



Reverse logistics manual

Case study for Prysmian Group

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Abstract:

A case study done for the logistics department at Prysmian Group Finland Oy. The logistics manager requested a manual to be made for their reverse logistics process. The objective of the manual was to remain simple and comprehensive, while also containing all the critical information about the reverse logistics process. The reason why a simple and comprehensive manual was chosen to be made for a complicated process, is to ensure it has practical usage. Typically, lengthy and complex manuals are unused and become dust collectors. Such manuals demand more effort to comprehend and utilize, which can be daunting during stressful situations. The manual's structural design ensures the process can be easily understood at first glance, which is ideal as the process can be complex and could become time-consuming for new employees to grasp. Qualitative research was the method of choice, as interviews were the only way to collect any data for the research. The literature in this research goes in detail on how to prepare a manual, what the content should look like, how the visuals and structural design of a manual should be, how the text can be written in different ways depending on what type of information the manual is designed to convey to the user. The literature also explores what are the interview methods for collecting qualitative data, and how the data can be analyzed by using a framework.

Keywords:

Prysmian, Manual, Reverse Logistics, Process

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1 Introduction

When talking about logistics, people tend to think about some sort of transportation mode from point A to point B. But how much thought is going into the reverse logistics, which is to say transportation from point B to point A.

The world is changing at a rapid pace, and so is the market. The spike in online shopping is rising and each day it gets easier to purchase something online. With the generous return policies companies offer nowadays it's almost a no brainer to purchase something you "might" need. Studies done on e-commerce show 92% of consumers will buy something again if returns are easy, 67% of consumers will check the returns page before making a purchase (Saleh, 2022). With these things in mind, how demanding is it really for the supply chain management at the companies selling the product to achieve a smooth and easy returns transaction for the customers.

When the product goes from the consumer to the seller it's called *Reverse logistics* (Jenkins, 2021). The following falls within reverse logistics category: Returns, delivery failures, refurbishments, rentals/leasing's, repairs (Jenkins, 2021). A proper reverse logistics chain can play a big part in how much a company wastes supplies and revenue compared to creating value again. The challenges with reverse logistics is however the infrastructure and how efficient it is, these things require constant optimizing and evaluation in order to get the most value out of it, everything can change depending on the type of company in question.

This study will go through the process of creating a user manual for reverse logistics in a customer claims situation. The logistical department at Prysmian Oy has asked for a clear and easy to understand user manual specifically for their department in the case of a customer claims situation. Standardizing and utilizing a specific protocol is a step closer to a better reverse logistics. Not only will this bring more value and a smoother customer transaction for Prysmian, but it will ensure that any new personnel can quickly learn the process of the company's reverse logistics protocol.

1.1 Problem statement

Prysmian Oy is one of the biggest companies in the world when it comes to manufacturing electric cables. The differences in their factories around the world warries a lot, this creates the difficulty of creating a united set of standardized protocols of certain processes. Due to this there are processes that could benefit from a set of instructions.

It takes time to write down and create a set of instructions, some people don't have extra time nor is it required in their job description to do that. This quickly evolves into a situation where most processes are memorized in people's heads and not written anywhere. This usually works until some sudden change in personnel or some important part in the process has changed and everything comes to a stop since its there's no clear guidance what to do. This kind of situation is nor optimal or efficient, however it's understandable why it happens.

Customers aren't going to be very pleased if they must do a claims request as the average customer is a building firm and they have a schedule to follow in their constructions. This makes it extremely important to have a hassle free and fast service to keep the customers satisfied with the already bad situation.

The Prysmian plant in Kirkkonummi wishes to get a manual with clear instructions for the reverse logistics part in a customer claim situation, as it is a very delicate area in which the process can go wrong in many ways and cause unnecessary delays for the customer.

1.2 Aim

The aim of this study is to create an instructions manual for the logistics department at Prysmian Oy, regarding the process in reverse logistics when managing customer claims.

There's already a big dip in revenue having to deal with claims on faulty cables, therefore its extremely important to have each step clearly state out what the reader should do next when handling the claim in the logistics department. These steps should decrease the number of failures and accidents that can come along the way as well as minimize any extra costs.

Ideally the manual should be user friendly in the sense that the reader doesn't have to read from start to finish in order to know what to do, but to be able to quickly look up a specific part of the process and act on it.

A situation where this manual would be useful would be for example, a summer worker who has no previous experience with reverse logistics and has to handle a customer claim but has no idea who and where to contact someone or how to even begin the process. Another example is an already experienced employee who is unsure about something in the process and wishes to just quickly glance at an easy-to-use manual instead of asking other employees in the other departments and perhaps creating more confusion with conflicting responses.

1.3 Demarcation

The manual will be distributed only to Prysmian, specifically it will be made for the logistics department. The manual won't go into details about the other departments involvement in the process, as that's outside the scope of the manual's objective. The manual has been designed to assist the logistics department in understanding their involvement and objective at every stage along the reverse logistics process.

Regarding the different flows in logistics, this will only cover the reverse logistics, as that's the area of involvement when it comes to customer claims. Calculating the costs that comes with reverse logistics or anything regarding customer service will not be included either as that isn't the job for the logistics department.

1.4 Definitions

Customer claims

When the customer files a complaint about a product or service (McMahon, 2022).

Reverse logistics

When the goods go backwards, for example from consumer back to the seller (Jenkins, 2021).

E-commerce

When buying goods or a service with an electronic device using the internet (Lutkevich, 2022).

1.5 Presentation of the company

Prysmian Group is an international company and a leading producer of electrical cables. The company was founded in 1879 under the name Pirelli Cavi e Sistemi in Italy. It wasn't until the year 2011 when the company merged with another leader in the market into what we know today as Prysmian Group (Prysmian Group, 2022).

Today the company has about 29000 employees worldwide and operating 108 plants in 50 countries, with the main headquarters being in Milan, Italy (Prysmian Group, 2021).

The manual will be written for the Finnish Prysmian plant, which consists of about 600 workers and had a revenue of about 370 million euros in 2021. The Finnish plant is significant for Prysmian Group as it can produce the bigger marine cables with a good success rate and has a port made to support the loading of such large cables onto a cable laying vessel. These are among the reasons why Prysmian Group is investing in another marine cable production line at the factory, which will include a 185 meters tall structure to support the production of the cable. It will be Finland's tallest structure to date. (Lehtinen, 2022).

2 To write a manual

Writing a manual can be simple, but if you look in depth what really goes into making a good manual, it quickly gets a lot more complicated and requires a lot more variables to be taken into consideration.

In this chapter, I will examine a range of theories that are relevant in the creation of a manual. I will focus on several key questions when considering these theories, such as: What is the content of the manual? How should it be structured and presented visually? How much detail should be included, will it overwhelm the user? Additionally, I will consider whether the manual is intended for experienced users or those who are new to the topic, and how this affects the design and content of the manual. By carefully applying these theories, I can create a manual that is effective, user-friendly, and visually appealing.

In addition to ensuring that the content of the manual is comprehensive and accurate, it is also important to consider the ways in which humans typically process new information and

incorporate this knowledge into the design of the manual in order to maximize its effectiveness and usability.

2.1 What is a manual

A book that gives you practical instructions on how to do something or how to use something, such as a machine. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022).

Manuals are an important tool for companies because they provide a standardized set of instructions that can be used to efficiently and safely perform tasks. By following a manual, employees can quickly and accurately complete tasks without the need for extensive training or trial and error. This not only saves time and reduces the risk of accidents, but it also improves the overall efficiency and reliability of the company's operations. In addition, having standardized procedures in place can improve a company's reputation by demonstrating a commitment to safety and quality. A manual removes the element of surprise from many customers experiences with the company. (Gappa, 2007). Overall, manuals are a valuable resource for any company looking to improve its performance and protect its interests.

A manual can be thought of as a corporate encyclopedia, that provides employees with the information they need to perform their specific tasks. Rather than using their own employees to create manuals, many companies choose to hire consultants because the process of creating a manual is typically a one-time job that requires specialized expertise. This allows companies to create high-quality, comprehensive manuals without investing significant time and resources into the process. (Tripathi, 2009).

2.2 Understanding information

Explanations might sound clear to someone with experience, but if the inexperienced person doesn't understand it, then nothing was gained, and time and resources was lost.

There's two ways to go by when giving information, either to recall information or to apply it. The method on how information is passed forwards is based on the learning objective, if its information needed to train new people or, making them remember it. (Barbazette, 2013). In the creation of this manual, it was agreed upon to be both to recall information and to showcase to new people how to do it step by step.

The difficulty is the write-up of the manual. If what is being taught in the manual is not clear or informative enough, or if the information can be interpreted differently depending on who is reading it, then the purpose of the manual becomes meaningless. (Tripathi, 2009).

2.2.1 Teaching approach

Teaching would be learning from a mentor, tutor, parent etc. This brings a personal touch to the learning and warries a lot each time. Shortcomings of this stems from the transfer of information from one individual to another, with completely different experiences and understandings. This means even though the information might have been given out accordingly by the person teaching, the person receiving the information might not have understood anything and not even memorized anything. Experience is very important when it comes to adding information on top of already known information, this can lead to misinterpret of information as well as even rebelling against it if not understood the same way. (SkillsYouNeed, 2022).

For the right person with the right amount of previous experience, this could be good, sharing an experience can deepen the learning of the individual as well as affect positively emotionally. This can lead to strengthening the bond in the team as well as give the freedom to the individual to learn in their own pace and understand the fundamentals on a deeper level. (SkillsYouNeed, 2022).

In order to learn something, the student must play an active role in the process. Without a meaningful experience and reflection of the task, no proper memorization of the experience will be partaken by the student. According to cognitive theorist, John Dewey (1938, as cited on SkillsYouNeed, 2022). However, it should be kept in mind that when teaching a process to another person, it can often vary a lot depending on who is teaching, as well as over time it can change a lot like in the children's game "Broken phone". Some steps might eventually totally be forgotten and skipped without the new person even knowing it.

2.3 Preparing a manual

A good starting point would be to ask for existing manuals/materials from the company and evaluate them and ask the head of department if it's in their interest to follow something similar or if they would like to try something else. (Gappa, 2000).

Moving on it's important to have a clear understanding of what to write. The legal implications it can have if some information were to be faulty, it can be as small as the wording in a sentence. Even a simple sentence can have two meanings if not written clearly and that can cause the wrong interpretations. (Tripathi, 2009). Going through if there's any specific information not to be included in the manual. Sensitive information or anything which could be linked to discrimination of the company. (Tripathi, 2009).

The flowchart (see figure 1) has a total of 15 steps, with the first seven steps focused on planning. These steps involve creating a plan for the project, determining what resources are needed, and setting goals and objectives. Steps eight and nine are focused on collecting data. These steps involve identifying the data that needs to be collected, and then actually collecting it. The remaining steps are focused on preparation and editing. These steps involve organizing and cleaning the data, and then editing it to ensure that it is ready for analysis and presentation. Each step has a self-explanatory heading that provides a clear description of what needs to be done at that stage of the process.

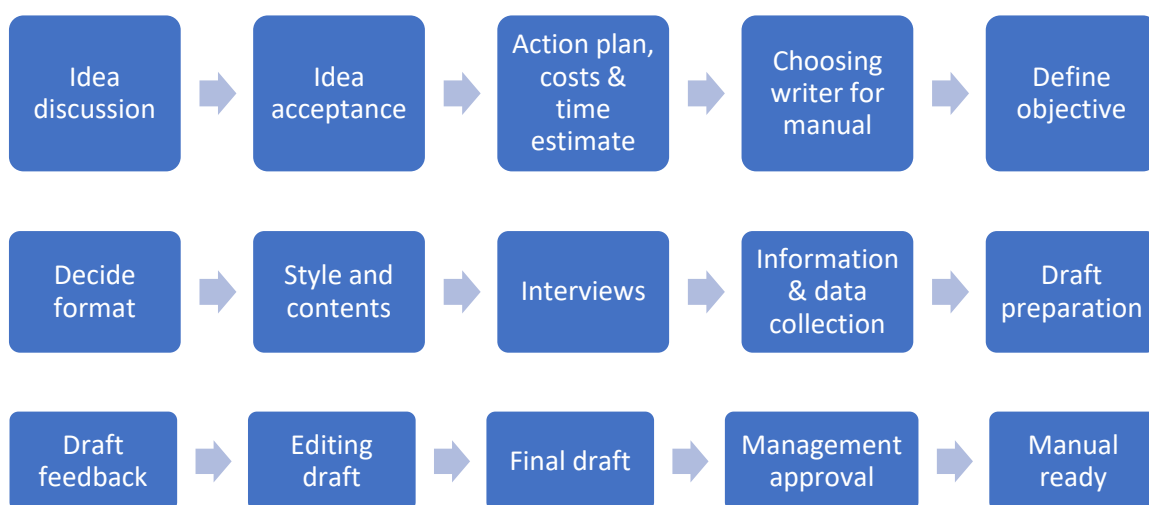


Figure 1. Recommended flowchart in the creation of a manual. (Tripathi, 2009)

2.4 Contents of a manual

Even after getting clear instructions on what content should be included in the manual, the big question will forever remain. Exactly how small details should also be considered, and how much of it. (Tripathi, 2009). This will more or less clear up after interviewing and putting the draft to the test, which will be in the end phase.

An instruction manual typically includes a small introduction explaining the purpose and importance of the manual, as well as the department it is intended for. The main objective of the manual is also often included, as well as information on who to contact if problems arise. Additionally, if the process described in the manual involves other departments, it is recommended that these departments be mentioned to avoid confusion and prevent individuals from performing tasks outside of their department. (Tripathi, 2009).

2.5 Visual

Tripathi. (2009) Mentions the manual should be attractive and interesting to look at, while simultaneously be informative and easy to follow, it should awaken interest in the reader. It goes without saying an attractive and easy to read manual is more likely to be read. than a heavy texted and dull styled manual.

Larger companies usually have their own set of models and layouts which are to be followed. Such as where exactly a company logo should be placed in a document, as well as how big it should be. Premade malls for manuals might already exist within the company, which makes visual planning unnecessary. (Tripathi, 2009).

2.6 Text

Some manuals rank up hundreds of pages worth of text, while others are brief and right to the point. The problem with large manuals is that it's possible very few individuals will ever read the entire manual, some might never even start to look at it when they notice how much time they need to invest in going through it. (Tripathi, 2009).

The text should be written with a learner's perspective in mind. (Barbazette, 2013).

Having a clear understanding on what exactly to write helps tremendously when carefully choosing the wording, for it has to meet the objectives. Avoid sentences that can be understood in different ways, arrangement of words in phrases and sentences should be chosen critically. (Tripathi, 2009). Simplify the text, use simple language which is understandable on a basic language level. (Barbazette, 2013).

2.7 Writing styles

Tripathi. (2009) mentions four different styles of writing. It's suggested to pick one and stick to the style, as it can enhance the learning experience and make it easier and more enjoyable to follow. Which style to choose varies depending on the situation and context of the text.

2.7.1 Descriptive Style

When the objective is to explain in elaborate detail. It's used in situations where critical information is given, and it's required to be informationally detailed. (Tripathi, 2009).

Example using a passport:

The passport is required in order to step on the airplane. The passport will include a clear photo of the individual. The passport has to include the full name of the individual. If the passport has expired the individual is not allowed to step on the airplane.

2.7.2 Playscript Style

Like movie scripts, playscript showcases each step and by whom its preformed, and what happens. This way it's easy for the reaper to grasp the whole procedure. (Tripathi, 2009).

Example using a scenario in a company:

Department X has to perform a task. The task should be performed by individual in position X. What happens when individual X is done with the task. Department Y has to perform the next step. The task should be performed by individual in position Y. What individual Y has to do. What happens when individual Y is done with the task.

2.7.3 Concise Style

Information should be brief and concise, highlight relevant points and make them easy to understand. (Tripathi, 2009).

Example a worker at a clothing store:

Worker: Make sure there's money in the register. Make sure the clothes are arranged in size. Make sure the clothes are neatly displayed. Greet and assist every customer.

2.7.4 Informal Style

Informative text which is written in a way to appeal the reader. Can for example help a person feel a sense of belonging in a new environment. (Tripathi, 2009).

Example a new student:

Dear X, welcome to your new school. Hope you will have a wonderful time while learning with us. You can find your schedule at site X. All new students should gather tomorrow at place X. Any further questions can be taken up with the school tutors.

2.8 Revising

Revising is an important step in the creation cycle, this is the step to evaluate what should be changed based on the information gathered and the feedback received.

This process should be repeated until head of management give their approval. However, it's important to know when to put the gloves down, as there can always be something to improve and eventually it can lead to an endless cycle. (Tripathi, 2009).

Gather all the information, hold discussions with the people the manual concerns, make sure all the facts are correct as well as if there's something missing. Writer should also give his own viewpoints when discussing, as it can bring light to a different perspective. (Tripathi, 2009).

If the writer is unsure with the information, they can perform a quiz called Procedure Analysis when interviewing. (Tripathi, 2009). Its six questions (Who, what, how, when, where, why) with the goal to get a clear understanding of the process.

Example case with a store worker:

Who = worker, what= puts foods on shelf, how= taking food from pallet and putting it on the shelf, when= daily/weekly, where=where the store exists, why=to gather paychecks.

Implementation process is a way to check if the information given in the manual is actually being followed in practice. If not, the purpose of the manual is defeated. (Tripathi, 2009).

It's recommended to make have a specific employee who makes sure the manuals are up to date or if some information has been changed and they need revisioning. Without this the manuals can quickly become obsolete. However, this takes time and resources, and most companies don't follow this rule. (Tripathi, 2009).

2.9 Summary

Learning is a crucial part of mastering any process, and how it is taught can greatly impact the performance of the process and the likelihood of accidents. The memorization and transfer of information are important factors in this process.

Manuals provide a standardized way of teaching a process, but they can be written in many different ways. It is not only important to collect relevant information and determine how it should be presented, but also to consider how the information is showcased. This includes ensuring that the information is engaging and interesting to the reader. The text itself should be easy to read and understand, using simple and clear language. The style in which the text is written can greatly impact how the information is perceived, and this can vary depending on the purpose of the text.

In order to create an effective manual, it is essential to regularly review and update the text to ensure that it remains relevant and accurate. Failing to do so can result in the manual becoming quickly obsolete, rendering it ineffective and potentially even harmful. Regular revision and updating of the text can help to ensure that the manual remains a useful and reliable resource for teaching a process.

3 Method

The goal of any research is to reach an outcome of sorts, but before we can achieve an outcome, we have to choose the most suitable approach to reach that outcome. In this chapter I will go over the method used to accomplish the objective of this research, which is to create a manual. As well as the rationale behind selecting the correct research method. The ethical concerns for this type of research will be mentioned in the end of the chapter, along with how they will be dealt with for this research.

3.1 Choice of method

There are various methods that can be used when gathering data for research, and it is important to carefully consider which methods are appropriate for the specific goals of the research. Some situations require the researcher to focus on one research approach, otherwise the outcome can be too complex to find any relevance between two research methods. (Brinkmann, 2013).

For this case I am going to start by looking at what are the objectives that needs to be researched, and what data is required for that research. As well as what type of data there is available. Saunders et al. (2003) describes this as research strategy, it's a general plan on how we should go on about answering the research questions when they are framed in a clear and objective way, including what data we are working with, and are there any constraints.

The wanted outcome is an efficient and easy to use manual, which is to say the data needs to be very detailed and informative. When having discussed with the head of logistics department about what current existing data is available, the answer was that there is no existing data. Which means the only available data that can be obtained is from individuals who knows the process.

3.2 Research approach

When it comes to data collection the two primary approaches are: quantitative research, and qualitative research. Bryman and Bell (2003) describes quantitative research in general terms as a collection of numbers, something which can be researched using quantities of numeric data. Or as Saunders et al. (2003) describes, a research that involve numerical data or contain data which when quantified will help you answer your research questions and to meet your objectives. Bryman and Bell (2003) would describe qualitative research as research using words instead of numerical data. Saunders et al. (2003) describes it as an expression of words, data which has implications in collection and analysis. In order to fully capture the meaning behind the qualitative data it cannot be collected in a standardized way, however, there is no standardized way of analyzing it. The non-standardized complex of the data requires it to be put into categories before it can be analyzed.

As the only available data for this research are the individuals who knows the reverse logistics process, this requires us to take the qualitative research approach. The advantage of a

qualitative research approach is that it provides the data I need (i.e., comprehensive insight data about the reverse logistics process). However, as Saunders et al. (2003) describes, the analyzation of this data will be the challenging part, and some sort of categorization or framework needs to be employed during analysis to get the most out of the data.

3.3 Respondents

A comprehensive email was sent to the head of the logistics department, outlining the agreement to create a manual and providing a brief introduction. The email then goes on to describe the types of participants who should be included in the interviews and requested that the head of the department create a list of individuals which fit the description.

How the meetings and interviews are going to be structured were mentioned using a similar structure as the Tripathi flowchart. (See Figure 1). This way the first round of interviews is intended to gather as much raw data as possible in order to create a data framework which can be used for the first prototype of the manual. The follow-up interviews were designed to provide feedback on the prototype each time it is updated in some way, until the manual is complete.

Lastly in the email it was mentioned to give a time schedule of their availability for the interviews and whether it would be preferred to conduct them online or in person at the company. It was acknowledged that taking this much time for the interviews may be a significant challenge and potentially the biggest obstacle in the interview approach.

3.4 Interview Approach

During the interview process, both virtual and in-person meetings at the company location will be held as available options. This will allow for more flexibility and to accommodate any changes in the availability or schedule that may occur, as communication in a timely manner is of the utmost importance. By offering both options, I aim to ensure that the interviews can proceed smoothly and efficiently.

If the interview is conducted virtually, it is likely to take place through the Microsoft Teams application, which is a convenient tool for online calls. This option may be preferred in situations where the interviewee has a heavy workload during the day and is unable to meet in

person. Online interviews have the advantage of being more relaxed due to the lack of face-to-face contact in a private room setting, as is often the case in traditional interviews. However, it is worth noting that this relaxed setting may potentially impact the quality of the answers given, as the interviewee may not feel as committed or serious in this environment.

It is important to note that the outcome of the interview should not be solely based on the setting, but rather on the content of the responses. (Galletta, 2013).

In-person interviews, also known as on-the-spot interviews, are often preferred due to the more natural interaction that takes place when sitting face to face. However, there are also some potential downsides to this approach. Firstly, the availability of the employees and the scheduling of the interviews becomes more restrictive. Additionally, conducting interviews on-site can be more time-consuming and resource-intensive, as it requires the transportation of the interviewer to the location, as well as the costs associated with providing food and other amenities. Furthermore, there may be waiting time involved if there are multiple interviews planned for the same day, which can also be a valuable resource. Not to mention the last-minute cancellations. All of these factors should be taken into consideration when deciding whether to conduct an interview on-site or remotely. (Galletta, 2013).

3.4.1 Unstructured & Semi-structured interview

The three standard ways of conducting an interview are: unstructured, semi-structured and structured approach. Saunders et al. (2003) describes these as following: In a structured interview you have predetermined questionnaires and a sort of standardized way. While you have a social interaction, it should be performed identical to each participant, i.e., approach and talk in the same tone of voice with everyone to avoid any bias. In semi-structured interviews there will be a list questions or topics which should be talked about, but in no standardized way and the conversations can vastly vary from interview to interview. In unstructured interview there is no formality, these are used to explore in-depth on a topic in hopes of gaining something substantial to work with. The participant can freely talk about events or experiences about the topic in question, without any directive.

In this research I will use the unstructured and semi-structured interview approach. Since I don't have a lot of substantial data to work with from the start, I will have to do an unstructured

interview at first. Once I have gathered enough usable data from the unstructured interview to form a framework of the reverse logistics process, I will move on to semi-structured interviews.

A key aspect of conducting effective interviews is the researcher's ability to pay close attention to the participant's narrative as it unfolds. When asking open-ended questions, it is important for the researcher to anticipate the possible directions that the participant's responses may take, and to guide the conversation in a way that allows for further inquiry as needed. This requires careful planning and an understanding of what further questions may be necessary to fully explore the topic being discussed. By paying close attention to the participant's narrative and being prepared to guide the conversation in a thoughtful and strategic way, the researcher can gather valuable insights and information. A great advantage would be to have a certain amount of spontaneity and the ability to respond to unexpected developments in the conversation. This requires the ability to think on one's feet and to adapt to the needs of the interview as they arise. (Galletta, 2013).

It is important not to overload an interview with excessive attention to your search for converging and diverging thematic trends in the data, this approach has the potential to dull your sensitivity to what is said and not said during the interview. (Galletta, 2013).

The interviewer should not shy away from interrupting the participant when it is necessary, in order to achieve clarification and understanding. This is important, as it helps to ensure that the researcher's interpretation of the participant's responses is as accurate as possible. Asking for clarification provides an opportunity for the participant to further elaborate on their responses and to add depth to their perspective. (Galletta, 2013).

As the interview unfolds, there may be moments where the researcher is aware that the participant's narrative offers a particular angle of vision that is considerably different from the theoretical framework or orienting theory driving the research design and analysis. Within the parameters of a semi-structured interview, there is room to explore this gap later in the interview, and well after the participant has narrated his or her experience. (Galletta, 2013).

3.4.2 Interview guide

Bryman (2012) suggests the preparation of an interview guide for the interviews. An interview guide can be written in any form, as its main objective is to work a memory list for the interviewer about various topics that should be discussed. During an interview its hard to keep track about which topics has been discussed, and maybe something important which has been forgotten as the conversation takes place and keeps changing direction. This helps to keep track and can even have some important reminders as the mentioning of confidentiality and anonymity before starting the interview.

3.4.3 Interview questions

To improve my knowledge about how the reverse logistics process is performed at Prysmian, the first interviews were done with an unstructured interview approach. The goal of the unstructured approach was to gather enough data and understanding about the process, so I could work out what questions to ask during the semi-structured interview.

When formulating the semi-structured interview questions, the emphasize needed to be on collecting relevant information, that of which could be used as data for the framework which was used for analyzing the data. The follow-up interview questions varied and changed significantly based on the type of data I received. It was essential to ensure that the questions were well-structured and focused on the development of the manual.

Situational awareness is critical, the interviewer must be attuned to the participants responses and adjust their approach accordingly to avoid overloading them. It should be kept in mind that the constant interviewing can become a burden for the company. In some cases, it may be necessary to design the manual with minimal information to get it completed. Galletta (2013).

3.5 Analysis of the data

There is no golden standard for writing qualitative texts, but rather tips and tricks and recommended ground rules. (Brinkmann, 2013).

In qualitative research, the focus is not on accumulating as much data as possible, but rather on carefully selecting and reducing the data to the most relevant and important bits. While the

process of collecting data through interviews can be enjoyable and engaging, the real challenge lies in the analysis and interpretation of the large amounts of transcribed data. (Brinkmann, 2013). The researcher must carefully review and select the most relevant pieces of information and organize them in a way that allows for meaningful analyzing. This process is very time-consuming and requires careful consideration and critical thinking in order to Reduce the data while keeping it relevant.

Brinkmann (2013) and Galletta (2013) both suggest the use of frameworks to organize and display qualitative data. It starts with creating a frame-by-frame structure that outlines the expected data based on pre-existing knowledge about the topic. This helps to provide a clear and logical structure for the data, making it easier to understand and interpret the findings. By organizing the data into categories, it is possible to identify patterns and trends that may not be immediately apparent when examining raw data. Once the data for this study, in the form of transcribed text from the interviews, has been collected, it is time to begin organizing it into the appropriate frames or categories. This may involve adding new frames for data that doesn't match any current frames or removing frames that are left empty, which should be inspected in case there is missing information that should be brought up during the follow-up interviews.

It is important to ensure that each frame contains the exact transcribed sentence from the participant, rather than a summary or interpretation by the interviewer, in order to maintain transparency and ensure the validity of the raw data used to construct the final research findings. Brinkmann (2013). It is also recommended to use diagrams and arrows to connect the frames and illustrate the relationships between them, in order to facilitate a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of the data. This visual representation can be particularly helpful in making sense of complex or nuanced information and drawing meaningful conclusions from the research.

Once the framework is populated with transcribed data, the next step is to begin identifying common themes and patterns within the frames themselves. This process involves reviewing the data and looking for similarities or trends that emerge within the frames. By narrowing down the findings in this way, it is possible to create a clearer and more concise display of information within each frame. This can help to identify key insights and insights that may not have been immediately apparent when examining the raw data. It is important to approach this process with a critical eye, examining the data from multiple angles and considering different

interpretations in order to arrive at well-supported and robust conclusions. This can help to ensure the reliability and validity of the study findings and facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the study topic. (Brinkmann, 2013).

Once the finalized framework has been established, it is time to begin designing the prototype of the manual based on the findings with the framework. The follow-up interviews and the feedback given during them for the refining of the prototype, will likely be repeated multiple times until a final prototype of the manual is accepted. It is important to approach this process with a thorough and systematic approach, carefully considering the insights and recommendations from the follow-up interviews and using them to adjust the design of the manual. This can help to ensure that the final prototype of the manual is well-informed, accurate, and effective in meeting the needs of its intended audience. (Brinkmann, 2013).

3.6 Validity and reliability

Brinkmann (2013) believes generalizability is the most commonly voiced external objection against interview research, meaning, to which extent can the information gathered from a few interviews be transferred to other contexts and conclusions in general.

The method used to collect and analyze the data would contribute to the overall reliability of the findings. By having the participants review the data during each iteration of the prototype development, the validity of the data was consistently improved and refined by the final stage.

Even though the interviews were conducted in iterations, the data could not always be considered accurate. It was important for the interviewer to be aware of both subjective and objective responses in order to ensure the validity of the findings. The small participant group made it more difficult to determine whether the information provided was subjective, meaning that it was based on the participant's feelings or perceptions rather than on concrete evidence. In this scenario, it was ideal for the interviewer to ask for proof or supporting evidence for the participant's claims in order to make them objective. However, this can be challenging since the purpose of this study was to create the manual possessing the accurate information.

During the follow-up interviews on the prototype of the manual, there was an increased risk of receiving subjective responses due to the influence of the human factor. Each participant could

have viewed the information in the prototype as accurate and might not have commented nor questioned it, especially if they believed that the information was provided by someone with more knowledge about the process. To mitigate this issue, one solution was to ask the participant to demonstrate or reenact each step before presenting them with the prototype and comparing it to their response. By taking this approach, it was possible to reduce the impact of subjective responses and increase the reliability of the study.

Galletta (2013) suggests that when constructing the framework, it is important to document the decisions made when interpreting or creating concepts from transcribed data. It is also important to continuously question whether there are any significant stretches made in the efforts to theorize the framework, as these may compromise the trustworthiness and reliability of the researcher. The interpretations and theories should be able to be linked back to the data source and support the conclusions drawn from them in order to maintain the validity of the findings. Ultimately, it is important to carefully reflect on each decision to ensure the accuracy of the research. This builds confidence in the researcher's study conclusions.

Qualitative interviewing can achieve a high level of reliability if desired. This can be done through the use of independent coders who code the same materials and inter-coder reliability can be calculated. However, this practice may not be practical or cost-effective for most projects. If reliability is defined as in different people see the same thing in the material, then qualitative interviewing can be reliable. A study demonstrated this by carefully considering various analytic conjectures and taking negative cases into account, resulting in a high likelihood that other analysts would reach similar conclusions. (Brinkmann, 2013).

3.7 Ethics

There are a few things regarding ethics which should be kept in mind already from the planning stage of the research, but also through the entire research. As any ethical concerns, especially in qualitative research, can occur during every stage of the research. When seeking access, during the data collection, analyzing the data, reporting the data. (Saunders et al., 2003).

When seeking the ideal candidates for the research its important to respect their privacy. They have the right to decline when asked to participate in the research, as well as withdraw from it whenever they want. They should not be guilty nor pressured into participating. (Saunders et

al., 2003). This information was disclosed before each interview, along with the confidentiality and anonymity information. The interview guide served as a reminder for me to mention this before each interview.

Stay on the objective throughout the research and avoid any subjective choices to narrate the conversations. During qualitative research it is harder to stay within the objective as the conversations can steer in other directions. This can impact the validity and reliability of the research, and this also falls within the ethics of a research. (Saunders et al., 2003). With the use of the interview guide which Bryman (2013) mentioned, this problem can be mitigated.

Bryman and Bell (2003) gave examples of situations where researchers felt the need to be unethical and what consequences it can lead to. It might feel morally right for the purpose of a good research, but it's still unethical practice and should not be done. For example, in order to get authentic and natural responses, they wouldn't let the participants know what is actually being researched, as the participants could otherwise give biased answers in order to sway the outcome of the research. Another example situation which often happens is when a company infiltrate their competitors research, and pry for sensitive information during the interview. While its understandable to be unethical in these examples, its something that should not be done for legal reasons, as well as risking the reputation of how the research was conducted and its credibility. While this isn't directly a concern for this research, it still serves as a good reminder to be honest about the research and not to hide anything from the participants during the interviews.

Confidentiality and anonymity should be mentioned before the interviews and should be maintained throughout the research process. However, it's possible the researcher is violating those rules without being aware of it. According to Saunders et al. (2003) during the data collection stage there can sometimes arise situations where the researcher wants to dig deeper into something in order to get more quality data for the research. While the data might be very useful for the research purpose, it can also lead to the participant being recognizable by whoever takes a look at the research results, as the information that was shared during the interview could be linked to that specific participant. The data in this research was openly discussed with all the participants throughout the research, as the goal was to get as accurate information as possible. However, the data wont be disclosed in this paper on the basis of confidentiality concerns.

Saunders et al. (2003) also mentions the risks involved with information and communication done over the internet and emails. Specifically, any sensitive information that could be forwarded to the wrong person or somehow accessed by someone else, such an action would infringe the confidentiality and anonymity and should definitely be avoided. For this research, we kept email communication to a minimum, and mostly regarding scheduling of the interviews. There was no need to discuss any of the sensitive information through emails, as the data collection was done during interviews.

Ethical issues can also appear during the analyzing and reporting stage of the research. A great deal of trust and integrity is placed on the researcher to analyze and report honestly. The researcher needs to remain objective when analyzing the data in order to not misrepresent it, nor be selective of which data to report. A lack of objectivity will clearly distort any conclusions and could very well be visible to someone looking into the research. At this stage it's vital to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity in mind, when reporting the data it should not be possible to piece anything together from the data which could be used to trace back to the source. This could cause embarrassment and refusal of any future cooperation. There's also the option of requesting the permission to use names, for example the organizations name. Undoubtedly this requires the researcher to fully disclose the context about the research and how it's performed, if they choose to have their name involved. (Saunders et al., 2003). During this research, the latest version of the manual prototype was presented during the follow-up interviews. The purpose of these interviews was to carefully examine the manual and improve it with the feedback received, thus resolving the ethical issues simultaneously.

4 Results

In this chapter I will present the empirical part of the research. An overview how the actual project progressed in each stage, and how all the literature and choice of method tied together to reach the objective of this research, which is to create a simple and efficient manual about the reverse logistics process. There will also be a section highlighting what each participant contributed towards the manual. However, to prevent any confidentiality issues, I will refrain from providing specific details about the actual reverse logistics process.

4.1 Planning and gathering information

Before I could start planning, I needed to have a clear definition of the research objective. In this case the objective was established during the first meeting with the logistics manager when we discussed about their needs, which was a manual for their reverse logistics process. Following the initial meeting, I researched literature about manuals to better understand the key components in creating a useful and efficient user manual. Equipped with the new knowledge about the creation process of a manual, I went and met with the logistics manager again. This time I brought up what I had researched, and what the process to create this manual will look like, and if there is any existing material which could be useful. We also discussed which people should be involved in the interviews and the timelines.

4.1.1 Available material

After we had come to an agreement with the logistics manager on a clear objective what the manual should accomplish, I requested all available material which could be useful for this project. Of the material I has given, there was a manual from another department which was similar in the way that it achieved the same goal for the reader, which was to understand the whole process and who is responsible in each step of the process. The manual included a description of each step of the process and a chart which gave a visual overlay of the whole process. Another similar achieving document I was given was about the Inbound and outbound logistics process. It included steps of the process and to which internal group each step belonged to. The other manuals I was given weren't exactly aligned with the manual I was trying to create, mostly they were step by step processes of how to do a specific task in the company's ERP system.

4.1.2 Interviews

After the objective of the manual was established, we then planned with the logistics manager on who to involve in the interview process. Since the logistics department is in constant involvement with another internal department during the reverse logistics process, we decided to include someone from the other department in the interviews as well. Just to make sure the flow of the reverse logistics process is correct from both departments point of view.

During the first round of interviews, I asked questions which could give me an overall understanding of the reverse logistics process. After each interview, the interview recording was transcribed. The transcript data was then applied into the data collection framework so it could be analyzed. The framework was regularly updated as I learned more about the reverse logistics process and could better categorize the structure of the framework. These interviews were repeated until I was confident the data I had collected could be used to create the first prototype of the manual.

The purpose of the follow-up interviews was to get feedback on the newest version of the manual prototype. The follow-up interviews were conducted virtually, as it was much more accessible for everyone and gave more flexibility when scheduling interviews. During the follow-up interviews I screenshared the latest prototype version and walked through each step of the manual, looking at the visuals, information & writing style. All the feedback gained was then used accordingly to update the prototype. This process was repeated until no further revisions were necessary, at which point the manual was considered complete.

4.2 The manual

In this chapter, the focus will be on the initial outcome of the manual, from prototype to finalized version. It will cover how each step was conducted and what conclusions and data was used. How each step in the creation was conducted and what conclusions and data went into it. To preserve confidentiality, no details about the actual reverse process will be disclosed.

4.2.1 First prototype

When there was enough data collected to get a general understanding of the whole reverse logistics process, I started to create the first prototype. Each category in the analysis framework was based on each step in the whole reverse logistics process. Due to this there wasn't any issues when transitioning the collected data to the first prototype.

There was no internal company standard for how the manuals should look or be structured. I was given a free hand in designing the structure of the manual, how it should look visually and how it should convey the information to the user. However, the main focus when I started to create the first prototype was neither the text nor the visuals, but rather the structural design of

how to display the content of the manual. Ideally a manual should be comprehensive while at the same time easy to understand.

By adding the current data of the overall reverse logistics process to different designs, made it easier visualize which type of structural design would be most suitable in displaying the content of the manual. Few different prototypes were created, each having a different structural design.

During the next interview these were displayed to be compared and to discuss the pros and cons of each design. Eventually there was a design which we chose to move forward with, as it stood out as the most practical and clear way of displaying the content of the manual.

The design was inspired by the material I had received at the start of this project. Specifically, a process manual used by another department within the company. It was a two-step way of displaying the process, first an overall flowchart with each step in the process, followed by a different page with descriptive information of each step in the flowchart. I did some tweaking to the design which seemed to improve how the information was displayed. With the approval of the structural design, we could move on to the feedback interview cycle.

4.2.2 Feedback on prototype

During the feedback interview cycle, the prototype was improved and changed accordingly to the feedback and suggestions received. Due to the practical and clear design of the manual, these interviews were very quick each time even when going through each step of the process. The meetings would usually start off by going over each step in the flowchart, and then moving on to the descriptive page. By having a visual and clear image of the overall process in a flowchart, the participants were quick to identify any steps which had to be corrected or changed.

Changes made from the feedback gained during the interviews did the following: improve the writing style, grammar, choice of words, correcting descriptions, visual design changes. Tweaking of the overall structure of the flowchart until it was an accurate representation of the reverse logistics process. How the actual steps of the process were being shown or grouped up as steps in the manual had to be reconsidered. For example, if there had to be more emphasis on a specific step of the process, visually it was made to be a separate step of the process in the

manual. Minor steps were visually combined where it made sense to do so for less visual cluster. Some steps deemed unnecessary for this manual were removed.

The interview approach had to be altered during this phase when I noticed I wasn't getting adequate amount of feedback. I opted for more open-ended questions, which resulted in more dialogue on all aspects of the manual. For example, questioning if a description could be rephrased in a clearer way, while still containing the same information. Due to the participants being already familiar with the process beforehand, there was a chance they might lack judgement on what a new employee might see and understand from the descriptions. My lack of experience and knowledge about the actual reverse logistics process was very useful in pointing out if the descriptions in the manual were clear or informative enough.

4.2.3 Final version of the manual

The feedback interviews were repeated until there was no longer anything which needed to be improved nor changed, and all the information was deemed accurate, which meant the manual was complete. At this point all that remained was an approval from the logistics manager, and discussions about in which format they wish to receive the manual.

On top of the first page is a panel with a heading, which describes the name of the process. Below the heading is a simple explanation on the meaning behind the color labels used in the flowchart. Each step in the flowchart has a color, the color is based on which department is responsible for that step in the process. Even though this manual is meant for the logistics department, they requested to include simplified descriptions of the other departments involvement in the process, this is to make it easier to understand the overall process. The focus on detailed descriptions were kept on the steps where the logistics department is involved.

The flowchart starts off from when the customer requests a return, after which the flowchart rapidly diverges into various branches as the procedures differ already depending on the type of return, and internal decisions. Since the flowchart is designed specifically for the logistics department, each procedure in the flowchart ends when the logistics department is no longer involved in the procedure. All this was achieved while still maintaining the clarity of the process flow.

The descriptive page came after the flowchart, on this page could every step of the flowchart be found with in depth description of that specific step in the process. The page was built like a table with columns and rows. One row for each step in the flowchart, starting from when the customer requests a return. Each column consisted of different details of the process. The first column had the same symbol and text of the corresponding step in the flowchart, making the step easy to distinguish. The second column has a comprehensive description of what occurs or should be done during that step. The third column had all the departments involved in that step. The fourth column worked as a filler for useful information about the step, that was not deemed essential enough to add into the second column. This was to make sure the description in the second column was kept short and comprehensive.

The manual was written in Finnish, but some terms used frequently within the company that were in another language were included in the manual. The reason for this was to avoid any potential misinterpretation by a new employee who might not be familiar with these terms and assume they have a different meaning.

The overall goal of this manual was met, which was a clear and comprehensive manual. The reader should be able to take a quick glance at a specific step of the process and instantly know what they should do or whom to contact without having to read through the whole manual. As stated in chapter two, lengthy and complex manuals tend to be unused. Such manuals demand more effort to comprehend and utilize, which can be daunting during stressful situations.

4.3 Participants contribution

For this study, a total of four participants were interviewed. To respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, their contributions will be explained in a general sense. Given the numerous minor changes the manual had, and the significant number of interviews conducted, I will simplify the presentation of what each participant contributed, by emphasizing on the major contributions brought forth by each participant. The participants will be identified alphabetically, ranging from A to D.

4.3.1 Participant A

When asked about the reverse logistics flow, participant A demonstrated a strong understanding of the process and was a significant contributor to the data gathered from the

interviews. Participants input was a tremendous help in shaping the framework, which served as the basis for the manual prototype. When questioning the design and layout of the manual, the participant gave many suggestions on the manual's visual appeal. The participant agreed the format of the other departments manual would be useful, as it would align with the manual's objective. In terms of grammar and text refinement, Participant A also played a role in determining the placement of text within the manual and identifying its necessary contents. The participant also made substantial contributions by actively correcting grammar errors and proposing alternative phrasing. Participant A's focus on ensuring readability for inexperienced employees was particularly noteworthy.

4.3.2 Participant B

During the questioning of the reverse logistics flow, Participant B demonstrated a high level of knowledge regarding the internal processes. The participant was instrumental in reshaping the process flow multiple times until it accurately represented the reverse logistics flow. When discussing the design of the manual, Participant B provided valuable insight based on previous experience with similar flowcharts. The participant made suggestions about symbols and colors that greatly improved the flowchart. Participant B also showed a keen eye for grammar, approaching the content from the perspective of a new employee. As a result, the participant suggested some changes to simplify the explanations, ultimately enhancing the readability of both the manual and the flowchart.

4.3.3 Participant C

Participant C proved to be highly knowledgeable in answering questions about the internal reverse logistics flow. The participant provided valuable feedback on the handling of returns once they arrived back at the factory. Participant C also proposed some suggestions to improve the process flow, which were ultimately agreed upon by the other participants and successfully implemented. These changes made the process smoother and more efficient.

4.3.4 Participant D

During discussions about the process flow, Participant D shared their knowledge and expertise regarding the initial steps of the customer claims process. The participant shared valuable insights on the exchange of documents and information that take place at the beginning of the

process. This input was taken into consideration when revising the information exchange section of the manual, which ultimately led to some improvements being made. Participant D's contribution was appreciated and played a helpful role in the overall development of the manual.

5 Discussion

In this chapter, I will provide a retrospective analysis of how the results and methodology of the project played out. I will discuss areas where improvements could have been made or where different approaches could have been taken in hindsight.

5.1 Discussion of results

The structural design of the manual would have been significantly different if it wasn't for the other departments manual I received in the start. It served as a significant source of the design inspiration, as it perfectly achieved the objective of what this manual was intended to accomplish. This design, coupled with the theories outlined in chapter two on how to construct a manual, resulted in a favorable outcome.

The analysis framework closely resembled the flowchart. If I had noticed this earlier, I could have developed the initial prototype sooner. The framework included frames categorized for each step of the process, which made it easy to transfer to a flowchart.

Having access to the right tools, could have ensured an even better result. Many of the flowchart programs had premium versions behind a paywall, including the Microsoft office package I had access to through the university.

The expected timeline should have been significantly extended. The number of meetings this kind of project required was underestimated. Including the number of times a meeting had to be rescheduled causing the already long project timeline to stretch out even further.

5.2 Discussion of method

There was no internal company standard for how the manuals should look or be structured. I was given a free hand in designing the structure of the manual, how it should look visually and how it should convey the information to the reader.

The interview approach was pretty accurate to how it was done in practice. Despite utilizing an interview guide, the initial interviews lacked structure. However, after implementing a framework and an appropriate interview guide, they became semi-structured. Although keeping the interviews on the right track and stay on topic was harder than expected.

From a validity and reliability point of view, it was a wise decision to also interview someone from the other department, even though the manual was intended for the logistics department.

Acquiring information and achieving a comprehensive understanding of the entire process took considerably longer than expected. Developing a visual prototype earlier in the process, even if less precise, could have accelerated the project. Once the first prototype was developed, the project advanced rapidly.

Realizing how important it is to have a framework to analyze qualitative data with, came after a few meetings. The data was so disorganized and scattered the creation of a framework was necessary to begin making sense of it.

If I were to redo this research, I would not focus on gathering as much theoretical information as possible in the beginning. I would start by only researching theories on data collection and interviews, and then immediately proceed to conducting interviews. After which I would look into theories about the creation of a manual. The project would have advanced much faster with this approach.

6 Conclusions

A case study done for the logistics department at Prysmian Group Finland Oy. The logistics manager requested a manual to be made for their reverse logistics process. The objective of the manual was to be simple and comprehensive, while describing all the critical information about the reverse logistics process. The reason why a simple and comprehensive manual was chosen

to be made for a complicated process, is to ensure it has practical usage. Typically, lengthy and complex manuals are unused and become dust collectors. Such manuals demand more effort to comprehend and utilize, which can be daunting during stressful situations.

The feedback received has been positive, with employees who were already familiar with the reverse logistics process expressing satisfaction with having a standard guide to follow. The manual's structural design ensures the process can be easily understood at first glance, which is ideal as the process can be complex and could become time-consuming for new employees to grasp.

Learning about the various theories behind creating a manual, which is to convey information to the user, has sparked my interest in how even the most complicated tasks could be quickly taught to someone with no prior experience, simply by utilizing an efficient manual.

6.2 Suggestions for further studies

As companies evolve and processes change over time, it is highly likely that updates will be required for this manual. To ensure its future relevance, both the clean PDF version and the raw files of the document will be provided, allowing for easy editing and updating as needed. Moreover, the manual can be used as a model for how other complex processes can be presented in a comprehensive and practical manner, serving as inspiration and a template for future manuals.

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