



Leading change by making it safe

A case study on psychological safety and change
leadership

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ABSTRACT

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At the core of change are often the people affected by it as it is up to them to adapt to the new way of things. This adaptation can bring about emotions of confusion, uncertainty and even fear.

When a team is described as psychologically safe, its members feel safe about being themselves, speaking up their mind and making mistakes without having to fear the consequences. The research aimed to better understand the significance of psychological safety in the context of change management and change leadership efforts. The objective was to find out what leaders could do to promote the feeling of psychological safety in their teams and by doing so contribute to creating a positive attitude towards change.

The research was implemented as a case study involving the introduction of a new claims handling system at Company X. The theoretical framework consists of concepts of change management, change leadership and psychological safety and it acts as a base for the empirical study. There are two research methods including theme interviews and a survey among the employees of the company in question.

The research results show that psychological safety is an especially important prerequisite for learning and thus the adaptation to change. Leaders act as enablers for a favorable individual - and team learning conditions and by doing so promote favorable conditions for the adoption to change. Leaders also contribute to the state of psychological safety through their behavior, by promoting open communication and feedback and inviting participation.

Key words: psychological safety, leadership, change management

TIIVISTELMÄ

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Muutosten keskiössä ovat usein ne ihmiset joihin muutos vaikuttaa, sillä heidän tulee sopeutua uuteen tilanteeseen. Tämä sopeutuminen taas voi tuoda mukanaan hämmennyksen, epävarmuuden ja jopa pelon tunteita.

Kun tiimiä kuvataan psykologisesti turvalliseksi, sen jäsenet uskaltavat näyttäytyä omana itsenään, kertoa ajatuksistaan avoimesti ja tehdä virheitä ilman pelkoa seuraamuksista. Tutkimuksen tarkoitus oli paremmin ymmärtää psykologisen turvallisuuden merkitystä muutosjohtamisen ja muutoksen johtamisen konteksteissa. Tavoite oli selvittää, mitä johtajat voisivat tehdä tukeakseen psykologisen turvallisuuden tunnetta tiimeissään ja näin osallistua positiivisemmän muutosasenteen luomiseen.

Tutkimus toteutettiin tapaustutkimuksena, joka käsittelee uuden korvausjärjestelmän käyttöönottoa yrityksessä X. Teoreettinen viitekehys koostuu muutoksen johtamisen, muutosjohtamisen ja psykologisen turvallisuuden teemoista ja toimii pohjana empiiriselle tutkimukselle. Tutkimuksessa käytetään metodeina yrityksen henkilöstölle suunnattuja teemahaastatteluja ja kyselyä.

Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että psykologinen turvallisuus on erityisen tärkeä edellytys oppimiselle ja sen myötä muutokseen mukautumiselle. Johtajat toimivat yksilö- ja ryhmäoppimisen mahdollistajina ja näin ollen tukevat suotuisia olosuhteita muutoksen omaksumiseen. Lisäksi he myötävaikuttavat psykologisen turvallisuuden tilaan viestimällä sitä omalla käytöksellään, edistämällä avointa kommunikointia ja palautetta ja kannustamalla henkilöstöä osallistumaan muutosprosessiin.

Avainsanat: Psykologinen turvallisuus, muutosjohtaminen, muutoksen johtaminen

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Initiative for the study

One of the 2020 megatrends in Finland is the total embedment of technology. The changing work life requires skills of continuous learning (Dufva, 2020) and the pace and change types of change continue to grow. This means greater requirements for employee adaptability (Pulakos *et al.*, 2000). Whether the change it is a new company policy, process or system, employees are living the turmoil of change and expected to adapt to it.

Change in the workplace can threaten an employee in numerous ways. As a reaction to a threat, resisting change is a primal human survival response (Hunt, 2015). Instead of understanding how to control or improve attitudes and people's adaptability towards change, leaders and coaches need to start paying attention to the why of things. As Kussrow (2001) states, "it falls upon the leader to approach all individuals they are trying to influence in ways that humans are naturally (neurologically) designed to learn. Thus the need to employ brain-based leadership design".

The idea of this research was initiated by the many recent and upcoming changes at insurance Company X, which is the case organization for this thesis. The megatrend of the embedment of technology in the company in question is represented especially in the automatization of claims handling processes as well as in the development of new digital services to customers. New claims handling systems and automatization reshape the job description of claims handlers and face them with the necessity of re-learning the conventional process. The personnel is under pressure to adapt to a working environment of continuous transition.

Having experience in leading a team, the author feels that a leader's mission lies in enabling others to perform at their best. Leadership clearly plays a role in change management. What could team leaders do to help their team members adapt to change and could psychological safety be one of the keys to do so?

1.2 Research need, purpose and questions

Leadership can be defined as “a relational activity where an individual(s) guide(s) (followers) to attain an objective or goal or direct(s) others (followers) to attain an objective or goal” (Beerel, 2009). The practices of leadership seem to be crucially important in organizational change processes where employees are exposed to uncertainty and the challenge of adapting to new.

There is a significant amount of research and other publications on topics such as change leadership (Holt *et al.*, 2003; Herold *et al.*, 2008; Magsaysay and Hechanova, 2017; Hechanova, Caringal-Go and Magsaysay, 2018), the relationship between leadership practices and psychological safety (Roussin, 2008; Walumbwa and Schaubroeck, 2009; Erkutlu and Chafra, 2016) and psychological safety as having either a direct or mediating role in employee voice, learning and performance in organizations (Edmondson, 1999; Baer and Frese, 2003; Caine *et al.*, 2007; Detert and Burris, 2007; Huang, Chu and Jiang, 2008; Carmeli and Hoffer Gittell, 2009) from the last few decades. However, research studying the relationship of change leadership and psychological safety (Cataldo, Raelin and Lambert, 2009) is still relatively modest. As previous research implies, a lot still remains to be discovered when it comes to leadership actions that promote psychological safety in times of change.

The purpose of this research is to define how can the team leader contribute to establishing a safe working environment in order to promote a positive attitude towards change? The research questions are set as follows:

- What is the role and responsibilities of a team leader in change management?
- What is the relationship between psychological safety and change?
- How can a team leader promote psychological safety?

2 CHANGE, LEADERSHIP AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

2.1 Reasoning of themes

The theoretical framework is mapped around three themes that, after significant amount of literature research, rose to be of most importance in relation to the research purpose. These themes are change management, change leadership and psychological safety. To be able to combine these three elements in the research while managing to keep it consistent, the topics were narrowed to two sections that describe the change management process and psychological safety from a rather practical point of view. The research also combined leadership practices to these theoretical framework topics to illustrate the important role and impact of leadership in both.

Firstly, understanding change requires comprehension of both the process and individual change (Proschi, 2020). In order to do this, the author chose to introduce well-known, widely-used models of change management. They provide insight into the process practices that take place and indicate actions required to implement wanted change but also demonstrate the complex process on an individual level. The theories also aid in distinguishing responsibilities of the team leader, underlining crucial practices in leading teams through change.

Secondly, the author studied the concept of psychological safety through a number of research findings and then revised topic-related theories that illustrate the direct and mediating effects of psychological safety in relation to change-related topics, especially learning. To keep the consistency of practical implications, related theories that suggest concrete ways in building psychological safety were outlined. As with change management, the theories and practicalities chosen are combined with leadership practices.

2.2 Why change management?

Firstly we need to understand what change stands for in organizations: What is the process of change and how can it be managed to result in the wanted outcome? Secondly, and most importantly, it is crucial for companies to see the value in change management: Why is managing change important for success?

According to research findings by Booz&Co, only about half of intended change processes result in success, meaning that the other half of change efforts fail to meet targets. The same study implicates concerning facts on employee reactions in times of change: Most of them felt excluded from the change process, 44 % said they did not understand the change and 38 % reported to disagree with the change (Aguirre, Post and Alpern, 2013).

According to findings by the PSYRES-consortium, organizational change negatively affects job satisfaction, emotional exhaustion, feelings of cynicism, stress, working ability, job insecurity and sick leave (Pahkin *et al.*, 2011). Leadership plays a major role in change management. It is also one main reason for change efforts to fail: too often leaders neglect the importance of reducing stress and anxiety caused by the change among employees (Beerel, 2009). Change is a matter that, when continuously reoccurring, poses the similar negative effects each time. People affected by change do not develop a certain resistance to it. On the contrary, when employees are exposed to continuous change, they have an elevated risk of suffering from emotional exhaustion and are less dedicated and satisfied at their work than those who have not experienced so many changes (Pahkin *et al.*, 2011).

Van der Voet and Vermeeren (2017) studied organization's cutback effects, findings that employee communication, participation and encouragement were helpful tools in moderating employee commitment during this change. Pahkin *et al.*, (2011) found the same three factors to positively influence the organizational change process among employees.

Leadership practices play a key role in change management (Gill, 2009; Hussain *et al.*, 2018). In addition, as there is no "one size fits all" change leaders need to

determine the best way to lead their particular organization (Hechanova, Caringal-Go and Magsaysay, 2018). For example, Herold *et al.* (2008) studied transformational leadership, which is most often described by leadership behavior of creating and communicating vision and creating empowering opportunities. According to their research, when the impact of change to an employee's job was high, transformational leadership method and the individual's commitment to change showed a significant positive correlation in comparison to the leadership practice of change management (Herold *et al.* 2008).

Focus on organizational change efforts through process-thinking, strong leadership practices and employee involvement seems to be beneficial in reaching the wanted outcome and thus contributing to the organization's performance.

2.3 Change management models

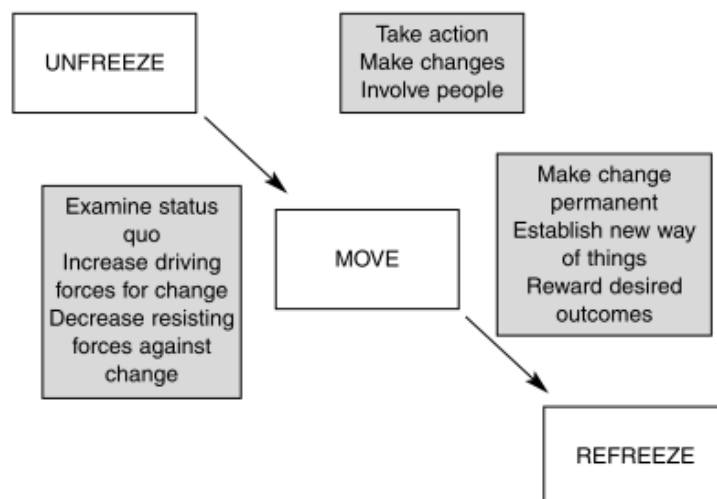
2.3.1 Lewin's 3-stage model

Kurt Lewin developed his 3-stage model in 1947 and it has since served as a base for many other theories. His field theory concludes that individuals' behavior is affected by pushing forces, which promote change, and pulling forces, which resist change. The need for change is necessary and acceptable only when the pushing forces exceed the pulling forces. The change is displayed by three stages of unfreezing, change and refreezing (Lewin, 1952; Erskine, 2013). Lewin's approach is humanistic, promoting learning and employee involvement as key factors in establishing change (Burnes, 2004).

The purpose of refreezing is to break the status quo by decreasing the pulling forces as they enable maintaining the current status of things. It takes action in order to attract employees away from the current status of things and create interest and dedication to the change. In practice stage one represents actions of communication, creating awareness and participation of employees. It is crucial that people involved in the change process understand why the change is needed and feel like they can participate in it. This provides a possibility to create employee engagement (Erskine, 2013).

The second stage is where new behavioral models are tested and accepted. This can be seen as the stage where individuals are most impacted by the change. Actions towards establishing the change in this stage include employee engagement, coaching, training and effective communication (Erskine, 2013).

Finally, refreezing stands for establishing and maintaining the newly gained status so that the adopted behavior remains. This stage requires actions that line company practices and processes with the new state of things. In practice this can for example mean modifying goals to meet new targets, changing company culture or modifying practices to better serve the current state (Erskine, 2013).



PICTURE 1. Lewin's 3-stage model (Source: Moon, 2009)

2.3.2 Kotter's 8-step model

Kotter's model bases on Lewin's model, suggesting eight concrete steps, illustrated in picture 2, to create change.

KOTTER'S EIGHT-STEP MODEL

1. **Establish a sense of urgency.** Discussing today's competitive realities, looking at potential future scenarios. Increasing the 'felt-need' for change.
2. **Form a powerful guiding coalition.** Assembling a powerful group of people who can work well together.
3. **Create a vision.** Building a vision to guide the change effort together with strategies for achieving this.
4. **Communicate the vision.** Kotter emphasizes the need to communicate at least 10 times the amount you expect to have to communicate. The vision and accompanying strategies and new behaviours needs to be communicated in a variety of different ways.
The guiding coalition should be the first to role model new behaviours.
5. **Empower others to act on the vision.** This step includes getting rid of obstacles to change such as unhelpful structures or systems. Allow people to experiment.
6. **Plan for and create short-term wins.** Look for and advertise short-term visible improvements. Plan these in and reward people publicly for improvements.
7. **Consolidate improvements and produce still more change.** Promote and reward those able to promote and work towards the vision. Energize the process of change with new projects, resources, change agents.
8. **Institutionalize new approaches.** Ensure that everyone understands that the new behaviours lead to corporate success.

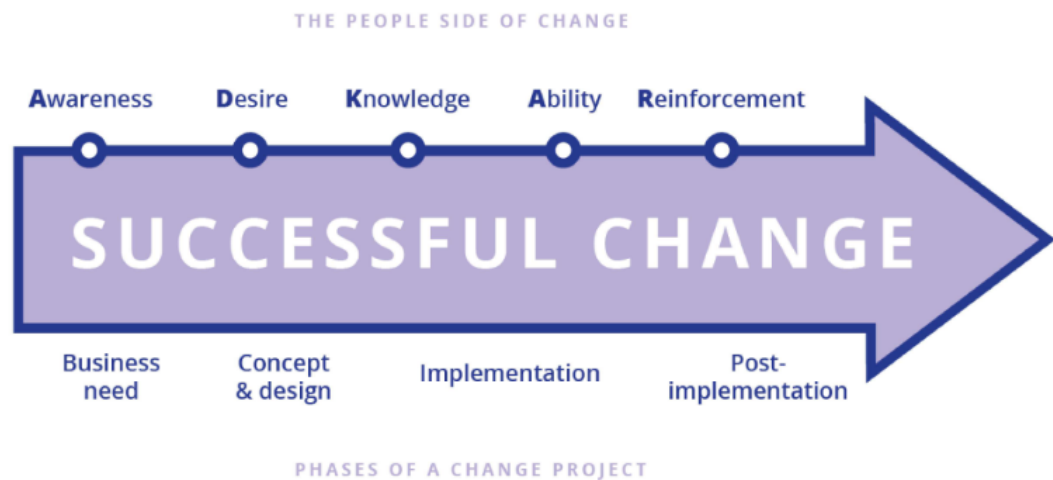
PICTURE 2. Kotter's 8-step model (source: Moon, 2009)

First step in the model is to create an understanding of the necessity and urgency of the change by, for example, estimating threats and opportunities that the future can hold and communicating this to stakeholders for their understanding and support. Once urgency has been established, Kotter's second step is to form a strong guiding team to communicate and guide change throughout the process. Steps three and four contain vision: Creating a vision (step 3) and efficiently communicating it (step 4) to all parties involved. In step 5, action is taken to remove any obstacles from the way of change, such as resistance to change or company processes that do not serve the purpose. Step 6 of the process is to create something called "short-term wins" or in other words, positive and visible outcomes of the change, to demonstrate the positive effects of the change and further motivate the employees involved. The change process is not complete without building on it in step 7, meaning that at this stage it is time to evaluate the change and expand it to the full potential. Finally, the last step stands for verifying the change has been embedded in the all aspects of the new way such as leadership practices, vision and processes (Kotter, 1995, 1996).

Kotter outlines that it is crucial for management to understand that a change process is complex and time-consuming. It requires patience as well as attention to detail in order to succeed (Kotter, 1995). Each step builds on the previous one. Speeding up the process by skipping steps is likely to result in an unwanted outcome (Auguste, 2013).

2.3.3 The Prosci ADKAR-model

The ADKAR-model designed originally by Prosci's founder Jeff Hiatt. It is a change management model focusing on the journey of an individual in the context of change. The name of the model represents the five stages of the change process: awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement. (Prosci, 2020). The importance of leadership, coaching and employee participation are displayed throughout the stages.



PICTURE 3. The ADKAR-model, viewpoints of both individuals and project management (Source: Prosci, 2020).

According to the model, change is displayed by two sides, project management and the individuals. The side that more often fails is the change process of individuals. ADKAR's solution to successful individual change includes creating awareness of change, building desire to participate in the change, providing

knowledge of how to change, enhancing ability to implement the change in everyday work and reinforcing the new stage of things to maintain change (Proschi, 2020).

Meeting the human need to know the “why” of change is a critical change management factor (Hiatt, 2006). This is why the first step is building awareness so that individuals understand what is the change about, why is it necessary and what will it eventually provide both for the organization and especially to individuals themselves. Tools for building awareness include effective communication, having an executive sponsor to promote it, coaching managers and leaders so that they can then provide coaching to employees and creating transparency by providing employees with access to the company’s business information such as numbers on performance (Proschi, 2020).

The second step of desire stands for an individual’s motivation for the change. When thinking of leadership, Hiatt (2006) explains that this stage can be difficult to tackle as in the end you cannot force individuals to support the change. Active and visible change leadership is crucial as leaders work as promoters for the change, leading by example. This is also why change leaders need to receive the appropriate training to be able to do so. Other tools in this stage include assessing the risk of change and preparing for resistance, engaging employees in the process and aligning possible incentive programs with the change. Especially employee engagement and participation are key factors in building support and desire (Proschi, 2020).

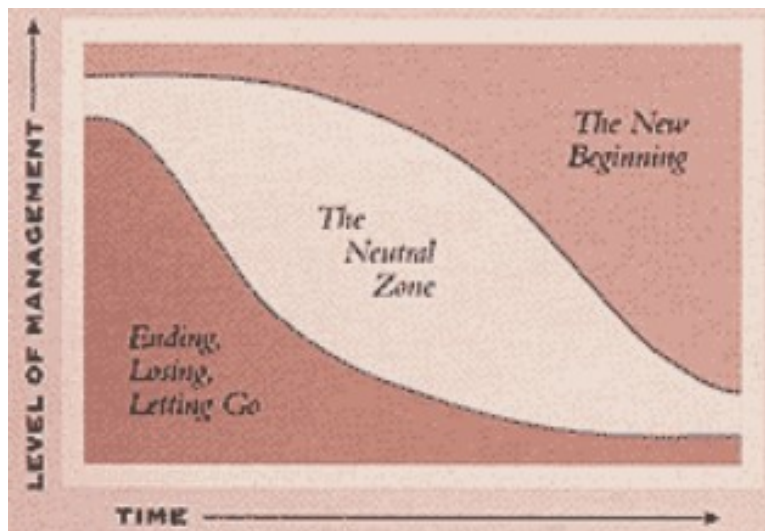
The third element of ADKAR is knowledge. It includes teaching individuals the necessary skills and providing them with the necessary information about possible new company processes, systems and tools. The stage also includes an individual’s understanding of the possible change in responsibilities and roles (Hiatt, 2006). The model suggests training programs, providing job aid for learning, individual coaching and establishing user groups and forums to promote peer learning (Proschi, 2020).

Creating knowledge then moves on step four, ensuring that employees are capable of taking action and really working on the change. This requires that employees are provided guidance, hand-on training and feedback on their work (Proschi 2020). Daily involvement and support of managers is important. According to the model, managers must establish a safe environment, one that allows making mistakes as for employees learning new skills and practicing new behavior safety is important. Other types of support and creating knowledge include support from experts, practical exercises and feedback and measuring performance (Proschi, 2020).

The change process is not complete as soon as change has been implemented: It still requires reinforcement in step 5. Reinforcement is aimed at sustaining change. This stage celebrates success and aims to create favorable ground for further development. From an individual point of view it also serves as personal satisfaction and motivation through feelings of achievement. Giving recognition, rewarding, asking for feedback from employees and estimating performance are useful actions for this final stage (Proschi, 2020).

2.3.4 Bridge's transition model

William Bridge's transition models bases on the idea that while change itself is external, transition is an internal process, a psychological reorientation people go through. It displays three stages through which transition takes place: End, Neutral zone and New beginning (Bridges and Mitchell, 2000).



PICTURE 4. Bridge's transition model (Source: Bridges and Mitchell, 2000)

Endings mean that employees going through change will need to let go of what they are used to. After this, they enter the neutral zone which is a transition phase described by uncertainty. This phase that takes most of employee's energy. The last phase of transition is the new beginning, settling to the new way if things (Bridges and Mitchell, 2000).

Ending is, in a sense, a person having to let go of he or she was in order to adapt a new role. This first phase of transition is often what we interpret as change resistance. Bridges describes the individual feelings through three aspects of disengagement, disidentification and disenchantment. From a managerial point of view, encouraging people to talk about their feelings, demonstrating the positive sides of change, providing training and allowing free communication and expression of feelings help to alleviate the pain (Bridges, 1986).

The neutral zone is a difficult part of transition, as it is the stage between the old reality and the upcoming or new reality, which can still remain unclear at this stage. The stage can be described through conditions of disorientation, disintegration and discovery where an individual is in a sense "between stages", understanding that what used to be the reality and context is no longer valid but the new state of things is yet very unclear. Management needs to acknowledge the existence of this stage, accepting the possible temporary negative influences on work performance and help individuals over the stage (Bridges, 1986). Even

though the neutral zone is challenging time, it can also be a time of creativeness (Cameron and Green, 2012).

The new beginning then requires adapting to the new changes, whether they are processes, skills, relationships, job descriptions and so on. The model distresses vision, communicated by leaders, as the foundation to a new beginning. This stage explains the managerial necessity to understand individual loss caused by the change. Loss can be displayed as loss of turf, attachment, meaning, future, competence, control or loss of itself. Actions to compensate for loss vary according to the type of loss experiences by the individual (Bridges, 1986). The new beginning is reached when people involved feel an emotional commitment in doing things the new way (Cameron and Green, 2012).

Rather than being a practical guide to change management, the transition model focuses on the psychological side of individuals, aiming to create an understanding of what people go through in the change process. By understanding the psychological side, change leaders can more effectively adapt change management practices to team members.

2.4 Change management and leadership practices

The change management models introduced provide a foundation for extracting certain leadership practices in the change process. Communicating the change initiative and necessity, providing support and coaching, promoting employee engagement through participation and establishing a safe setting of open communication and learning are all responsibilities that are, at least partly, associated with change leadership. Alongside leadership practices the models also outline a certain need for leaders to understand the psychological perspective of individual change. People's feelings are involved and they should not be repressed but rather understood and guided in the right direction.

2.4.1 8 practices for change

To clarify change leadership responsibilities, Rowland and Higgs (2008) developed eight leadership practices for change. According to the findings the biggest effect is gained by the actions a leader does, not the things that he or she says or plans for change. The theoretical level of understanding change a leader has seems to be unimportant, it is the actions and reactions, being able to lead in the moment by reacting to changes in the environment, that count in successful change leadership efforts (Rowland and Higgs, 2008).

There are four necessary leadership practices. Insight and comprehension stands for the leader being able to communicate the need to change and the reasoning for it. Change leaders also build on the organization's blueprint, creating structure and control as well as informal networks and change skills for change efforts. Third, change leaders build capacity by developing change skills and so aligning processes to fit the new way of things. Finally, change leaders thrive to grow the personnel's potential by actions that support everyone to perform at their best (Rowland and Higgs, 2008).

In addition to the necessary practices another four distinguishing practices exist. Where the latter four are necessary for implementing change, these four are seen as the factors that determinate success of the change efforts. Leader as an attractor helps to create, communicate and acts as an example of vision and thrives to provide meaning through it. The term "Edge and tension" is used in the model to describe the leader's capabilities is encouraging open communication, tackling resistance, guiding behavior and rewarding performance. Thirdly, the leader acts as a container that has to be able to manage tension and anxiety and firmly direct employees towards the right path. Finally, the leader provides a type of "transformation space" which means providing learning opportunities and open discussion for employees personal development and promoting engagement (Rowland and Higgs, 2008).

2.4.2 Kotter: What leaders really do?

Management, as Kotter (1996) defines it, is the effort of keeping a complex system, consisting of people and technology, running whereas leadership is the effort of adapting organizations to continuous change of circumstances.

Leadership efforts that result in producing change are categorized into three types of action. Leaders establish direction by creating vision as well as strategies for obtaining that vision. They align people by communicating the vision and strategy in an understandable way, thus helping to create teams and coalitions in favour of the change. Leaders also motivate and support people living the change turmoil, helping them to overcome obstacles (Kotter 1996).

So the core task of leadership is to prepare people for change, help them cope with it and overcome it (Cameron and Green, 2012) by answering basic human needs (Kotter 1996). Considering that satisfying basic human needs is a part of change leadership, we can see a direct link between change management and psychological safety. In order to cope with change, employees need to feel safe so they can learn whatever the change poses and thus perform at their best. Next we take a closer look at psychological safety.

2.5 Why psychological safety?

Change can be challenging for all the personnel involved, as it requires adaptation (Bridges, 1986) in both personal- and group level. This adaptation always involves learning (Rowland and Higgs, 2008; Prosci, 2020), whether it is a new tool, position or way of thinking. As will next be explained through theories on psychological safety, learning is a process of frustration and difficulties as it is something new that the learner does not yet fully understand. Adapting new skills is also a phase in which people should be able to make mistakes and learn from them. The challenges of learning can outweigh the positive experience if fear of failure is present. In other words, for the change process to succeed, people involved should feel safe in order to learn the new ways.

Psychological safety can be defined as shared belief among members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking. Team members have a sense of confidence that the team will not embarrass, reject or punish someone for speaking their mind (Edmondson, 1999). In other words, employees can feel comfortable being themselves and know they will not be punished for doing so.

The theme of psychological safety has been studied in individual, team- and cultural context. A variety of studies show that psychological safety is an important factor in organizational success, either as the operator or as a mediator. Schein (2006) related psychological safety to individuals' ability to change, stating that motivation to change will not arise until the change target feels secure enough to do so. Edmondson (1999) studied psychological safety and team learning in 51 working teams in a manufacturing company, concluding that psychological safety correlated positively with team learning and thus, team performance. Baer and Frese (2003) extended the concept to an organizational climate of psychological safety. Their research results indicated clear relations between climates for initiative and psychological safety and firm performance, stating that psychological safety is not only a promoting factor in team performance (Edmondson 1999) but also in the performance of mid-sized companies. Edmondson and Lei (2014) reviewed literature on psychological safety, examining the topic-related related research. The review concludes that the interpersonal experience of psychological safety is argued to be foundational if the company wants to enable the kind of behaviors that are essential to learning and change in all of personal, team- and organizational levels.

The leader's role is important in creating psychological safety. Especially crucial is the leader's behavior, as team members are very aware of it. Openness to change and interest in acting to feedback can be used as tools for encouraging employees to speak up (Detert and Burris, 2007). A supportive, coaching-oriented leader who reacts to questions and challenges non-defensively is more likely to promote what the team experiences as a safe environment (Kahn, 1990; Edmondson, 1999, 2019).

2.6 Psychological safety models

2.6.1 Kahn's four factors of psychological safety

Through his research on personal engagement and disengagement, to which psychological safety is associated with, Kahn (1990) differentiated four factors that directly influence psychological safety.

Interpersonal relationships is one of the four factors that promotes psychological safety when these relationships are supportive and based on trust. They promote an environment where individuals can learn by trial and error without having to worry about the consequences of possible failure. There is more potential of threat in relationships between hierarchies in comparison to peers (Kahn, 1990). This observation stresses the importance of leader behavior in creating psychological safety.

Another factor is group and interpersonal dynamics that are described as the assumed unconscious roles and unacknowledged characters. Individuals take on roles that vary in the context of how they bring their own identity to these roles. The extent to which one's own identity is displayed is dependent on the level experienced safety. Different roles expose different levels of safety depending on how much respect and authority the roles receive (Kahn, 1990).

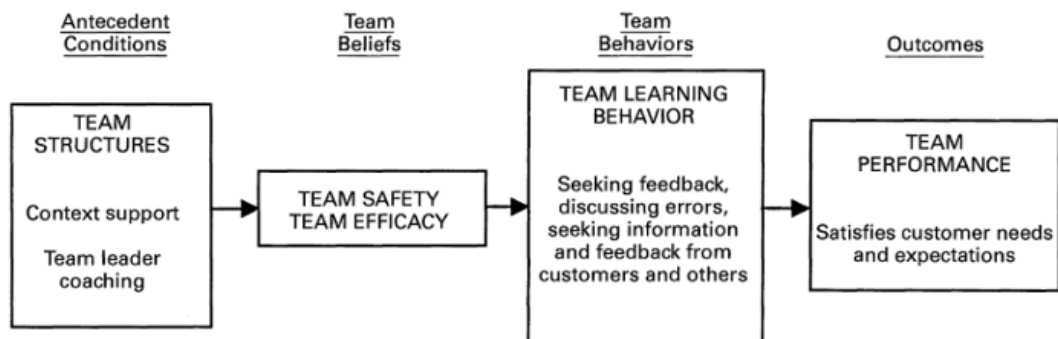
Third, management style and process are factors in psychological safety. Managers who are able to establish a supportive environment are creating conditions for people to try and fail without fear of consequences. Creating and leading vision is also a managerial skill that enhances perceived security as it communicates competence and the managers trust in him- or herself. Managers should also allow people to be involved in the processes by offering them control over their work. Strict control sends a message of distrust (Kahn, 1990).

Finally, organizational norms is the fourth factor. They are the shared expectations that people have of general behaviors of the members of the system. People feel safer with behavior inside these norms whereas deviance causes anxiety and frustration meaning that it is safer to work inside the norms than to wonder

outside them (Kahn, 1990). Based on this factor it would appear that at its best, norms can guide a coherent way of working together but at its worst restrain development as people are afraid of breaking the rules of “how things have always been done”.

2.6.2 Edmondson’s team-learning model

Psychological safety is crucial in enabling team learning and team performance. In Edmondson’s model, team leader coaching and context support act as preceding conditions for team safety and efficiency. A supportive leader skilled in coaching is more likely to promote team psychological safety than an authoritarian one. Team learning process is described as an ongoing process of interactions such as feedback and discussing errors. For this to happen, team members need to feel psychologically safe enough to do so. Again, this type of team learning is what enables team performance, providing customer satisfaction as the outcome (Edmondson, 1999).



PICTURE 5. A model of work-team learning (Source: Edmondson, 1999)

Differences in team learning behaviour can be explained by the team safety and efficacy rather than the team type (Edmondson, 1999). This is consistent with what Google found out in 2015 when they studied the factors behind successful teams. Having the best performing people did not equal the best teams but it was, among other factors, the psychologically safe environment that enabled team performance (Duhigg, 2016).

For her research, Edmondson also created a simple questionnaire to measure whether team members felt psychologically safe. The questionnaire, shown in picture 6, consists of seven statements to which the respondents answer on a scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. It also measures team leader coaching through three simple questions. The questionnaire has been adapted to use by other researchers too.

Team psychological safety*	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you.	.36	.38	.49	.41	.34	.43
2. Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.		.28	.56	.35	.34	.37
3. People on this team sometimes reject others for being different.			.32	.45	.45	.33
4. It is safe to take a risk on this team.				.37	.37	.48
5. It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help.					.42	.41
6. No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.						.39
7. Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.						

Team leader coaching†	2	3
<i>The team leader . . .</i>		
1. . . . initiates meetings to discuss the team’s progress.		.38 .47
2. . . . is available for consultation on problems.		.70
3. . . . is an ongoing “presence” in this team—someone who is readily available.		

PICTURE 6. A take on Edmondson’s research questionnaire on psychological safety and team leader coaching (source: Edmondson, 1999)

Keeping in mind that adapting to change and being able to implement it is strongly related to learning, the model provides valuable insight into change management practices. It reveals factors that enable team learning, providing leaders and understanding on what to focus on in their attempts to lead change. In addition, Edmondson’s research provides a tool through which psychological safety and team coaching can be evaluated.

2.6.3 Schein’s 8 activities

The change model by Schein and Schein (2016) describes the change through three stages. Psychological safety needs to be established in the first one, as it enables creating motivation to change.

Stage 1 Creating the Motivation to Change (Unfreezing)

- Disconfirmation
- Creation of survival anxiety or guilt
- Learning anxiety produces resistance to change
- Creation of psychological safety to overcome learning anxiety

Stage 2 Learning New Concepts, New Meanings for Old Concepts, and New Standards for Judgment

- Imitation of and identification with role models
- Scanning for solutions and trial-and-error learning

Stage 3 Internalizing New Concepts, Meanings, and Standards

- Incorporation into self-concept and identity
- Incorporation into ongoing relationships

PICTURE 7. The stages of the cycle of learning/change (source Schein and Schein, 2016)

Disconfirmation is unpleasant information that shows the staff that something is not working in the intended way. This can mean goals that are not being met or processes that do not work in the intended way. Change leaders' responsibility is to communicate this data, that sometimes can be very alarming or upsetting, to employees in order to initiate change. When the disconfirming information has an important and strong enough effect towards the recipients, it creates survival anxiety or guilt. In addition, employees realize that change will bring along the need to learn and adapt new ways of perceiving, thinking, behaving and feeling. This understanding can create learning anxiety which in turn creates resistance to change (Schein and Schein, 2016).

The reasoning behind learning anxiety is fear. It comes in many forms, including fear of loss of power or position, fear of temporary incompetence, fear or punishment for incompetence, fear of loss of personal identity and fear of loss of group membership (Schein and Schein, 2016).

There are two crucial conditions that a leader needs to create for change. Principle 1 is that survival anxiety or guilt must be greater than learning anxiety and principle 2 is that learning anxiety must be reduced instead of increasing survival anxiety (Schein and Schein, 2016). Principle 2 is where psychological safety comes in. The authors suggest eight steps in creating psychological safety to employees going through the change process.

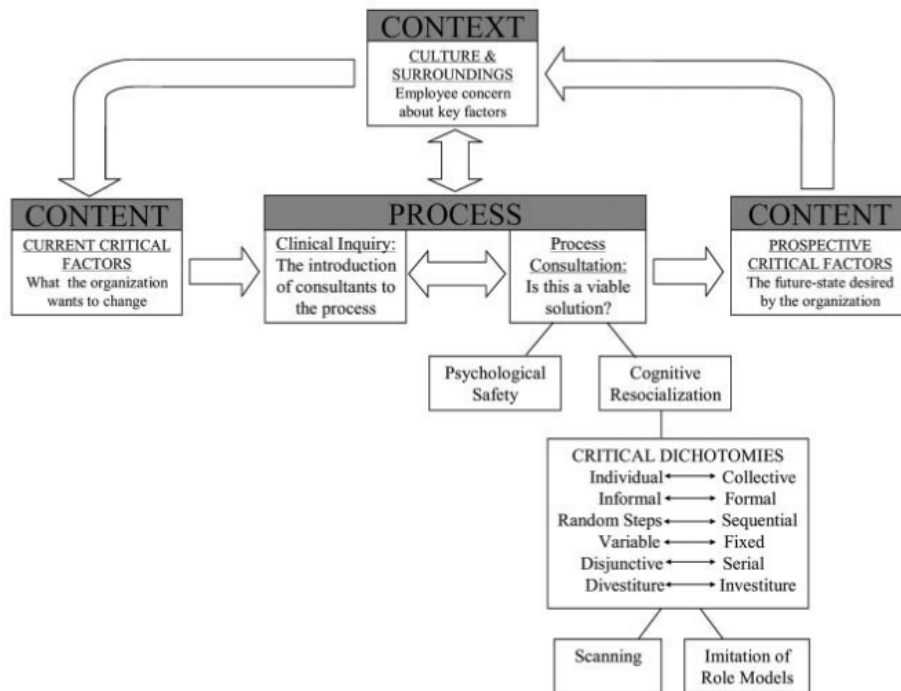
1. Provide a compelling positive vision - It is crucial that employees affected by the change come to believe that learning the new ways will be good for them. The vision should be clear, explained through behavioral terms and consistently communicated by the management.
2. Provide formal training - If the change requires new ways of working that have to be learned, employees must be provided with the accurate training to adapt these new skills.
3. Involve the learner - Individuals learn in a variety of ways and so there should be variability in the learning methods provided. It is important that employees feel they can manage their own informal learning process.
4. Train relevant “family” groups and teams - Culture arises in groups and so training and practice needs to be extended to involve the whole group. This is how new norms and assumptions can be built together.
5. Provide resources - Resources stand for time, practice fields, coaches and feedback. It is not possible to properly learn something unless the right setting to do so has been provided. Practicing and being provided a safe environment in which to make mistakes is equally important.
6. Provide positive role models - Learners must be able to concretely see the change in the behavior and attitudes of other to really adapt it. Especially the behavior of high-level personnel of the organization is important.
7. Provide support groups in which learning problems can be aired and discussed - Learning is a process that includes frustration and difficulties. When learners are provided the opportunity to discuss the learning process and it out, they provide each other support and learn together.
8. Remove barriers and build new supporting systems and structures - The systems and structures need to support the new way of thinking and working. Whatever the goal, functions around need to be consistent with it (Schein and Schein, 2016)

Schein’s model can be an effective tool for leaders seeking to create the optimal learning environment for the team and individuals in order to enable change. In terms of psychological safety it is very clear-cut, explaining the means to promote psychological safety with hands-on practices. The model is also easily relatable to change management models, indicating that these tools can be integrated in change efforts to consider the business, team and- individual aspects.

2.6.4 The integrated Schein model

Cataldo, Raelin and Lambert (2009) combined Schein's work into a diagnostic model by combining context, content, and process theories of change. The model displays psychological safety as a critical subtheme.

Employees need to effectively participate in the change process, as from the employee point of view not having a chance to participate in the change can undermine psychological safety (Cataldo, Raelin and Lambert, 2009). This is consistent with the change management models introduced in chapter 2 as all stress the importance of employee involvement in the change process.



PICTURE 8. The integrated Schein model (Source: Cataldo, Raelin and Lambert, 2009)

As such this model does not bring significant value to the practicalities of leading change through psychological safety as it describes Schein's theoretical work rather than practical, but it does provide an understanding of psychological safety being a key element in organizational change.

2.7 Psychological safety and leadership practices

Based on her studies, Edmondson (2019) suggests three practices that, when used continuously and in interactive ways that promote learning, can create and maintain psychological safety. She also states that supporting psychological safety is the responsibility of all leaders in an organization, regardless the level and status.

Category	Setting the Stage	Inviting Participation	Responding Productively
Leadership tasks	<p>Frame the Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set expectations about failure, uncertainty, and interdependence to clarify the need for voice <p>Emphasize Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify what's at stake, why it matters, and for whom 	<p>Demonstrate Situational Humility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledge gaps <p>Practice Inquiry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask good questions Model intense listening <p>Set up Structures and Processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create forums for input Provide guidelines for discussion 	<p>Express Appreciation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen Acknowledge and thank <p>Destigmatize Failure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look forward Offer help Discuss, consider, and brainstorm next steps <p>Sanction Clear Violations</p>
Accomplishes	Shared expectations and meaning	Confidence that voice is welcome	Orientation toward continuous learning

PICTURE 9. The leader’s toolkit for building psychological safety (source: Edmondson, 2019)

2.7.1 Setting the stage

Frames are assumptions or beliefs that prevail in reality. Framing is often automatic and seen as the reality. For example, failure to act according to a certain guideline can be seen as a mistake and as such not be spoken about on the basis of fear. However, leaders can help reframe these assumptions and beliefs or, in other words, reframe failure. The goal is to make people understand that mistakes happen, they are allowed and, even though not wanted outcomes, something to learn from. Another act in setting the stage is communicating the urgency of the goal to remind people of the underlying motivation in change. This acts as the

“why” of doing things, the core of what drives all efforts related to change (Edmondson, 2019).

Failure can be categorized into three types including preventable failures, complex failures and intelligent failures. Preventable failures are the most severe type, occurring for example in patient care. Complex failures occur in a setting of many types of factors, possibly ones which have never occurred simultaneously at once. Intelligent failures are results of experimentative efforts in new areas. Intelligent failures, as Edmondson suggests, should be celebrated (Edmondson, 2019).

In framing the leader also needs to emphasize uncertainty, which encourages curiousness and alertness of the changing work environment, interdependence, which stresses the impact of their work and clarify the stakes whether high or low. Even the role of the boss can be reframed. If the default frame is set as authoritative, efforts can be made to reframe to a leadership-approach (Edmondson, 2019).

2.7.2 Inviting participation

Encouraging staff in non-threatening ways to participate in communication is a way of promoting psychological safety. Requesting comments and opinions from all team members promotes participation to speak up. There are two essential behaviors that should be practiced. Situational humility is one of the two leader must-haves. It is expressed through a mindset of learning. In practice a humble leader is easily approachable, actively invites feedback, is able to acknowledge his or her mistakes and understands that no leader has all the answers. The second tool is proactive inquiry. It is all about not being afraid of asking questions and once asking them, being able to do it in a manner that attracts discussion, fits into the situation and cannot be answered with a single word. Furthermore, yet another tool for inviting participation is asking for input and providing employees with situations to communicate their ideas through means of, for example, focus groups and workshops (Edmondson, 2019).

2.7.3 Responding productively

As it has already been established, the way leaders react and responds to team members speaking up is an essentially important part in creating psychological safety.

The established safety is gone when a leader responds with anger or scorn as it penalizes the taken risk instead of rewarding it. Instead, leaders should react by showing appreciation of the input. Another tool to use is focus on destigmatizing failure, which in action means making it visible that failure is a necessary part of learning, uncertainty and innovation and reacting to mistakes in the appropriate way that fits the context and situation, depending on the type of failure (Edmondson, 2019).

Surprisingly, outlining clear violations and their consequences is also a way of creating psychological safety (Edmondson, 2019). In a sense, clear policies set the stage to the work-environment and expected behavior that all need to respect and in return, employees can operate in a safe environment where violations, if some occur, are dealt with accordingly.

2.8 Summary of the key elements

According to the change management theories we can distinguish characteristics that, although stressed at different levels, these models have in common. Establishing a need and an understanding for change, encouraging participation and inviting input and providing training and coaching are key elements in all change efforts. The theoretical framework also illustrates that leadership plays a significant role in the implementation of these elements, especially through a supporting, encouraging and enabling team members.

A change is always characterized by a need for the people involved to develop or adjust their abilities in relation to the imposed change. So, change always involves learning. Furthermore, learning has been shown to correlate with psychological safety as a safe conditions promote learning and thus team performance.

Based on these implications we can draw up a conclusion that leadership practices are a required element in all stages of the change process. Furthermore, all stages of this process involve the necessity of employee participation, whether passive or active, and thus poses a need for learning. In order to support team members in their learning efforts, team leaders need to take action to promote a safe working environment or, in other words, take actions to promote psychological safety.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research strategy

At its most simple explanation, a case study means studying a certain case or multiple cases. The case itself can be a variety of things ranging from a company or community to an individual (Kananen, 2008, 84). As case study takes many forms, it is better described as a research approach rather than a certain specific way of collecting or analysing data (Eriksson and Koistinen, 2005, 4).

According to several guidebooks, choosing a case study approach is recommended especially when a) the nature of the research is represented by questions such as “What, how and why”, b) the researcher holds little control over the events, c) there is only little empirical research on the topic and/or d) the research focuses on a phenomenon of real life (Eriksson and Koistinen, 2005, 5).

The case in this research was a specific change project at insurance Company X. It involved commissioning a completely new claims-handling system that needed to be adopted by the customer service staff along with their team leaders and other superiors. The research purpose was to study the phenomena of change leadership and psychological safety in the context of this specific case. The research questions (a), extend of control (b) and the studied phenomenon (d) represent the research characteristics that correspond to previously specified criteria. Evaluation by these standards gives indication that opting to a case study was a well-argued approach.

There is a variety of case study types and categorizations. This case study type is instrumental. This type of study aims to understand something beyond the case itself (Eriksson and Koistinen, 2005, 9), like a phenomena related to it. The case study approach is explanatory as it aims to better understand and explain a complex phenomenon (Eriksson and Koistinen, 2005, 12).

There is a variety of different methods for acquiring material for research. The chosen method is affected by the reasoning of how will the material be utilized (Koppa, 2015a) and moreover, it should be chosen carefully to best answer the research questions composed so that the data provides the most appropriate information about the topic (Puustinen, 2013).

Commonly research methods are categorized into quantitative and qualitative categories. One could describe qualitative research as aiming to answer the question why whereas quantitative research is more known to produce “measurable answers” to questions. It is however, possible to use both approaches in the same research (Koppa, 2015b).

The goal of qualitative research is to understand people in and based on their perceived setting (Tuomivaara, 2005). This means giving notion to viewpoints, experiences, motives, thoughts and/or feelings, which would be difficult or even impossible to try to obtain by using quantitative methods (Puustinen, 2013). Qualitative material should be collected directly from the speech of the people who are being studied. This can be implemented by using unstructured observation methods. In addition the setting should be, to the extent possible, natural (Tuomivaara, 2005).

In the case of any study, the researcher is responsible for choices made in all steps of the process. These decisions are based on the researcher’s subjectivities, assumptions, and values (Andres, 2012). Qualitative research is thus never completely objective and this is why understanding these limitations is so important (Puustinen, 2013). As Andres (2012) states “without at least informal hypotheses, we could never confirm what we suspected, nor could we be surprised about unexpected findings.” The theoretical framework forms the basic indications of the research topics, inviting to suggestions about the nature, importance and relationship of the studied themes.

The goal of this research was to gain a deeper understanding on the relationship of psychological safety and change and leadership practices that promote psy-

chological safety in times of change. Keeping this goal in mind, the research bases on examinees' own experience and perception of things (Tuomivaara, 2005). Going to the people themselves for the answer is crucial.

The research used interviews and a survey as the primary methods of data collection, both including mainly open-ended questions. This approach of combining methods is referred to as triangulation (Kananen, 2017, 177) which again is a common research strategy in implementing a case study (Kananen, 2008, 84).

3.2 Interviews

Interviewing is a common method used in qualitative research. As Seale *et al.* (2004) define, interviews are "social encounters where speakers collaborate in producing retrospective (and prospective) accounts or versions of their past (or future) actions, experiences, feelings and thoughts".

Interview forms can be classified according to the number of participants to individual- and group interviews and based on the structure of the interviews that use a form to fill in (structured), questions that are divided into themes (semi-structured) and open interviews (unstructured) (Kananen, 2014; Koppa, 2015a). In general the interviewing method poses many advantages. In addition to the interviewer being able to act on visual cues in a face-to-face interview (Andres, 2012), another advantage is the flexibility of interviewing, as it is possible to adapt the process of the encounter to fit that specific situation and modify the questions based on the responses the interviewee gives.

One of this study's data collection methods was conducting theme interviews with open-ended questions. These types of questions give the interviewee an opportunity to comment or expand upon the questions and themes (Andres, 2012). In relation to the latter, open-ended questions pose benefits in providing an opportunity for the interview to raise topics that may turn out to be important for the research, even if not considered as such beforehand.

In theme interviewing, the frame of the questions is created before the actual interviews take place. The interviewee is allowed free speech while the researcher guides the conversation and ask specifying questions when necessary. The interview progresses so that the researcher starts with one theme and proceeds step by step to more specific questions. The process is sometimes compared to peeling an onion, meaning that layer by layer you get closer to the answer (Kananen, 2014).

The interviews were conducted among leaders involved in the case study change process, including three team leaders and the head of the unit at Company X. All the leaders were first asked about their willingness to participate. Four leaders agreed. These four had positions in teams that represented all types of insurance claims handling of the sampling. This ensured that the sampling was adequately comprehensive.

Interviews were selected as a research method as they best fit obtaining information from employees in leadership-related positions for two major reasons. Firstly, there was an opportunity that they held more information about the case and the change process than what the author or team members were aware of. Interviewing as a method allowed the researcher to grasp other arising themes outside the planned questions, ask specifying questions and, if necessary, redirect the conversation.

Secondly, the case study focused on a time of change which often poses leaders with a hectic schedule. Therefore the author saw it as more beneficial to organize meetings to make sure the interviewees reserved the time for the interview. A survey can easily be skipped in one's e-mail as there is no personal contact between the leader and the researcher. In addition, it is also possible that leaders feel more comfortable talking to their peer (the author) and thus speak more freely in comparison to a similar setting between other employees talking to the author (their superior).

3.2.1 Implementation of the interviews

The team leaders and service manager of the chosen company unit were sent an invitation beforehand asking them to participate in an interview for the research. Out of these six people four, including the service manager, agreed to be interviewed. The invitation included information about the topic and purpose of the study, participants data protection measures and an explanation of the meaning of psychological safety as well as the important role of leaders in promoting psychological safety. The reasoning was to encourage potential participants to share their views and familiarize them in advance to the concept of psychological safety.

The interviews were conducted between the 2nd of September and 7th of September. Each interview lasted between 30 to 45 minutes, depending on the respondent. They were scheduled to the beginning of the month to match the time when the user trainings of new claims handling system started. This provided an opportunity to gather the team leaders' views and expectations of the implementation and reflect on their role in the change process. The original intention was to interview each participant in person but due to the challenges of the participants' busy schedules, location in various cities and the safety precaution measures due to the corona-virus situation, two of the four interviews were conducted as online-interviews with a video connection.

The interviews followed a certain set of predetermined questions. However, the interviewer asked both additional specifying questions as well as unplanned questions when an interesting theme relating to the topic arose from the discussion. The predetermined questions were tested in advance, revised after each interview and modified according to the interviewer's own remarks. In total the interview frame and questions were slightly modified after interviews number one, two and three. These modifications included relatively small alterations that did not affect the general frame of the questions, providing that interviewees were consistently communicating their thoughts and opinions on the same topics in each interview.

The interview question themes included the respondents' views and opinions on expectations, demands, leadership role and support and training in relation to change. The interview questions are found in appendix 1.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcript contents were themed into topics, compared in similarities and deviations and the results analyzed based on the material and themes that arose.

3.3 Survey

As stated before, the research methods chosen should be those that best produce the needed information in question. Surveys are often considered as a quantitative research method, especially so when constructed by using structured questions with pre-determined answer option. However, surveys can also be a form of qualitative research methods (Andres, 2012, 3-4).

Self-administered surveys are a type that allows the respondent to answer the questions without the presence or aid of the researcher. This is what differentiates them from interviews. Survey as a research method, in comparison to interviews, provides the respondents with a setting not controlled by the interviewer, thus allowing them to answer more freely especially in situations where the topics can be perceived as sensitive (Andres, 2012, 47).

There are studies that speak both for and against using surveys with open-ended questions as a research method due to the level of detailed information they might provide (Andres, 2012, 47-48). Interviews are often perceived as the winning qualitative data collection method, but this is not always the case. For example a study by De Leeuw (1992) shows that even though mail interviews prove more difficult in obtaining answers, they do provide better quality data and perform better in responses to sensitive questions in comparison to face-to-face -and telephone interviews. One could reason that, as mail and e-mail-surveys are similar, the same kind of benefits could be expected in e-mail surveys too.

The chosen method in this case was seen to bring more benefits than disadvantages. Employees of the company were asked, among other things, to provide their opinions on their team leader and his or her practices. The author's position in the company in question was leadership-related so it was possible that responding to these types of questions in an interview-setting would bring discomfort to the interviewees and therefore limit their responses. Hence the reasoning for using a questionnaire to ensure as open replies as possible. In addition, the format allowed respondents to answer the survey at the time they see most fit, giving them flexibility time-wise.

In conclusion, the data collection method varied according to what is best perceived to serve obtaining as much necessary information as possible.

3.3.1 Implementation of the survey

The online-survey was constructed by using Webropol software and send by e-mail to 63 claims advisors participating to the change of the case study. This target group consisted of the unit's employees with a claims advisor status who participated in the system deployment trainings. The only claims advisors who did not receive the invitation to the survey were those who operated as trainers of the new system. The trainers were excluded from the study as they derived from the rest of the claims advisors in terms of the progress of their learning process. They had already learned the new tool brought on by the new system and were now teaching it to others.

As in the case of the team leaders, the e-mail explained the topic and purpose of the study, data protection measures and a description of the meaning of psychological safety. It also aimed to encourage claims advisors to respond by stating that their views and opinions are the core of the study and can help team leaders to develop their change leadership skills in the future. In addition, the author approached team leaders and asked their help in promoting the survey by encouraging their team members to take the time to provide their answers.

The online-survey itself included 12 questions, out of which 10 were open questions and two multiple-choice questions, illustrated in appendix 2. The invitation e-mail including a link to the survey was sent to claims advisors late in the evening on the 30th of September so that it was available to respondents the next day 1st of October. The reasoning for the timing was to launch the survey as soon as the system trainings had taken place and ended in September.

The survey was open for 1,5 weeks. After one week since the launch of the survey, a reminder was sent to the same target group. The number of responses was a total of 29 answers collected, giving the survey a response rate of 46 %. According to a study by Baruch (1999), an average response rate in academic studies is 55,6 % with a deviation of 19,7 %. This indicates that the response rate obtained in this research is of the average level. On the other hand there is a 54 % possibility of non-response bias and as such the results should be considered according to the fact that that they only represent approximately half of the employees' views.

When thinking of the reasoning for the number of answers received, it is possible that the survey did not reach all respondents as some of them could have been absent from work at the time of the survey. It is likely that there was also a group that did read the survey invitation on time but decided to not answer it. The reasoning for this cannot be verified but the author suggests the main reasons to be lack of time due to a busy schedule and the disbelief of making a difference in answering the survey. In relation to making a difference with their contribution, it is also possible that one of the main reason for the non-response rate was the claims advisors view on the importance of the topic, a theme studied by Bozman and Stem (2005).

The written answers were separated into documents per question and the responses of each question themed into topics. The topics were then evaluated and compared according to similarity and deviation and, combined according to similarities on topics and analyzed.

3.4 Validity and reliability

The trustworthiness of research is measured by its validity and reliability. They act as measures that indicate the quality of the research. Unlike in quantitative research, the trustworthiness of qualitative research bases on the researcher's evaluation of this criteria (Kananen, 2014). Reliability represents to the constancy of the results, referring to the extent to which the findings of the study are replicable (Andres, 2012; Kananen, 2014). Validity in turn stands for measuring the right things and the accuracy of these measures. The measurement is valid when it measures what it was intended to (Kananen, 2014).

According to Kananen (2017), common criteria for trustworthiness of the research include the following.

- Confirmation of the data by the informant
- Confirmability by using multiple sources to collect evidence
- Evaluability through sufficient documentation of the whole process
- Internal validity (interpretation of the topic remains the same regardless of the interpreter)
- Saturation of the data
- Previous research findings

The validity and reliability of the research implemented are evaluated by the researcher using the latter criteria in chapter 5.2.

3.5 Survey ethics

Every researcher must know and follow a certain code of research ethics commonly accepted by the science community (Koppa, 2009). According to the Finnish advisory board of research integrity (2012) scientific research can only be ethically acceptable and reliable and the results of the research credible if the research has been implemented based on ethical code of conduct. The advisory board introduces practicalities of ethical considerations in their guide. The author was familiar with these guidelines and the research followed these practicalities.

3.6 Data analysis

For purposes of analysis the collected data needs to be organized and interpreted. When it comes to case studies, any of the variety of qualitative research analysis methods can be applied (Eriksson and Koistinen, 2005, 12). One way of grouping the data is to use a thematic analysis method. This method often, yet not necessarily always, follows the frame of the theme interviews that have been conducted to gather the data. It is also possible that new, previously undetermined themes arise from the data. Thematic analysis also includes displaying carefully selected quotes in the written results to better illustrate the existence and content of the data (Saaranen-Kauppinen and Puusniekka, 2006).

Thematic analysis was chosen as the data analysis method for many reasons. It displays consistency and clarity bin the data collection and analysis. The method is also a flexible one in preparing for an outcome where new information arises. This means that in addition to the existing, predetermined themes, it is also possible to alter and add the themes according to the information arising from the gathered data (Seale *et al.*, 2004). Finally, as the studied phenomenon and the data collected rises from employees themselves, the author felt like giving them a voice through selected quotes displays consistency with the research strategy.

The data of the interviews is firstly transcribed into text for the purpose of unifying all the research data into one text form. Coding can then be used as an aid in thematic analysis. It is not a method of data analysis but a tool to convert the data into an understandable form that can then be processed further (Kananen, 2008, 88-91). The aim of the analysis is to find topics arising from the data that are relevant in that they assist in answering the research question (Silius, 2008).

The analysis approach was theory-guided, meaning that the themes arising from the data analysis were guided by the theoretical framework. Just as in planning and forming interview-and survey content, the analysis was guided by the theories of change management, psychological safety and leadership practices that relate to the latter two.

4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Interviews – The leader view

There were five themes that rose as key findings from the interviews conducted among the team leaders. These themes describe the views, expectations and transferable skills of the interviewees. The topics relate to daily work, learning, attitude and leaders' role and readiness.

4.1.1 Impact on daily work

“Well challenges at the beginning will probably be that it is not ready yet”.

When asked about their expectations of the change of the deployment of the new claims handling system, all leaders communicated views that related to the impact of the change in relation with employees' daily work. The main challenges of the deployment were perceived as the incompleteness of the system and the need for employees to still use multiple claims systems for a long period of time. Once the system is deployed, it will not have yet reached its complete functionalities which means challenges for employees using the system. The completion of the change will take up to a few years.

On the positive side, all leaders also saw the change bringing advantages to the daily work. They saw benefits in better user experience and ease of use once the system development is complete. Additionally two mentioned an advantage in the company employees having one common system among all sections of the company and one pointed out that a user-friendly, fast system was likely to increase work satisfaction.

It is clear that the deployment will be lengthy and bring along user-related, temporary obstacles. Communicating the vision and long-term benefits of the change are shared themes in change management related theories (Kotter, 1995, 1996; Bridges and Mitchell, 2000; Rowland and Higgs, 2008) and can help leaders to create a sense of trust in the process among the teams. As users themselves are

at the core of potential development of the incomplete system functionalities, they are likely to provide valuable observations and suggestions for improvement. Psychological safety is a prerequisite for ensuring this feedback, as it means employees feel safe to speak up. Leaders can encourage this communication by focusing on inviting team members' participation, maintaining an atmosphere of active discussion and asking questions throughout the change process as suggested by Edmondson (2019).

4.1.2 Active learning

When asked about their views on the requirements the change poses on the team members, three of the interviewees expressed a strong confidence in their team members' technical capabilities. None of the interviewees mentioned any concerns relating to users being able to learn the functionalities of the new claims handling system. On the contrary, the main concern posing threats to learning was the resources that were provided to support it.

Even though the user trainings were planned in advance and participation of all team members was made sure, the main concern rose to be continuous learning. The new claims handling system is already being used in September but actual claims will be processed in it gradually through insurance conversions in the next years. Three interviewees saw this as a threat, explaining that after the implementation of user-trainings they found continuous practice very important for team members to be able to maintain their newly-learned skills. The hands-on learning opportunities of new system's claims handling are limited immediately after the deployment.

"I am worried that now that we train personnel, how can we keep up the newly learned skills before migrations start"

Three of the interviewees saw reserving enough time as another important requirement for learning. The question to be asked here is whether the provided

resources are sufficient. Even though reserving time for learning rose as an important topic, none of the interview answers provided any insight on knowledge of how will it be ensured or supported. On the contrary, one interviewee stated:

“I feel that in this sense our company does not support skills development by taking it into consideration in the resources”

Control over one’s own learning is a factor contributing to psychological safety (Schein and Schein, 2016). If tight resources restrict learning, they should be rearranged or increased to support learner needs. Reserving the necessary time and providing team members with an opportunity to lead their own learning would be a way of aligning the work to support continuous learning. Another method is to ensure the continuity of training by extending it to cover the whole change process and ensuring that enough practical, hands-on training is included.

When it comes to team leader practices, leaders can support continuous learning by adopting a mindset of learning and aiming to integrate and communicate it in daily activities (Edmondson, 2019). Leaders generally also play a role in communicating this need to management as managerial support is a key term in psychological safety (Kahn, 1990; Edmondson, 1999).

4.1.3 Attitude towards change

“It requires a positive attitude towards change... that you are excited about the change”

Another common view in relation to requirements that the change poses to team members was attitude, which was mentioned by all interviewees. It was described through terms such as positive approach, open-mindedness and curiousness. Based on the answers it seemed that the concept of attitude was seen as something that individuals are solely responsible for themselves. None of the answers displayed direct indication of the team leader’s ability to influence attitude.

As an attempt to obtain in-depth views of this theme, in the last two interviews team leaders were asked an additional question to describe their views on where attitude stems from. One saw attitude as being affected by a mix of things including individuals' experience of how meaningful the work is, to what extent he or she feels like belonging to a group and work safety in terms of the amount of workload and type of contract. Another team leader said that attitude is affected by the company's communication about the change, creating a more positive attitude when the benefits the change brings are outlined.

Creating motivation to change is one factor in initiating change (Kotter, 1996; Prosci, 2020). Even though the interviewed team leaders did not describe direct efforts in motivating their team members, three recognized it as a part of their role. One clearly stated the role to include efforts of motivating employees whereas two others described motivation-related factors of encouragement and coaching. Two linked attitude to their own actions and explained that they felt by doing so they were setting the example.

A very interesting factor linked to motivation was that the leader approach included several mentions of what could be described as "forced change". Three viewed the change case as something that will need to be accepted by all, no matter what their initial opinions. One interviewee clearly stated that this forced change in itself can be a motivating factor as there is no alternative. Employees need to acknowledge the inevitable by doing so, accept and embrace the change. As another team leader stated:

" You just need to get on board the boat as it is inevitable this will happen"

Team leader communication promoting the need change, leader behavior and coaching all contribute, directly or indirectly, to psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999; Schein and Schein, 2016) and thus the employees' attitudes towards change. When change is inevitable, their support to team members is crucial.

4.1.4 Leader's perceived role

When asked about their role in the change, all interviewees felt they were acting as communicators, informing the team about the change, answering questions and getting answers, listening to worries and forwarding feedback and comments received from team members.

Another common factor was that three out of four saw their role as supportive and encouraging, guiding team members through the change and creating belief that all will turn out well. Two of these three answers focused on feelings as these leaders saw themselves as people team members can confide in, reflect on their feelings and express all emotions initiated by the change.

"I need to be the well where they can pour their worries. Change always initiates, depending on the person, rage or fear or pain and so on, I need to be the well to receive it but not to provoke it"

Communication has been shown to play a significant role when it comes to change management (Bridges, 1986; Kotter, 1995; Erskine, 2013; Prosci, 2020) and psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999; Schein and Schein, 2016). In fact both themes appear to be, at their core, efforts of communication. So leadership practices that promote psychological safety have to do with inviting communication and responding to it. Team members showing emotion and speaking about their thoughts and experiences is a sign of psychological safety among the team and can actually be considered as a significant accomplishment.

4.1.5 Leader readiness

Whereas the interviewees seemed to answer other interview questions with an ease, they appeared to struggle more on topics that related to their own preparedness towards the change at hand.

Three of the team leaders remembered having gone through change leadership-related coaching in the last two years. The opinions of the quality of the training

varied. Whereas one felt like team leader coaching in change was continuous and good in quality, one remembered the last experience of training to be poorly planned and unnecessary. One did not remember receiving any training at all.

Two mentioned that they felt like having lived through many changes contributed to their skillset, stating that experience in change is a factor in training one for it. This is a surprising find as studies suggest the contrary. Research findings indicate that employees experiencing numerous changes does not contribute positively to their adaptability in the future (Pahkin *et al.*, 2011).

All leaders had already received some general information about the claims handling system and were aware that they would receive system-related training during September by participating in the same training as their team members. Part of the training program was planned to be studied individually. What seemed to pose difficulties in training was the challenges in time management. Two of the leaders clearly stated that their participation in forums where the new system was introduced as well as their progress in self-managed learning was minor as their time was taken up by other tasks. Another one admitted that time resources in leading this change posed a big challenge.

“I do not know to what I need support because I have not even really had the time to adopt those things to begin with”

Overall it seemed that none of the respondents had yet been able to form a clear picture of the system characteristics, functionalities or its effect on daily work. It appeared that whereas team leaders were able to pinpoint a certain learning path prepared for their team members, they were very unsure of the training they were to receive. It seemed that the change planning was not particularly considerate of leader needs. It is also possible that the taken training measures had not yet been communicated to the team leaders, explaining these answers as merely miscommunication.

“At the team leader level there is actually a lot more left undescribed and unrecognized and team leader participation has been zero”

Team leaders play a role in change management, leading it forward towards a positive outcome. Just as with team members, providing team leaders with learning opportunities and thus the required skills for leading change is a part of change management practices (Proschi, 2020) - How else could leaders obtain information and skills to answer questions and coach team members forward as well as develop their own learning mindset, making mistakes and learning from them? Adopting this behavior again contributes to the team psychological safety (Edmondson, 2019).

4.2 Survey – The employee view

The survey results focus on four emerging themes described by the respondents. These themes include employee views of the change in daily work, employee involvement, change resources and the leader's role.

4.2.1 Impact on daily work

The respondents were firstly asked to evaluate the impact that the change of the new system would have on their daily work. According to the answers, the most visible effects relate to workload and time-related resources.

“Temporarily increases the workload, burdens work-related stress and takes time from claims handling”

The most common answer related to daily work at 31 % (9) of all responses dealt with learning. Respondents described their work being affected by the need to learn the system. 27 % (8) of the respondents felt that the new system will increase their workload. They reasoned that learning the use of the new system was an additional responsibility adding to the daily workload. They saw that use of multiple systems as well as the unfinished system contributed to this increase.

Some mediating effects of the change creating uncertainty could also be distinguished. 20 % (6) of the respondents described the automation in claims handling

cases brought by the change and some went on to explain that automated claims handling was expected to reduce manual work done by employees and leave them with the work of more challenging claims handling cases. These answers may also pose an underlying perceived threat of decrease in work long-term which again can be interpreted to lead to layoffs or changes in job description.

From a leadership point of view it appears that both the workload and continuous learning need attention. Change requires effort from the employees but at the same time demands leadership actions that create a favorable environment for team members to operate in. As indicated by the foundational 3-stage theory by Lewin (Erskine, 2013) as well as other theories (Schein, 2006; Rowland and Higgs, 2008), providing resources and aligning working conditions to the change is key in enabling employees to perform at their best. Based on the survey results, as explained in more detail further on in this chapter, creating this safe learning environment has been a stumbling block in creating psychological safety in the case study in question.

It is only through trustful and open communication that the team leader can gain an understanding of the actual feelings, such as fears, of his or her team and then act upon them if necessary. When the situation is uncertain and could pose underlying threats, the leader can encourage communication and aim to create the necessary trust for team members to speak up, as indicated by the work of Schein and Schein (2016) and Edmondson (2019). As explained before, change management tools include regularly promoting the vision and outlining the change benefits. These actions could help team members to overcome the frustration caused by the work-related complications brought by the new system.

4.2.2 Resources for employee adaptation

"Training has been good, but you have been forced to move onto independent practice after a quite limited amount of learning together. Everyone has a great responsibility of their own progress".

Following the theme of favorable learning conditions in terms of training and independent learning resources, 69 % (20) of the responses were positive in evaluating the quality of the actual trainings when employees were asked to describe their experiences on system-related training provided. Many of these answers also positively described the expertise of the trainers.

When it comes to time management and the execution of the learning process, 28 % (8) were not satisfied with the time and work shift arrangements provided for the learning. They felt that little time was reserved to learning but instead adapting to the system was an extra workload adding to their current responsibilities. Some mentioned that they were also not able to attend all trainings as the timing overlapped with their work shift, leaving them to independently study the things from recordings.

31 % (9) felt challenges in outsourcing most of the learning and practice to the individuals themselves. They felt that after the group training provided they were left alone and expected to learn and practice on their own, solely leading their own learning. 13 % (4) clearly stated the need for practical training. Additionally, the need for team learning, explained in more detail later on, occurred in 17 % (5) of the answers when respondents were asked about their needs towards their need of support from the team leader.

“Surely you can learn by browsing through instructions but that type of learning is very slow. I would have needed more practical training done together.”

Individual, group -and practical training rose to be the key finding and development target of the study results. Whereas the quality of the training was perceived good, other provided resources of time and practice and support all appeared to suffer from lacks. As stated before, learning is at the core of psychological safety, as change inevitably forces it.

The leader’s behavior related to learning is important and can be illustrated by actions such as attitude towards and encouragement for mistakes and adopting to a mindset of learning (Edmondson, 2019). However, this leader behavior is not enough if the setting does not otherwise support learning. Here it appears more

crucial to provide employees control over their own learning by reserving the necessary time to do so.

4.2.3 Communication and participation

When asked about their evaluation of the execution of the new system, the majority, 48 %, of respondents evaluated it as moderate as seen in figure 1. 28 % (8) evaluated the execution as good and a total of 11 % (3) as poor or very poor. These results can be considered only as partially accurate responses as an evaluated 20 % (6) of the respondents misunderstood the question of the execution to stand for evaluation of the system-related training.

4. Miten järjestelmän toteutus mielestäsi onnistui?

Vastaajien määrä: 29

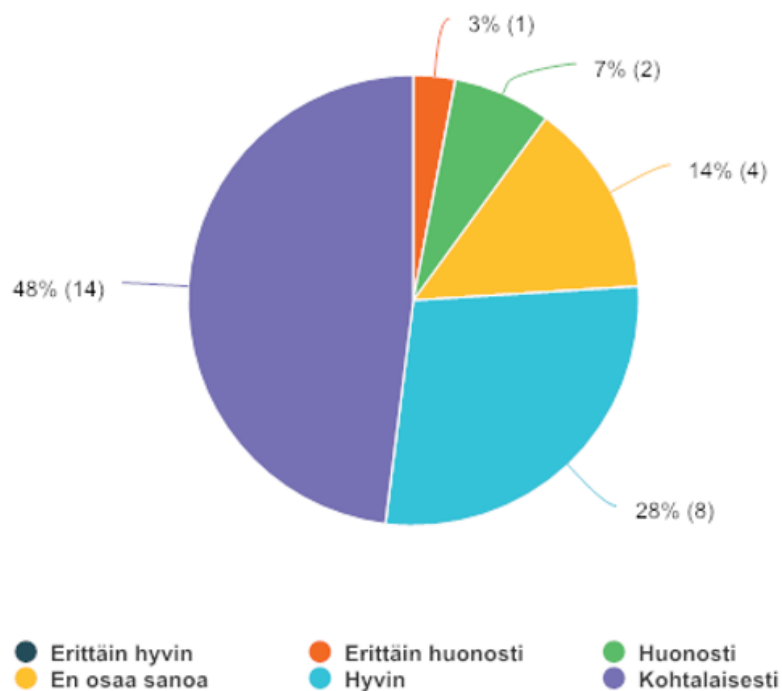


FIGURE 1. Answers to the question “How well did the execution of the system succeed in your opinion?”

”(I participated) in no way, I was not given an opportunity”

Respondents were also asked to explain how they participated in the planning and execution of the system. 76 % (22) answered, that they had not been a part of this process at all. 10 % (3) stated that they had provided suggestions regarding the system and 7 % (2) had actually taken part in developing it. These results could indicate a correlation with the lack of employee participation.

Although actual participation of employees was very moderate, the communication was perceived mainly as good. As seen in figure 2, 62 % (18) evaluated informing of the change as good. None of them rated this communication as poor or very poor.

7. Miten arvioisit järjestelmään liittyvää tiedottamista tiimissäsi ennen varsinaisia järjestelmäkoulutuksia?

Vastaajien määrä: 29

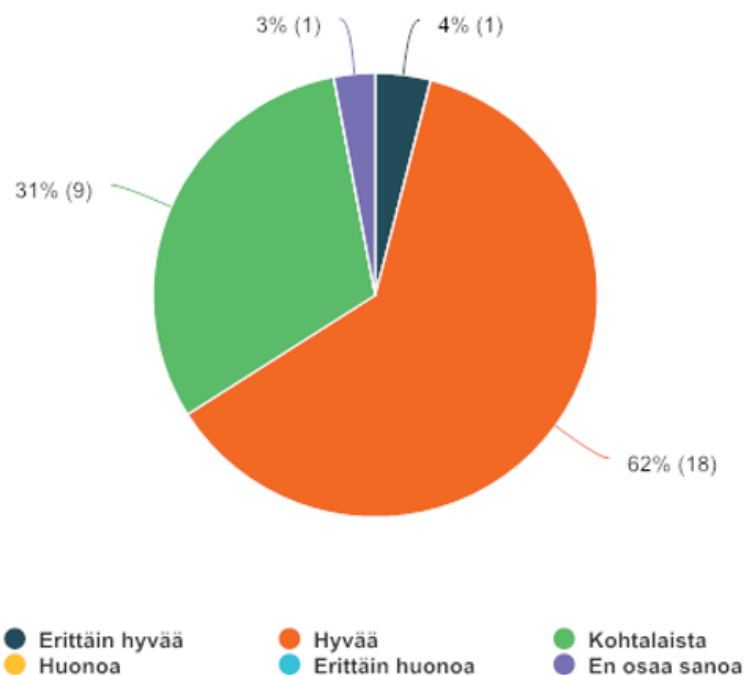


FIGURE 2. Answers to the question “How would you evaluate informing of the prior to the training?”

Also most of the written answers explaining the evaluations were either neutral or positive. Communication was described as sufficient, on-time and clear. What seemed to attract most negative responses was the channel or channels used in

communication. 14 % (4) directly criticized Microsoft Teams as the main communication channel and additionally 10 % (3) said that using multiple information channels made it difficult to keep up with the info. So, whereas the quality of information was good, the channels used were seen as confusing.

Respondents were also asked for feedback in a separate question that stated “How do you act if you want to give feedback or development ideas about the system?”. The majority at 69 % (20) answered that they would communicate this to the trainers of the system and 27 % (7) indicated that they would use a specific feedback channel created for the system. These answers clearly indicate that the team leader is not seen as playing a role when it comes to feedback yet it is possible that the leaders contribute into establishing a psychologically safe environment as all respondents did agree that they would speak up.

Employee participation, as explained by both Lewin’s model (Erskine, 2013) and the ADKAR (Prosci, 2020) is an important factor in change management. It can also indicate the state of psychological safety as feedback is more likely to occur when employees feel safe enough to do so (Edmondson, 1999, 2019). User experience and suggestions provide opportunities for system development, thus creating a better possibility of a functional system if not ignored. As we have already learned, leaders can enhance communication and through their behavior show that it is encouraged. Even if employees are not able to fully participate in the development process, the experience of participation could most likely be enhanced if they feel safe to speak up their mind, giving suggestions and opinions.

4.2.4 Leader’s perceived and expected role

In the last part of the survey, respondents were asked about what had their team leader done to help them in the change and what kind of support or help would they have needed.

“Good question. I feel that the team leader does not really have any kind of role in this at least from the perspective of the employee.”

“In my opinion the team leader can only support and inspire when it comes to the new system and give time to adopt to the new and enable training moments inside the team when it comes to work schedules. A lot of repetition is needed.”

The actions of leaders' help fell into three categories. 38 % said that their leader had been a help in the change by providing time to adopt to it. In practice this meant scheduling training times and organizing time for training when it otherwise overlapped with a work shift. 28 % (8) stated that their leader had not helped in any way. 10 % (3) said that their leader had provided support or advice relating to the change.

Even though provided time was the most frequent answer, so was the answer to the question of what the wishes of the respondents were. 55 % (16) said that they would have hoped for more time for learning and out of this response rate 17 % (5) specified the need for group learning. Team leader support and encouragement were also a topic at a total of 17 % (5) of the responses.

It appears that team members perceive their leader mainly as an enabler for learning conditions, giving little value to the leader's support. The people involved in the learning process, such as trainers and colleagues, were perceived as more important. This indicates a single, clear need posed to the leader: Organizing resources to support training in order to enable learning. In practice the team members explained their need for the leader's actions to reserve them time and a support group for learning. Once again, it appears that psychological safety emerges when the leader is able to create a setting that organizes resources to support learning.

It is not always up to the leader to make the critical decisions about use of resources such as work shifts. However, leaders can act as a communication channel towards management, explaining the needs and delivering information. In every-day work they can also encourage learning whenever possible.

4.3 Common ground - Summary of the key findings

Learning rose to represent the core of the research in terms of psychological safety from both team leader and team member perspectives. As the case focuses on system deployment, it is natural for the learning to aim for practicality and use in every-day work. The setting that enables learning was a concern among all respondents, especially when it comes to time-related resources. Team leaders saw independent and continuous learning important but were not able to provide answers on how to enable it. Team members described obstacles in learning to be lack of time among work shifts and insufficient learning opportunities. It seemed that they felt left alone to figure out how to continue and develop their learning. A safe working environment for learning is crucial in establishing psychological safety.

Based on their answers the leaders saw attitude as something crucial for the adoption of change among employees. They did not however seem to recognize themselves as enablers or influencers of a positive attitude but experienced it as something forced to be adopted as change was inevitable. The employee survey results are in line with these views as the general attitude appeared to be open. No results indicating resistance towards the system use or deployment could be defined. Instead, employees appeared to be eager to learn despite the challenges the new system was seen to bring to daily work. This could indicate that an inevitable change that does not have dramatic effects on the work, unlike for example lay-offs, is easily adopted.

Both team leaders and team members provided answers indicating the incompleteness of the new system. It was also clear that neither of the parties was really involved in the development of it. This could explain, at least partly, why the success of the deployment did not obtain highly positive evaluations from the team members and why team leaders did neither appear to have very in-depth understanding of the system nor have a significant role in the change process. It should also be considered that if employees were provided more opportunities to participate in the system development and deployment, the participation could be a positive mediating factor in the learning process, thus enhancing psychological safety.

Finally, the role of leaders in this case was considered different depending of the response group. Both groups indicated leadership support as a factor but what varied among the two groups were the practical actions in which it took form. Leaders saw themselves as team supporters on a mental level whereas team members perceived them providing support as enablers for learning conditions. Here it really appeared that what a leader does overweighs what a leader says as the team members were expecting help in the form of concrete actions promoting learning opportunities. There could be a contradiction here between what leaders are expected to do and what they are actually able to do as time and group learning reserved for the training is not necessary dependent on their decisions.

According to the key findings, psychological safety in a setting of system deployment is an enabler for and most visible in the practical learning process. Leaders can contribute to a safe learning environment by reserving the team time for it in both individual- and group training opportunities. It is important for the team members to know they are allowed to take the time to develop themselves and that there will be no consequences to suffer from it. Active communication promoting a dialogue of learning and feedback also plays a mediating role. It can positively contribute to employee participation in system development and improve the learning process. Dialogue indicates a healthy level of psychological safety when employees are willing to speak up and exchange their thoughts.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The results show that it is possible to distinguish a variety of important leadership roles and responsibilities in change management. The key conclusions divide leader roles into three main categories described by the actions they represent.

Enabler – Leaders take action to ensure that the conditions for change adaptation can occur. A leader acts as enabler for favorable change conditions among his or her team, aligning the work setting to fit the change and by doing so creating an environment for employees in which they can safely adapt their skills to the new demands.

Communicator – Leaders play an important part in change communication. A leader acts as a communicator both towards the team as well as upper management, supporting the dialogue among the latter two. He or she acts as an agent for promoting open communication and inviting feedback, provides support and encourages action both among the team and on an individual level.

Inviter – Leaders also contribute to employee participation along the change process. As established, a leader promotes communication, dialogue and feedback. This means that the leader also plays a mediating role in enhancing and inviting employee participation along the way by encouraging team members to contribute their opinions and ideas to the change process and by doing so partake in future development and improvement.

When it comes to the link between psychological safety and change the relationship is evident. Change efforts always involve learning something new in order for change adaptation to happen whereas psychological safety enables learning to happen. Employees must feel that the setting is well organized and resources allocated to support their learning. Change is also characterized by efforts of communication. Psychological safety is a requirement for employees to communicate openly, speak their mind and give feedback. This then again contributes to development along the change process. To put it short, psychological safety is a

preceding requirement for efficient communication and learning, which again play a role in enabling successful change efforts. So understanding the role of leadership and the importance of psychological safety in the context of change, what is it that leaders can actually do to help their team members to feel safe? The answer is, a lot.

Allocating time for learning – The most important way in which leaders can support their teams in change through means of psychological safety is first and foremost by promoting learning opportunities by enabling favorable conditions for them. Especially time is of utmost importance. Team members need to feel that they can dedicate themselves to learning without having to struggle with how to organize their time and responsibilities to be able to do so. Even though self-directed working and learning is often encouraged, it appears result in insecurity and distress in the case of the introduction of a new system. Leaders take a strong role in ensuring the allocation of time reserved for learning.

Promoting group support – Promoting learning opportunities also involves the concept of team learning and peer support. In the case in question the team members feel dissatisfied when left alone to study independently: They miss shared learning where they can exchange ideas, opinions and questions with their co-workers and rely on the trainers' support. Leaders can support their teams by ensuring that they are provided with team learning opportunities and the sufficient support from key people involved in the system deployment.

Inviting participation through communication – Promoting employee participation and trust are also factors in creating and improving the status of psychological safety. Leaders can act as promoters in guiding team members to communicate their ideas and opinions that contribute to the system and its development. Another way to use communication is to focus it on reducing fear of the future. Inevitably change causes insecurity and even fear. Leaders can tackle this by guiding focus to the positive factors the change. In practice this stands for regularly communicating the vision of the change and promoting the long-term benefits the change will bring. The reasoning here is to create trust in the change among the team.

Leading by example – Even though not necessarily as visible in direct effects to psychological safety, team leader behavior is important. The way a leader acts, speaks and reacts creates a platform for the state of psychological safety. Leaders can and should pay attention to the way they address things. Behavior that promotes learning, open dialogue and participation contributes to encouragement of team members.

5.2 Evaluation of validity and reliability

The data collected from the informants was saved exactly as they expressed it. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and the survey results base on the written answers by the informants themselves. The respondents did not confirm the data separately but have given their permission to use it in the study. Thus there is no possibility of errors in the data.

The research used two types of sources of informants, team leaders and team members, in two means of data collection of interviews and a survey. The use of multiple sources contributes to confirmability of the research. The whole process of the research was documented, including e-mails, interview recordings both by audio and video, transcripts, survey questionnaire and its results as well as the data analysis process formed by the author. The whole research process can be thoroughly evaluated based on its documentation.

When considering internal validity, the author intended to remain unbiased to the results, only forming results from facts occurring in the data and avoiding any personal interpretations that did not clearly rise from the material. However, the author's professional status as working among the studied respondents does pose a more in-depth level of understanding or familiarizing oneself with the setting. This experience can, even though not intendedly, contribute to the results compared to the ones a completely external researcher might provide.

The research obtained data saturation. This saturation is less visible in the interview results as there were only four respondents. However, repetition and similarity of the answers can be distinguished. The survey results of 29 respondents

provided a more clear saturation. It was noted that no new information arose as the number of responses increased.

The previous research findings were carefully studied and they guided the research. The research findings contribute to previous research and indicate similar results.

5.3 Discussion and suggestions for future research

It is obvious that leadership that promotes psychological safety in times of change can be used to encourage and support team members in the process and help them adapt to it. The research results indicate that in the case of system deployment, the employees had most likely already accepted the change and were willing to work for it, providing that the conditions met the requirements set for them. This was indirectly visible in the employees' answers as none of them criticized the company's decision to introduce a new claims handling system nor did they indicate unwillingness to learn the use of it. Instead the respondents indicated their need for support to guarantee a favorable learning process. The team leader's role in creating psychological safety is especially visible in acting as an enabler for efficient learning conditions and encouraging open communication and feedback both among the team and towards upper management.

It seems alarming that in today's working life time resources for additional tasks outside the core responsibilities can be very scarce. This could indicate that work has already been arranged to maximize the use of resources and work efficiency, leaving very little time for changes occurring at work that require additional resources. These two topics seem to contradict with each other: If work is not arranged according to the situational needs but only to best support efficiency, how can employees be expected to adapt to changes? Another contradiction can be distinguished in employee participation and engagement. Both are recognized as important factors in many change related theories, yet not necessarily always visible in change efforts. One considerable reason could be, as in the case of the lack of time-related resources to support learning, the focus on efficiency and productivity. If employee resources are at their limit of sufficiency, it is likely that

personnel cannot be assigned to other tasks. Again, these factors annul each other. Implementing successful change should be about getting the right people involved but not possible if the scarce employee resources prevent it.

Outside the actual research setting it should be noted that there appeared to be a lot of background turmoil among the team members and their team leaders. Two of the teams involved in the study had recently been moved under new team leaders. It seemed that both sides felt insecure and unfamiliar with the situation, as this underlying change was brought up numerous times by both. It is possible that this setting contributed to the answers as often it is the case that current, strong experiences and feelings guide the focus of the respondent.

Another factor contributing to the results could be the new collective agreement of the insurance business. According to it, 24 hours of working time per year can be allocated for skills development of the employees. These hours fall outside the core working hours, Saturdays included (Vakuutusväen liitto, 2020). As employees and team leaders indicated in the survey results, most of the training was either self-guided outside the core working hours of the day or group-learning on Saturday. There was some training during the core working hours too but some team members had difficulties in being able to attend them because of their working shifts, meaning that they were again left to learn the things afterwards based on recordings. This could explain why the need for leaders to enable safe learning conditions was perceived so important.

It should be noted that leaders, especially team leaders, are often under the pressure of their superiors and not necessarily authorized to make the decisions that best benefit the team. Just as team their team members, leaders also feel the pressure of change and should, in all fairness and in return, expect support from their superiors and be able to feel psychologically safe themselves.

The case in this research can be described as a minor one in comparison to for example a drastic change in the work description or status. The results should therefore be observed with an understanding of the scale of the change. A change process involving employee co-operation negotiations can challenge psy-

chological safety much more drastically and requires significant leadership efforts, most likely more so than in the case of the introduction of a new system to work with. The understanding of the change impact on a certain scale related to the change in question also gives suggestions for future research. The results suggest that in addition to existing research on psychological safety and change management from a leadership point of view, the matter should be studied by focusing on various types of cases and settings based on the experienced gravity of the situation as well as the focus group in question. Recommended leadership actions may vary according to the latter.

Another interesting topic for further research is the relation between the change type and employees' adaptability towards it. It has been studied that changes that have a high impact on the employees do not prepare them better for future change. However, the research results give some indication of employees being able to maintain their change readiness when it comes to minor changes such as learning new tools to work with. The respondents criticized some resource-related matters along the change process but did not seem to be otherwise emotionally involved in or challenged by the process. It could be that technological changes and advances are so common and accepted that the reoccurrence of them does not necessarily challenge employees, provided that the conditions for adapting to the change have been arranged to support learning.

5.4 Author's reflections

The theme of psychological safety is, modestly put, interesting and very vast. This research provides evidence contributing to the importance of the topic discovered by other researchers.

When evaluating the research process the author feels it to have been a successful one, not to mention a great learning experience. The research process was planned in detail and progressed as intended. The author is especially satisfied with the quality and scope of the data collection as well as the analysis and research results. The data provided answers to the intended research questions. The study reached its goal to provide team leaders with practical focus points and

advice on the importance of psychological safety and its use as a tool in change leadership.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview questions

Perustiedot

1. Työtoimenkuva
2. Työvuodet LähiTapiolassa

Muutosjohtajuus omassa työssä

3. Minkälaisia odotuksia sinulla on muutokseen liittyen?
4. Mitä muutoksen toteutuminen mielestäsi vaatii työntekijöiltä?
5. Miten kuvailisit omaa rooliasi muutoksen toteuttamisessa?
6. Mitä valmennusta olet muutokseen liittyen saanut?
 - a) *Muutosjohtamisen valmennus?*
 - b) *Järjestelmään liittyvä valmennus?*
 - c) *Mitä toivoisit tällaiselta valmennukselta, jos saisit päättää?*
7. Miten olet tukena tiimisi jäsenille muutoksessa?
8. Miten oma esimiehesi tukee sinua muutoksessa?
9. Tutkimuskysymys oli *"Miten esimies voi omalta osaltaan vaikuttaa (psykologisesti) turvallisen työympäristön luomiseen ja näin tekemällä edesauttaa tiimiläisten positiivista suhtautumista työssä tapahtuviin muutoksiin?"* Haluaisitko sanoa vielä jotain aiheeseen liittyen, tuleeko muuta mieleen?
10. Lisäkysymys (tarvittaessa): Millä keinoin koet voivasi vaikuttaa tiimiläisten psykologisen turvallisuuden tunteeseen?

Appendix 2. Survey questions

Muutosjohtaminen ja psykologinen turvallisuus eläin- ja irtaimistokorvaustiimeissä

Case: Guidewire-korvausjärjestelmän tuoma muutos

Tämän kyselyn tarkoitus on kartoittaa ajatuksiasi ja mielipiteitäsi uuden Guidewire-korvausjärjestelmän tuomaan muutokseen liittyen.

Kysely ei kerää yksilöiviä henkilötietoja ja vastaukset käsitellään täysin anonymisti.

Mielipiteesi on tärkeä. Kiitos, että varaat aikaa vastauksille.

Taustatiedot: Työkokemus

1. Kuinka pitkään olet työskennellyt LähiTapiolassa? *

- alle 2 vuotta
- 2-4 vuotta
- 5-10 vuotta
- yli 10 vuotta

Teema: Muutos omassa työssä

2. Miten uusi järjestelmä vaikuttaa työhösi? *

3. Miten kuvailisit saamaasi järjestelmään liittyvää koulutusta? *

4. Miten järjestelmän toteutus mielestäsi onnistui? *

- Erittäin hyvin
- Hyvin
- Kohtalaisesti

5. Miksi näin? Perustelethan vastauksesi kysymykseen numero 4*
6. Miten olet itse osallistunut järjestelmän suunnitteluun ja toteutukseen? *
7. Miten arvioisit järjestelmään liittyvää tiedottamista tiimissäsi ennen varsinaisia järjestelmäkoulutuksia? *
 - Erittäin hyvää
 - Hyvää
 - Kohtalaista
 - Huonoa
 - Erittäin huonoa
 - En osaa sanoa

Teema: [Muutosjohtaminen ja esimiestyö](#)

8. Miksi näin? Perustelethan vastauksesi kysymykseen numero 7*
9. Miten toimit, jos haluat antaa palautetta tai kehitysideoita järjestelmästä? *
10. Mitä sellaista esimiehesi on tehnyt, mikä auttaa sinua uuden järjestelmän omaksumisessa?*
11. Minkälaista tukea olisit esimieheltäsi järjestelmään liittyen kaivannut?*
12. Tämän tapaustutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää, miten esimies voi edistää tiimin jäsenten psykologisen turvallisuuden tunnetta ja