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# Management and Leadership in the Modern Corporate Culture

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SEINÄJOKI UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

## Thesis abstract

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The first goal of the thesis was to find out how the modern corporate culture helps a company to succeed and to have a positive impact on business. The aim was to define the modern corporate culture and to provide companies with tools for managing it. The thesis responded to the challenge posed by the millennials by guiding companies to adapt and possibly to change their practices, work environment and leadership style to make work meaningful and in balance with leisure. The Commissioner was a family business that had converted from entrepreneurs into employers. Another goal was to provide the Commissioner with concrete practical guidelines for developing the modern corporate culture.

The theoretical framework of the thesis deals with the key concepts and theories on modern corporate culture management. This includes a variety of ways to build and maintain a modern corporate culture. It discusses the importance of millennials in the work community. The approach of the study was to examine the current state of the corporate culture at the Commissioner company. In the empirical study, two different qualitative studies were used as the method. The Commissioner was interviewed using a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire. Content analysis was used for the interpretation and analysis of the study. The data were analyzed as a process, in which practice and theory formed a conclusion.

The results of the thesis show that business leaders should understand how millennials are led. The company can thrive in the best possible way considering the benefits of the modern corporate culture that helps the company stand out from the competition. The results of the study show that the Commissioner has built a corporate culture without being aware of it. Through practical examples, the Commissioner can utilize the thesis to develop the modern corporate culture and use it to build a handbook for their employees. The thesis is a management tool of the modern corporate culture.

<sup>1</sup> Keywords: corporate culture, generation Y, leadership, entrepreneurs

SEINÄJOEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

## Opinnäytetyön tiivistelmä

Tutkinto-ohjelma: Liiketalous

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Opinnäytetyön ensimmäisenä tavoitteena oli selvittää, miten moderni yrityskulttuuri auttaa yritystä menestymään ja vaikuttaa positiivisesti liiketoimintaan. Tarkoituksena oli määritellä moderni yrityskulttuuri ja antaa työkalut sen johtamiseen yrityksille. Opinnäytetyö vastasi millenniaalien haasteeseen ohjaamalla yrityksiä sopeutumaan ja mahdollisesti muuttamaan toimintatapojaan, työympäristöään ja johtamistyyliään, jotta työ olisi merkityksellistä ja se olisi tasapainossa vapaa-ajan kanssa. Toimeksiantaja oli perheyritys, joka oli muuttunut yrittäjistä työnantajiksi. Toisena tavoitteena oli antaa toimeksiantajalle konkreettisia käytännön ohjeita modernin yrityskulttuurin kehittämiseen.

Opinnäytetyön teoriaosuudessa käsitellään modernin yrityskulttuurin johtamisen keskeiset käsitteet ja teoriat. Tämä sisältää erilaisia keinoja modernin yrityskulttuurin rakentamiseen ja ylläpitämiseen. Siinä käsitellään millenniaalien merkitystä työyhteisössä. Tutkimuksen lähestymistapana oli tutkia toimeksiantajan yrityskulttuurin nykytilaa. Empiirisessä tutkimuksessa menetelmänä käytettiin kahta erilaista kvalitatiivista tutkimusta. Toimeksiantajaa haastateltiin teemahaastattelun ja kyselylomakkeen avulla. Sisältöanalyysi auttoi tutkimuksen tulkintaa ja analysointia. Dataa analysoitiin prosessina, jossa käytäntö ja teoria muodostivat johtopäätöksen.

Opinnäytetyön tulokset osoittavat, että yritysjohtajien tulisi ymmärtää, miten millenniaaleja johdetaan. Yritys voi menestyä parhaalla mahdollisella tavalla ottamalla huomioon modernin yrityskulttuurin tuomat edut, jotka auttavat yritystä erottautumaan kilpailijoista. Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että toimeksiantaja on rakentanut ympärilleen yrityskulttuuria tietämättään. Käytännön esimerkkien kautta toimeksiantaja voi hyödyntää opinnäytetyötä modernin yrityskulttuurin kehittämiseen ja rakentaa tämän avulla työntekijöilleen käsikirjan. Opinnäytetyö on johtamisen työkalu moderniin yrityskulttuuriin.

<sup>1</sup> Asiasanat: yrityskulttuuri, y-sukupolvi, johtajuus, yrittäjät

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## Terms and Abbreviations

<b>DE&amp;I</b>	Stands for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Diversity is differences in the environment, where equity as processes is fair, and practices to ensure that people feel sense of belonging in the workplace.
<b>HC</b>	The hermeneutic circle. The concept of a research method in which the understanding of the object of research is deepening all the time.
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources is the department within the organization that handles employee-related administration.
<b>Millennials</b>	Person who is born between 1980s and 1990s. They are called millennials because they became adults around the time of the millennium.
<b>ROI</b>	Return on Investment. A calculation of the monetary value of an investment versus its cost. The ROI formula is: $(\text{profit minus cost}) / \text{cost}$ .
<b>Talent Acquisition</b>	Refers to the process use for ongoing strategy to find and recruit, hire, and orientate. It is a function of the human resources (HR) department that focus on long-term human resources.
<b>Generation X</b>	Person who is born between 1965 and 1980.
<b>Generation Y</b>	Means the same as millennials. Person who is born between 1980–1995. They are called millennials because they became adults around the time of the millennium.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Prospects for the future are changing rapidly. According to the world of work and the latest workplace survey, as many as 39 % fear that their jobs will become obsolete in the future (PwC, 2022). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, old work models have had to be updated earlier than planned. According to PwC (op. cit.), smart organizations are now using their latest experience to attract and retain a new generation of employees. This involves developing skills and a vision of cultural change.

The purpose of this thesis is to explain what a modern corporate culture is that challenges organizations in practice and to highlight the power and impact it has on the success of a company.

The most effective single benefit of a firm is the corporate culture that influences business success (Laker, 2021). Company values should be part of an employee's identity and meet expectations. It is said that a company with a strong corporate culture has quadrupled its turnover (op. cit.). A moment of truth about the benefits and tools brought by a strong corporate culture came to light because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The millennials represent the next large age group in the workforce. Millennials' motivations and ways of working are different from those of other generations and that is why it is important to get to know how a company can best succeed with millennials employees. This combination of millennials and corporate culture is referred to in this thesis as modern corporate culture.

There are differences within each generation, but common characteristics can still be combined according to the environment (TechTarget, 2021). Millennials that stand out from the older generation are a good thing for the company. They do not feel the job is just a job, but they are looking for something more meaningful. Recognizing this opens completely new opportunities for the company to grow, develop and succeed. Millennials want to bring out their mindsets and balance work and leisure (Hickey, 2021). Diversity is important to them.



Technology is impacting the shift. Companies need to be able to deal with this change in a positive way by providing diverse opportunities that engage employees and create support for the economy, adapt to societal structures and innovate creativity (O'Halloran, 2015).

New skills and operating models are needed from all to take the process of modern corporate culture forward. Roles disappear from the workplace and new ones emerge. To transform a business for sustainable growth, an organizational culture needs to be reviewed and developed (PwC, 2022). A modern corporate culture helps a company cope with change and meet the challenges it poses.

A strong culture supports the company when difficult decisions must be made, and challenges are turned into opportunities. Together, a culture focused on communication and responsibility takes business forward.

## **1.2 Rationales**

Working with millennials are more current than ever. Corporations need a major professional development to keep up with the changes. Rationales for this thesis is to update the know how methods of this field to combine modern generation's needs and corporate culture to ensure business success now and the future.

Millennials, the change, and development of the world have brought with them different ways of working and influenced people's perception of work and the way work is done. Appreciation and holistic pleasure are raised much higher than before. Although everyone in the company builds a corporate culture, the biggest responsibility is with the management. Most of the workers are Millennials, whose opinions and working methods are different from those of Generation X, who were born between 1961 and 1980. This generation Y has enjoyed the potential of the internet and technology. The competition in the employer branding market is fierce and talents are being fought. Companies want to attract the best employees. The question is how to keep the employees to themselves.

Millennials want to dismantle hierarchical principles and function as one large group (Kurter, 2018). They want appreciation and demand adaptability from a more inviting work environment. Kurter (op. cit.) highlights five ways in which millennials shake of operating and even the strategies of organizations. According to him, one of them is a culture built on

emotional intelligence, where caring for them increases motivation and performance. According to Kurter, working from home is a requirement and it is part of balancing work and private life, which is valued by millennials. Creating a culture based on openness and transparency is strongly focused on creating harmony in every aspect of life. Kurter believes that this generation is more flexible to change and willing to explore the opportunities offered by technology. It is important for corporations to engage employees in a new way to modern workplace cultures. The Millennial generation has rising expectations and is even more important to create a culture built on mutual respect, trust, and accountability.

The profitability of the corporate culture is supported by research results (Rossi, 2012), according to which the best workplaces in Finland have faster turnover growth, higher productivity, more innovation and job seekers, investment in skills, fewer sick leave and lower employee turnover than average in other Finnish companies. In the best workplaces, culture is based on trust.

### **1.3 Objectives**

This thesis seeks to address the research problem and achieve the main objective. The first purpose of this thesis is to significantly provide information on how to develop the sector of corporate culture to a new modern way of working. It does this by providing guidance on how a company can find its own unique and modern corporate culture, maintain and, if necessary, update it.

The aim is to show how a modern corporate culture can help companies cope more easily with challenges, improve business, clarify the concepts of millennia and corporate culture, and understand how they relate to each other. The mission is to promote the mindset of management and open discussions to the emergence of modern corporate cultures. This includes the actual assignment, which is to find the company's, Kuttex AG's, current corporate culture situation and create a foundation that supports corporate culture for a growing company, which can be distributed to new employees. Without this important knowledge new companies can go under in the business if they cannot keep their employees.

Corporate culture is no new acquaintance, it must change to meet the expectations of today's employees. The new generation of millennia longs for a modern corporate culture that focuses on the holistic wellbeing of people.

#### **1.4 Delimitations**

This thesis focuses on why and how companies should move to a modern corporate culture and on how to build a sustainable modern corporate culture. Despite the extensive theoretical material, the intention is not to create a development strategy or a ready-made employee handbook, but a foundation for this.

The theoretical framework is limited to highlighting different models of corporate culture, their ways of doing things, and creating the best tools for today's leadership through culture. However, the intention is not to go to change management. This would require own full thesis.

The purpose of study is to open opportunities in leadership. The researcher's own expertise is visible and reflected through the comments. Qualitative research is carried out through interviews aimed at deepening understanding (Pitkäranta, 2014, p. 22). The Commissioner, Kuttex AG, can apply and model the research findings as the company grows.

Qualitative research has been selected, because the material is collected in interaction relationship with the commissioner and the researcher is the data collector (Kananen, 2019, p. 26). Secondary data and primary data are interpreted and concluded (op. cit., p. 30).

#### **1.5 Research approach**

The approach is to look at the organization, which includes management and employees. The purpose of the thesis is to form a clear picture of the ways in which organizational culture is maintained and developed. The aim is to gather information from the commissioner, Kuttex AG, using two different interview methods. This means two different qualitative studies that are best suited as methods to meet the goal of the thesis.

The different sections of the thesis present a whole content of which cover the assignment and form a clear understanding to meet the objectives. In the theoretical part, the most

important topics from research problems are highlighted. It is important to understand what modern corporate culture is and what it consists of. The first part focuses on defining this and highlighting the importance. The next focus is on understanding how to build a modern corporate culture and how to meet the challenges. Understanding the millennials in the workplace and their meaning for the work environment and community is a key element. Finally, the thesis takes a closer look at how modern corporate culture can be reflected in the workplace.

Research methodologies focus on gathering data through qualitative studies. The method is reviewed in detail, breaking the process and results into pieces. In addition to the study material, various source materials have been used extensively in this thesis. They have included source literature and online resources from articles to books. The purpose of the interviews is to highlight the current situation of Kuttex AG. The researcher's own observations of the current and previous workplace, where a long career in management has provided experience in building and maintaining a corporate culture, are also included. These precious grains of knowledge helped build an overall picture of the subject. According to Kananen (2019, p. 12), the researcher's own knowledge of the topic is a prerequisite for producing new information. If the information is not available in advance, it should be gathered.

Qualitative studies are well suited for the implementation of this thesis. Pitkäranta (2014, p. 9) describes qualitative research as focusing on the future, as its purpose is to develop or renew a subject. He mentions that there are many approaches to qualitative studies and that it is a whole in which the analysis of the data is always present. The purpose of this thesis is to analyze and reflect on each stage of the study. The structure of the thesis is shown in Figure 1 (p. 13).

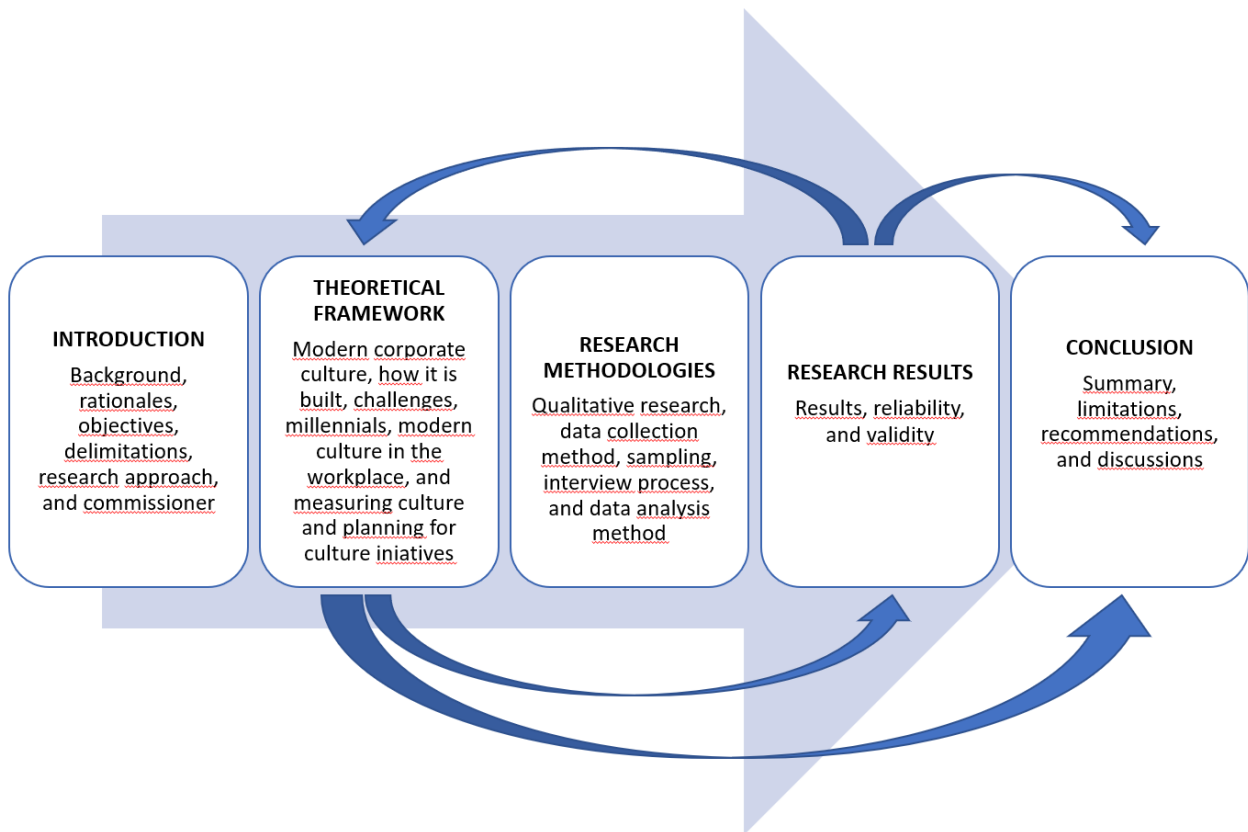


Figure 1. Structure of the thesis.

In summary, the totality of all these methods offers an opportunity for a complementary conclusion and shows the answers to the two research problems presented at the beginning.

## 1.6 Company description – Kuttex AG

Kuttex AG is a joint venture between a father and a son. It was established in the spring of 2017, when Markus and Pascal Kuttelwascher opened an office with warehouse in the village of Wängi, Switzerland (Kuttex AG, n.d). Wängi is in the canton of Thurgau near the cantonal capital called Frauenfeld. The German border is only 37 kilometers away.

Kuttex AG is a trading company that mainly sells, rents and repairs stair climbers, but also cam carts, transport carts and cranes. Special customer solutions are also being developed and implemented. Kuttex AG's customers are private customers and big companies like COOP and Rolex who need carts to transport their own products.

The company has a turnover of CHF 850,000 per year, and it is growing fast. Due to strong demand, the company has great desire to grow its business and for this they will need to hire more staff. During this thesis, the company grew by one employee and the owners became employers.

The new job description brings changes to the company's operations. Running a business has worked well, but now the company needs to be able to lead new employees and familiarize them with the values and mission. This is a great place to secure a corporate culture and start using a modern corporate culture to help a growing company. The company can learn how to build, maintain, and measure a modern corporate culture. Kuttex AG is the commissioner of this thesis.

The starting point of the study is to gather information about the company for analysis to promote concrete practices for creating and developing a corporate culture. The interviews are used to find out the company's business idea, mission, vision, values, and the current state of the company's culture. The acquisition of empirical material is also supported by the collection of information by reading and the researcher's own notes.

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Modern corporate culture

#### 2.1.1 Definition of modern corporate culture

Although corporate culture is a familiar word to many, it is often difficult to define. This is because to ensure the concept is defined and understood, one should know what culture, mission, values, and business strategy mean. Therefore, it is better to first look at where the corporate culture is built. Modern corporate culture is a modern way to work with the new generation. It's a way to live at work and spare time. The corporate culture is in a state of change. The employees are changing, the world is changing, and a response of an action is needed how to change the corporate culture.

A company may have only one corporate culture, but there may be variations between different locations (Luukka, 2019, p. 70). Employees build a corporate culture based on the given frameworks, and these shape a corporate culture that is different between offices and workplaces, but still recognizable to the company. A strong corporate culture is reflected externally to customers and attracts employees.

According to Luukka (2019, p. 25), there are six key features of corporate culture. Looking at these characteristics, it can be stated that culture is a group behavior. When employees in the workplace behave according to the given instructions and values, they create a culture together (op. cit., p. 17). Culture is not on the shoulders of one person, but requires common practices, agreements, and time to build. It is a difficult combination of a company's mission, values, ethics, and overall work atmosphere.

There is different type of corporate cultures, but the hierarchical corporate culture is a thing of the past and today companies are investing more in building a cohesive team whose positive atmosphere creates success. Hsieh (2010, p. 2), founder of Zappos, also states that the founders of a company do not build culture alone. Together, the entire team has grown from a well-known online store, in addition to a profit company, to a purposeful and passionate workplace and lifestyle (op. cit., p. 2). It is often forgotten that people see more colleagues per week than some friends. That is why it is important to build an environment and a

corporate culture where employees enjoy spending time, working is not a perpetual drill, but also having fun and the pride of working in a company is visible and heard from the employees. This way of life is not only left in the workplace, but joy is offered to others outside of it (op. cit., p. 2).

Although everyone in the company builds a corporate culture, the biggest responsibility lies with management. HR (Human resources) is an old term for personnel management. The more modern term Talent Acquisition is more relevant. The task is much more than human resource management. Many skills can be taught, but it is more difficult to cultivate and teach the right attitude. When management change the focuses from customers to employees and develops employees' skills and well-being, they automatically take care of customers. According to Rossi (2012, op. cit.), the corporate culture and strategy must be in line, otherwise the strategy will be lost, and it will not succeed. In its simplicity, corporate culture is a way of doing things. Corporate culture is managed, but not without factors.

Modern corporate culture combines modern ways of working with millennials in corporate culture that is sometimes also referred to as organizational culture, business culture, or workplace culture. Different elements are intertwined. Corporate culture has the power to influence business results that is done with people.

Because employee wellbeing at work is a hot potato, in addition to the environment, services are also part of the employer brand (Employsure, 2021). To balance work and leisure, many companies have invested in game rooms, cafes, gyms and children's or animal care facilities. They want to highlight the uniqueness of the premises, where every detail and furniture is intended. Today's work environment is designed to present the modern corporate culture and general feeling that a company wants to convey to its employees and customers (Bas van Wijk, 2021). A modern workplace is defined by the mental, technical, and physical conditions that regarding Bas van Wijk (op. cit.) aims to achieve the best possible productivity and efficiency in the company, as well as employee satisfaction. The design includes more open spaces, called the activity-based working concept. This gives employees choice and flexibility for different work situations. It enables companies to respond to rapidly changing situations. The facilities can be easily converted into meeting rooms. Optimized office facilities help employees communicate with technology.



The solution to keep up with changes is to start creating a modern corporate culture now. The era of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is stronger than ever. Employees expectations needs to be met. Investing in DEI has shown better business performance when there is more diversity in the workplace (Zemke, 2022a). Valuation, influence, and flexibility have become important metrics in employee satisfaction (op. cit.). Employees want to be influenced by business results, decisions and give meaning to their input. It may be that Millennium employees leave a job that is unable to offer them flexibility and different job options in terms of job location, career or working hours. Zemke (op. cit.) points out that showing appreciation is part of employee engagement and promotes performance.

Modern organizational culture is adaptive, continuous investment, evolving, and should be driven by empathic communication that supports the need of the generation Y for people-centered corporate cultures (Zemke, 2022a).

### **2.1.2 Importance of modern corporate culture**

Companies are for profit and that is a basic condition for doing business (Luukka, 2019, p.168). Corporate culture is a tool that helps a company succeed better. The real need for a corporate culture is seen too late. When a company is doing poorly, a good corporate culture can save the company from surviving a difficult time, as employees are motivated, committed, and the work has given them meaning. To maintain meaning in their lives, they invest in saving the business (op. cit., p.169).

Wages and benefits can attract employees, but in modern times this is only a momentary control (Zemke, 2022a). Change starts with leadership. Modern leaders listen, respect, and trust employees. Leadership provides the attitude and examples, and management provides the tools. The strategy is guided by the values and culture that lead to the goal.

An understandable and well-communicated culture is, according to Zemke (2022a), a prerequisite for a strong corporate culture. The role of the employer in the employee's wellbeing at work has been growing for a long time and there is currently talk of the employee's overall wellbeing. According to Zemke, healthier employees not only bring competitive advantage but are more inspired, productive, and strategic. Business benefits from creativity.

Viitala (2021, Chapter 2.7.) also highlight how a corporate culture, that has the capacity to innovate and change its operating methods when the environment so requires, is the lifeblood of companies. According to her, the atmosphere in the workplace is a result of corporate culture and manifests itself in work motivation, job satisfaction and different outcomes at work. As the culture is developed by all decisions of the company, the management must be ready to modify it if necessary to achieve the target state (op. cit., Chapter 3.13.).

The six global mega-trends published by the Project Management Institute (PMI, 2022) highlight the importance of corporate culture in supporting societal challenges. The corporate culture influences the development of the entire organization and the development of the Talent Acquisition industry. Employee branding is difficult to implement without a corporate culture in the background. It is important to understand what the whole corporate culture consists of, how it is developed and maintained.

While the pandemic has raised awareness of the challenges of climate change, many organizations really need to take more responsibility to protect the environment (PMI, 2022). Investing in sustainable development projects is essential. Millennials are more vigilant about their own values and the importance of their work. Companies that communicate, convey, and choose environmentally sustainable products and operate responsibly throughout the production chain until delivery, are the ones that attract innovative employees to their team (op. cit.).

Another megatrend, demographic change, is affecting organizations' ways of finding talent (PMI, 2022). As the population ages, educational technology has helped Japan develop the next generation of skills (op. cit.). One of the megatrends strikes directly at the need for companies to build more inclusive cultures, because although organizations have grown, due to labor shortages and DE&I it remains challenging to incorporate into every activity.

Diversity management has increased in working life and its skills are needed to understand it (Viitala, 2021, Chapter 5.5.). McKinsey's study (Dixon-Fyle et al., 2020) on the impact of diversity on business shows that profitability was better for companies with more than 30% women in leadership and higher performance. However, getting involved is not easy. Overall, only 18% believed their work to be relevant. According to the study, the integrated approach of diversity leaders to strengthening inclusion highlighted five different policy areas:

promoting openness and diversity, enabling equality, fairness and transparency, leadership responsibility and capacity towards Inclusion & Diversity, and combating microaggression (op. cit.).

A diverse workforce increases company performance by 33%, as different backgrounds, views and experiences increase creativity in the workplace (Joan, n.d.). Technology has created different ways to communicate, work and even store information. With the help of various tools, it is easier to perform daily work tasks. Employee wellbeing is promoted by creating hybrid offices whose designs reduce stress and increase productivity (op. cit.).

To (2021, p. 43) in his study linked the connection between the importance of inclusion in the workplace and the development of a positive corporate culture. The results of the survey revealed that employees believe that good involvement in the workplace can lead to a positive corporate culture.

Leaders need to be aware of the changes that are taking place globally to effectively contribute to the organization to help with society's challenges and be part of the solution, not the problem. Building a meaningful corporate culture begins with the company's own commitment (Zemke, 2022a). Piha (2017, p. 15) clearly underlines the process of change into an idea where the world, communication, work, and perception of people have changed, and corporate culture is the solution to curbing resistance to change because it challenges and guides. She links the purpose of life to business, for the company must find purpose within (p. 22). Employees want to work for a company they believe in.

When cultures become a way of life, it is energizing and creates happiness. Strong organizations retain and attract more of their top employees (Zemke, 2022a). A millennial does not change jobs because of salary but because of the relevance of the job. Work must fit into their goals, values, and lives. They are looking for a strong corporate culture that prioritizes their wellbeing (op. cit.). Such companies benefit from commitment, enthusiastic and innovative employees who want to grow the company's business.

### **2.1.3 The current state of the corporate culture**

Every company has a culture, but it must be nurtured and managed (Luukka, 2019, p. 35). Values and mission can be written on a website, but if a company's management is not ready

to understand what is required to create a functioning and successful corporate culture, it can affect a company's success. The company's management must be aware of the target state, the current state, take the customer into account and understand whether the experience of the corporate culture is the same for everyone (op. cit., p. 42). According to Zemke (2022a), managers should honestly consider what the company's culture is and empathic managers should think about what it would be like to be an employee in the company.

Clarifying the space between the optimal and the current corporate culture and creating a new one is based on an understanding of contemporary culture (Zemke, 2022a). Corporate culture must keep pace with organizational change and development. Culture should, in fact, lead to change. If an organization gets new technology equipment to serve better customers and work more efficiently, but the corporate culture is toxic to change, it will be hard. Understanding the current state begins with listening to employees (op. cit.).

Kuusela (2015, p. 180) considers cultural analysis to be a good way to find out which factors need change in a company:

- What is the structure of the organization?
- What are the current operating methods and key cultural beliefs?
- What is the role and importance of customers and management?
- What does the company consider important?

He emphasizes that change happens together and takes time. Kuusela (pp. 191–195) also highlight ten points in creating a good culture. They begin with identifying challenges, understanding current culture, finding, and building a common state of mind. Next, the organization is made attractive which is managed by planning change together. He recalls that learning is part of change. Kuusela reminds us to change only what prevents success.

Zemke (2022a) suggests using various surveys or engagement metrics, statistics on recruitment targets, employee satisfaction surveys, and indicators of sick leave, or to study market reputation for assessing corporate culture.

## 2.2 How modern corporate culture is built

### 2.2.1 Recruitment and orientation

Culture must be the same in all organizational processes and roles (Luukka, 2019, p. 254). Construction starts with the right recruitment. Luukka (p. 259) lists how the company needs to know what kind of role they want to fill in and understand what factors it is devoid of. Above all, what kind of employee fits into the corporate culture. It is also important to be able to campaign the recruitment message correctly. Who is recruited: young, experienced, engineers or experts? These decisions can affect the corporate culture and, if necessary, even change it (op. cit., p. 265).

Quantity does not replace quality. It is better for a company to get fewer real applicants than many applicants to spend resources on a recruitment process that does not ultimately yield the desired results.

There are different selection processes. Depending on the organization and industry, group interviews and various tests or hands-on exercises can be conducted before even going to the interview. In the first phase, it is already important to meet colleagues as well. It must be remembered that recruitment is for both, the company, and the employee. Behind every test and exercise should be the importance of doing it (Luukka, 2019, p. 279).

Communication during the process is important, even with those who are not chosen (Rossi, 2012). At its best, the recruitment process is an experience that attracts the employee to the organization and where the employer gets a clear picture of the candidate's suitability for the company. In the interview, it is important to find the applicant's world of values. Luukka (2019, p. 281) mentions that compromises should never be made in the selection process. It is better to keep a place open than to hire someone who is not suitable for the company, as it always affects the culture. When the salary level is also clear at the beginning, unnecessary salary discussions are avoided.

Recruitment should be continuous with preconceived notions, because if you only recruit when you need help, it is already too late. Recruitment is looking for talent for the organization. This important process is worth concluding for the celebration, as it is also for

the selected candidate. Luukka (2019, p. 284) recalls investing in the moment of signing the employment contract and introducing the new employee to colleagues.

Zappos' recruitment process also describes their values and ways of doing things (Hsieh 2010, p. 197). Employee interviews are specifically looking for talent suitable for the company that shares the same insanity and humor. Interview questions help the recruitment process to see if the applicant is a more creative than average person.

For the promises of corporate culture to be fulfilled, the orientation must be successful. Most remember the first day of work and the first impression determines how expectations for a new job are built (Luukka, 2019, p. 287). The orientation, which can continue for weeks after the first day of work, is intended to give the employee tools to get started, hands-on guidance, and a better understanding of the work environment and new colleagues. Luukka (p. 290) suggests that the orientation may be done by colleagues rather than the members of the Talent Acquisition team. He recalls that sometimes new employees are forgotten after the initial induction, but feedback should continue throughout the employee's journey. Recent feedback on the recruitment process is also helping to evolve. Luukka (p. 300) also suggests celebrating the end of the probationary period. Orientation takes time and effort; it is meant to exceed the employee's expectations. At its best, it also saves money and future resources.

Rossi (2012) also considers further recruitment measures involving orientation. By ensuring the new employee internalizes the mission, values, history, and corporate culture, the real act of building culture has been completed. Orientation should include training, monitoring, and feedback. At Microsoft, a career progression plan for a person is mapped at an early stage (op. cit.). At H&M, recruitment is often the responsibility of a recruitment team made up of different stores in the area, and employees will be informed about open vacancies first. A cultural test is a way to find out at an early stage whether a person is suitable as a company's cultural ambassador. Various trade fairs and internships are the best ways for some companies to attract new employees.

### **2.2.2 Build trust**

Without trust, there is no modern corporate culture. It is the basis for working in a work community and running a business (Haapala & Lehtipuu, 2021, p. 23). Trust also extends beyond the work community to customers and other stakeholders. Communication is also

about trust. Trust must be earned, nurtured, and strengthened and lost trust is extremely difficult to regain (op. cit., p. 26). It is easier for a reliable company to forgive mistakes from customers. For millennials, trust is a fundamental issue that is expected to come from employers.

Trust asks performance, which can be assessed by various studies and observations (Haapala & Lehtipuu, 2021, p. 63). Having a strong brand makes it easier to build trust when it comes to new products or customers. Haapala and Lehtipuu (pp. 64–67) mention that domesticity, the history of the brand and various actions build trust. According to them, customer feedback is a gift a company can learn from. People often choose products and services that suit their values and beliefs. Trust is based on honesty, goodwill, and notoriety. The company must meet the expectations of the customer and employees, be positively identifiable, arouse emotions and build emotional ties, as well as the courage to admit mistakes (op. cit., pp. 82–91). Awareness in business also means consistent action to deliver on the promise of trust. Good reputation, customer service and identifiable actions build a high level of trust and esteem around them (op. cit., p. 145).

Leading people means building trust, doing concrete actions, and repeating them are important management roles (Luukka, 2019, p. 326). Experimentation and transparency help self-direction. However, it requires transparency in the corporate culture. People need to experience inclusion.

Many companies want to create a personnel handbook (Rossi, 2012). The purpose of the manual is to contain the company's values. Unfortunately, many companies continue to create rules and restrictions that restrict the freedom and creativity of employees. Trust is best built by giving freedom and showing that the company wants to strengthen relationships. Rossi (op. cit.) wants to emphasize that the goal is to get an innovative team to blow one coal passionately to get results.

According to Barnes (2013), loyalty, which is two-way, brings with it common understanding, satisfaction, and trust. He points out that disloyalty, on the other hand, creates false information and rumors that create mistrust. Loyalty is built like trust. You can try to correct the lack of trust by thinking about the following points: treating everyone equally and being fair. It is worth distributing praise to those who deserve it, but it is worthwhile to state the

reasons openly and clearly (op. cit.). Another way is to consider those who need help the most. Whether it is help in development or learning.

Strong corporate cultures are being managed. The customer sees and experiences the effects of corporate culture through the service (Rossi, 2012). Teamwork, respect, and the treatment of employees are directly reflected in customers. A workplace where employees enjoy their work and get to achieve their own goals is happy. A positive environment guides performance and development. When employees are boldly given responsibility and permission to implement themselves, they focus on achieving the best performance. Permission to use their own gifts, according to Rossi (op. cit.) provides the best tools for a maximizing policy designed to lead people through growth and success.

Covey (2000, pp. 55–61) suggests six important ways in which highly efficient and independent individuals work to build effective and powerful relationships with others. These are: understanding everyone, making small and valuable gestures to the other, keeping promises, clarifying expectations, sincerely apologizing for a mistake, and showing self-esteem. These helps build lasting relationships based on trust.

### **2.2.3 Listen and communicate**

The basis for building a modern corporate culture is to increase communication and trust. As already mentioned, trust is earned through openness, action, and transparency. The means of communication are many and the company may have different communication channels. Communication by e-mail or at a meeting is different from break-in room conversations. Communication is for the most part non-verbal. Key skills also include listening, direct conversation, and emotional handling. Learning these skills can improve individuals' success in private life as well.

For the management of corporate culture to be implemented in practice, communication cannot be forgotten (Rossi, 2012). The best communication is transparent, honest, and open. A culture where employees are aware of change and how important things are handled creates the best results. There, employees can participate, influence, and even resolve issues and challenges.



Rossi (2012) mentions how transparency raises responsibility and freedom. Such a culture increases employees and customer satisfaction and ensures the profitability of the business. According to her the team organizational structure emphasizes the directness of the discussion channels and short communication channels. Open management answering employees' questions and free discussions help with the flow of information. It is important for a company to find suitable and effective means of communication. They can be emails, trainings, appointments, various occasions, bulletin boards, idea boxes, posters, stickers, campaigns, or games. Only the imagination is the limit. The smallest companies even communicate via WhatsApp. Without work phones, the challenge here is to disrupt leisure time.

The importance of communication is emphasized to bring the vision, mission, and strategy of the organization to life. According to Rossi (2012) it is a tool that, when done correctly, can inspire or crush the entire culture. In an open communication environment, an employee is not afraid to express their ideas. However, open, and transparent communication does not mean omitting filtering. Too much information can also be fatal. It is best to give freedom and opportunity to seek information.

Successful communication helps people better understand others and the situations they have found themselves in. Creative ideas emerge and problems are resolved quickly. Communication skills are good in all aspects of life. Advanced communication in the workplace facilitates decision-making, avoids conflicts, and understands compromises (Stahl, 2018). In personal life, communication skills make it easier to understand other people better. People with good communication skills are also often the ones who motivate, drive change, inspire and are part of the solution in the workplace.

The main communication skills to be developed are listening, non-verbal body language, straightforward, and emotional approach. Communication is always two-way, and the best tool is listening (Radley, 2021). When there is a lack of frustration and trust in a company, Radley (op. cit.) thinks often the reason is poor communication. He believes the best ways to improve communication in an organization are one-on-one meetings, weekly meetings, clear assignments that answer the question of why, giving constructive and positive feedback, listening, and leading by example.

For medium-sized businesses, a 15-minute morning meeting is a great means of communication. It does not always have to be a full of information but also having fun and laughter will improve communication. It is a good idea to put messages and information for the evening team or those who are on a day off on a notice board or in a common workplace booklet.

Things need to be repeated so that what is heard is understood and remembered. Communication must consider all listeners and be diverse (Luukka, 2019, p. 337). Some people understand best through pictures, others by listening and some by reading. When you can tackle all three aspects of communication at the same time, you are on the winning side.

The most important roles of supervisors are to act by one's own example, to be present and reachable. No one can expect employees to implement values that are missing from the management. Even then, it cannot be demanded from the employees. The role of employees is also to listen. According to Luukka (2019, p. 69), one employee cannot change culture. A strong culture is recognized for employee engagement and automatic culture maintenance. He points out that an employee has the right to choose a workplace where the corporate culture feels close to their own values and norms.

For communication to be successful in all its forms, there must be cultural support for listening. This can be done annually by asking employees for feedback or daily in face-to-face interactions. Communication is not just the ability to discuss, listen to or communicate through various means, it is also about involving and engaging employees (Rossi, 2012). When employees do not understand strategic goals, there may be a lack of understanding of meaning. If a person does not understand the meaning, it does not commit. Communication should be everyone's job, like building a culture.

Through listening, managers can develop employees (Rossi, 2012). One of the best tools for this is development discussions. Discussions that take place at least a couple of times a year map out training needs and career goals. When an employee gets involved in planning and developing their own future, it rewards. Listening is one of the best ways to lead (op. cit.). It has a direct link to increasing productivity. This is possible when the entire staff is involved.

Success is not about what is done but how. In a modern corporate culture, listening to employee ideas is not just about development discussions, but an open channel of

discussion and communication is possible throughout the year. Personal meetings with managers outside development discussions also help to do this. Rossi (2012) reminds that the ideas received by employees should be returned and feedback should be shared. The company succeeds best when employees are involved in the implementation and strategy of ideas.

Modern corporate culture strongly involves giving and taking responsibility. Communication is also the company's way of working, such as the recruitment process (Rossi, 2012). More can also be communicated in the work environment, where the office or company is located and how it is built. Relaxing factors, like football table, clean kitchen, relaxation rooms, rooms suitable for meetings and offices forward the message. Has occupational ergonomics been taken care of? These all communicate how a company wants to take care of its employees. Some companies, such as Suitsupply, also attract customers to spend time in the store.

According to Hsieh (2010, p. 200), strong and positive relationships are based on openness and honesty, as they lead to trust and faith. Caring and emotional ties are part of this. Often communication is part of the challenges of companies. At Zappos the best leaders are those who not only lead by their own example, but are also team followers (op. cit., p. 202).

#### **2.2.4 Develop and grow**

The growth of the company and the employees go hand in hand (Rossi, 2012). The job of management is to be for the employees. For development to be at the heart of culture, management must rely on the employee's own enthusiasm and desire to grow. By creating a culture of continuous learning, employees are provided with channels, interests, and assistance in development (op. cit.).

As part of professional development, there is also a balance between rest, work, and leisure. Rossi (2012) emphasizes the pursuit of holistic development. By giving room for growth and helping employees find a personal vision, it also stimulates creativity. A coaching management approach supports holistic development. The company may use experts, mentors, training, coaching programs, or instruct staff to attend seminars as incentives for personal development. Management should not forget its own example in development and feedback (op. cit.). It is important to consider whether there are any obstacles to development in the company and how they can be removed.

Appreciation often comes from caring. Caring can be demonstrated through staff-invigorating gifts, flexibility, support during a difficult period of life and encouragement to relax. Fondi company has a curse and snort license on Monday afternoons (Rossi, 2012). In a caring work culture, each employee is allowed to be their own and it considers a person's diverse life. At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, managers were expected to make quick decisions about enabling telecommuting. Change management rose to prominence and consulting assistance was used. Companies with a strong corporate culture found it easier to follow, and those who used modern tools found it easier to switch to hybrid work. In part, the change has been permanent. Some companies have found that managing a modern corporate culture cannot ignore the sensibility requirements of the millennials in maintaining balance.

Caring mindset requires more than just conveying a career. Occupational wellbeing provides the conditions in which employees are mentally and physically good. The problems often occur when the organization and team do not meet. Rossi (2012) argues that the root cause is found in practices that should be changed. Proactive work for wellbeing at work is invaluable. When an employee goes on sick leave due to burn out, it is already too late. A corporate culture that invests in employee wellbeing, creates efficiency, saves costs while avoiding sick leave, and builds trust in employees. In practice, caring means hybrid work opportunities, occupational health care, exercise vouchers, insurance, travel tickets, flexibility of working hours, breakfasts, and attentiveness, as well as other services designed to help the employee find balance (op. cit.). Preventive measures in the field of workplace safety, cleanliness of the working environment and maintenance of routines secure the company's most important resources, employees, but also save costs in the long run.

Support is also provided through the corporate culture itself. A humane and humorous work environment creates a strong symbolic sense of community. Every employee should therefore be considered as an individual. Caring can also be part of the development of society or the protection of the environment (Rossi, 2012). Ecology is often part of a company's values. Management should therefore consider how they could increase the happiness of customers and employees and what solutions the company must prevent the formation of stress.

Leadership also means leading each employee himself (Piha, 2017, p. 116). Leaders often draw their inspiration from others (Bock, 2015). The freedom given to employees brings with it responsibility. In a modern corporate culture, there is a wellbeing team. Important resources

in life are interesting work, where an appreciative and supportive work community offers various opportunities and challenges to develop (Viitala, 2015, p. 214).

### 2.2.5 Success and rewards

Rewarding employees does not always mean being money in the form of a salary, bonus, or other benefits (Luukka, 2019, p. 371). Positive attention and feedback, remembering birthdays, rewarding a meritorious or committed project are all different ways to engage employees as well. Celebrating matters outside of work also demonstrates employee appreciation. Everyday actions often mean a bonus given more than once a year. Thanks, motivates many.

Thanksgiving is part of creating a positive and modern corporate culture. Focusing on solutions, encouragement and rewarding help build a strong foundation for a modern corporate culture that makes appreciation based on values (Rossi, 2012).

Laughter, energy, and positivity are the best indicators of the work atmosphere. Work can be done hard without feeling tired. Motivational meetings and healthy competitions with prizes are part of the praise given to the team. Rossi (2012) points out an important point of view that praise and appreciation are not limited to capital. Demonstrating appreciation through a variety of events can exceed an employee's expectations, which has a much more far-reaching impact on productivity and success than non-praise. Humor should not be forgotten; work can be fun, and time should also be found to celebrate. Employees should be encouraged to be active communicators. Rossi (op. cit.) also points to the importance of feedback.

To make thanking feel just as important every time, the ways of thanking can vary (Rossi, 2012). In addition to giving thanks during meetings and regular habits, new ways can be devised. Companies can sometimes thank employees for a good performance, even with a gift card, and this will prevent them from getting used to the accolades. Rossi (op. cit.) points out that the failure can also be thanked, because then the employee has tried. Management should encourage company employees to thank each other as well. In this case, the culture of praise is at its highest.

Leading for success requires energy, an inspiring approach, a good atmosphere, and a strong team spirit (Rossi, 2012). According to Rossi (2015), community can be seen as greetings from colleagues, networking feedback, gratitude, or even a summer party. If the projects are successful, it is important to celebrate the victory and collaborate after the training days to weld the teams together. She says the company should also actively encourage its employees to operate outside of working hours. One of the activities that promotes a work culture is to set up your own cultural committee. Development discussions can take place outside the workplace, even in a quiet café. Some companies celebrate colleagues' years of service with a small gift and a cake. Above all, it is about doing in a team as success is celebrated (Rossi, 2012). It's not about busting employees, but the fact is that if employees are denied benefits, at the same time their desire to help the company succeed is reduced. Then it is easier for the employee to switch to a competitor.

The focus should be on building success, because then people are ready for effort and a desire to influence the experience to do their best (Rossi, 2012). However, building a positive and successful work environment is not only based on celebration, but it reinforces the community spirit needed to run a successful business through culture. If a company is experiencing difficult times, there is not always a chance to celebrate. Rossi (op. cit.) reminds that celebration does not have to be a state of emergency but part of the daily life of an organization and the reasons may be different. She mentions that some companies celebrate with access to sales goals, success stories, customer feedback, or come up with unique traditions. It can be something the team has to do together, for example, with help or clean stockroom together. Regular participation in common practices promotes community spirit (op. cit.).

The right salary level and bonus are also reflected in employee job satisfaction. Fair compensation for work is based on the perceived significance of the work (Rossi, 2015). In workplaces where success is generously distributed to employees, they believe it will return even better (Rossi, 2012). These companies believe that employees deserve a fair reward because they are behind the success. Often these are also companies that are ready to help society and responsibility work is one of the basic principles. In this case, the reasons can already be found in the corporate culture and are also divided into other stakeholders. The company thinks bigger and wants to change the world. The employee can be confident that bonuses and rewards will be distributed fairly and transparently.

### 2.3 Challenges in modern corporate culture

Even from a bad culture, one can rise to a culture of victory, but then one must identify where the company is in the state of culture and how to move from it to the next (Luukka, 2019, p. 44). The state of corporate culture can change quickly, and Luukka (p. 45) points out that changing operating methods also leads to a change in corporate culture. He says the poor recruitment can bring a challenging effect on the entire corporate culture and business. Luukka gives an example of an open work environment where employees are required to have qualities such as flexibility and creativity, it is extremely difficult for an employee for who likes security to keep up with change.

Failure to consider people who fit the values of the organization when hiring employees can result in a highly inflamed atmosphere in the future. When building a team, a leader should consider what the person is bringing to the company and what impact he or she may have on the corporate culture. It can be very difficult for an employee in need of a hierarchy to adapt to a modern corporate culture where openness, transparency and direct channels are commonplace.

Luukka (2019, p. 45) points out that poor managerial work is also one of the most common reasons for the failure of the corporate culture. According to him, the toxic atmosphere can also be caused by incorrect practices and processes. Excessive politicking and favoritism are the main reasons for the development of different gossip. The team environment can then turn into a struggle for individual employees, where everyone strives to care about their own interests and progress (op. cit.). Management should be always up to date on its own corporate culture and maintain its development. Leading by example is important because an individual's behavior can influence the attitude, motivation, and inspiration of the rest of the team, making it easier to build a staff mentality (CFI, 2022b). The example of a manager can also be followed in terms of working hours or outfit.

A psychological study that followed more than 900 managers for four years revealed that managers also leave the company if the corporate culture is unethical, and the values are not pleasing (Vuorela, 2016).

However, Luukka (2019, p. 50) mentions that building and maintaining a corporate culture is the responsibility of each member of the organization and everyone has influence. People

need to change direction with their own behavior first. In some organizations, responsibility for corporate culture has been thrown to Talent Acquisition or HR team. Building a successful modern corporate culture requires the involvement of owners, other management, and employees (op. cit., pp. 49–50). Shifting responsibility can be due to fear, disinterest, or ignorance.

In a successful modern corporate culture, all employees understand each other. Feedback is based on values, not personal opinions but performance at work. The management of the modern corporate culture must be given to the responsible management, whose important task is to ensure that culture is one of the topics on the agenda (Luukka, 2019, p. 53). Today, many investors are looking for a suitable company whose values and mission, for example in environmental matters, are close to their own moral solutions.

The biggest challenge for an employee brand is to build it from within the company (Rossi, 2012). Once social media has taken over the market, companies cannot control their own brand. Therefore, it is important to grow it from within so that employees take good care of the company's external reputation. It also enhances the employees' overall cultural experience from the very first steps of recruitment.

Creating a brand is also the creation of a corporate culture, as it starts with ideas, ways of working, leadership, thinking, employees, and actions (Haapala & Lehtipuu, 2021, p. 160). Building trust within a company takes place when values and principles are implemented on a practical level. Without investing in people or their career development there is no trust (op. cit., pp. 168–170).

According to Kuusela (2015, p.14), the social power of culture brings external and internal challenges. He raises the issue of working together and whether the company thinks about achievements and operations in the same way. Kuusela raises prospects and meeting the expectations of customers and employees as external challenges.

If the challenge is resistance to change, the company must be able to lead change through employees. At best, constant change is part of values and everyday life, it is part of modern cultural careers (Rossi, 2012). In difficult times, transparency is important, involving employees may bring ideas to solve problems, and sharing information is a priority. Management should be willing to sacrifice their own pay cuts first and layoffs as a last resort



after everything else is done. A company makes the mistake of thinking that a change in corporate culture is a marketing campaign (DenkProducties, 2020). Cultural change is worth starting from early adapters, they are trendsetters and have a strong influence on culture (op. cit.).

Not all elements of modern corporate cultures can or should try to develop at the same time. Renewal starts with an understanding of the starting point and the focus should be on changing practical practices as they shape culture (Halttunen et al., 2021, pp. 107–108). The most important thing is to prioritize the best option for own company and complete it systematically throughout the year (Rossi, 2012).

The biggest mistake a company makes is not listening to employees. If a company has high turnover and employees give feedback, management should openly receive it and think about where the constructive feedback comes from. Feedback can be related to training, the work environment or even work habits. Management should strive to look at the situation from the employee's perspective to prevent the same mistakes from being repeated in the future, update work practices, and consider the wellbeing of employees. These are all prerequisites for a profitable company for long-term employment relationship.

## **2.4 Millennials**

There are differences of opinion between the most important birth years of the millennials (Y-generation). In this thesis we use the term millennials from the generation born in the 1980-1995 century.

Millennials communicate more in the context of technology, expect to perform a variety of tasks, are the most demanding in career planning from supervisors, are accustomed to working in teams, and value corporate culture (CFI, 2022a). They want to achieve their dreams and they are often speakers on behalf of the organization, offering a direct and honest opinion (TechTarget, 2021).

Millennials are subject to many beliefs, one of which is the strong demand for flexibility and trust (Hickey, 2021). Believing in doing meaningful work, millennials are committed and willing to work hard. According to Hickey (op. cit.), they value training and development

programs. Millennials want to influence their work and need feedback, not because they need guidance, but because they want to do their job as well as possible.

Millennials often want to communicate electronically, rather than face-to-face or by telephone (Hailo, 2020). The use of different means of communication and the improvement of internal communication help to attract millennials. The tech-savvy millennium is productive and efficient for the company.

In his study, Kultalahti (2015, p. 3) utilized a total of a thousand stories collected from 250 millennials in Facebook using the empathy method. The method means qualitative research, in which the material is based on the short stories of the respondents. This study found that millennials value a coaching approach from supervisors, a balance between work and family life, meaningfulness of work, and atmosphere (op. cit., pp. 81–98). This shows that companies should update traditional models and look at practices that are shaping modern corporate culture.

## **2.5 Modern corporate culture in the workplace**

### **2.5.1 Starting with purpose, mission, vision, and values**

A modern workplace is not found in tools but in corporate culture. A process that never ends. Only continuous development will move forward and bring success. A modern work culture is important because it is a sign of a forward-looking and open organization that is committed to the employee and filters to customers (Modern Workplace Alliance, 2019). The two are so intertwined. Dissatisfied and rude staff do not bring satisfied customers. The biggest obstacle to creating culture is a solid way of thinking. Development is the only way to take your business forward.

Many jobs are looking for self-employed workers. Freedom to choose work assignments, and especially opportunity, have become important factors, (Luukka, 2019, p. 148). After Covid-19, work has moved from home back to offices, but some companies have also left room for hybrid way of working. This creates freedom. Significance at work can also be a goal in life (op. cit., p. 158). Money can be a motivation for going to work and doing work. The employee

must feel that the company has a purpose (op. cit., p. 161). This is a condition of existence known as mission.

The mission is important because the tasks must satisfy and it must have a purpose (Luukka, 2019, p. 229). The core mission must also always be true, and the owners and managers must believe in it (op. cit., p. 231). Through passion, others will also begin to believe a story.

Mission needs a vision. The vision must be an ambitious but achievable goal. This can be the direction to go and believe in a future where the company sees itself (Luukka, 2019, p. 238). The strategy helps companies get there through values. The goal must still be challenging, emotional, inspiring, and future-oriented. If it is just about increasing turnover, or goal is not achievable, the employees are not committed, enthusiastic or they are even tired of the whole idea (op. cit., p. 243).

Value management is the real act of answering the question of how. The values must be considered from the doer's point of view (Luukka, 2019, pp. 207–211). Every word should be meaningful, and inspiring, but more importantly, they should live in everyday life. If the values are too similar or there are too many, they will not be remembered by anyone, even in their simplicity (op. cit., p. 215). If a company does not expect employees to remember values, then the spirit of values becomes unnecessary. The spirit of values refers to the atmosphere that is visible in everyday life. Luukka (op. cit.) emphasizes that clear and well-defined values attract like-minded employees to the company. As the world changes, some companies may need to update their values. Renewal is part of the process of success and values should not be ignored by. Mission and core values that reflect deeds are interactions. By Hsieh (2010, p. 183) as a company grows, processes and strategies may change, but the core values should remain the same. It is not worth rushing to build values. Because all activities should be based on values, building a foundation is important. The company needs to identify its own situation and make decisions about updating values based on this.

Hennes & Mauritz is known for its value management. One of the seven values is constant improvements. To this, staff often attach another value, simplicity. When something is changed, they want to make sure it is done in a simple way. All seven values are intertwined and easy to use.

According to Luukka (2019, p. 176), a company must have cornerstones on which to build a strong corporate culture. The expectations created by the company affect the performance of the factors. How employees are trampled or challenged to move forward. Aspects of an organization's positive perception of people are trust and openness, which improve the corporate culture (op. cit., p. 183). A company where a toxic work environment can quietly destroy creativity and mistrust prevails are reflections of management.

By Hsieh (2010, p. 2) the happiness is at the core of cultural strategy. The ambition for the success of Zappos is to put employees ahead of meaningful goals, rather than just drilling for pay. When management knows what kind of corporate culture they are going to apply for, they need to be able to answer the question of how (Rossi, 2012). Often this also works the other way around, knowing how you want to act can determine what to do (Rossi, 2015, p. 24).

Luke (2019, p. 203) simply opens how the mission answers the question why, strategy tells what, vision leads where, and values tell how. If an organization has no reason to exist, it is very difficult to give answers to the rest of the questions and it is not known where the company is going or how to get there.

### **2.5.2 Evaluating existing culture**

The easiest decision is to think about what kind of culture the company wants, and the hardest part comes in building it (Luukka, 2019, p. 87). A strong corporate culture is recognized by the fact that every activity of a company is wrapped around it. All the acknowledgments, awards, feedback, everyday activities, communication, and development discussions are reflected through values and mission. It is very difficult to copy culture because the interactions within each company are different (op. cit., p. 94).

According to Luukka (2019, p. 104), building a corporate culture takes time, as it is a constant change. Company can start at any time. According to him, the most important thing is to pay attention to continuous and clear construction and recruitment. The operating methods affect the results, and the team follows the example of the management (op. cit., p. 110). Luukka (p. 110) mentions that culture is systematically built-in different processes and encounters.

Culture works in all work environments and at its best it is proactive (Zemke, 2022b). Cohesion is not place-bound, but a sense of identity must be built on the culture built by the community. While everyone in a company builds a corporate culture, the behavior and leadership style of leaders is directly reflected in what the culture looks like. Often, one of the values of an organization is employee appreciation. However, sometimes an organization fails to show that employees are their most valuable resource.

Corporate culture is tied to a company's brand and image. Often in organizations, the corporate culture is built on the small gestures and actions of employees (Luukka, 2019, p. 76). Hsieh (2010, p. 157) explains how an open environment helped a company discover values and create its own foundation for Zappos' corporate culture. Employees were requested to ask anything from the company's management. No frames were given on the topics and employees were encouraged to ask questions by e-mail, which would be answered in a monthly newsletter for employees, uncensored. There were a lot of questions and they ranged from the time of the Christmas party to why women and men have different shoe sizes. Hsieh (p. 158) emphasizes that belief in a company's brand, its own corporate culture, and building it must be visible and is important for training future talent.

It can even be difficult for committed staff to explain the culture of the organization to those who ask for it (Heathfield, 2020). The reason for this is probably that the manifestation of culture appears as routines. Heathfield (op. cit.) emphasizes that in addition to observation, interviews and surveys can be used to find out what employees think about a company's work environment, whether people are enthusiastic and interact with each other. Valuation can also be done by monitoring whether the entire organization lives up to its values, using various productivity metrics and reading external feedback from review sites. (Zemke, 2022b).

### **2.5.3 Engaging employees**

Managers who know how to build the right kind of work environment attract the most talented employees of all (Bock, 2015, p. 12). Google made great discoveries on how best to find, develop, and retain employees in the work environment they built, based on freedom, creativity, and fun (op. cit., p. 15). Significant work inspires to go to work and completing an interesting mission creates motivation. The leader needs to identify the strengths of the

perpetrators. When we lead through strengths, productivity is higher and results are more positive (Luukka 2019, p. 155).

Employees should think about how they can positively impact the company's operations every day and improve their own attitudes (Hsieh, 2010, p. 184). Other companies can copy business models, processes, and company overviews, but no one can copy the employees, corporate culture, or service a company provides (op. cit., p. 187).

It must be possible to commit to values. The first moments of a new employee in the company already start with the recruitment process. Expectations are high and confidence is being built. All of this disappears very quickly if management and other employees point to the company's values as a sham when they do the opposite. This image is more difficult to change later.

Values alone are not enough to build culture, but deeds are decisive (Rossi, 2012). Therefore, inspiration can be considered as one of the practical aspects of modern cultural management. The employee is not only committed with trust, but the person needs to find motivation. If a manager does not trust employees, this, too, is an obstacle to inspiring employees (op. cit.) When work matters, it inspires experimentation, challenge, and success. Meaning can mean different things to people. According to Rossi (op. cit.), it can be a success, an improvement in the world, or even happiness. For some, it can be attending a vision, belonging to a group created by colleagues and the work environment or team meetings.

Inspiration takes place in practice in finding meaning. This can happen even in a development debate. Inspiration can also be the completion of a project, orientations, workplace celebrations and benefits. Encouragement can well be linked to increasing motivation. H&M holds the Kickoff event twice a year as the season changes. This exhilarating two-day gathering motivates store managers to take on a new season. Having fun, good food, informative presentations, teamwork, sharing opinions, and new goals inspire management to share the same in store to the employees.

Some companies inspire employees through various programs, training, or rewards (Rossi, 2012). Weekly or daily meetings can inspire employees to perform best. When an employee gets to pursue their passion in their work and living a mission together is easy, inspiration is

guaranteed. Demonstrating appreciation takes place by inspiring, encouraging and being interested in people and work (Kuusela 2015, p. 22). According to Hsieh (2010, p. 171), Zappos employees know that employees themselves are the company's most important asset in the corporate culture. Employees prank each other and can host Oktoberfest events or karaoke nights. According to him, culture is the brand of a company (pp. 175–177).

By acting fairly management supports good role models and clearly demonstrates cohesion (Kuusela, 2015, p. 79). The exemplary nature of management in leading a culture should not be underestimated. The power of the group is enormous, and the interaction with its attitudes is part of the culture (op. cit., p. 113).

As a result of corporate culture, Luukka (2019, p. 143) mentions the motivation and commitment of the employees. Motivation can mean a sense of wellbeing about achieving the goal and that actions are considered valuable; the doing is enjoyable, and it guides the action. When work is important, it also affects the ability to perform the task. Commitment is a relationship between the employee and the company, and when job satisfaction improves, it leads to commitment (op. cit., p. 166). The higher the job satisfaction, the lower the turnover and the lower the recruitment costs. Motivated employees also have fewer absences.

The ability to change is challenged as the world changes. Issues related to corporate culture should be of interest to management even before the changes (Piha, 2017, p. 172). According to Piha (p.184), a culture of change intelligence has prepared by giving way to conflict and straightforwardness. Committed employees opens discussions and shares information in a modern corporate culture.

Private spaces are great stress relievers if a person wants their own peace and quiet. Different freely selectable workstations and tables are the solution when you want to adapt quickly to different situations.

Halttunen et al. (2021, p. 113) think, staff can identify with an organization, such as goals, values, or culture. Colleagues or the work itself can also be the target of identification. Identification creates a sense of inclusive experience that supports elements of modern corporate culture.

#### 2.5.4 Digitalization

Digitization does not have a clear definition, but over time, changes in society and people, markets and companies have come call this business tool as digitalization (Ilmarinen & Koskela, 2015, p. 23). Digitization or technology is not enough to create or cause digitalization. Ilmarinen and Koskela (p. 31) state that digitalization is changing the business, and digitalization can be used to develop business growth, profitability, and competitiveness by switching to digital channels. They also point out that this will reduce the cost of the company, create new business models, and increase the efficiency of the use of capital. They recall that it also deepens the relationship with customers.

One of the megatrends is digital disruption (PMI, 2022). Changes in technology are affecting almost every industry that is moving forward at a rapid pace, raising questions about artificial intelligence and its use. In the workplace, training people in new technology takes time and resources. Due to the pandemic, many companies were forced to work remotely and accelerate digital technology within the company (op. cit.). As technology changes, companies may need to change their business model and operations. To support this change management, a foundation of corporate culture is needed to make it possible and as painless as possible.

It is inevitable that with technology, doing work and thinking has changed. Hectic spending and the constant rush have taken stress readings to a new level. In Finland, young people under the age of 35 have the highest incidence of sickness and sick leaves can last for a year. 35 % of sick leave is due to mental health reasons (Siirilä, 2020). Leadership has shifted from work-related skills development to holistic human development (Rossi, 2012).

Hämäläinen et al. (2016) also highlight how the holistic experience of individuals is emphasized in contemporary leadership. They think that culture is the backbone of their activities and supports the change in the digital age. They say it is based on trust, learning from mistakes, experimentation, and diversity as a resource. The employees are absolutely at the heart of everything. Hämäläinen et al. (op. cit.) encourage investment in culture, as its importance as a factor in the success of a company is emphasized in the digital age. A fast-learning and adaptive corporate culture is most effective in delivering results at the cutting edge of change.



## 2.6 Measuring culture and planning for culture initiatives

A consistent measurement of corporate culture shows employees that company management is willing and ready to focus on developing corporate culture in the right direction (Anderson & Smit, 2019). Because every culture is different, the metrics can also vary. There may be different metrics such as employee and hiring manager satisfaction, brand awareness, candidate quality, source of hire and cost per hire, employee engagement, retention, and referral rate, measuring employer brand Return on Investment (ROI). Metrics can also be related to customer satisfaction or cost-effectiveness.

The company Suitsupply wanted to know what the employees of a particular store think about the corporate culture. Employees had to describe culture in one word. Most responses were result oriented. This may mean that employees feel the company is more focused on the result rather than the process (Bhushan, n.d.). The question allowed the company to measure whether it has succeeded in building a corporate culture that reflects the company's core values.

Zappos wanted 10 values to reflect everything they do (Hsieh, 2010, p. 183). Values are the consequences of how they think, behave, and communicate to the people around them. It does not matter if it's your own family, customers, or other stakeholders. The company made them look like their worth, and Hsieh (pp. 189–192) emphasizes that the goal was to build Zappos into a memorable and unique company that is bold and experimental but not careless about the solutions and actions it makes. Employees are encouraged to take risks and make mistakes. In this way, space is given to creativity. These same guidelines are worth their weight in gold in modern corporate culture. The realization of values is one of the indicators of corporate culture (Piha 2017, p. 154).

Elzinga (2022) agrees with the challenge of cultural unity. A consistent culture is reflected at all levels of the organization, where every employee feels valued. He recalls that, at best, measuring culture is an ongoing process, not a one-time activity.

### 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Two different interview methods were selected from the qualitative research methods. Interviewing is the most common form of qualitative research and is often conducted as an individual interview (Vilkka, 2021, p. 99). The qualitative research method considers the description and review of Kuttex AG's operating environment and study situation. The material was collected as a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire interview (Vilkka, 2021, p. 98). The questions were structured in such a way that the interviewees can describe the company's culture and give practical examples of how it works. The intention is to focus on the quality rather than the quantity of the content when collecting the material (op. cit., p. 103). In the questionnaire, it has been emphasized that the respondent is expected to answer the questions in the order given, and thus the researcher is ascertained from the wider material, where the answers complement each other (op. cit., p. 99).

According to Vilkka (op. cit., p. 103), collecting background information first, helps the researcher to better understand and interpret the answers. He points out that the aim of qualitative research is to obtain research material that comprehensively describes the research problem in terms of size, analysis, and interpretation.

The aim of qualitative research is to analyze the compatibility of theory and practice to increase understanding of how to move to different modeling. Pitkäranta (2014, p. 17) says that this phenomenon is also called the hermeneutic circle. The hermeneutic perimeter is a process in which the understanding of the object of research gradually deepens (Tieteen termipankki, 2020). According to Vilkka (2021, p. 142), the goal of a theory formed by the hermeneutic method is interpretation, which takes the form of action. In this study material, interpretation engages in a dialogue between the management of an ideal modern corporate culture and the current state of the firm and how it should be developed. In this study, a variety of theoretical starting points can be applied to the analysis, although the theory did not directly guide the analysis (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018).

### **3.1 Qualitative research: Questionnaire interview**

#### **3.1.1 Data collection method and sampling**

According to Kananen (2019, p. 28), various techniques can be used as data collection methods for qualitative research. Documents can be collected from secondary materials that already exist, such as videos or various websites. Material for this research problem has also been collected through interviews. These are called primary materials and are collected from people who are part of the phenomenon (op. cit. p. 29).

By mixing different interview methods, the researcher gained flexibility and offered the respondents the opportunity to get acquainted with the topic in advance (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). The questionnaire was given to the respondent in advance and the aim was to emphasize the correctness and quality of the answers, not the quantity. The aim was to get as much information as possible and the answers were not divided into right or wrong answers. The questions that the respondent could not answer provided a lot of information about the company at the analysis stage. In a questionnaire interview, success is influenced by the interviewer's carefully prepared questions and their comprehensibility (Grönfors, 2011, p. 61). For this reason, the questionnaire had also opened the definition and purpose of corporate culture in the organization.

#### **3.1.2 Interviewing process and data analysis method**

Content analysis is a traditional method of analyzing qualitative research, which means interpreting and analyzing written, heard, or seen content (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (op. cit.), the researcher must be able to distinguish between significant and stronger supporting material for analysis. In this study, theory serves as an aid, but the analysis is not directly based on theory. Data-based content analysis has been used as the method of data analysis. The aim is to use the meanings given by Kuttex AG to renew their corporate culture to operate in a modern way in the conditions required by environmental change.

The purpose of the researcher is to analyze the data as a process in which practice and theory bring out different perspectives and finally form a conclusion (Pitkäranta, 2014, p. 33).

Therefore, in addition to theory, the theoretical framework includes different practices. Pitkäranta (2014, p. 56) emphasizes that to develop an organizational culture, guiding and unequivocal answers are needed to solve the research problem. It is important for the researcher to identify the current state of Kuttex AG.

The questionnaire was sent to one of the owners of the company as a document attached to the e-mail, in which the respondent was able to record his reply directly. It had been agreed in advance with the commissioner that the interviews would be a data collection method of study. The questions of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

## **3.2 Qualitative research: Semi-structured interview**

### **3.2.1 Data collection method and sampling**

Semi-structured interviewing is the most used form of questionnaire interviewing (Vilkka, 2021, p. 99). The advantage of a semi-structured interview is that the interviewer can move forward with the help of specific questions in the interview and get more out of the answers, the significance of which is enhanced in the interaction (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). Since the goal of the study is to find out the opinions of the owners of the company and to find out the state of the current culture, it was extremely important to have an interview with both owners. The questions of the semi-structured interview can be found in Appendix 2.

Grönfors (2011, p. 61) points out that the interviewer must pay attention to many different points when the study is largely based on interviews. To gather comprehensive answers and get the most material from the interview, he shares a few tips for the interview situation. At the time of data collection, it is important that the interviewer does not interrupt the interviewee, the interview situation should be as natural as possible, and the interview should start with easily approachable questions. The interview environment and time should also be considered appropriate. According to Varto (2005, pp. 185–187), the study report must highlight the different stages of the study, the manner, environment, and course in which the results of the study were achieved to describe the whole.

### 3.2.2 Interviewing process and data analysis method

According to the research framework, the interview proceeded according to the principles of the semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview can also be called an open interview, the ultimate purpose of which is to find meaningful answers to the causes of the problem and to develop the best possible solution (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). On the topic of the research problem, a theme was picked up around the questions, an understanding of the current state of corporate culture, and a foundation on which to build a modern culture to also address how it affects organizational performance.

The interview was arranged with the commissioner in advance and a peaceful office was chosen as the venue. Also, the interview questions had been sent to the interviewee in advance and had been built into two different groups. The first section dealt with the interviewee and the company's business. The next section focused on different topics based on corporate culture. The face-to-face interview lasted 45 minutes. After the interviews, the interviewer transcribes the material as part of the qualitative material analysis process.

The semi-structured interview was also analyzed using content analysis, which can be divided into a three-stage process (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). Tuomi and Sarajärvi (op. cit.) say that the first stage contains the reduction of the material to be analyzed after reading and getting acquainted with the content of the interview. They mention that reduction helps the researcher to weed out all that is irrelevant. Next, the data should be grouped, i.e., clustered and the tertiary approach is conceptualized. Abstraction is linked to theoretical concepts and the material is understood from the perspective of the interviewees (op. cit.).

After the interviews, the researcher in the reduction phase considered expressions describing the research tasks and divided the material into parts. Merely organizing and finding answers is not content analysis, but throughout the process, the researcher made sure that the data and analysis met and the goal to solve the problem was achieved.

## **4 RESEARCH RESULTS**

### **4.1 Qualitative research results**

#### **4.1.1 Backgrounds of the interviewees**

Both interviewees own the company. The son of the family, one of the owners, has a background in IT specialist apprenticeship and currently works at Kuttex AG in the office. He is responsible for digital marketing, website maintenance and construction, but also deals with customers and sells products.

The father, one of the owners, grew up in Balterswil and attended school there. He completed an apprenticeship in as a carpenter in Dussnang. After training, he worked in the field for 18 years. He then worked in the industry as a seller of industrial products. He did this work for another company for 16 years before starting his own business.

When reviewing and analyzing the results of interviews, interviewees are referred to as, father or son, business owners or entrepreneurs. The research results have been analyzed separately but summarized in the following sections of the thesis.

#### **4.1.2 Business idea**

The owners of Kuttex AG emphasize that the company is a family business operating throughout Switzerland. Both owners cite the business idea of providing quality and useful means of transportation that they sell, rent and service. One of the owners specifically mentions that excellent service is important to the company. He thinks the most important thing is to make customers happy. He emphasizes the business idea corresponding to the customer's problem. Kuttex AG offer simple but smart tools that help to make work and life easier and safer. The products must last long.

According to Viitala and Jylhä (2013), a business idea often starts with an entrepreneur's own idea, which can be born based on a hobby or even a skill. They mention that a niche market arises when an entrepreneur wants to differentiate his product, image, or service. They emphasize that a good business idea is often a service idea designed to stand out from the

competition in terms of quality and service, and the company that defines the business idea has its own unique way of doing business and results. The description should be made as accurately as possible so that the understandable business idea can be evaluated by others. It will therefore also be easier to develop later.

#### **4.1.3 Mission and vision of Kuttex AG**

The mission is to show why the company exists and what it wants to achieve with its current operations (Y/P, n.d.). It should be possible to express a common mission in a maximum of a few sentences. Other owner says the mission's goal is to acquire new customers and achieve their satisfaction. One of the entrepreneurs identifies the business idea and the mission, where the result is a satisfied customer, but expresses the matter through efficiency and safety. He does not mention acquiring new customers, which may in fact be the company's strategy to realize the vision.

The strategy is taking the company towards visions. The father's vision is to hand over the company to his son. While this beautiful idea is a goal and a future goal for the father as well as possibly the son, as new employers, the vision needs to be redefined. The company's vision should inspire and motivate employees to commit to pursuing it (Y/P, n.d.).

#### **4.1.4 Values and leadership inside Kuttex AG**

Values are a personal way for each company to act (Y/P, n.d.). Values do not have to be defined, but as a company grows, they are useful because they guide the behavior of management and employees. Values, like culture, are present, defined or not. Values should be displayed every day and do not need to be communicated separately to customers.

Simple but visible values, suitable for Kuttex AG, guides the business. Of the value-related responses, both owners mentioned quality as the most important value. For Kuttex AG, quality means quality equipment, a corporate image and, above all, quality service that leads to satisfied customers. The son mentioned that quality increases motivation:

Quality products and great service means, customers will be happy and will come again. They will spread the word which is the best marketing. It is also satisfying

for us to know that customers are happy. It's motivating. Our new employee for example just sold an expensive stair climber to a customer. A few days later the customer called our employee to say: "I just wanted to call you to say thank you for selling me the stair climber! It's amazing!". I think this tells everything.

Other values the son thought were honesty, trust, and responsibility. In addition to quality products, the father listed quick service and professional repairs. According to him, these are manifested by an efficient and professional repair, which guarantees the customer to use the device reliably.

Both entrepreneurs believe that employees should be able to take responsibility. The son combines values and leadership. After all, values are ways of doing things. As a manager, he wants to give employees freedom, but points out that through freedom comes responsibility. He considers it important to give positive feedback and listen to employees. The son involves the employee in projects and decisions by maintaining motivation and demonstrating the importance of the employee to the company.

#### **4.1.5 Challenges of recognizing corporate culture**

The interviews revealed that it was more difficult for the other of the owner to define Kuttex AG's corporate culture. The son emphasizes the importance of trust and honesty, as everyone plays an important role in a small business. Therefore, employees who have these characteristics are best suited to the corporate culture and help to differentiate the service from its competitors.

Kuttex AG does not know how to consider the well-being of employees or their growth, how to reward them or how to distribute bonuses and benefits equally. Now, not everyone thinks that they are treated fairly.

Father had no answer to engaging employees, but he emphasized employees' independent work and responsibility. He inspires employees through successful sales results and gives praise when a good order is received. The son believes that openness and participation binds employees best. He gets motivated when employees listen and take him seriously. He also inspires employees by sharing good feedback.



## 4.2 Reliability

In cultural research, the aim is to question old patterns of behavior and increase general understanding of the research topic (Vilkka, 2021, p. 154). According to Vilkka (p. 154), reliability comes in part from the researcher's reasoning for how final solutions have been reached and assessments of the functionality of the solutions.

The aim of reliability methods is to obtain credibility in terms of the permanence of the results (Kananen, 2019, p. 31). The two qualitative studies carried out differently measured the same issue and were consistent in this respect (Hiltunen, 2009, p. 10). The saturation limit of the material was reached when same answers were obtained from the interviews. Data collected from different data sources were compared and mutually supportive results and responses were obtained that support reliability. The analysis of the data was transparent, and the material also included a direct quote from the interviewee. The results of the thesis follow the current questions, which are answered in the conclusions. Data collected from different sources have also been compared to the researcher's own interpretation and experience of the phenomenon. The method of verification was strengthened through interviews, which provided informative confirmation of the researcher's interpretation and research results (Kananen, 2019, p. 33). On these grounds, it can be said that the research results of the thesis are reliable.

## 4.3 Validity

Researching the right things and asking the right questions must do justice to the phenomenon and the method of research must be chosen according to the desired information (Hiltunen, 2009, p. 3). The validity of the research is indicated in the material in which the obtained results and research methods are shown (op. cit., p. 7). The conclusions are suitable and usable for the measurement results.

The commissioner was correct choice to qualitative study and reflected in face validity (Hiltunen, 2009, p. 5). The result looks right when you consider the commissioner's background, history, and the young age of the company. The researcher's own critical understanding was needed when studying the research results.

## 5 CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Summary

The conclusions are based on the research results and are the answer to the research problem (Kananen, 2019, p. 45). The aim of this thesis was to find out *what* a modern corporate culture is like and *how* it is developed. Another goal was to identify how a modern corporate culture should be managed and *why* it is related to the success of the company. The purpose was to find out what the current state of the commissioner's corporate culture is and how it should be changed as the company expands, if necessary. After analyzing the study results, the researcher has compiled a summary that shows the current state of Kuttex AG's corporate culture and highlighted the topics for which specific instructions have been given. The purpose of all guidelines is to make it easier for company management to make the right decisions and to succeed not only as a company but also as an employer. The thesis is given to the commissioner as a tool that they can use later.

The thesis opens the ways in which millennials work in the workplace and how these transforms corporate culture into modern corporate culture. The thesis provides many examples of *what* modern corporate culture is and brings together different ways to meet the challenge of given by millennials. Business leaders should not be afraid of the way they work but understand what millennials really want from the workplace and believe in the job. These are autonomy instead of micromanagement and meaning over money (TEDx Talks, 2015). They have a lot to offer employers when they believe in their work and love what they do. This means employers need to adapt and change.

There are five areas that management must consider to consciously build a modern corporate culture, differentiate themselves from competitors and prosper. These five practical aspects to consider in managing a modern corporate culture is shown in Figure 2 (p. 51). Vilkkä (2021, p. 129) notes that significance is considered to exist in structures and in the functioning of individuals. Things need people to give meaning to become significant. For a modern corporate culture to succeed, it must be led. This thesis shows different ways in which a modern corporate culture can be developed and maintained (*how*). It is an ongoing process that needs to be updated, to observe the current and target state, and to identify needs for implementation.



Figure 2. Practical aspects to consider in managing a modern corporate culture.

In practice, the construction of a corporate culture is managed by implementing different areas (Rossi, 2012). This thesis has brought together a variety of reasons *why* modern corporate culture plays an important role in a company's success. Values lead to decisions and every employee is a cultural act that shapes culture. The goal of companies is to grow and develop. A strong corporate culture must be seen, heard, and sensed not only by employees but the customers as well. A strong culture also carries companies even in bad times when it comes to making difficult decisions. Mainly because the situation can be noticed earlier, it is seen from a different perspective and the challenges are turned into opportunities to strengthen meaning, trust and corporate culture. A culture that focuses on communication and responsibility drives employees to take the business forward together.

Kuttex AG's business owners are enthusiastic entrepreneurs who have built a business out of a passion to serve customers in the best possible way. As a company recruits new employees, their practices and leadership become important as they show what kind of corporate culture they have. Although the company has not written anything on paper, the corporate culture is reflected in their gestures, routines, and interaction skills. It is heard in

the answers and is shown by example. Websites convey a message to prospective employees, customers, and other stakeholders. Unknowingly, the owners of Kuttex AG have built a corporate culture around them.

Entrepreneurs could not put into words their actions or answer some questions about corporate culture or its management. It was because purely the lack of the knowledge. This is considered in the limitations section. This showed the researcher that it is important for even smaller companies to address and clarify the topic. This information was used by the researcher to provide tips for development.

Although both owners clearly mention the defining approach of the business idea, which is based on providing quality means of transport, the business idea was still not uniform. Owners should make the business idea unified, which would also describe the company's success factor, i.e., customer-oriented customer service compared to competitors. The message of a business idea should be the same for customers and both entrepreneurs should understand the business idea in the same way. The business idea should show the offer, the benefit, and the importance of the quality of the service. An ambiguous business idea makes it difficult to build a modern corporate culture.

According to Korhonen and Bergman (2019, p. 132), values are part of the core of culture, and building a corporate culture starts with understanding values. They believe that involving people will help cultural change, as common practices, rules of the workplace, and workspaces can be discussed (p. 138).

Kuttex AG must first unify the above business idea, followed by clarification of values. The company can then go through how to manage the culture.

Many books and articles have been written about management and corporate culture. The management of modern corporate culture combines the idea of group thinking, where there is a balance in combining people, operations and change management (Kuusela, 2015, p. 139). Kuusela (p. 144) emphasizes the most important role of a leader, which is to make others believe and follow the leader. The leader must also be one member of the team. The thesis highlights the management methods that are best suited to modern corporate culture and how they can be implemented in everyday challenges. The owners of Kuttex AG do not have managerial training in employment history, but this is not an obstacle of being an employer.

The most important thing is openness and enthusiasm to learn, work on leadership skills, and learn from mistakes.

One-way communication is often the reason for a failed change, because in the absence of an interaction, the employee does not have enough information about the reasons or goals for the change in corporate culture (Halttunen et al., 2021, p. 108). The employee then feels that he or she is not trusted and, accordingly, is not committed to creating a modern corporate culture. This should be considered when developing an already existing culture. Kuttex AG has recruited the first employee, so the knowledge gained through this thesis can be used to practice in the first time.

Halttunen et al. (2021, p. 125) write that the creation of inclusion and community is related to community leadership and the emotional expression of the company. Leaders should be able to reflect on their own statements and arguments not only through reason but also through emotion. According to them, enabling experiences, a low organizational structure, and participation are the most important constructive factors in a corporate culture. Kuttex AG has every opportunity to create a successful and modern corporate culture and next step is to get started.

The impact of corporate culture on business results can be felt, but few companies prioritize the topic. However, companies have come to a crossroads where clearly the most successful understand the need for the millennials to find a suitable job and workplace that is close to their values and respects work-life balance responsibility (Ray, 2019). Millennials want companies to take social responsibility and act fairly in every area.

## **5.2 Limitations**

Through the thesis, the commissioner received an answer to the main question of the study, yet some shortcomings emerged that are in the empirical study. The first limitation concerns the qualitative research method used in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section, which related to the respondent itself and the company, was easy to answer by the interviewee. The questions in the second section that related to corporate culture could have been clarified. Now the respondent could not answer some questions.

Another limitation concerns the analysis between the two, questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Although there were different interview techniques, the answers turned out to be similar. In a semi-structured interview, more open-ended questions could have brought new perspectives and allowed the results of the interviews to be discussed more broadly.

### 5.3 Recommendations

After reading the practical guidelines of modern corporate culture, it is time for Kuttex AG to consider how to apply them to their company, on what schedule and what is currently relevant. Not all steps in culture can or should be taken at the same time.

The company should finalize the business idea by answering three basic questions (Viitala & Jylhä, 2013) to whom they want to sell, what and how. As the business idea seems to be clear in part, entrepreneurs should define the business idea together so that it combines the uniqueness of the company and the need from the customer's point of view with a couple of clear phrases. The business idea can also be added to a website where it is easy for customers to read.

For both business owners to have a clear picture of the company's mission and purpose, the owners should unify the mission, create a vision for the company for 5 to 10 years, and design a strategy that all employees can implement to achieve the vision. Since leadership is also communication, the mission, strategy, and vision should be as simple as possible (Puranen, n.d.).

The vision should be unified, and this is achieved through discussion. In a larger company, individual stakeholder interviews can be used to gather investor feedback and ideas about the vision (Peek, 2021). As an employer, Kuttex AG should develop a concise and understandable vision in a few sentences that they can share with their team, other stakeholders, and customers. According to Peek (op. cit.), a vision can provide guidance, set priorities, and be unique. For example, he shares Samsung's vision: "Inspire the world, create the future.", TED's vision is "Spread ideas.", And Google's vision: "To provide access to the world's information in one click." A new company does not have to have a vision right from the start and the vision can change along the way (op. cit.). Kuttex AG has a good timing to develop and create a vision that focuses on success.

The company's clarified business idea, mission, strategy, and vision should be reviewed by employees at a meeting during the financial year, these should be included in the employees' handbook and published to customers on the company's website.

The foundation of modern corporate culture is built through values. Kuttex AG has concise and well-deserved values that describe the company's purpose and business idea. Because the values differed slightly between owners, they should also be agreed together so that employees have a clear picture of how to act. Values can be reduced, they do not have to be many, but they are meant to be clear to employees.

The company should go through the thesis to understand what is meant by modern corporate culture and what tools are available to develop it. The first and important recruitment is behind them. As employers, they must ensure that the subsequent stages of the orientation are considered. This can be done by reviewing and asking if there are any challenges in the tools or job role or if the employee has wishes for a review. It is important to listen the new employee's feedback on the entire recruitment process and orientation for the future.

When recruiting new employees, the company must consider the selection process, communicate throughout the process, and ensure that feedback on previous recruitment is noticed.

To earn the trust of a new employee, the promises made must be redeemed. This requires concrete action and careful consideration of future promises. It is better for management to be transparent and recognize, for example, their ignorance than to promise something they cannot keep. A good way to build trust is to continue the son's idea of employee involvement and to give the new employee responsibility. Honesty about feedback helps the employee develop best. The importance of constructive feedback should also be remembered. To ensure fairness, the company needs to secure benefits and a fair distribution of any bonuses.

Both owners could not answer the question related to the remuneration of employees.

Rewarding can be anything between a thank you and a bonus. It can also mean remembering birthdays in its simplicity, but the most important are everyday deeds.

Motivation takes place through consideration. To strengthen a positive corporate culture, Kuttex AG needs to focus on solutions and creating a level playing field. All employees should feel valued. This is accomplished through a clear bonus system. Owners should

create a simple system that shows how bonuses are distributed and when. An arbitrary and hierarchical system does not work in a modern corporate culture and does not show respect for employees. Bonuses can be distributed, for example, once a year if a company exceeds a certain turnover, but this must be clearly communicated to employees.

For an employee to be happy, his or her goals must be listened to and ensure the employee understands the values of the company. As communication and trust are the cornerstones of a modern corporate culture, openness and finding the right communication channel help to achieve motivation and goals. Communication can take place over the phone, in weekly short meetings with an employee, or even via email. The purpose of communication is also to ensure that owners are present when needed and listen to the employee. The skill of listening should be reflected in all dealings with the company.

Well-planned development discussions are of great importance. The culture of listening should be supported by high-quality development discussions which are clearly communicated to the employee. These review training needs and career goals. Leaders need to remember that this is about understanding the employee. The employer must know what is relevant to the employee to be able to commit him or her to the company's strategy.

Kuttex AG needs to build a foundation for development discussions so that the employee knows when, what and how to be discussed and evaluated. It can be before or at the same time with salary evaluation. The employee should be given enough time to prepare.

As an employer, Kuttex AG must be involved in motivating the employee and providing opportunities for growth or training. Well-being at work can be demonstrated by caring for and providing the right conditions and tools to do the job. Although the owners did not mention it, the benefits for the employee include a car and a phone. A caring work culture considers the employee's physical and mental well-being. It provides opportunities for example of additional training, ensuring ergonomic workstations, lunch break opportunities and routines to ensure work safety. Kuttex AG must ensure that the objectives set out in the development discussions are pursued and supported.

Kuttex AG shows its appreciation by organizing dinners, lunches, or various events. The most important thing, however, is to give thanks. It does not have to be in the form of material but thanking and acknowledging colleagues in everyday life also helps a lot. There is no



shortage of humor in the Kuttex AG office. This could be linked to building success and practices in meetings.

The company must pay a fair wage for the work. This is based on the importance of the work. All employees, including owners, should have a level of pay that is reflected in the investment and skills made in the job and not in the amount of education on paper. As neither of the owners has, for example, leadership training, the salary should be fair and equal. An employee's salary also influences his or her job satisfaction. The entire company must be confident that bonuses are distributed fairly among all employees, as they are the key to success.

A company, large or small, is always dealing with different stakeholders. It is important for Kuttex to maintain reliable and efficient cooperation with all stakeholders. With the supplier, the company went to celebrate a five-year journey, which is great.

The purpose of the personnel handbook is to communicate a positive perception of people, in which employees want to create an idea model of corporate culture (Luukka 2019, p. 187). Luukka (p. 187) thinks a positive perception of people needs exemplary leadership, otherwise we are in a stalemate. Management is required to become familiar with current trends, read human studies, and read social psychological books. This is also a good tip for owners who are stepping into managerial work. It is a good idea to build a handbook, albeit slowly, so that it is ready when there is a need to recruit more staff.

In the future, it may become topical to think about the work environment as well. A little change can accomplish a lot. Korhonen and Bergman (2019, p. 140) emphasize that simply combining workspaces can promote transparency, share information, and improve cooperation. At present, Kuttex AG's workspaces allow for good cooperation. Attention should be paid to an employee who does not work in the office but further away.

The management of a company changes when employees come into the picture. In a modern corporate culture, well-being at work, motivation and feedback are valued in leaders. Giving constructive feedback is a skill that does not look at accusing fingers but is solution-based. There is room for mistakes, but the expectation is to learn from them. Giving positive feedback and praise is part of employee engagement and motivation.

Practicing leadership skills comes with time. Identifying own skills can help deal with different situations. A calm leader can resolve conflicts, a kindly communicator can help manage customer feedbacks, and a leader who admits mistakes can lead by example how to learn and evolve from them (Wooll, 2021). Many books and courses are good tools for this as well. There are good videos online on how to develop leadership. By developing management and leadership, a modern corporate culture can also be strengthened, as jointly agreed operating methods and exemplary nature enable renewal and the work of members of the work community in the desired way (Asunmaa, 2019, p. 73).

Of course, the purpose of corporate culture is not only to produce a good opinion or mood, but to guide success through the company's mission and make a profit (Piha, 2017, p. 59). A strong culture becomes important when a company faces internal and external conflicts. Piha (p. 65) believes that conflicts help to create something new and increase commitment to the organization. A strong organizational culture allows this. It literally favors transparency, exchange of ideas and quick response to change. In a safe environment, goals are achieved through conflicts (op. cit. p. 74). It should be constructive to question things.

Looking to the future, the most important guideline for the company is clear communication, going through the above issues and making a joint decision on what to develop next.

## **5.4 Discussions**

The whole process of making thesis has been interesting and very rewarding. The final topic idea came on late, even though I knew I wanted to study leadership all the time. I also wanted to be able to draw on my own experiences and perspectives when looking at sources and searching for research literature. Working with Kuttex AG inspired me from the beginning. It is great to see how the company grows and what the potential lies under neath. In a few years, the company may already have 20 employees, and hopefully by then these guidelines have been the backbone of building a modern corporate culture.

Working with employees has always motivated me and when I wrote about thesis, I got a lot of inspiration for my career. In my previous workplace, I was leading the change of the working environment and culture thinking of both Latvia and Lithuanian countries. It was not easy, and I wish I could have known what I learned during this process. I believe that now I

would do things differently and be able to complete the change more efficiently and purposefully using the right tools.

The work progressed at a rapid pace over the course of a few months. In making this thesis I have learned a lot along the way. I am a millennial, born in the early 1980s. I clearly recognize the same traits in myself and, above all, appreciate the balance between work and other life. This is one of the biggest things for me. I have seen my loved one burn out and myself have been on sick leave for half a year because of this. Now I recognize in good time when my energy is no longer enough. It is scary to see how strong a stress management ability can be lost without getting it back. Another important point was, I want my work to matter and have a meaning to me.

A successful and thriving career does not have to come by making sacrifices. Can work hard while having fun. During the thesis process, many interesting insights and discoveries have come to the fore. Among them, the biggest personal discovery is getting reassurance for themselves in what field I want to work on next. It has deepened my awareness of leadership and modern corporate culture.

Corporate culture is built from within. This comprehensiveness covers important areas: finding right talents, building trust, and inspiring for the best performance, honest and open communication, contributing right tools, listening, and developing employees, using the power of appreciation, caring, and building relationships, celebrating, leading, and sharing success among team. In strong corporate cultures, every piece fits together. Their mission, values and practices form an integral whole.

I share believe of having a talented, diverse, and inclusive workforce as the greatest strength. Most successful companies create, build and drive for modern company culture. That not only attract top talents but also gives back so much more as positive results of business growth and employees are willing to work for the success of the company. Leading success requires energy, an inspiring grip, a good atmosphere, and a strong team spirit. I want to be involved in growing business in this amazing role. My work starts with a love for the employer branding as a mission and a passion for the responsibilities that changes job satisfaction.

Hsieh (2010, pp. 77–78) highlights the importance of continuous learning. This skill is not just about working, but also about other happiness in life. According to him, the challenges can

be overcome by reading and learning something new and by trying and copying the best. By copying, he does not mean outright word-for-word or imitation of action but following and applying the information to one's own company. According to Hsieh, by asking and experimenting, one learns the best. When sharing and having fun, notice that everything is not always about making money (op. cit.). This may sound dangerous to some leaders, but the meaning of work can be different for everyone.

The most amazing thing about the process has been that I have been able to apply the theory I have learned at work. I have found a profession I would like to pursue. I feel I have a better understanding of the millennials (me as well) and how they are managed. The result of the study is significant benefit to the commissioner, who has been given practical tools for developing a modern corporate culture. It is a tool that includes instructions and tips that also other companies can use in the future.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1. Questionnaire interview questions 4.5.2022

Appendix 2. Interview questions 4.5.2022

## **Appendix 1. Questionnaire interview questions 4.5.2022**

### **Fragebogen Interviewfragen 4.5.2022**

Background information about the interviewee and the company:

Hintergrundinformationen zum Interviewten und zum Unternehmen:

1. Could you briefly tell us about yourself, your work history, and your current role? Können Sie uns kurz etwas über sich, Ihren beruflichen Werdegang und Ihre aktuelle Funktion erzählen?

2. How would you describe your business in a few sentences? Wie würden Sie Ihr Unternehmen in wenigen Sätzen beschreiben?

3. What is the business idea of your company? Was ist die Geschäftsidee Ihres Unternehmens?

4. What is the mission and vision of your company? Was ist die Mission und Vision Ihres Unternehmens?

5. What are the values of your company? Was sind die Werte Ihres Unternehmens?

6. What do you think the values mean (each value individually) and how do they manifest in your own job? Was bedeuten Ihrer Meinung nach die Werte (jeder Wert einzeln) und wie manifestieren sie sich in Ihrem eigenen Job?

7. What do you think are the key principles of leadership and how do you run your business? Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach die wichtigsten Führungsprinzipien und wie führen Sie Ihr Unternehmen?

Every company has its own corporate culture. A strong corporate culture is the most effective single benefit of a company that contributes to business success. A modern organizational culture helps a company cope with change and meet the challenges it poses. A strong culture carries companies even in bad times when it comes to making difficult decisions. Mainly because the situation can be noticed earlier, it is seen from a different perspective and

the challenges are turned into opportunities to strengthen meaning, trust and corporate culture. A culture that focuses on communication and responsibility drives employees to take the business forward together.

Jedes Unternehmen hat seine eigene Unternehmenskultur. Eine starke Unternehmenskultur ist der wirksamste Einzelnutzen eines Unternehmens, der zum Geschäftserfolg beiträgt. Eine moderne Organisationskultur hilft einem Unternehmen, den Wandel zu bewältigen und die damit verbundenen Herausforderungen zu meistern. Eine starke Kultur trägt Unternehmen auch in schlechten Zeiten bei schwierigen Entscheidungen. Vor allem, weil die Situation früher wahrgenommen wird, sie aus einer anderen Perspektive betrachtet wird und die Herausforderungen in Chancen verwandelt werden, um Sinn, Vertrauen und Unternehmenskultur zu stärken. Eine Kultur, die auf Kommunikation und Verantwortung setzt, treibt die Mitarbeiter an, das Unternehmen gemeinsam voranzubringen.

1. Describe your corporate culture in a few sentences and what kind of people succeed in your corporate culture? Beschreiben Sie in wenigen Sätzen Ihre Unternehmenskultur und welche Menschen haben in Ihrer Unternehmenskultur Erfolg?
2. How does your company take care of the growth and well-being of your employees? Wie kümmert sich Ihr Unternehmen um das Wachstum und das Wohlergehen Ihrer Mitarbeiter?
3. How do you reward your employees? Wie belohnen Sie Ihre Mitarbeiter?
4. What is your bonus system based on? Worauf basiert Ihr Bonussystem?
5. How do you consider fairness in your company? Wie sehen Sie Fairness in Ihrem Unternehmen?
6. How do you engage your employees? Wie binden Sie Ihre Mitarbeiter ein?
7. How do you inspire and motivate employees? Wie inspirieren und motivieren Sie Mitarbeiter?

**Appendix 2. Interview questions 4.5.2022**

Background information about the interviewee and the company:

1. Could you briefly tell us about yourself, your work history, and your current role?
2. How would you describe your business in a few sentences?
3. What is the business idea of your company?
4. What is the mission and vision of your company?
5. What are the values of your company?
6. What do you think the values mean (each value individually) and how do they manifest in your own job?
7. What do you think are the key principles of leadership and how do you run your business?
8. Describe your corporate culture in a few sentences and what kind of people succeed in your corporate culture?
9. How does your company take care of the growth and well-being of your employees?
10. How would you promote your reward system for employees?
11. How do you consider fairness in your company?
12. How do you engage your employees and what motivates you?
13. How would you inspire and motivate employees and what motivates you?
14. If you had to change something in your corporate culture, what would it be?