when choosing the suitable leadership style. The more leadership styles and theories employers are familiar with, the easier it is for them to adapt to changing circumstances and adjust their leadership style accordingly to promote motivation.

## **4 Leadership theories**

In a nutshell, employees who experience wellbeing at work feel committed to their organization, commitment is linked to belonging which leads to a sense of community. When employees feel belonging to their organization and to one another, sense of team spirit is created. Team spirit enhances motivation, for employees are likely to value common organizational goals when they feel connected to their co-workers as well as the company. Consequently, employees are motivated to perform effectively to fulfill their part of the company's workload. Thus, motivation plays an important role in this study, but to maintain motivation triggered by a sense of team spirit and other factors concerning wellbeing in the organization, the appropriate way to lead has to be defined.

A vast number of leadership theories have been introduced over the years to identify effective styles to lead and motivate employees to reach organizational goals. Each theory depicts a different angle to view leadership, and typical points of view that examine the topic include the leader's traits, behavior or the process of leadership. (Giltinane 2013, 35.) This chapter will introduce some of the major leadership theories, followed by an in-depth introduction of the chosen theory that best supports the work circumstances at company X.

### **Trait theory**

Trait theory of leadership suggests that leaders possess certain characteristics which enhance their ability to lead. In such theories it's believed that great leaders are born to lead, and leadership cannot be learned if the required qualities are lacking in the leader. Preferable qualities that make leaders great are considered self-confidence, social skills, determination and intelligence, for instance. Trait theory is connected to Thomas Carlyle's Great man –theory developed in the 1800's, as they both view leadership as something that is naturally in the leader by birth. (Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube 2015, 8.)

### **Behavioural theory**

In contrast to the trait theory, behavioural theory depicts leadership as a skill that can be learned through education and observation. Great leaders aren't measured by their qualities but rather by their behaviour and its suitability in regards to the work settings. Leaders can be roughly divided into three categories based on their behaviour; autocratic leaders give straightforward directions, democratic leaders consult employees in decision-making and laissez-faire leaders offer absolute freedom for the followers. (Amanchukwu & al. 2015, 8.)

### **Situational theory**

Situational leadership theory advises leaders to analyze the work circumstances in order to adapt to the most suitable approach to lead. Different tasks, situations and employees might call for a different leadership style, and it should be chosen accordingly to fit the situation. High-achievers who handle challenging tasks and are expected to perform well could be approached democratically and supportively as well as by involving them in the decision-making process, whereas more inexperienced workers might require more of a directive leadership style. The idea is to assess the ability and commitment of the target group and adapt to their needs. (Amanchukwu & al. 2015, 8; Wolinski 2010.)

### **Contingency theory**

Similar to situational leadership, contingency theory demonstrates leadership style's changeability in regard to the environment, followers' capabilities and task characteristics. The better fit the leader's qualities are to these factors, the better he or she is as a leader in a certain leadership situation. The theory emphasizes that different circumstances require different leadership styles, and the point is to identify the major qualities of a work environment in order to adjust one's leadership style accordingly. The leader might have to switch from a task oriented manager to a people oriented leader within the same company if the circumstances so require. (Educational business articles 2016; Wolinski 2010.)

### **Path goal theory**

The path-goal theory created by Robert House in 1971 concentrates on adapting to a leadership style that suits the work environment accordingly and increases motivation at work. The four established styles include the following; directive leadership, supportive leadership, participative leadership and achievement-oriented leadership styles. The most convenient style is chosen according to the type and difficulty of the work, and the purpose is to help employees reach their goals, remove obstacles and clarify the path that they take in order to reach the goal in a satisfying manner. (Sage Publications 2016.)

Path-goal theory was chosen as a framework for this thesis, as it seems to best fit the purpose of this study. The intention is to discover how to motivate the staff of company X most efficiently to reach organizational goals. The work they do is project-oriented, which leads to changing teams, tasks and methods. Thus, identifying an applicable leadership style that supports changing task characteristics would most likely result a suitable leadership framework for the thesis.

# Major Components of Path Goal Theory

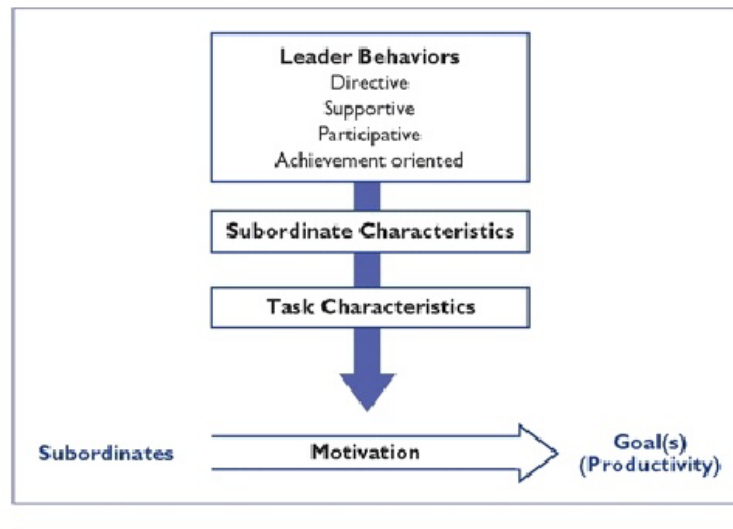


Figure 5: Major components of path-goal theory. (Slideshare 2012.)

As the figure 4 shows, the leadership style has to fit the personality of the employee and the features of the job itself. Different subordinates might call for a different leadership approach based on their personality and preferred method of working. Similarly, not every project or task can be managed in the same way. Thus, these factors determine what the most convenient leadership technique is to create a clear and obstacle-free path that generates motivation to reach the determined goals of the individual or the organization.

(Sage Publications 2016.)

Directive leaders offer straightforward instructions, methods and deadlines regarding the task. Appointed tasks lack space for individual creativity and flexibility, and the tasks are designed clearly so that the subordinate is offered all the necessary tools to succeed at the job. The emphasis is on providing guidance and required structure in tasks that are of demanding and complicated nature. Directive leadership is especially effective on subordinates who seek authority and structure in their work. (Sage Publications 2016.)

Moving on to supportive leadership, the leader adapts to a warmer and humane leading style. The goal is to appear approachable and caring in the eyes of the subordinate, and a supportive leader could be described as someone who pays special attention to employee wellbeing and job satisfaction. Subordinates who would find this leadership style effective are often considered people who value human connection in otherwise dull work settings. Their tasks might be repetitive and lack any need for creative thinking, thus supporting the

subordinates is meant to increase job satisfaction that otherwise might be absent in mundane, even simple jobs. (Sage Publications 2016.)

The third style is about involving the subordinates in the decision-making process as well as sharing knowledge and ideas. This approach is often used in tasks that are more complex and the structure isn't very clear. Typically, participative leadership suits autonomous work environments where employees seek guidance and more structure into their work, and the goal is to increase motivation by clarifying the path by involving the employees in the work process. (Sage Publications 2016.)

Lastly, when following achievement-oriented leadership framework, the major focus point is about challenging the subordinates to excel at their work and to develop their performance constantly. In addition to high expectations, achievement-oriented leaders also trust their subordinates to be highly competent to succeed as expected. This leadership style is often executed around tasks that are complex and of a higher level of difficulty. Subordinates that seek achievement-oriented leading continuously want to perform well and excel at challenges, and doing so boosts their confidence at work. (Sage Publications 2016.)

The path-goal theory can be applied in any circumstances and different styles can be used even in the same company, according to the tasks and the people doing them. As a general rule, the leader needs to analyze the settings and choose a leadership technique that would most likely enhance employee motivation and efficiency. The path of the process should be made as smooth as possible, and the probable obstacles can be either removed by the leader or taken care of together with the employee by providing assistance and guidance. In order to create an ideal path to reach the determined goal, the leader needs to examine carefully the nature of the task. As discussed in the previous paragraphs, complex and simple tasks call for different measures, and by applying the right leadership style the task can be made clearer or more interesting. Thus, the subordinate is more likely to feel motivated at work when the leader applies a leadership style that fits the characteristics of the task. (Sage Publications 2016.)

In conclusion, path-goal theory offers a leadership model where the leader's behavior, the subordinates' personalities and the nature of the task are in balance. The idea is to compensate for whatever the work environment might lack for, in order to boost motivation and wellbeing at work. Besides feeling motivated, the subordinates experience feelings of success and justification of appropriate awards received from the work. That is, if the chosen leadership style is fit for purpose. (Sage Publications 2016.)





Figure 6: The major components of the theoretical framework of the thesis

Overall, the three dimensions covered in the theoretical framework are constantly connected to one another. If one of them were to be nonexistent, the rest would most likely suffer the consequences. For instance, if employees didn't feel well at work, they would hardly be eager to create deeper bonds or form a sense of team spirit with their peers. When people don't feel comfortable at work nor do they enjoy their social environment, they most likely end up with decreased motivation. The same goes all three ways, which is why employee wellbeing, team spirit and motivation are in a continuous interaction.

The availability of defined sources of wellbeing ultimately determine whether an individual feels physically and mentally well at work. Experiencing positive feelings inside out often results in confronting other people with a positive mind-set, which in turn facilitates connecting with one's co-workers and establishing a mutual sense of team spirit. When co-workers sincerely care about each other and enjoy working together for mutual goals, a sense of belonging is formed naturally. This ideal level of commitment is evidently beneficial for the company but beyond that, it gives purpose and meaning in life to the individual. Work becomes a source of genuine satisfaction, when the people there support each other and the job generates feelings of wellbeing as well as belonging in a team. Consequently, such a satisfying workplace and team most likely increase one's motivation towards these two subjects.

As the purpose of the thesis was to get an insight of the current work environment at the commissioning company, first it had to be explained which variables influence the personal wellbeing of an individual, which factors contribute to a healthy social environment

as well as how a suitable leadership style might affect the motivation of an employee. Once the connection between the three dimensions is comprehended, evaluations can be made of whether the company is in fact in the desired state of employee wellness, team spirit and motivation. The basis of the theoretical framework was utilized in the questionnaire measuring these dimensions, which was expected to generate appropriate answers to the research questions.

## 5 Methodology

This research was initiated in the spring of 2017, when the commissioning party accepted the chosen topics for the thesis. The goal was to get a better understanding of employee wellness and team spirit inside the company, and how they could be improved to make company X a better place to work. To make this happen, it was equally important to identify the right way to lead the people working there so that they would be motivated to reach organizational goals. Thus, the aim was to study these aspects and identify the problem areas and find functional solutions for future reference.

After the introduction of the research problems and a summary of the company, I started gathering applicable data from outside sources which included websites, articles and books. The purpose was to get a vision of current trends regarding employee wellbeing and team spirit in order to reflect on these aspects at company X. In addition, path-goal theory was introduced as the chosen leadership theory that could be used as a basis for the interview questions studying the employee motivation.

### 5.1 Qualitative vs quantitative research methods

The first step I used in methodology was to identify whether qualitative or quantitative research method would serve a better purpose in this research. The difference between qualitative and quantitative research methods is put simply by Newman and Ridenour;

*“The qualitative, naturalistic approach is used when observing and interpreting reality with the aim of developing a theory that will explain what was experienced. The quantitative approach is used when one begins with a theory (or hypothesis) and tests for confirmation or disconfirmation of that hypothesis (Newman & Ridenour 1998, 3).”*

The fine line between these two research methods often comes down to the research problem and which forms the data collection and data analysis take when examining the research problem. Qualitative research aims to understand a larger sense of social, people-related phenomena and behaviour that hasn't been specified yet, whereas quantitative research is more defined and the research problem can ultimately be converted into empirical findings in forms of charts and statistics. Qualitative research focuses on understanding people's experiences, opinions and feelings by in-depth interviews, for instance, in order to turn observations into research results. On the other hand, quantitative research can be put into figures and charts more effortlessly, as the variables are more defined and structured. Creating quantitative data results requires data collection through questionnaires and surveys as an example. (Brannen 2016; Brink 1993, 35.)

Thus, the research topics of this thesis could be best examined by a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Employee wellness, team spirit and work motivation are rather emotional and personal aspects that require observation and going deep into the subject. The intention was to find out how the target group of this study feel and react to certain topics, yet any possible infographics and charts that could help illustrate the findings would be convenient in the data analysis. Thus, a quantitative approach is equally beneficial in this research, as collecting data that can be converted into numeral charts and figures is of the essence in the data analysis.

As the research concerned a target group of 19 individuals, the most coherent results were expected to be reached by a questionnaire in a form of a structured interview. All the respondents were asked the same questions, which were both open- and closed-ended questions. The questionnaire was built on Webropol-survey tool, which was expected to be of assistance when analysing the interview results. Thus, creating infographics to clarify the results would be facilitated.

## **5.2 Structured questionnaire**

The questionnaire followed a structured interview pattern, as the most accurate results were to be expected when all the respondents were asked the same questions, in the same order. As time was of the essence, a structured questionnaire resulted to be the most time-efficient method of gathering data that best served the purpose of this research. (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 2016.)

In structured questionnaires the questions are typically closed-ended but open-ended questions are appropriate too. The interviewer must have high knowledge of the research problems in order to create relevant questions that would generate valuable answers regarding the research. (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 2016.) As a member of the commissioning company myself I feel that I have a great deal of understanding and expertise of the company and the previously studied phenomenon to create an applicable structured questionnaire.

When it comes to the content of the questionnaire (see appendix 1), the questions were based on each of the theories as following:

Question number	Theory	Subchapter
1		
2	Employee wellbeing	Meaningfulness
3	Employee wellbeing	Meaningfulness
4	Employee wellbeing	Meaningfulness
5	Employee wellbeing	Trust
6	Employee wellbeing	Autonomy
7	Employee wellbeing	Health
8	Employee wellbeing	Stress relief
9	Employee wellbeing	Stress relief
10	Employee wellbeing	Balance of work and personal life
11	Employee wellbeing	Office design and utilities
12	Employee wellbeing	Office design and utilities
13	Team spirit	Company based in multiple locations
14	Team spirit	Camaraderie
15	Team spirit	Company based in multiple locations
16	Team spirit	Camaraderie
17	Team spirit & employee wellbeing	Hospitality, belonging, code of conduct, trust
18	Leadership theories	Path-goal theory
19	Leadership theories	Path-goal theory
20	Leadership theories & employee wellbeing	Path-goal theory, autonomy
21	Team spirit	Belonging

Table 1: The relation between the theories and the questions

As demonstrated in table 1, all theories and subchapters inspired certain questions. Employee wellbeing was referred to more frequently than the other theories, as it was the major focus point of the thesis. Leadership theories inspired only three questions, as it was mostly a supportive addition to the theoretical framework, the purpose of which was to identify the most appropriate leadership style that would support the employees' motivation and nature of their work. Questions that stemmed from the theory of team spirit intended to clarify the current state of relationships between the employees and their preferences for the future in terms of the social environment at company X.

### 5.3 Accuracy of the chosen research methods

To examine whether the chosen research methods can be trusted to study the chosen phenomena accordingly, validity and reliability must be in place. *Validity* is often used to describe whether a research actually studied the intended, original research problem and if the conducted method was appropriate. The way H. Brink sees it, "a valid study should demonstrate what actually exists and a valid instrument or measure should actually measure what it is supposed to measure" (Brink 1993, 35). However, validity is not to be mistaken for *reliability*, which defines if the same results would be obtained by several attempts to study a certain phenomenon. In order to create a reliable study, the results should be similar enough when another researcher repeated the study using the same or similar target group and measures. (Brink 1993, 35; Winter 2000.)

*“One of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured as in quantitative research. Assessing the isomorphism between data collected and the “reality” from which they were derived is thus an inappropriate determinant of validity” (Merriam, S. 2009, 213).*

In qualitative research validity and reliability are more complex and changing than in quantitative research where the studied variables are more permanent. When intending to understand behaviour and draw conclusions of people and their feelings, the target group goes through changes in their mood, attitude and emotions. Thus, the exact same results might not be obtained when repeating a study and there isn't one right, defined way of conducting the study either. (Merriam 2009, 214.)

Changing life situations might affect how a respondent would answer questions related to wellbeing, but it doesn't necessarily indicate poor reliability of a study. As a matter of fact, the purpose of this research in particular was to study the actual wellbeing, team spirit and motivation within the company, and these aspects could be felt differently about if the study were to be repeated after a certain amount of time. Thus, one must bear in mind that the focus was to understand the current state of the company and find the key points on how to improve the named work environment.

## 6 Results

The questionnaire was answered by 18 employees of company X. It consisted of 22 questions, which can be found in the appendix. The respondents were given one week to answer, and they were sworn confidentiality as the results were obtained anonymously.

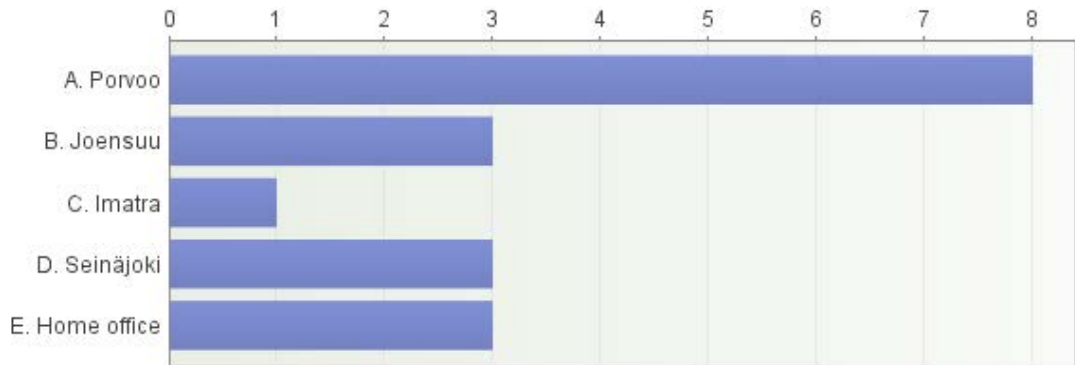


Figure 7: Work location of the respondents

Figure 7 demonstrates the location division of the respondents. Roughly half of the respondents work in Porvoo, whereas the other half have distributed evenly between Joensuu, Seinäjoki and home offices. Only one of the respondents works in Imatra.

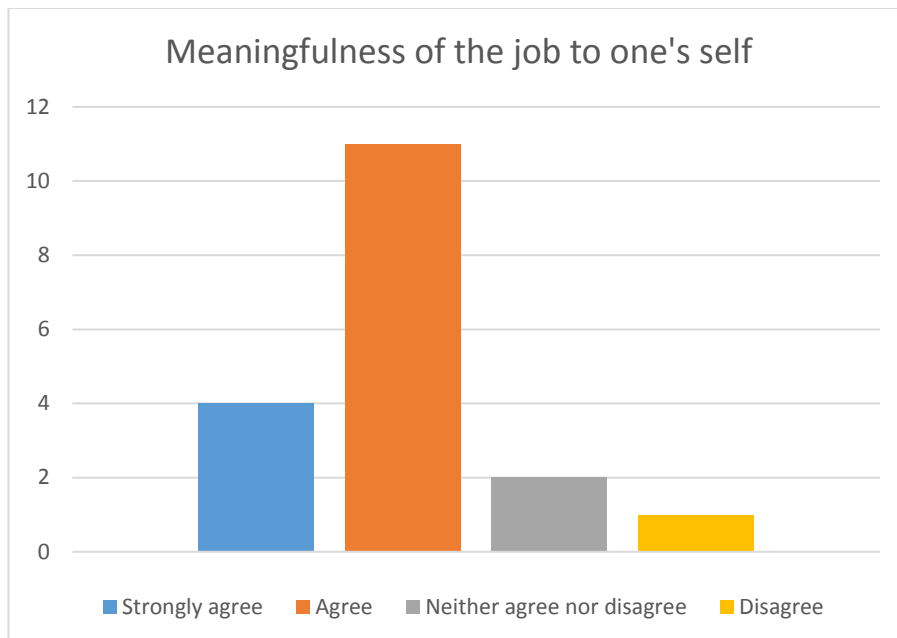


Figure 8: Respondents' opinions on the meaningfulness of their job to themselves

To begin with the questions, the respondents were asked to rate how much they agreed that the work they do is meaningful to them. Most of the respondents agreed that their

work is meaningful to them. Only one respondent disagreed with the statement, and two couldn't say.

When asking what could make it feel more meaningful, some said that receiving more positive feedback would affect the meaningfulness of the job, whereas others thought that this could be achieved by a bigger salary.

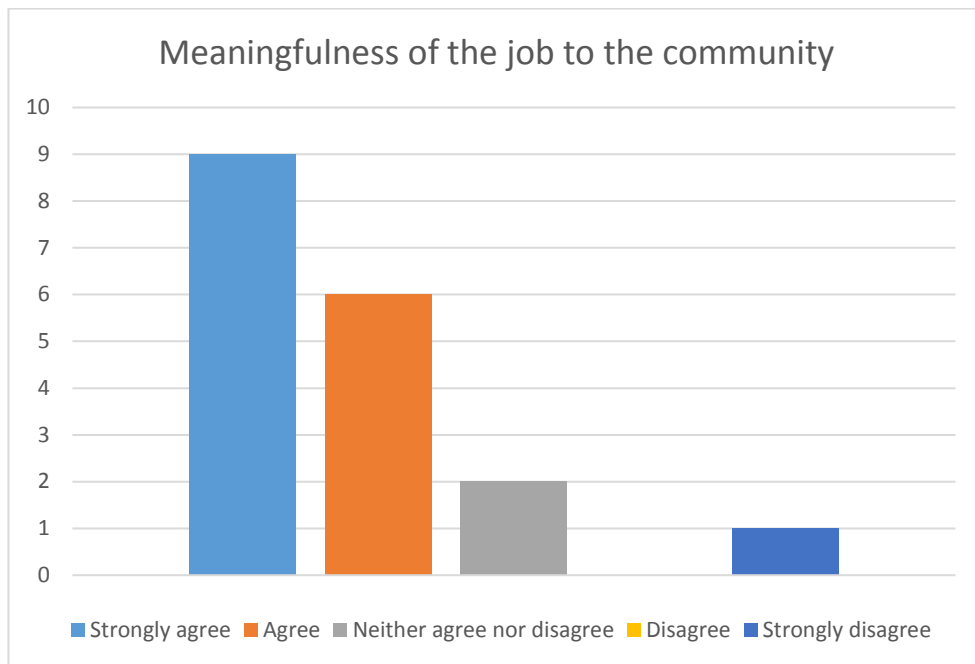


Figure 9: Respondents' opinions on the meaningfulness of their job to the community

The respondents felt similarly about their job's meaningfulness to the community as to themselves. More felt even stronger about the job being meaningful to the community, with half of the respondents stating that they strongly agreed with the statement.

Thoughts about what could make it feel more meaningful included the planning process being more effective and receiving positive feedback from customers. In addition, thorough training before familiarizing with new projects, ideas or systems was said to be helpful, so that employees would have more knowledge before conducting a project to a client. To minimize employees' burden and increase the meaningfulness of the job, the engineers' planning work should be inspected within the company before handing it in to the customers.



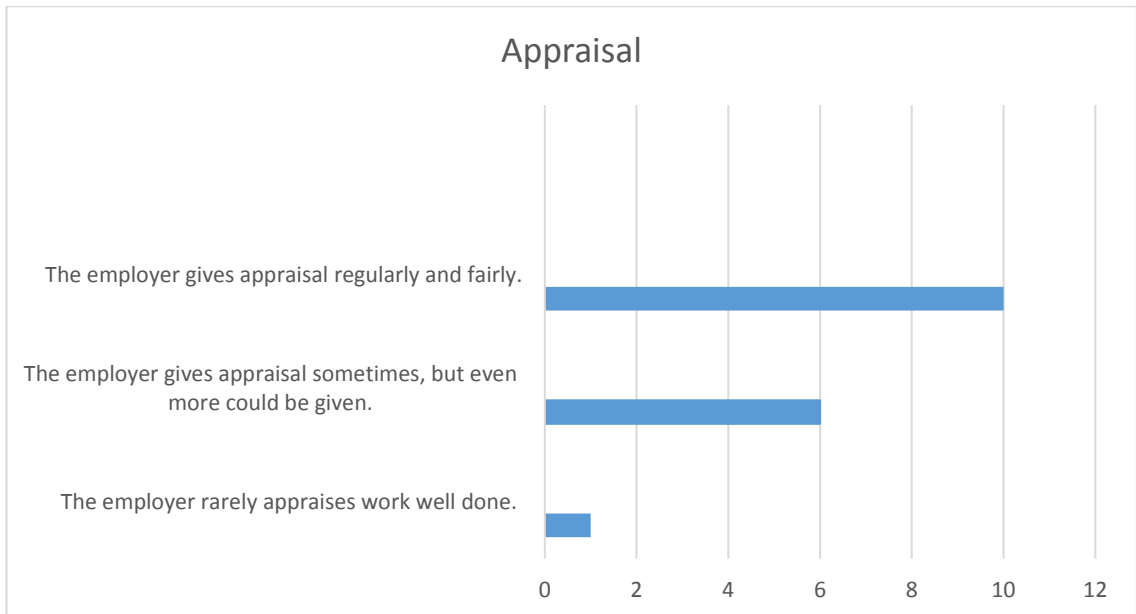


Figure 10: Respondents thoughts on the appraisal of employees

Over half of the employees thought appraisal is given regularly and fairly, whereas 6 respondents felt it could still be given more often. Only one person agreed that any appraisal was hardly given.

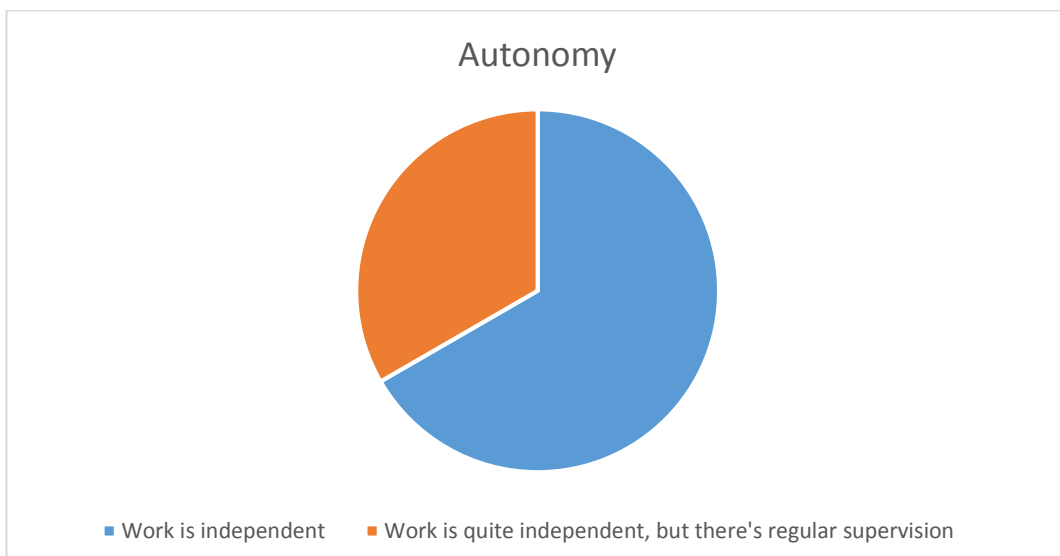


Figure 11: Autonomy of the work structure

When investigating whether the employees find their jobs autonomous, they were asked to choose the most agreeable answer describing the autonomy in their company. Twelve of the employees thought that their jobs are self-directed, and they are given space to make their own decisions regarding working styles and methods. The rest (6) agreed, but they also felt there's regular supervision by the employer who also affects their working styles and methods. None of the employees thought that they wouldn't be given any space to make their own decisions or affect their working styles and methods.

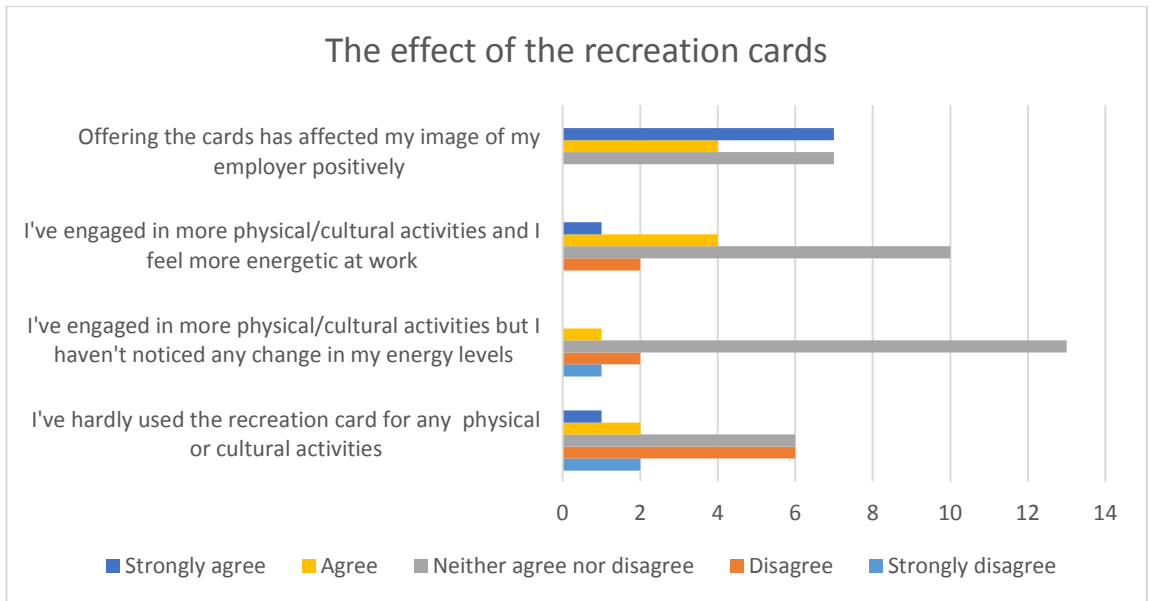


Figure 12: The effects of the recreation cards

To gain a deeper understanding of the effects the employees had noticed since the introduction of the TicketDuo -recreation cards, the respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement to statements related to the recreation cards, as demonstrated in figure 11. Most of the employees couldn't say whether the cards had affected their energy levels at work, while only five were certain that they felt more energetic due to an increase of physical and/or cultural activities.

11 agreed, 7 more strongly than the rest, that providing the cards had affected the image of the employer positively. Nobody disagreed as such, but 7 neither agreed nor disagreed.

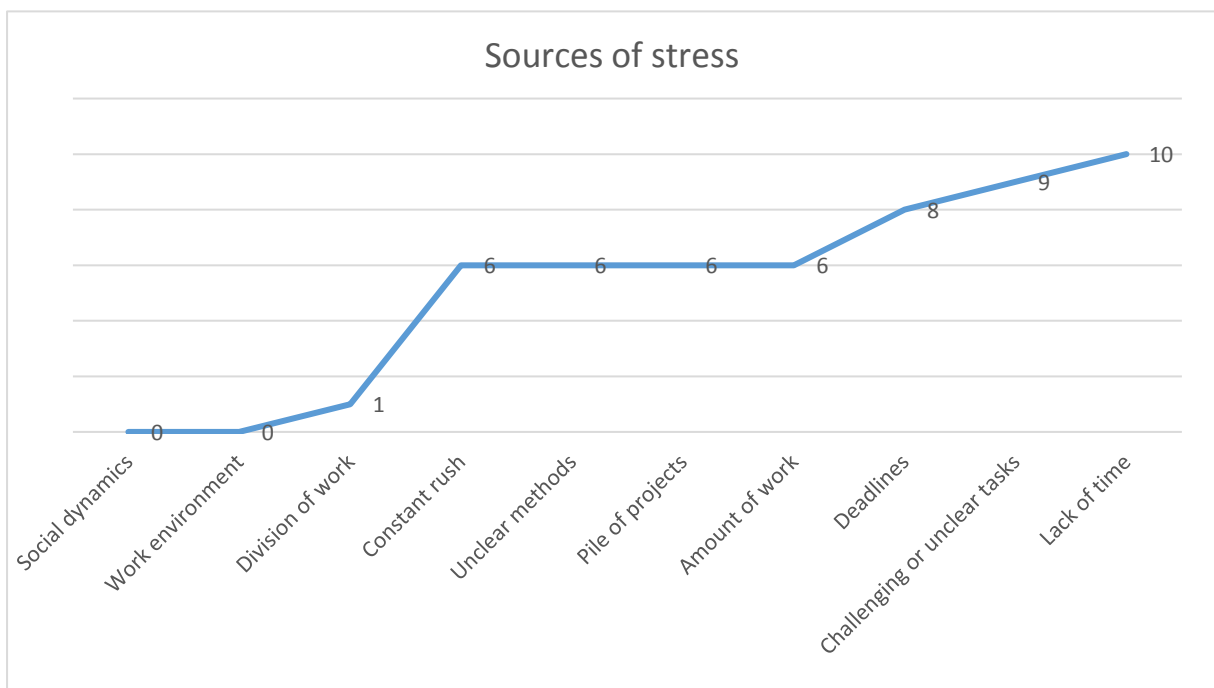


Figure 13: Most common sources of stress for the employees

To discover the main sources of stress at the commissioning company, the employees were asked to pick the objects that caused the most stress to them. All the options were picked, except for the work environment and social dynamics, which positively supports the idea of a healthy social environment.

The sources of stress that appeared repetitively in the results were lack of time, challenging or unclear tasks and deadlines. The other factors such as amount of work, constant pile of projects, unclear methods and constant rush were answered six times. One of the respondents thought that division of work was also stressful.

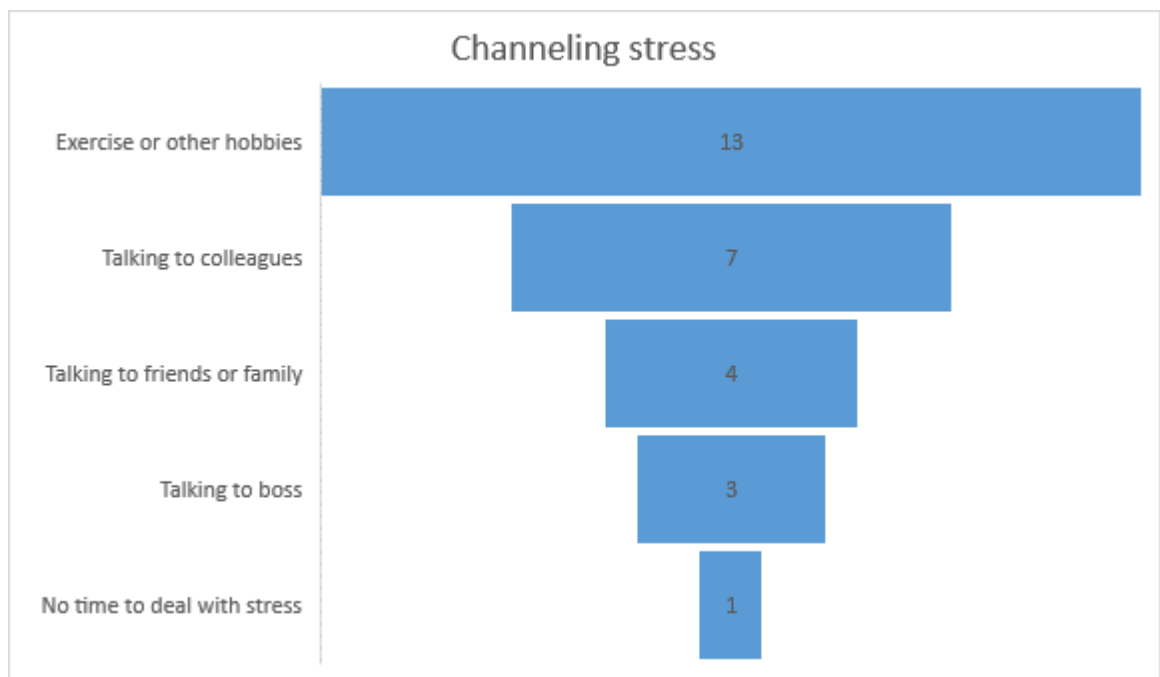


Figure 14: The channels that the employees use to deal with stress

Moving on to the ways of how the respondents normally deal with stress, the majority seemed to appreciate the effect of exercise or other hobbies as a stress relief. The second most common answer was dealing with stress by talking about it with colleagues. Some also shared it with family, friends, boss or other undefined channels. One respondent stated they didn't have time to deal with it, which is quite concerning.

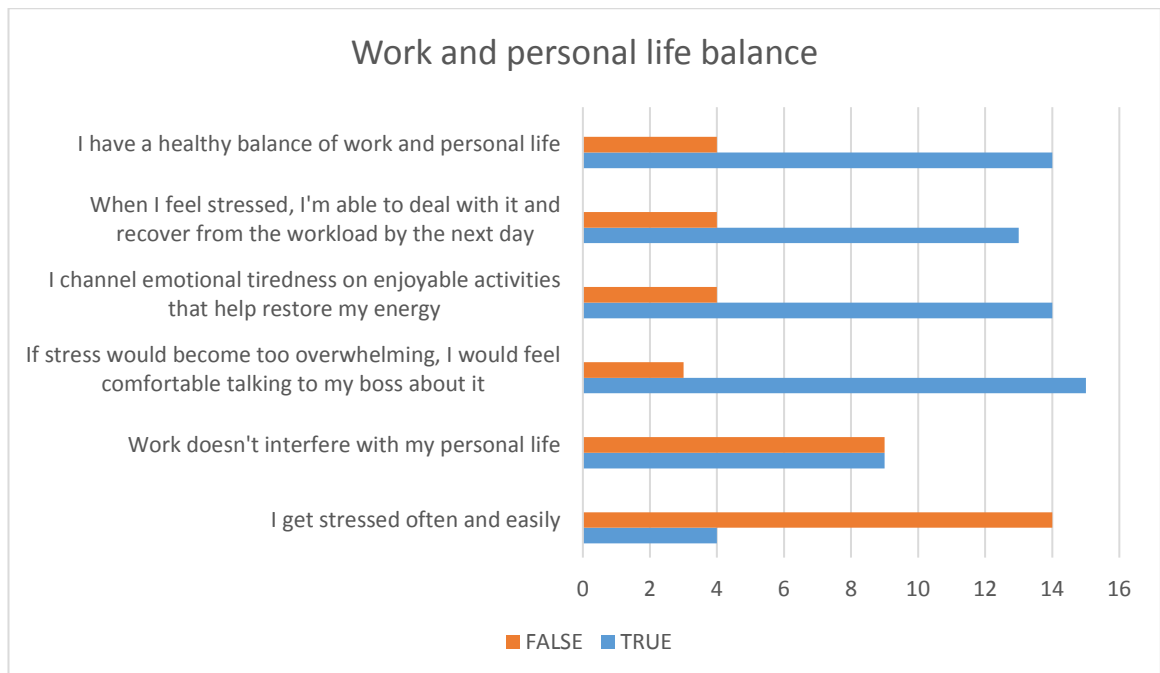


Figure 15: True/false statements related to work and personal life balance

The respondents were asked to indicate whether they thought the following statements were true or false.

The positive outcome of this exercise was finding out that:

- the majority agreed they have a healthy balance of work and personal life
- they recover of a heavy workload by the next day
- they have discovered some enjoyable activities which they can channel their emotional tiredness on and regain energy
- they feel comfortable coming forward to their boss if work stress were to become too overwhelming
- they don't get stressed that often or easily

However, an alarming discovery that came up was how half of the respondents said work interferes with their personal life.

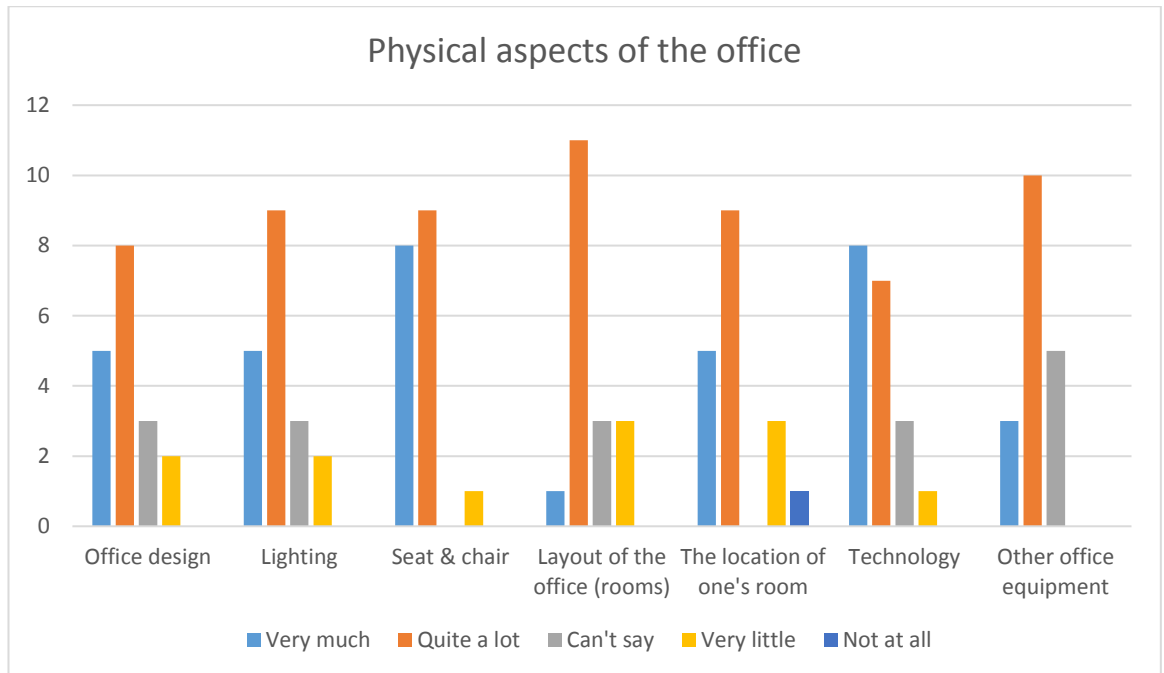


Figure 16: Demonstration of how much/little the physical objects of the office support the employees' work

In this question the employees were asked to rate the physical objects of the office with regard to how much or little they support their work. Overall, the answers were positive, and "very much" and "quite a lot" got remarkably more answers than "can't say", "very little" or "not at all". Only one of all the options was said not to support one's work at all, which was the location of the room.

Seat and chair, followed by technology, received the most positive answers of all, and the vast majority found these objects supportive. Most of the employees also agreed that location of their rooms, lighting, office design, other office equipment and layout of the office contributed positively to their work output. However, the overall layout of the office could be better according to three respondents, whereas two seemed to want something to be done about the office design and lighting.

In question number 12 the respondents could give open feedback about the previously mentioned objects. Areas of improvement concerning the physical aspects of the office were as following:

- Echo cancelling/sound-proof walls
- Personal phones, tablets and other gadgets to support people's work
- Ergonomic chairs and adjustable tables
- More effective heating-system at the office
- More windows and natural light

- Another toilet
- A coat-hanger
- Cleaning equipment

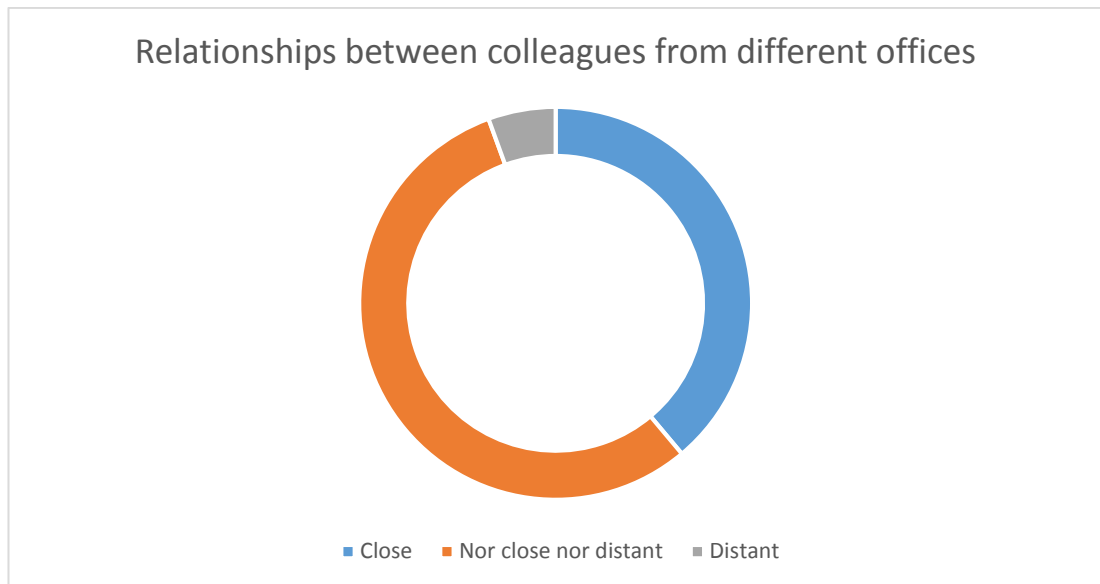


Figure 17: The description of relationships between colleagues from different offices

When the employees were asked about their relationships with their colleagues from the other offices, 10 described them as neither close nor distant. They said they interact with each other every now and then, but they mostly concentrate on work related topics. Seven employees considered their relationships close, which implied regular interaction as well as exceeding work-related talk to more personal conversations with fellow employees from other offices. Only one felt distant to his or her colleagues from the other locations with seldom interactions about work matters.

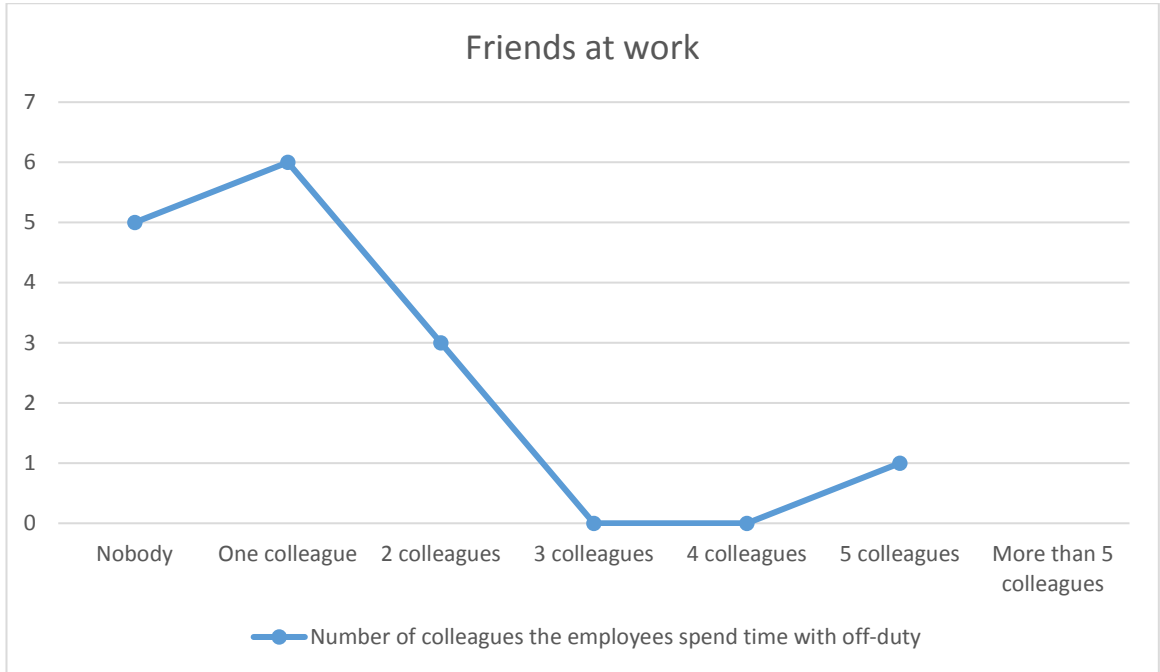


Figure 18: Number of colleagues with whom employees spend time with off-duty

Question number 14 was created to discover whether any of the employees had made actual friends from work with whom they would meet on their free-time. Three of the employees didn't answer to this question.

Nine respondents considered at least one person to be a friend with whom they spend time together after work. Six said there was in fact one person they meet outside of work, whereas only three mentioned there to be two people they see on their leisure time. One person said there are five people he or she considers friends. Another one said he or she hadn't met a colleague on his or her free-time yet, but mutual after-work plans had been initiated. Mutual hobbies, sports and other activities came up frequently when explaining what the employees usually do together.

Five responded that they don't spend time with any of their colleagues off-duty, excluding the annual gatherings of the whole staff. Two said it was most likely because of their remote geographical location, which had made it physically challenging to spend time with one's co-workers.

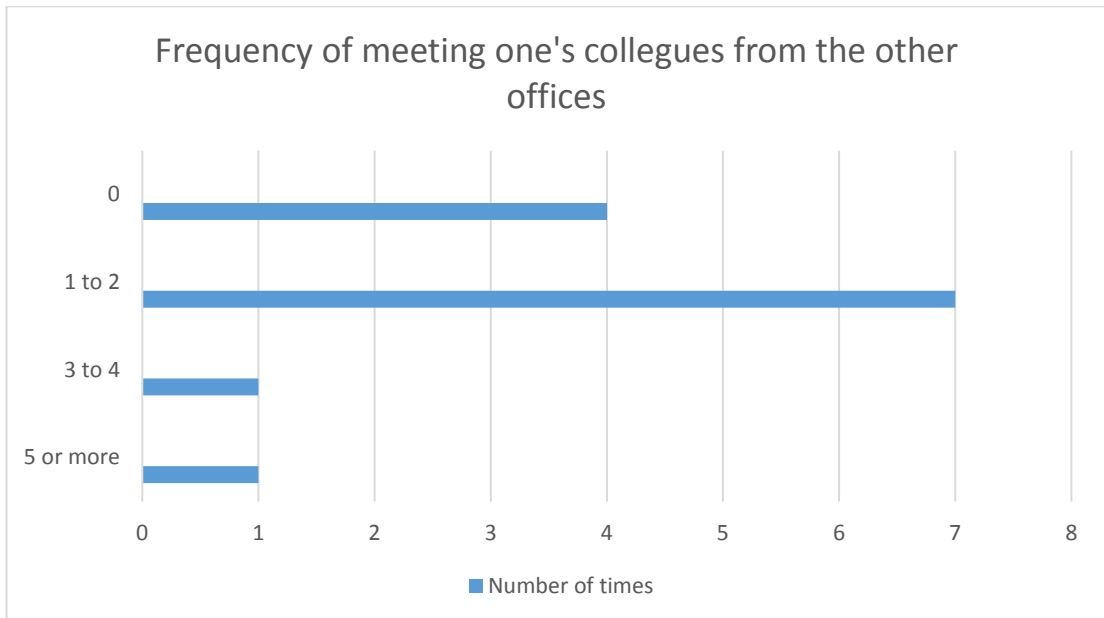


Figure 19: The frequency of the employees meeting their colleagues from the other offices

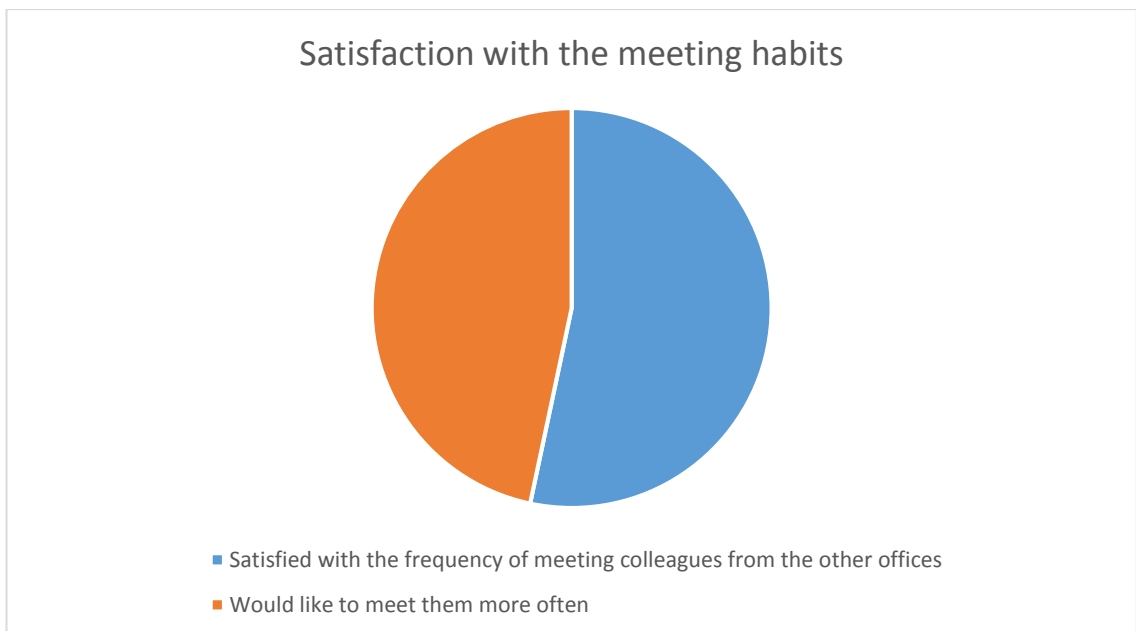


Figure 20: Level of satisfaction with the frequency of meeting colleagues from other locations

Figure 19 and 20 are both related to the number of times per year that the employees meet their fellow co-workers in person. When asking about the frequency of meeting one's colleagues from other locations, 1-2 times was answered the most, followed by 0. Only one person said 3-4 and 5 or more. Eight employees thought their meeting habits were sufficient, whereas 7 would have liked to meet their colleagues more often.



In the following question the respondents were asked to describe team spirit in the company to achieve a profound understanding of how it's observed by the employees. The way the employees described it to be went as following:

- Same sense of humor and way of thinking makes team spirit great
- Although teams are located in different places, whenever the whole staff gets together it feels as if they had been under the same roof all along
- People treat each other as professionals, but it doesn't get too formal though
- People share the same organizational goals, which are more important than individual's success alone
- Happy and positive atmosphere and treatment of others
- No competition or jealousy, sincere will to help each other out
- Annual gatherings (recreation days and Christmas parties) help to connect voices with faces and get to know one another better
- No cliques, everyone thinks like a team

However, there were also some slightly negative comments about team spirit. For one, team spirit was described to be weak due to geographical distances between offices, which would less likely be improved as long as people weren't working under the same roof. Indeed, some felt that there wasn't one unified team, but separate teams in different offices, and some people were closer than others. In addition, the way how people only talk about work-related topics and won't even sit down for coffee breaks was criticized, as this could be something to create an everyday team spirit.

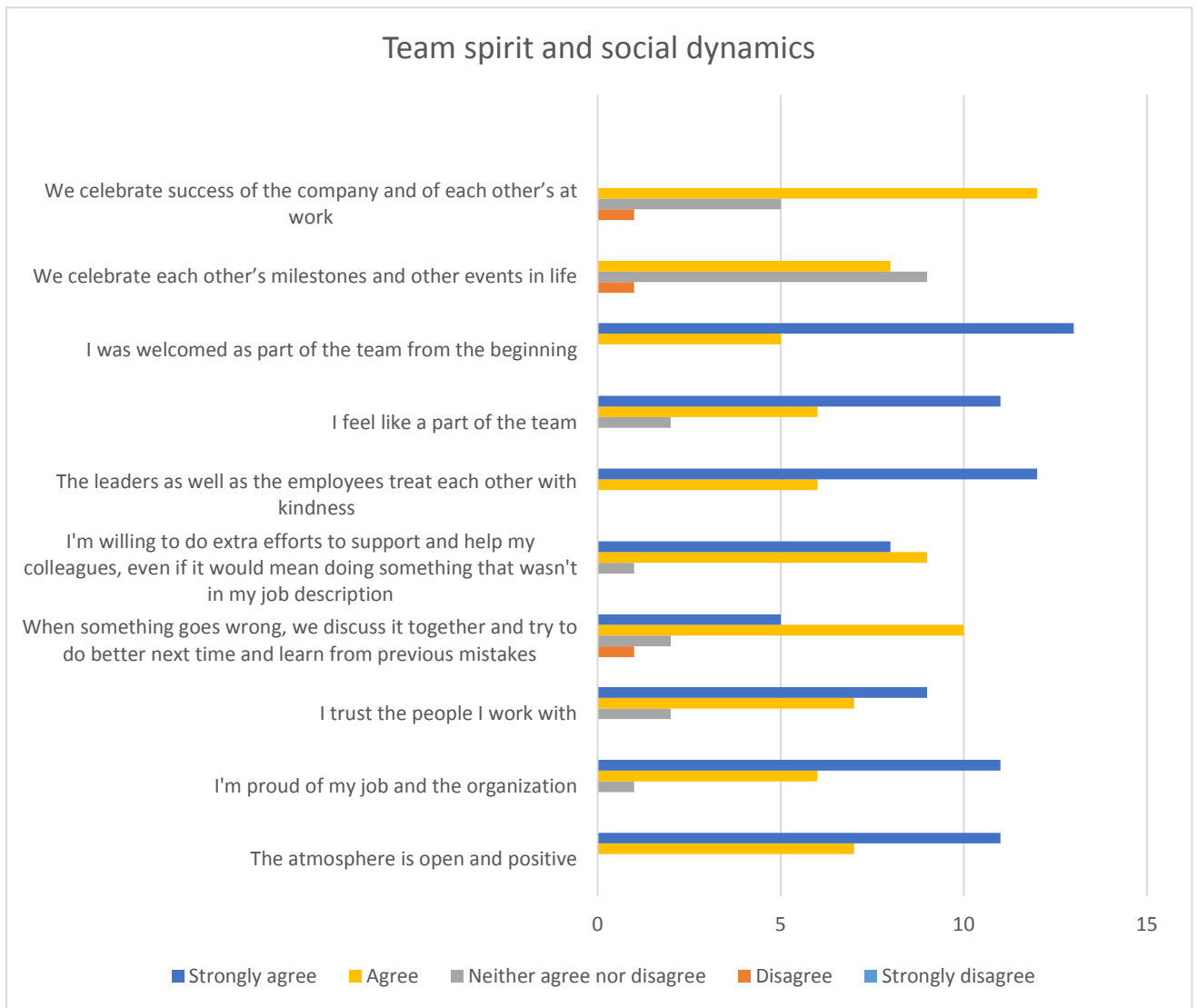


Figure 21: Employees level of agreement with statements related to team spirit

As shown in figure 21, the respondents were asked to share their opinions on a number of statements on a scale of 1 to 5. The majority strongly agreed that:

- They atmosphere is open and positive
- They feel like a part of the team
- They were welcomed as a part of the team from the beginning
- Employees and employers treat each other with kindness
- They are willing to go beyond their job descriptions to help and support their colleagues
- They are proud of their jobs as well as the organization
- They trust each other
- People discuss mistakes and misfortunes together to learn and do better next time

To some extent, they couldn't say whether they celebrated each other's milestones

(9 answers) or professional success (5). One person disagreed upfront with both statements. The statement concerning discussions about mistakes and misfortunes and learning from them was also disagreed with once.



Figure 22: The leadership style that the employees would like to see in their leader

When clarifying the employees' wishes for leader's behavior, most of them said they would like to be involved in the decision-making process and be asked for ideas. The second most frequent answer was about the leader taking a directive approach by providing straightforward directions, deadlines and expectations regarding the task. People also wanted the leader to be supportive and consider their feelings. The least popular choice concerned an achievement-oriented approach with challenging the employee to excel at demanding tasks.

## Task characteristics

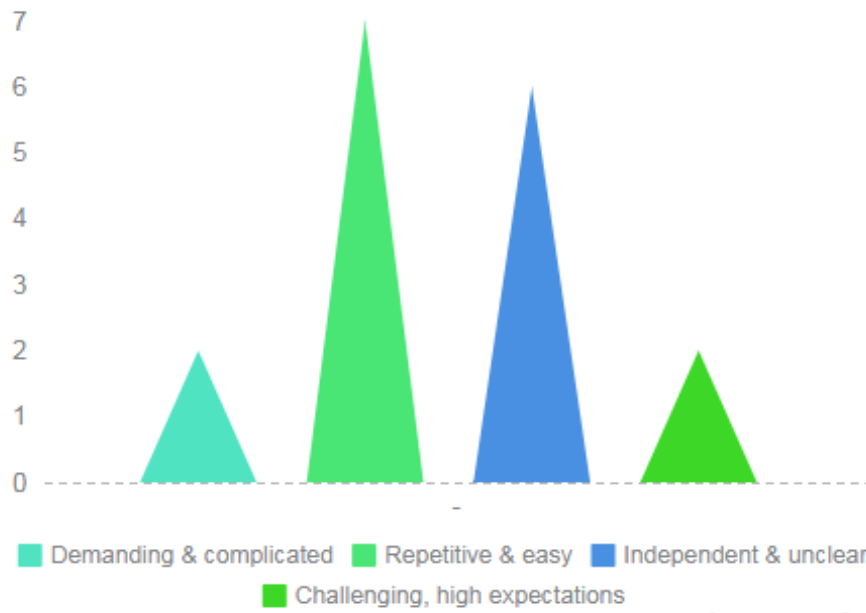


Figure 23: Task characteristics of the respondents' usual tasks

To see if the task characteristics would match the appropriate leadership style according to the path-goal theory, the respondents were assigned to choose the most agreeable description regarding the characteristics of their regular tasks. When describing their usual tasks at work, seven of the respondents thought they were repetitive and easy, whereas six considered them more independent, complex and of unclear structure. Only two would describe them as “demanding, complicated, need of structure and guidance” or “difficult, challenging, high expectations”.

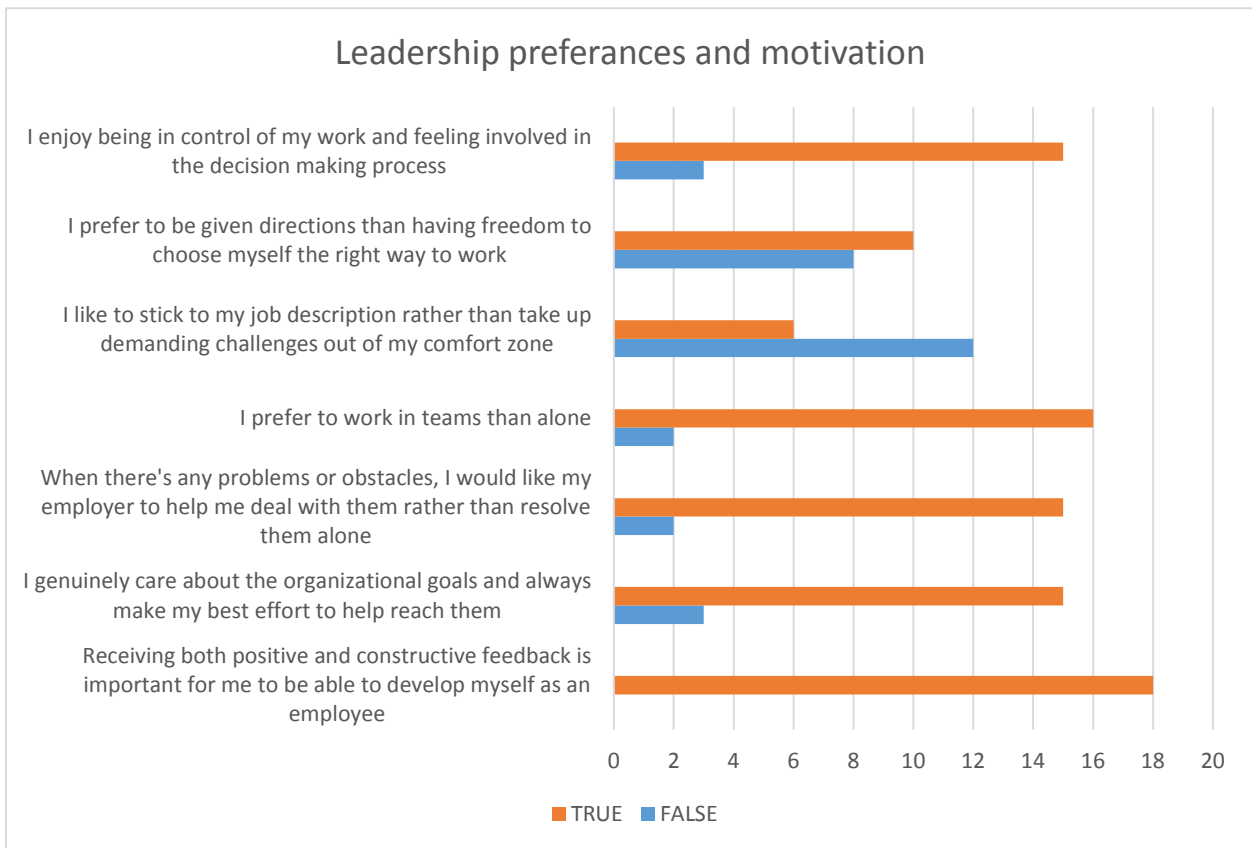


Figure 24: True/false statements related to leadership and motivation

Figure 24 depicts the respondents' opinions on a number of statements related to work motivation and preferred leadership approach. The only statement which all 18 of the employees thought was true, was about the importance of receiving both positive and constructive feedback to be able to develop as an employee.

Most of them also agreed that:

- They enjoy being in control and involved in the decision-making process
- They like to take up demanding challenges out of their comfort zone
- They prefer to work in teams
- They would like their employer to help them deal with any problems or obstacles
- They genuinely care about organizational goals and make their best effort to help reach them

The statement which came closest to a tie of "true" and "false" was about being given directions vs. having freedom to choose one's own working style. 10 preferred being directed whereas 8 would have chosen the freedom of choosing. Surprisingly, the results also revealed that three of the respondents admitted they don't care about the organizational goals genuinely and don't always make their best effort to help reach them.

Finally, the employees were asked to describe organizational values that they can relate to, as establishing mutual values within the company was an important focus-point in the theoretical framework. The intention was to identify whether there is a clear set of values that all of the employees are aware of and have included as a part of their own ideology. The following values were mentioned:

- Trying new things
- Sticking to schedule
- Doing one's work thoroughly
- No pain no gain
- Innovation
- Growing the company bigger
- Being able to say proudly "I / We did that"
- Integrity
- Promising future
- Let's do this -attitude
- High quality of work
- Innovation
- Determination
- Employee wellbeing
- Reliability
- Cation
- Specialist services in the areas of expertise

Lastly, the employees were given an opportunity to leave open comments about anything they thought could still be improved and wasn't mentioned in the questionnaire. The comments included the following:

- Recruiting another new employee to help with the workload
- Sharing information evenly throughout the company, not only in the headquarters in Porvoo
- Executive committee meetings could include a changing set of participants, so that everyone would have a chance to participate in the decision-making processes
- When taking part in new and unclear projects, instructions should be clear regarding the expectations, tasks and methods
- Thorough instructions; a vague phone call isn't sufficiently informative when entering a new territory

## 7 Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis was to clarify the current level of wellbeing and team spirit in the commissioning company. Additionally, the employees' leadership preferences were examined to enhance work motivation. The results for these aspects were achieved by a questionnaire, which was based on the major findings from the theoretical framework. The questionnaire was successfully answered by all but one of the employees with 18 answers altogether. Therefore, the results can be considered trustworthy and relevant to the purpose of the research.

Based on the questionnaire results, the staff of company X can be described as satisfied and motivated employees, who thrive in their social as well as physical work environment. They take great pride in their jobs and the organization, and most of them sincerely care about reaching the organizational goals and make their best effort to get there. However, it cannot be ignored that three employees didn't feel this way. While three isn't a significant number when looking at the big picture, it still means not everyone in the company is aligned with the same values which determine the common goals. Perhaps not all the employees feel sufficiently aware of what the organizational goals are in fact. When not knowing the goals, contributing to their achievement is difficult. The employer should reflect on how the common goals are included in their corporate missions and values, and whether they are communicated openly enough. (MacFarland 2013; Lee 2012.)

Division of information is crucial indeed, especially in such company of multiple locations. In the questionnaire an employee pointed out not always knowing what's happening in the company, because most of the information is shared in the headquarters first and foremost. Thus, it might likely be the case that some of the employees lack knowledge of the organization's core goals and values and therefore find it difficult to identify with them. In fact, some admitted point blank not being familiar with the values of the company, which definitely requires a reaction from the employer. Implementing the core values and goals into the daily life at the office is the most crucial thing to be done by the commissioner. They should be introduced in the beginning of a hire to the new recruits and reminded of in any company gatherings. (MacFarland 2013.)

The work was considered more or less autonomous by all the respondents, which supports both the characteristics of healthy work settings based on the theoretical findings as well as the intentions of the CEO of encouraging self-governance. However, the employer should consider individual differences, as it was discovered that roughly half of the employees preferred to be given directions than choose themselves the right way to work. In

addition, almost half thought their regular tasks were unclear and in need of guidance and structure. Consequently, the second most preferred leadership style was directive; giving clear directions regarding the tasks, methods and deadlines, which the lack of were amongst the major sources of stress.

On the other hand, the most preferred leadership style was participative while over half thought their regular tasks were repetitive and easy. Thus, it can be concluded that the employees acknowledge the level of difficulty or clarity of their tasks differently, which is why path-goal theory is a functional framework as a leadership theory; a changing set of tasks calls for a leadership style where the approach is chosen to meet the task characteristics. In this sense, the leader of company X should adjust his leadership style accordingly, based on the individual and task in question. He shouldn't lead everyone in the same manner, but always estimate the situation and choose the right approach accordingly. Sometimes he should be more directive whereas on another occasion a participative approach would generate the best results.

All employees felt similarly about the importance of the leader removing obstacles when they come up. This is one of the key learning points of path-goal theory; the leader must help the subordinates by removing any obstacles to help them reach the defined goals. Therefore, the leader should be available and easy to reach in case an obstacle occurs, so that the employees aren't left alone to battle them. He should pay special attention to the employees from the more distant offices that aren't in direct face to face contact with the leader. They might feel more isolated, which intensifies the need of the leader to regularly check in with these employees to see if they need more support or direction.

In fact, some employees felt they hadn't been given clear enough directions concerning new tasks or projects. Sometimes the instructions remained vague and lacked clarity, which was something they hoped would be improved in the future. Verbal instructions aren't always the most convenient way to distribute information, as it is at the risk of forgetting or misunderstanding. Therefore, directions are encouraged to be given in a thorough written form to minimize these risks.

Overall, the amount of autonomy should be considered accordingly. Too much of it might further enhance feelings of lack of direction, which could frustrate the employee and make it difficult to get in touch with one's skills and be able to develop them. To avoid such outcome, the employer should communicate openly with employees to establish the level of autonomy that best fits their needs. Especially with new employees it's important to provide sufficient guidance before giving them more autonomy, so once they start working



more independently they feel sufficiently prepared and confident to face new challenges. (Crane 2017, 199.)

To move on to the other improvement ideas based on the questionnaire results, giving more positive and constructive feedback could be considered. All the respondents agreed feedback is necessary to be able to develop oneself, and some thought more of it could be given. For one, it's important to communicate to employees that their ideas have been acknowledged and made use of in the decision-making, and thank them for making a contribution. Such communication is prone to boost employees' feelings of respect, membership and competence, which in return is likely to enhance employee loyalty to the corporation when feeling appreciated and involved. (Crane 2017.)

Moreover, giving regular feedback of one's actions should be a part of the corporate policy, and employees should be praised not only in the annual performance reviews but throughout their careers. In fact, it's not only the responsibility of the employer to give feedback but equally that of the other employees. People who work together should learn how to praise each other when things get done well, but also know how to give constructive feedback without insult when there's room for improvement. Embracing open and honest communication, in both pleasant and difficult circumstances, is the key to establishing the ideal level of giving and receiving feedback. (Murch 2016.)

As the employees of company X seemed to have strong work morals, complete dedication to their jobs comes naturally from them. However, enabling a healthy balance of work and personal life is vital to avoid the risk of burnout, which some of the employees could be at the verge of. Half of them said work interfered with their personal life, which shouldn't be the case in a healthy work environment. There were also four who stated they didn't have a healthy balance of work and personal life, nor did they recover from their workload by the next day or channel emotional tiredness on any activities. These are some of the warning signs of burnout, which should be reacted to immediately.

It's far too common to let the symptoms of burnout last long without reacting to them in any way, which makes it all the more demanding to avoid ending up with a nervous breakdown. People tend to squeeze in too many activities on their free-time as well, which decreases their time spent on pure relaxation. That mixed with an endless pile of work is most likely a recipe for disaster that can suck out one's inner energy and restore feelings of exhaustion in the body. Consequently, overworking oneself can ultimately deteriorate one's physical health and create physical symptoms that increase the risks of work disabilities. (Jabe 2010, 57-58.)

Therefore, the most valuable asset of the company, the staff, must be taken care of to ensure an optimal future for the whole organization. The employees should be encouraged to pay more attention to their wellbeing to avoid exhaustion, which could sooner or later be the outcome. That is, if the employees who experience high levels of stress, interference of work in their personal lives as well as no time to recover from the workload keep going this way for a longer period of time. If it were to go that far, the aftermath will be more demanding and costly to manage than to avoid in the first place. Thus, hard measures must be taken to avoid employees from overworking themselves. As a matter of fact, the CEO has already taken the first step by limiting the maximum work hours that the employees can enter in the work hour registration, which makes it more demanding to over-work excessively.

As discovered in the theoretical framework, physical exercise helps deal with stress and channel emotional frustration. Some of the employees haven't taken full advantage of the recreation cards, which could be something the employer could further encourage. The cards could be made use of together with one's colleagues, which simultaneously would contribute to the team spirit by building friendships at work. The employer could encourage employees to join gyms or sports classes together, for instance. What's more, implementing friendly competitions of physical exercise could boost motivation to lead an active life. Some form of awards could be given to those who maintain physical activities, and by encouraging employees to do it together the positive outcome would be even more significant. Combining physical activities and team spirit could be done by forming groups of team sports within the company, such as football, volleyball or floorball, to strengthen employee bonds and make exercise fun in the meanwhile. (National institute for health and clinical excellence 2008.)

Having mentioned team spirit, it's another issue that could still be improved. Although it received rather positive feedback from the employees, some thought the physical distances between the offices prevented the company from forming one solid team that the whole staff would be a part of. Roughly half of the employees said they were neither close nor distant to their co-workers outside their own office, and that they would like to meet them more often. Could the employees make cross-office visits to meet their colleagues more often? What if some of the bigger meetings were held in person? Or could the employees do business trips together with their fellow co-workers from another office? Most of the staff habitually travel to a certain destination for work purposes, but they usually do it with someone from the same office. Perhaps for some of these trips the people appointed for the trip could be from different locations, so while traveling for work they could

also spend more time getting to know each other in person. These are some ideas the commissioner could consider to enable more profound connections between employees.

However, the unfortunate truth is that nothing can be done about the physical distances. The team spirit within each office is more possible to make an actual impact on. The employees seemed to get along with each other well, but for most there was only one person, if any, with whom they spend time off-duty. Perhaps the atmosphere at work could be even more open and positive if the employees would build closer relationships with one another. Every now and then, the people from each office could gather together on their free-time for mutual activities that foster team spirit. The options for these activities are limitless, but for example the teams could try out escape-rooms or trampoline parks (employees' suggestions), ice-skating on a winter afternoon, barbeque and drinks at the office on a Friday evening, Christmas porridge every Monday morning of December, wall climbing or sponsored charity walks or runs. The list of activities is endless and the company should pick the ones that best fit the team's personalities. (Heryati 2017.)

Minor details can affect the sense of team spirit, and an effortless way to start could be catching up over a daily cup of coffee. An employee commented on the questionnaire how people at company X seem to work nonstop and won't even have short coffee breaks. This might seem like a cost-efficient detail but in reality, having short breaks during the day can have a huge effect on productivity, concentration and motivation, and ultimately build deeper connections between colleagues while transforming the mundane coffee breaks into the social highlight of their days.

Another thing to consider is the milestone celebration which could be further implemented in the company policy. Celebrating important anniversaries is a key point at building strong relationships within corporations, as it brings people closer together as unique individuals rather than merely co-workers who only work in the same organization. Until now, the employees of company X have usually brought pastries or a cake to work on their birthdays, which has been a pleasant habit. (Heryati 2017.)

However, the company could also give something in return to the individual in question. Perhaps the company representatives could consider small gestures, such a little gift, to award the employees with on their special day. An anniversary calendar could be made use of, while containing the major events on it such as birthdays, company and employee anniversaries, Employee Appreciation Day (first Friday in March), project achievement days, weddings, birth of new family members, graduations etc. Any major events in the employees' lives are worth paying attention to, and it doesn't need grand gestures or

costly expenses, but even as little as fifteen minutes of the day to gather together and celebrate the purpose of the event. To involve employees from the other offices to these celebrations, small posts on Yammer could be made so that they could also share their best wishes. Perhaps there could be an additional gathering of the whole staff every year, where the company would celebrate its anniversary over a dinner, for instance. If it's demanding to gather the whole staff together, the company could sponsor each office to have dinner on the company's special day. (Heryati 2017.)

Lastly, some areas of improvement were mentioned related to the physical work environment. For most part, the employees seemed pleased with their work environment and thought it supported their work, but some felt there was still room for improvement. For instance, some suggested that the walls could be sound-proof. A noisy work environment can cause muscle tension and digestion problems, as well as deteriorate the quality of sleep and ability to concentrate. To enhance wellbeing of the employees and avoid such outcome, the commissioner should make sure all the employees are given the same level of noise rejection. The ones working in an open office space surrounded by more people might feel differently about noise and its effect on concentration than the ones working in a closed room or their home office. Regardless of the location of one's work space, everyone should be guaranteed an environment that supports the ability to concentrate. (Launis & Lehtelä 2011, 102.)

The same applies to the lighting and heating of the office spaces. According to health authorities, the ideal office temperature is 22 degrees in winter and 25 in summer. The right temperature at the work settings contributes to concentration, alertness and sleight of hand which is essential for job performance in computer-based jobs. Similarly, the right kind of lighting is important to maintain an active mind at work. Even though the ideal level of lighting can be achieved by lamps, the effect of natural light is still remarkable. Not only due to illumination but rather the effect on productivity and creativity caused by an outside view of nature. (Launis & Lehtelä 2011, 285-287.)

## **8 Discussion**

To conclude, the final chapter of the thesis will evaluate the process of the research project as well as own learning, while having a separate subchapter for evaluation of reliability and validity.

### **8.1 Reflection on the thesis process and own learning**

This thesis project was initiated during the spring of 2017 when I started working at company X as an Executive Assistant. I had been struggling to choose myself a thesis topic, when I came up with an intriguing idea to conduct a research about wellbeing, team spirit and motivation at my work place. My employer shared my enthusiasm about these themes, and soon we decided that I would write my thesis about these topics.

Even though the thesis seemed very inspiring and interesting to me, the process turned out to be a challenge – working full-time and writing an academic research paper simultaneously wasn't an easy combination. Although I started working on the thesis approximately half a year before graduation, time flew by quickly and the whole process felt quite challenging.

However, I don't regret combining my thesis with work, as I feel privileged for having such a motivating topic and the opportunity to write for a commissioner that I had grown a part of myself. In other words, I knew the target group of the thesis personally, and I had sincere interest in identifying probable sources of dissatisfaction in our work community to be able to improve and create a better workplace for my colleagues and me. Throughout the thesis process my job description was extended to match my thesis topics even more – HR coordinator. Thus, I could professionally utilize all that I had learned through researching the named dimensions related to employee wellbeing and relationships within the company.

Overall, I found writing an academic research paper very educational. I believe my writing skills have developed throughout the process, and my professional vocabulary has extended tremendously. Similarly, my ability to identify quality sources from poor ones has improved, and I believe the sources that I chose to use were relevant to the thesis. Above all, I have gained significant knowledge of essential dimensions related to wellbeing, team spirit and motivation, which I consider beneficial for my own future in the human resources department.

## 8.2 Validity and reliability of the research

Although I had initially planned on interviewing my co-workers, I ended up choosing questionnaires over interviews. Anonymous questionnaires turned out to best serve the purpose, as I expected to gather more honest answers if they were given anonymously rather than through an interview. Any sources of dissatisfaction would most likely come up when the employees could make anonymous comments without having to speak out loud. Expressing negative feelings could put the interviewee in an uncomfortable position, thus they might not speak out their mind at all. Furthermore, my position as an Executive Assistant that works closely together with the management could prevent the target group of the research from disclosing sensitive information due to possible uncertainty of whether remaining anonymous as an interviewee. These are valid reasons why I chose to conduct a questionnaire instead of an interview, so anonymity wouldn't be questioned nor would issues of shame or dare interfere with the results.

In terms of reliability, I believe the same research method could be used to gather similar results from the same target group. However, the target group might experience changes in their attitude, opinions and feelings, which is why the exact same results cannot be guaranteed if the study were to be repeated in a year, for instance. The employees might feel differently about their colleagues or their own wellbeing in a certain period of time if the variables affecting these aspects would evolve to another direction. Consequently, these changed attitudes and feelings would most likely generate a different set of results.

When measuring the validity of the study, I believe the questionnaire succeeded at studying the defined research problems.

### 1. *Do the employees feel physically and mentally well at work?*

Yes, the employees seemed to feel generally well at work, especially when it comes to mental wellbeing. They find their jobs meaningful and are given the opportunity for self-governance, which enhanced their work satisfaction. However, some of the employees could consider their physical health more in order to avoid exhaustion or burnout.

### 2. *What are the risk factors potentially threatening their wellbeing?*

Stress and high dedication one's work could ultimately end up a threat to some of the employees' wellbeing, as they might neglect to take care of their own health when they are so deeply focused on their work and let it interfere with their personal life.

3. *What could be improved to make company X a better place to work?*

Some of the areas of improvement included the equal division of information within the whole company, as well as thorough training and guidance when initiating new projects. In addition, inspecting the engineering work internally before handing it in to customers was suggested to decrease the burden of the engineers.

4. *Do the distances between offices affect team spirit?*

The multiple locations of the company was proven to affect team spirit, as some thought it prevented the company from forming one solid team. Even though the majority thought the social environment was open and positive, and the gatherings of the whole staff were the social highlights of the company, there was no denying that the distances wouldn't affect the overall team spirit. The mundane team spirit was mostly considered office-based.

5. *Can team spirit of the whole company somehow be repaired?*

Little can be done about the geographical distances, but more cross-office visits or in-person gatherings within the whole company could be considered. If resources aren't available as such, personal milestones or achievements could be celebrated in social media platforms that would enable all employees to participate in personal life events of their colleagues over strictly work-related interaction.

6. *Are the employees motivated about their work?*

The employees seemed to be motivated about their work, as the majority said they were proud of their organization, sincerely cared about reaching organizational goals and were willing to exceed their work titles to support their co-workers for the common good. They also found their jobs meaningful to themselves and the community, which supports the description of a motivated employee.

7. *Which leadership style would enhance their motivation?*

Path-goal theory was used as a framework to study the employees' leadership preferences. It was proven a suitable leadership style for the occasion, as the target group had distinctive preferences about the behavior of a leader as well as different opinions about their tasks in terms of clarity, structure and difficulty. This supports the idea that their leader should adjust his leadership style depending on the task and person in question. All employees cannot be lead similarly, but a different approach should be taken when dealing with different personalities and task characteristics.

Reflecting on the results, I feel content with the questionnaire and the responses given by the employees. I received honest and open answers, and it seemed like everyone participated with an intention to help me achieve as informative answers as possible. After all, the questionnaire results were going to be used in favor of the work community, which most likely motivated the employees to give purposeful comments on anything that they thought could be improved. This was their chance to make an impact and contribute to the common good of the company.

Had I had more time for this thesis, I would have interviewed some of the employees in addition to solely conducting the questionnaires. In-depth interviews would have enabled more open-ended questions which might have given more insight into what some employees would like to change or improve in their workplace. Consequently, more insightful discoveries could have been made with the help of interviews added to the data collected from the questionnaires.

However, given the circumstances I still think the research I conducted served the purpose of the thesis, and useful discoveries were made. It's too early to say whether the commissioner will take actual measures to put the conclusive suggestions for future reference in practice, as the thesis and its results will be introduced to the company for the first time on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December, when the whole staff gather together to celebrate Christmas.

Based on the enthusiasm of the commissioner towards my research, I believe he will take the results seriously and implement the suggestions of improvement into his agenda for future reference. The wellbeing of the employees, the social dynamics between them as well as their attitude and motivation towards their work are crucial dimensions for the commissioner that will most certainly be contributed to if possible. The suggestions drawn from the data results and theory are quite practical and easy to apply, which should further enhance the probability of implementing them into the organizational culture.



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## 9 Appendix

### Employee wellbeing at company X

This questionnaire is a part of a Bachelor's thesis for Haaga-Helia Porvoo Campus. The purpose is to study employee wellbeing at company X, along with team spirit and motivation. The results will be used to create improvement suggestions for future reference. Thus, everyone's input is important and highly appreciated.

The answers are confidential and the identities of the respondents will not be revealed in the thesis, to the employer, other employees or any other third parties.

Please answer each question as thoroughly as possible. You can answer in English or Finnish.

Thank you for your participation!

#### 1. Please choose your office location. \*

- A. Porvoo
- B. Joensuu
- C. Imatra
- D. Seinäjoki
- E. Home of-  
fice

#### 2. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 strongly agree, 2 agree, 3 neither agree nor disagree, 4 disagree, 5 strongly disagree) Do you agree that the work you do is meaningful to you?

Strongly agree \*      1      2      3      4      5      Strongly disagree

#### 3. The work I do is meaningful to the community. (1 strongly agree, 2 agree, 3 neither agree nor disagree, 4 disagree, 5 strongly disagree) \*

Strongly agree      1      2      3      4      5      Strongly disagree

#### 4. What would make it feel more meaningful?

**5. Do you feel like your employer rewards employees accordingly for work well done?**

- A. Yes. The employer gives appraisal regularly and fairly.
- B. Sometimes, but even more appraisal could be given.
- C. No, the employer rarely appraises work well done.

**6. Choose the most agreeable answer.**

- A. The work is independent and employees are given space to make their own decisions regarding working style, methods and schedules.
- B. The work is quite independent, but the employer regularly supervises and affects the working style, methods and schedules of the employees.
- C. The employees aren't allowed to decide their own working style, methods or schedules, and they are given clear directions and structure that helps them succeed in their tasks.

**7. Please rate the effects you have noticed since the introduction of the TicketDuo -recreation cards from 1 to 5 (1 strongly agree, 5 strongly disagree)**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I've engaged in more physical and/or cultural activities and I feel more energetic at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I've engaged in more physical and/or cultural activities, but I haven't noticed any change in my energy levels at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I've hardly used the recreation card for any physical or cultural activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offering the cards has affected my image of my employer positively	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**8. What is the most common source of stress for you?**

- Amount of work
- Lack of time
- Constant pile of projects
- Deadlines
- Challenging or unclear tasks
- Unclear methods
- Division of work
- Constant rush
- Work environment
- Social dynamics

**9. How do you deal with stress?**

- I deal with it alone by doing exercise or any other hobbies
- I deal with it by talking to my family and/or friends

- I deal with it by talking to colleagues
- I deal with it by talking to my boss
- I don't have time to deal with it
- Other

**10. Please choose true or false.**

	True	False
I have a healthy balance of work and personal life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I feel stressed, I'm able to deal with it and recover from the work load by the next day	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I channel emotional tiredness on enjoyable activities that help restore my energy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If stress would become too overwhelming, I would feel comfortable talking to my employer about it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work doesn't interfere with my personal life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get stressed often and easily	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**11. Mark how much/how little the following objects positively support your work and make it more pleasant.**

	Very much	Quite a lot	Can't say	Very little	Not at all
Office design	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lighting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seat & chair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Layout of the office (rooms)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The location of my room	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other office equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**12. In regards to the previously mentioned objects in question 10, is there any you would like to improve? If yes, please explain how.**

**13. How would you describe your relationship with your colleagues from the other offices?**

- A. Close. We interact regularly, and we also share some personal conversations.
- B. Nor close nor distant. We interact every now and then, but we mostly concentrate on work related topics.

C. Distant. We interact, but quite seldom and only about work related topics.

**14. Mark a number of colleagues you spend time outside work hours and describe what you normally do.**

**15. How often do you meet your colleagues from the other offices face to face? Has it been enough, or would you like to meet them more often?**

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5 or more
- I'm satisfied with the amount of times I meet them
- I would like to meet them more often

**16. Describe team spirit in your company. How is it now and how would you like it to be?**

**17. Mark your opinion on the following statements on a scale from 1 to 5 when thinking of company X.**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
We celebrate each other's milestones and other events in life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We celebrate success of the company and of each other's at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The atmosphere is open and positive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel like a part of the team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was welcomed as part of the team from the beginning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The leaders as well as the employees treat each other with kindness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I'm willing to do extra efforts to support and help my colleagues, even if it would mean doing something that wasn't in my job description	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I'm proud of my job and the organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



I trust the people I work with

When something goes wrong, we discuss it together and try to do better next time and learn from previous mistakes

**18. What kind of behavior would you like to see in your leader(s)?**

- A. The leader should provide straightforward directions, deadlines and expectations regarding the task
- B. The leader should be supportive and pay attention to how I feel
- C. The leader should involve me in the decision making process and ask for my ideas
- D. The leader should challenge me to complete demanding tasks as well as trust my ability to succeed

**19. Which of the following best describes your regular tasks at work?**

- A. Demanding and complicated, need of structure and guidance
- B. Repetitive and easy
- C. Independent, complex, unclear structure
- D. Difficult and challenging, high expectations

**20. Please choose true or false.**

	True	False
I enjoy being in control of my work and feeling involved in the decision making process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I prefer to be given directions than having freedom to choose myself the right way to work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I like to stick to my job description rather than take up demanding challenges out of my comfort zone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I prefer to work in teams than alone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When there's any problems or obstacles, I would like my employer to help me deal with them rather than resolve them alone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I genuinely care about the organizational goals and always make my best effort to help reach them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Receiving both positive and constructive feedback is important for me to be able to develop myself as an employee	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**21. Can you name the most important values that you share with the company?**

**22. If you have any further comments or improvement suggestions, please write them here.**

