Master's Thesis

Creative Design Management

2023

Soila Tuomainen

Towards strategic communication

– The development of a hospitality industry
company's communication plan

TURKU AMK

TURKU UNIVERSITY OF
APPLIED SCIENCES

Soila Tuomainen

Towards strategic communication

- The development of a hospitality industry company's communication plan

In recent years, businesses have increasingly recognized the importance of strategic communication. It has been observed how the benefits of strategic communication can affect the overall success of the organization.

The aim of this thesis was to develop a communication plan based on strategic communication for a company in hospitality industry. While the company had previously established a strategy a few years ago, the goal was to integrate a strategic perspective into communication as well.

In creating the communication plan, relevant literature on strategic communication planning, work community communication, crisis communication, and corporate social responsibility communication was utilized. The current state and objectives of the target company's communication were analyzed through semi-structured thematic interviews and employee surveys. The research findings were supplemented with the author's own insights and observations.

The responses indicated several areas for improvement that could be enhanced through communication. Based on the results, a comprehensive communication plan was created to address the organization's needs and is easily updatable in the coming years.

Keywords:

communication plan, strategic communication, work community communication, crisis communication, corporate social responsibility communication

Soila Tuomainen

Kohti strategista viestintää

- Viestintäsuunnitelman kehittämistyö matkailu-, ravintola- ja tapahtuma-alan yrityksessä

Yrityksissä on aivan viime vuosina herätty arvostamaan strategisen viestinnän tärkeyttä. On huomattu, miten strategisen viestinnän tuomat edut voivat vaikuttaa koko organisaation menestykseen.

Tässä opinnäytetyössä tavoitteena oli kehittää strategiseen viestintään perustuva suunnitelma matkailu-, ravintola- ja tapahtuma-alan yritykselle. Yrityksessä on jo laadittu strategia muutamia vuosia sitten, ja nyt haluttiin tuoda strateginen näkökulma myös viestintään.

Viestintäsuunnitelmaa laadittaessa hyödynnettiin lähdekirjallisuutta, joka käsitteli muun muassa strategista viestinnän suunnittelua, työyhteisöviestintää, kriisiviestintää ja vastuullisuusviestintää. Kohdeyrityksen nykytilaa ja tavoitteita analysoitiin puolistrukturoiduilla teemahaastatteluilla ja henkilöstökyselyllä. Tutkimustuloksia täydennettiin kirjoittajan omilla näkemyksillä ja havainnoilla.

Vastauksista oli todennettavissa monta kehityskohdetta, joita on mahdollista parantaa viestinnän keinoin. Tulosten pohjalta luotiin kattava viestintäsuunnitelma, joka palvelee organisaation tarpeita ja joka on helposti päivitettävissä tulevina vuosina.

Asiasanat:

viestintäsuunnitelma, strateginen viestintä, työyhteisöviestintä, kriisiviestintä, vastuullisuusviestintä

Content

Appendices

Figures

Tables

List of abbreviations

CSR   Corporate Social Responsibility

ESG   Environmental, Social ja Governance

GDPR   General Data Protection Regulation

KPI   Key Performance Indicator

NPS   Net Promoter Score

ROC   Return on Communication

ROI   Return on Investment

1 Introduction

In the 21st century, we can talk about a strategic shift in communication. Communication has become increasingly goal-oriented and has evolved into an integral part of organizational leadership. This transformation has been influenced by the fact that communication within organizations has transcended traditional boundaries, extending to cover all aspects of an organization's operations and communication, involving all stakeholders in the communication process. (Juholin & Rydenfelt 2020, 81.)

In recent research conducted by Finnish communication organizations, which aimed to investigate the current state and future outlook of the communication industry, the majority (52%) of communication professionals believed in the growth of the communication field. Additionally, over half (55%) perceived an increase in the general societal appreciation of communication. (Viesti ry et al., 2023.)

This thesis deals with communication management and strategic communication in the hospitality industry business. The aim is to develop a communication plan for a company in hospitality industry that has not previously had one. This company has a long history, yet it started strategic planning only a few years ago and hadn't seen the need for a formal communication plan until now.

The principles of community communication, published by the communication professionals' association ProCom in 2020, predict that the expectations and demands for community communication will continue to grow. At the same time, there will be an increasing need for professionals, analysts, and researchers who understand organizations and communication. Communication will play a more prominent role in all professions in the future, especially in leadership positions and specialist level work. Communication will become increasingly intertwined with various functions within the organization at all levels, making it an integral part of the organization's expertise and the competence of all experts. (ProCom 2020.)

With the increasing demands for communication, the target company has recognized the necessity of having a well-defined communication strategy. While the company has had a crisis communication plan in place, their current goal is to establish a comprehensive communication plan that aligns with their overall strategy, values, and vision.

This thesis is a research-based development work focused on improvement and employs both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Research questions:

1. What kind of demands are placed on corporate communication today?
2. What is the current state of communication practices within the target company, and which are the areas that need to be improved?
3. How to create a communication plan that improves the communication practices in the target company?

The goal of the thesis is to evaluate the current communication practices within the target company, point areas that need improvement, and develop a communication plan that aligns with the company's overall strategy. To assess the current communication status and identify areas for enhancement, the study will involve semi-structured thematic interviews with key members of the executive team and an employee survey.

All findings will be put in a theoretical framework by using several literature resources. The key concepts that are related to this topic are strategic communication, work community communication, crisis communication and corporate social responsibility communication. It's important to note that this thesis will not cover marketing communication.

2 Corporate communication

Corporate communication has traditionally been viewed primarily as a service function in charge of composing press releases, campaigns, or a favorable reputation. (Zerfass & Volk 2018) Earlier research shows that communication is often underrated because the services of communication departments and how they contribute to value creation are not fully understood by top management and co-workers. (Brockhaus & Zerfass 2022.)

According to Juholin (2022) we are now living in a communication boom era, where organizations are investing in communication and understanding its value. The transition towards comprehensive community or strategic communication is a growing trend. The boundaries between functions are becoming blurred, and communication, marketing, and journalism are occasionally overlapping with each other. (Juholin 2022, 45.)

In the 21st century, we can speak of a strategic shift in communication. Strategic communication has permeated all areas of society, and it is often used synonymously with community and corporate communication, communication management, and integrated communication. Communication has become increasingly purposeful and has become integrated into organizational management. This is influenced by the fact that organizational communication has transcended traditional organizational boundaries, expanding to encompass all aspects of an organization's operations and communication, involving all communication stakeholders. (Juholin & Rydenfelt 2020, 81.)

2.1 Communication management

In communication management, a key task is to ensure that the perspective of communication is considered when planning activities − not as a last-minute embellishment to the larger picture. (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 27.)

It is crucial to recognize that a significant part of communication takes place across the organization. Even when there is a dedicated communication team, employees in various roles must communicate within the workplace and with customers as part of their work. The understanding about communication responsibility depends on the company's organizational culture and whether the achievable outcomes through communication are truly comprehended. The role of the communication team is to support this effort and create the conditions for effective communication. (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 27.)

The "Diamond of Communication Leadership" (see Figure 1) is a concrete model of strategic management (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 29). Whether the strategy is seen as a more permanent plan or a continuously evolving process, it serves as a map for managing an organization (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 32).
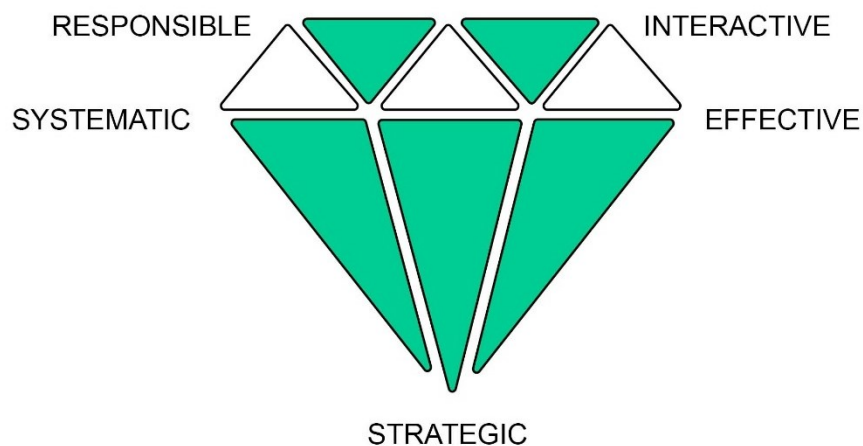
Figure 1. The Diamond of Communication Leadership (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 32).

According to Marjamäki & Vuorio (2021, 51) *systematic planning* provides the structure for communication leadership. A plan makes communication comprehensible even to those not directly involved in communication and aids

in assessing the required resources. Furthermore, it facilitates the prioritization of themes and actions to be communicated.

According to Marjamäki & Vuorio (2021, 85) strategic thinking, systematic planning, and effectiveness are fundamental prerequisites for purposeful communication leadership. In addition to these, communication leadership should be examined from the perspectives of *interaction* and *responsibility*.

The benefits of participation and interaction are significant for leadership and organizational success.

- **Commitment grows** as employees communicate more about work-related matters, leading to a greater sense of engagement and belonging to the organization.
- **New information is acquired through participation**; valuable insights that might otherwise remain hidden can be revealed.
- **Uncertainty diminishes** in a work community where participation fosters proactivity, knowledge sharing, creativity, and adaptability.
- **Bridges are built** as collective deliberation fosters trust, which in turn builds even more trust. (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 104.)

Expectations regarding the *responsibility of businesses* and other societal actors are constantly on the rise. It is now mainstream understanding that responsible business practices and ambitious sustainability goals provide a competitive advantage concerning customers, employees, job seekers, and investors. An increasing number of employees want to commit to an organization where the purpose and broader significance of its operations have been thoughtfully considered, both locally and globally, for individuals and society. (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 122.)

2.2 Transformation in work community communication and communication culture

Work community communication has emerged as one of the most significant factors for the success and growth of organizations, driven by technological advancements. Numerous studies have demonstrated that effective communication directly enhances employee engagement, productivity, and a sense of belonging to the community. Furthermore, communication enables an organization to achieve and sustain a good reputation among its relevant stakeholders.

In the 21st century, there has been a shift from top-down hierarchical structures to a conversational, dialogic culture at workplaces. Communication involves multidirectional information sharing, interaction, and the creation of new knowledge. The term *work community communication* replaces the previous concept of internal communication. Internal communication confines communication within the work community, while work community communication acknowledges communication taking place in forums extending beyond the work community and into networks where members of the work community communicate within the scope of their roles and authorizations. (Juholin 2017, 118.)

Modern organizations use a whole range of channels to reach their internal audiences – from traditional, face-to-face communication to printed publications, electronic media, and social networks. All internal media: print, electronic and face-to-face, can be effective if used methods are considered acceptable and appropriate by employees. (Tkalac & Špoljarić 2019.)

The purpose of communication is to create conditions for work – availability and exchange of necessary information, joy of working, maintaining, and strengthening the work community, fostering innovation, and enabling individual and collective learning among its members. This is enhanced through responsible dialogue. Through their work and communication, members of the work community consciously and unconsciously shape the identity and

reputation of their organization, reflecting it back to the work community and their own identities. (Juholin 2017, 121.)

Strategic work community communication includes the idea that communication has a purpose, direction, and objectives. It is based on the overall goals of the entire organization, adapts to changes, and responds to the expectations of the members of the workplace community. The ultimate purpose of communication is that work flows smoothly, people are well, and the workplace community thrives. (Juholin 2017, 121.)

In many companies information flows insufficiently, leading to what is known as "information voids" or "news deserts." These voids are inevitably filled one way or another. The best way to avoid information voids is through fast, active, and reliable internal communication. (Åberg 2006, 112.)

Strategic work community communication is built on four dimensions (Juholin 2017, 121–122):

1. **Dialogue is guided** so that the strategy is understood and acted upon accordingly.
2. **Information is communicated clearly** and made accessible so that the facts are known, and knowledge can be shared.
3. **A sense of community** is built so that engagement is possible, and a connection to the workplace community is felt.
4. **Dialogue is conducted responsibly** so that influence can be exerted, a sense of meaningfulness is felt in ourselves and our work, and dedication to our work can be achieved

The communication infrastructure consists of a shared system that defines key information content, channels, interactive forums, shared digital workspaces, practices, and responsibilities for everyone. (Juholin 2017, 129.)

Traditional communication channels have included announcements and newsletters, bulletin boards, and employee magazines. These have been complemented by organization and unit-level information sessions.

However, the most widely used workplace channel is email, which is best suited for one-way communication. When used thoughtfully, email is an efficient way to convey information quickly and widely when there is an immediate need for it. In everyday life, email is replaced by community tools and chat platforms. These accelerate communication, and people can genuinely share information, participate, and have an impact. However, rules are needed so that people know which forums they are expected to use and which channels to follow and use. An excessive number of options can lead to fragmentation and loss of control, where these new solutions no longer serve their purpose. (Juholin 2017, 129−130.) As the generation of digital natives takes over the dominant percentage of work force, it could have been expected that new media would become increasingly more significant. (Tkalac & Špoljarić 2019.)

According to Juholin (2017) the question of who communicates is irrelevant because in the work community, everyone should communicate, and everyone can communicate. Every employee should, in their own role, grow into an active and self-directed *seeker*, *producer*, *transmitter*, and *sharer* of information. This doesn't happen automatically but requires communication responsibilities and rights to be documented in the job description or at the very least explicitly communicated. According to Åberg (2006) it is, however, important to ascertain the information needs of one's own staff. One should not assume that everyone always acts rationally and actively seeks information.

The role of leadership is fundamentally connected to all communication.

> Leadership communication within organizational frameworks involves interpreting issues, producing, and sharing necessary information for action, directing the work of individuals and groups, organizing, monitoring, motivating, and encouraging, as well as fostering interaction and community. (Åberg 2006, 93.)

Experiences with workplace communication can vary even within the same work community. Frameworks must be created where people feel comfortable communicating without feeling awkward or fearful. (Juholin 2017, 139–140.)

2.3 Corporate social responsibility communication

> A responsible company takes into consideration climate, environment, and social responsibility in its operations, while adhering to good governance practices. Growing sustainable business practices can even bolster a company's position in the market. A responsible company can also gain reputational benefits and a competitive edge through its responsible actions, which can be leveraged in both communication and marketing efforts. (Op.fi 2023.)

According to Renfors (2023) sustainability is the key issue of a successful tourism enterprise and a prerequisite for its survival. In the last years, tourism enterprises have started to understand that sustainability is much more than just recycling and waste management. The importance of environmental issues has rapidly increased as sustainability is one of the main requirements of the tourists. (Renfors 2023.)

Up to 76 percent of consumers consider sustainability and responsibility to be critical brand values. Responsible products have experienced a remarkable fivefold increase in average sales growth compared to products that are not marketed as responsible. It's worth keeping an eye on the sustainability trend, as it has become a default expectation in many aspects and a requirement when using various products and commodities. (Komulainen 2023, 19.)

As a result, *transparency* and *authenticity* have gained prominence in modern business in a form of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Consumers no longer just purchase products or services; they seek values, ideologies, and identity. Responsibility has also become a significant recruitment asset when hiring new employees.

Companies today provide sustainability information through different channels, including annual or sustainability reports and websites, and they see this communication as a value. (Bogren & Sörensson 2021.) Finns have an especially close relationship with nature and take conservation and sustainability issues very seriously. Visit Finland's vision is that Finland will become the most sustainable travel destination in the world, which means that supporting sustainable development is one of the priorities in Finland's tourism strategy. (Renfors 2023.)

Since 2017, it has been mandatory for large companies within the EU to publish sustainability reports annually. With these documents in place, there are now clear guidelines for individuals and businesses on how to act in a sustainable way to protect our common future. (Bogren & Sörensson 2021.)

The European Commission defines corporate social responsibility as a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis. (European Commission 2023.)

Many companies see opportunities to enhance their competitiveness by leveraging ethical and environmental trends (Harmaala & Jallinoja 2012, 77). From the tourism companies' perspective this is a good opportunity to gain legitimacy among their stakeholders. It is crucial to their success that companies gain and sustain legitimacy from stakeholders within society. Stakeholders in the tourism industry desire and expect information about tourism companies' sustainability work. (Bogren & Sörensson 2021.)

What makes this strategic is when CSR objectives and actions are integrated into the company's business strategy and operational activities. When responsibility is genuinely strategic, objectives and results are measurable. In such cases, the organization's performance metrics also include indicators related to economic, social, and environmental responsibility to facilitate ongoing development. Projects related to responsibility development are also funded through budgets and other control systems. (Harmaala & Jallinoja 2012, 77.)

If the organization's history with sustainability is relatively short, it's advisable to create a dedicated CSR communication plan. Developing such a plan helps clarify the goals related to sustainability and outlines the communication strategies for various themes or topics. This is also an opportunity to consider the target audiences and communication channels for CSR communication. (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 126.)

In the planning of CSR communication, the first step is to clarify the communication objective, to which the company's leadership should also commit. Alongside defining the objectives, at the beginning of the communication process, the organization should identify the target audiences − i.e., those to whom the message is intended. (Harmaala & Jallinoja 2012, 163.)

The next step is to plan the content of the message and select the communication methods and tools. The message should primarily be customer-centric and directly demonstrate customer benefits. In addition to persuasiveness and persuasion, in environmentally oriented marketing communication, it's important to increase recipients' awareness. (Harmaala & Jallinoja 2012, 164.)

According to Harmaala & Jallinoja (2012, 164) collecting feedback is an essential stage in the CSR communication process. Analyzing this feedback provides insights for the next communication process. The effectiveness of CSR communication should always be assessable in some way. Often, the effectiveness of a campaign is assessed based on increased sales or improved awareness or recognition. In the context of green campaigns, there may be a need to create new metrics for success.

2.4 Crisis communication

Every organization is likely to encounter some form of crisis at some point in its lifecycle. A crisis develops gradually either because of one's own actions or due to external pressures. In a hospitality industry a crisis could be related to factors like cyber security leaks, unexpected misfortune, environmental crisis, or any reputation-damaging event that leads to public scrutiny.

Social media has significantly accelerated the need for businesses to be present in the dialogue (Piha 2015). Additionally, the media now operates faster, more extensively, and efficiently than ever before in its history, immediately seeking information when something exceptional or transformative occurs.

Crisis communication involves generating, collecting, processing, and sharing essential information to address crises. During crises, both one-way information delivery and interactive engagement are important. Recent research highlights that crisis communication is a shared responsibility and should be seen as an inherent process in every role, contributing to learning from the experience. (Juholin 2022, 274−275.)

Crisis communication also plays a vital role in preserving an organization's functionality during crises and facilitating a smoother recovery from such situations. The three fundamental pillars of crisis communication are *speed*, *transparency*, and *honesty*. (Kortesuo 2016, 12.)

In today's world, where information spreads online in real-time and media gathers at the doorstep as soon as a crisis occurs, being *initiative* also becomes paramount. *Responsibility* and *humanity* are aspects that often get overshadowed in the chaos of a crisis, yet they are crucial considerations. (Henriksson & Karhu 2008, 27.)

In crisis communication, it's crucial to consider the organization's internal needs as well. The general principle is to address internal matters before external ones, and often, inform various media simultaneously. (Kortesuo 2016, 125.) Internal crisis communication is the dynamic and continuous communication process that involves all organizational members as receivers, senders, and sense makers, before, during and after a crisis has occurred. Several studies acknowledged its crucial role in different moments. First, internal communication is key for crisis prevention because it can improve internal quality relationships that foster positive employee communication behaviors such as advocacy, while reducing the negative ones such as badmouthing. Second, during the management of a crisis an organization should consider the dynamic interplay between external and internal stakeholders in order to define its communication strategies Third, after a crisis internal communication plays a role for the recovery and relaunch of the organization. (Mazzei et al., 2022.)

Well-led organizations fare best in crises. However, having internal guidelines for crisis situations is necessary for the entire organization (Kortesuo 2016, 22). Even if an organization has a well-thought-out crisis communication plan, it's important to practice actual crisis situations and especially crisis communication. Through practice, a degree of routine can be established for these scenarios, enabling rational actions to be initiated as swiftly as possible. (Hiltunen 2012.)

Challenging communication situations always carry the risk of damaging reputation. That's why it's crucial to prepare for them proactively. Building reputation is easier than repairing it. When a situation becomes critical enough, communication is often called upon to be the savior. However, most of the organization's communication – and it should be this way – occurs without crisis communication. Critical perspectives related to various themes should be considered as part of communication planning. When planning communication for a particular theme in conjunction with core operations, discussions about potential critical themes, possibilities of misunderstanding, and timing should all be part of the conversation. (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 76.)

3 The relationship between communication and strategy

Strategic communication is about communication, in the context of organizational strategy development and implementation (van Ruler 2021). Strategic communication, through the way it is organized, influences the business process, which is why, if an organization is successful in implementing strategic communication, it will definitely notice a positive effect on the efficiency and effectiveness of the business process. On the contrary, if a company either does not implement a strategic communication system or implements it in a way that leaves it to be desired, it will have a negative effect on the business process. (Popa 2019.)

In companies, there's a tendency to emphasize actions instead of discussing objectives. It's crucial to follow strategic understanding with well-structured execution. Methodical planning establishes the foundation for effective communication management. Such a plan ensures that communication is understandable even to non-communication professionals and aids in evaluating the necessary resources. (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 53.)

The strategic communication agency Ellun Kanat conducted a study in 2012 to examine the views of Finnish corporate leadership regarding the strategic importance of communication. One of the key conclusions was that in many companies, a communication strategy was lacking. Either it had not been developed yet, or companies were following a single-strategy policy. In such cases, the company relied solely on its business strategy, which each unit supported with its own plans. (Piha & Puustell 2012, 20.)

Communication is considered strategic when it is in line with the organization's mission, vision, values and when it aims and is able to increase the strategic positioning and competitiveness of the organization among its competitors. When understanding the concept of strategic communication, it should be

perceived from the organization's perspective and not from any other entity's (internal or external) point of view. (Popa 2019.)

According to Marjamäki & Vuorio (2021, 50) strategic communication involves systematically promoting an organization's key objectives through communication methods. It has been recognized that all communication vital to an organization is strategic and that communication plays a role in supporting leadership. Communication management must be strategic too. (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 50.)

According to van Ruler (2019) the communication management is double sided. On the one hand, it is concerned with initiating communication processes with the aim of conveying the company's point of view and influencing stakeholders. On the other hand, communication management monitors relevant stakeholders and communication processes within the organization and in the organizational environment and brings the analyses onto the decision-making table. (Van Ruler 2019.)

Effective communication leadership includes the ability to transform complex and multi-layered matters into coherent and comprehensible entities. For an organization's communication to be effective, it requires strategic expertise and planning. By planning, communication goals and actions can be prioritized, and situations that require specific resources can be anticipated. (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 53.)

Communication at its best is simple and clear for its recipients. Successful and clear communication often goes hand in hand with well-organized operations. Planning provides the structure for communication management. A plan makes communication understandable even for non-communicators and helps in assessing necessary resources. The key tool for communication management is the communication strategy. It translates the organization's strategic objectives into communication goals and guides the entire organization to communicate in a consistent manner. (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 53.)

3.1 Towards strategic communication

Strategic communication should be conceptualized as an agile management process in which the focus is on feeding the arenas in which meanings are presented, negotiated, constructed, or reconstructed for strategy building and strategy implementation, and on testing strategic decisions by presenting and negotiating these in a continuous loop. (Van Ruler 2018.)

In strategic communication planning, the aim is to affect. The goals may focus on, for example, reputation or brand, employee well-being, the experience of inclusivity, or stakeholder engagement, thereby contributing to the organization's ultimate results. (Juholin 2017, 67).

Figure 2. The different levels of communication planning and actions (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 54).

The communication strategy is derived from the company's strategy, encompassing its goals, values, vision, and mission. The defined key messages provide the communication with a high-level direction, while its practical implementations demand substantial linguistic and visual proficiency, tones of

voice, channel-specific content, consistency, and time resources. The comprehensive plan of communication is often referred to as a strategy to distinguish it from practical planning (see Figure 2). (Juholin 2017, 65).

According to Juholin (2017, 66) a strategy includes both the objectives (*why*) and the key guidelines for actions (*how*). The strategy does not aim to answer the question of (*what*), that is, what will be done concretely, as it is included in operational planning.

The development and implementation of a communication strategy are forms of communication in themselves. If the plan is crafted within a small circle, it can be challenging to gain commitment from others and to get them to execute the strategy in their own work. (Juholin 2022, 104.)

3.2 From strategic to tactic

No strategy is complete without a game plan in which choices are made about the tactics − the most important choices that will guide the operational activities (van Ruler 2021). A communication strategy is put into practice through a communication plan. This plan outlines specific details about what actions will be taken, when, how, with whom, and who is responsible for each aspect. Practical communication actions are often placed in a year clock.

On the other hand, day-to-day communication is ongoing and related to tasks within the work community as well as with customers and partners. Communication guidelines can be integrated into the communication plan to ensure a consistent approach even in these situations. These guidelines might include instructions for social media usage, for instance. (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi & Murtola 2015, 60.)

The essence of a communication plan is to foster a diverse and authentic communication culture within the organization. This involves integrating communication into the core service offerings and making customer needs and expectations familiar to everyone. Simultaneously, it ensures that clear and

understandable communication is upheld across all levels of the organization. A well-done communication plan demonstrates the entirety of communication efforts and fosters trust in communication activities. The plan makes communication visible even to those who do not engage in communication as their main responsibility. (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 67.)

In one of the most used books on public relations planning, Ronald D. Smith claims that the planning process in public relations consists of four phases (van Ruler 2021):

1. The analysis of the situation, the organization, and the public.
2. Strategy, consisting of establishing goals and objectives, formulating action and response strategies, and developing the message strategy.
3. Tactics, which means first selecting communication tactics and then implementing the strategic plan.
4. Evaluation of the plan.

It's advisable to establish a solid foundation for the communication plan all at once and subsequently offer it for the entire organization's use. This approach guides and expedites communication planning. (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 67.)

Even though communication is operational, its management should be strategic, systematic, and impactful. Objectives need to be defined, and efforts should be directed toward those objectives in a planned manner. (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 29–33.)

3.3 Framework and components of communication planning

Communication is an integral part of strategic management, which is why the input of top management in defining communication's strategic objectives is essential. While the final decision is made at the top level of leadership, the communication strategy should be developed as an interactive process involving as many stakeholders as possible. The responsibility for leading this process falls on communication professionals. (Juholin 2022, 103.) Juholin's

practical planning framework can be used as the basis for planning (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Practical planning framework (Juholin 2017, 94).

According to Juholin (2022, 108) a classic communication plan can be divided to core functions or individual communication tasks and situations, which are addressed in the following subsections.

- **Daily communication** is continuous and often routine by its nature. Daily communication encompasses all information flow and exchange that keeps the wheels turning. (Juholin 2017, 95.)
- **The annual calendar or year clock** records the things that are implemented and serve as certain anchors for activities. Daily communication revolves around them. (Juholin 2011, 117.)
- **Individual or one-time actions** in a company are concrete actions and activities that a company carries out to achieve its communication goals (Juholin 2022, 116).
- **Instructions and process descriptions for communication situations** can be created for any action where it is important to follow a consistent approach, and which is not self-evident to everyone. (Juholin 2011, 120–121.)

- **Sudden changes in the organization, operations, or communication environment** can occur. It's worthwhile to try to prepare for such situations in advance, if possible, by creating a plan B and necessary guidelines. (Juholin 2022, 131.)

When the strategy or plan is ready, the real work begins. How the strategy is translated into actions is a challenging task that needs to be addressed immediately. Communication management must monitor how the plans are being implemented and what kind of feedback is received. (Juholin 2022, 103.)

4 Measuring and evaluating communication

Measuring reveals the value of communication: whether there is a sufficient connection between communication and the organization's strategy and how communication supports the organization's operations. Likewise, it is essential to demonstrate whether resources have been used appropriately. In this sense, communication does not differ from other organizational functions. (Juholin & Luoma-aho 2017, 10.)

Corporate communication is often less successful when it is competing for influence with neighboring functions such as marketing or sales within organizations. (Brockhaus & Zerfass 2022). Communication and marketing communication practitioners are often accused of not having credible ROI *(Return on Investment)* values. The effects of communication are often not immediately measurable or quantifiable in monetary terms. Even successful communication efforts may not necessarily transform to results, and conversely, good outcomes can be achieved despite inadequate or unsuccessful communication efforts. (Juholin 2013, 52.)

According to Piha and Puustell (2012, 70) measuring communication is often considered challenging, and as a result, it is frequently left undone. Also, the digital environment brings entirely new demands, but at the same time, there are innovative methods available for collecting and analyzing data. On the other hand, the other side is that data is flooding everywhere, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish essential information from the unimportant. (Juholin & Luoma-aho 2017, 10.)

Careful planning is essential for effective and cost-efficient measurement. To ensure that measurement serves the organization well and that the results are valuable, it's important to think carefully about what you want to discover through measurement and what specific questions will provide answers to genuine needs. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 139.)

Currently, many companies measure communication through methods such as media monitoring and employee surveys, as well as tracking website and intranet analytics. However, communication can be measured in the same way as any other aspect of a company's operations if the right methods are identified and employed. (Piha & Puustell 2012, 70.)

In communication analysis, key points of interest encompass the organization's level of recognition, the effectiveness of message delivery and reception, audience reactions, and the organization's visibility in earned media (see Figure 4). Communication professionals are concerned with factors like the frequency and tone of the organization's presence in various media outlets, the subjects of discussions, and the overall resonance. There's also an interest in assessing the extent to which the organization's key messages have been communicated and understood. Additionally, the focus extends to measuring the impact achieved and how it aligns with the communication or broader organizational objectives. (Juholin 2022, 309.)

Figure 4. Targets for evaluating communication from different perspectives (Juholin 2013).

Tom Watson and Paul Noble present the "SMART" model for goal setting, which stands for specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, relevant, targeted, and timed, based on their respective characteristics. (Juholin 2013, 58.)

The evaluation of work community communication progresses cyclically, starting with an evaluation of the relevance of goals and plans in relation to the business strategy (see Figure 5). Next, the effectiveness of processes and immediate impacts are examined. Finally, the long-term effectiveness is assessed, and areas for improvement are identified. (Juholin 2013, 86.)
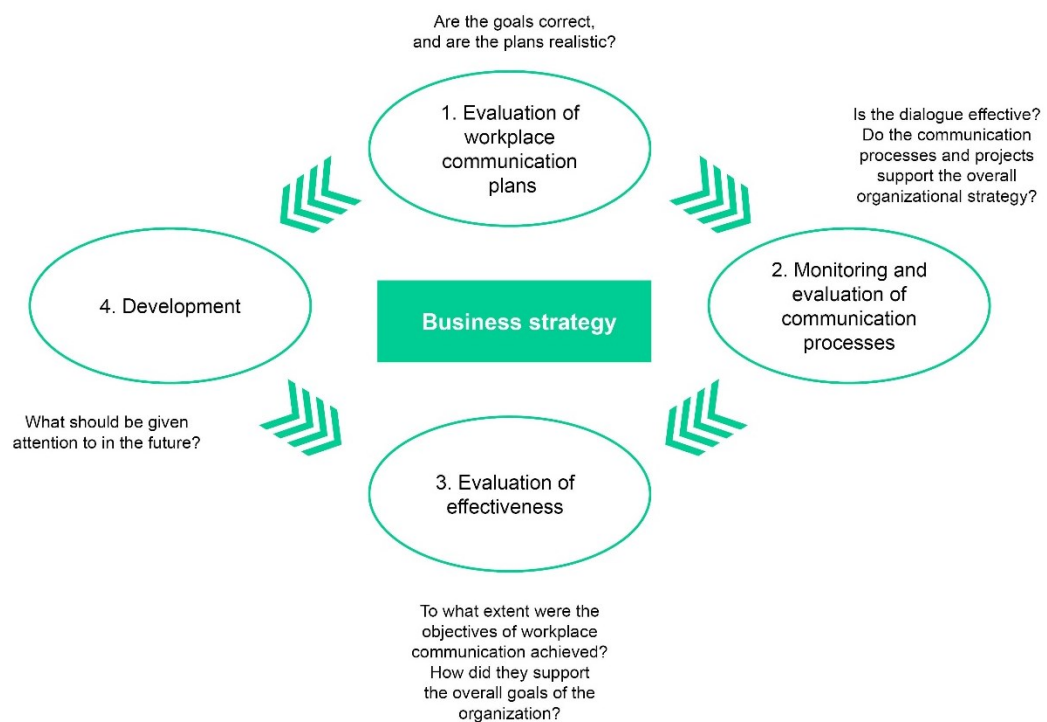
Figure 5. The dynamic cycle of workplace communication evaluation (Juholin 2013, 287).

The most critical phase of the measurement process is when the results are available, and a decision must be made about what to do with them. Presenting results alone is not sufficient; interpretation is needed to understand what this means and what can be inferred based on the results. (Juholin 2013, 80.) By using the results, it is possible to improve the strategic communication itself or

make communication tools more effective and suitable. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 139.)

According to Ed Robertson's pyramid model (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004), the success of strategic communication is measured from several perspectives (see Figure 6):

Figure 6. Ed Robertson's "Quality Pyramid" for evaluating the success of communication (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 142).

- Message delivery: Did the message reach the recipient?
- Message attention: Did the target audience notice or read the message?
- Comprehension: Did the audience understand the message?
- Relevance: Did the message content relate to the recipient's work and/or situation?
- Acceptance: Did the message influence the recipient's attitudes as desired?

- Commitment: Did the message motivate the recipient to support the desired cause?
- Action: Did the recipient respond to the message by taking action, discontinuing an action, or continuing their actions as desired?

These perspectives provide a comprehensive way to evaluate the effectiveness of strategic communication. According to Robertson's pyramid model, success in strategic communication is achieved only when the strategy is implemented in the everyday work and results of every employee. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 141–142.)

Based on the measurements, an evaluation is conducted to understand what these results indicate and what actions should be taken as a result. Are the results compared to previous performance, stakeholder expectations, or industry benchmarks, or even competitors' performance? Development should be a collaborative process whereas many stakeholders as possible have the opportunity to listen, discuss, provide input, and suggest how things can and should be further improved. (Juholin & Luoma-aho 2017, 23.)

5 Research implementation

This thesis is a research and development project, the goal of which was to create a communication plan for a hospitality industry target company that supports the company's strategy, based on its vision and values. This can be achieved by:

1. Determining the current state of the company's communication and identifying its strengths and weaknesses.
2. Creating a communication guideline that considers the company's current state and listens to the wishes and ideas of key members of the management team and employees.

Research questions were:

1. What kind of demands are placed on corporate communication today?
2. What is the current state of communication practices within the target company, and which are the areas that need to be improved?
3. How to create a communication plan that improves the communication practices in the target company?

Data for this thesis was collected in early fall 2023. The development work began with an assessment of the current state of the company's communication by using two different research methods. To bring out the central communication themes and areas of development, interviews with four key members of the executive team, and a staff survey were conducted.

It could be said that in this development work, action research was also utilized. This is not a specific research method but rather an approach that combines practical development work and research. A practical interest guides action research: the aim is to understand how things could be done better. Through action research, efforts are made to gather information that serves the improvement of practices. Various research methods are used to uncover this information. (Valli & Aarnos 2018.)

5.1 Semi-structured thematic interviews

The central characteristic of qualitative research is that it is based on the examination of people's subjective experiences and perspectives. In qualitative research, exemplar data can be presented, or typifications can be made, which serve as ideal models and examples of how the phenomenon manifests in the 'reality' of organizational life. (Puusa et al., 2020.)

The research interview method known as a "thematic interview" is a popular approach in Finland for collecting qualitative data (Valli & Aarnos 2018). In a thematic interview, the interview topic or theme is predetermined. This method lacks the precise question formulation and sequence typical of structured interviews, which ensure that everyone is asked the same questions with the same answer options. During a thematic interview, it is ensured that the predetermined themes are covered with the interviewee, but the order and extent of these themes may vary from one interview to another. (Valli & Aarnos 2018.)

In this development work, four key individuals in the company's executive team (CEO, Sales and Marketing Director, Hotel Director and HR Manager) underwent semi-structured thematic interviews where they were asked the same questions (see Appendix 1). Follow-up questions and emphases might have varied slightly based on the interviewee's role. Interviews were conducted in Finnish. All interviews were recorded, and the audio files were transcribed afterwards.

Later in this thesis when presenting the results, interviewees are referred to as:

- − Respondent 1
- − Respondent 2
- − Respondent 3
- − Respondent 4

5.2 Employee survey

A survey is one of the oldest and most traditional ways to collect research data. (Valli & Aarnos 2018.) It is said that a quantitative research approach aims to establish general understandings, while qualitative methods delve into details. However, the research approach alone does not solve everything. Statistical methods can also provide access to details. (Vehkalahti 2014, 13.)

In my thesis, an electronic survey was conducted among the company's employees to gather information on their communication preferences and suggestions for improvement (see Appendix 2).

The survey was sent to the entire staff of the target company, consisting of professionals in accommodation, restaurant, event, rehabilitation, beauty, and well-being services. In addition, the survey was sent to employees responsible for various functions within the company, including marketing, sales, financial management, legal matters, IT support, and payroll processing. They work within the same corporate group but are employed by different companies within the group and closely collaborate with the target company. The number of employees in August 2023 was 347 in total.

An electronic survey was sent via email to a total of 195 employees. One significant challenge was that a big part of the company's employees either do not have work email addresses or do not work with computers. To reach non-desk workers, advertisements were placed in break rooms, allowing employees to access the survey by scanning a QR code.

63 employees responded to the survey, which is approximately 18 percent of the company's whole workforce. It is reasonable to assume that several employees might not have noticed the information about the survey on the break rooms.

Additionally, the survey was conducted only in Finnish, even though there are some employees in the company whose native language is something other than Finnish. Therefore, they remained outside the scope of the survey as well.

6 Research findings

The target company, located in Southwest Finland, operates in the hospitality industry and its workforce consists of both permanent employees and seasonal/temporary workers. The company's mission is to offer its customers a unique combination of high-quality accommodation, restaurant, event, meeting, rehabilitation, beauty, and wellness services. Their vision is to provide the best service experience in the market area, characterized by both interest and responsibility.

The company's values include:

- Commitment
- Courage
- Openness and
- Joy of collaboration

These values align with the company's mission and vision by emphasizing qualities that are essential for delivering exceptional service and maintaining a strong presence in the competitive hospitality industry.

This company has a long and successful history in the Southwest region, yet it started strategic planning only a few years ago. Now there is a desire within the company to develop its communication in a more strategic direction too. The planning of communication begins with an assessment of the current situation, so that actions in the communication plan can be targeted towards the right areas.

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the current state of the company's communication, and wishes towards communication, a semi-structured thematic interviews and an electronic staff survey were conducted in this development project. Based on the responses, the development of a communication plan was initiated. However, the testing of metrics and further development of the communication strategy were left outside the scope of this work.

6.1 Semi-structured thematic interviews

The interviewed members of the executive team have all worked in the company for several years, and they can reflect on the current state of the company's communication in relation to the past. They all described the current state of the company's communication in a congruent way. According to all interviewees, progress had been made in the company, especially in the internal communication, which had previously been almost non-existent.

> Daily communication has improved significantly. However, we have many employees who do not have work email and do not perform desk jobs; they are involved in tasks like housekeeping. There is a large group of employees that our messages do not reach. Despite our versatile communication channels, I can't honestly say that our communication truly reaches everybody, or that we are pioneers in work community communication (Respondent 2.)

> Our communication still has a lot of room for improvement, but the change from the past is tremendously significant. When I joined this company, there was an idea that things should be kept within a very small circle, and there wasn't much discussion about things internally or externally. It's not a coincidence that openness is one of our current values. However, our communication is still quite unstructured and inconsistent. There's a lack of consistency and a clear direction in what we ultimately aim to achieve. Internal communication has even more room for improvement than external. Nevertheless, things are moving in the right direction. (Respondent 3.)

The responses from the executive team also emphasized the fragmentation of information deficiencies in information flow and partially outdated communication methods.

> The most common feedback that supervisors receive regarding communication is, "I didn't know; no one told me." Many resources, such as orientation guides and various forms, are already available to us on modern platforms. The desire is to communicate with the entire staff in an inspiring and innovative way. However, all employees have smartphones at their disposal; could we utilize their potential better? Nevertheless, a constant flood of WhatsApp messages is not desirable. (Respondent 2.)

> The company's intranet is currently quite disorganized. It contains employee benefits, appointment announcements, new investments, and projects all mixed together. If you really want to find specific information on the intranet, you must scroll a lot. In fact, I'm not even sure how many people actually use it now. Even though there is more communication on the intranet than before, it needs a more organized approach. (Respondent 3.)

In their interviews, the members of the executive team, have acknowledged that the company's communication lacks structure and long-term planning. They are

particularly eager for a communication plan to address this issue. They are also seeking solutions on how to effectively reach employees who do not perform desk-jobs. Furthermore, they hope that the communication plan will place greater emphasis on enhancing the company's employer brand.

> In the future, we will face the challenge of where to find skilled personnel. Our company is going through many interesting and exciting developments, and it would be great if we could encourage our own employees to share more about what it's like to work here. (Respondent 3.)

> Building an employer brand requires a structured plan rather than occasional, isolated efforts. Ideally, it should involve active participation from our own employees. (Respondent 4.)

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication is considered important in the company. The company has obtained environmental certifications of the travel industry, which also require the company to communicate extensively about its sustainability efforts. The first certification was received in 2021. The company also produces an annual ESG report (Environmental, Social and Governance) for its investors.

Asking the opinion of the executive team, the company's sustainability communication is still in its early stages.

> We are doing a lot for responsibility activities, but we don't always see or recognize the situations and aspects that would be important to communicate further. There is still a lot of work to be done in this area. The sustainability themes that are communicated and who is responsible for them should be included in the communication plan. (Respondent 2.)

> In CSR communication, it's easy to lag behind. Responsibility in our company encompasses much more than just green values. We calculate our carbon footprint, but we are also a responsible employer, pay salaries on time, and give many young locals their firs touch in to working life. Leveraging this aspect in our communication has been overlooked. CSR communication is not yet ingrained in our company's DNA. (Respondent 1.)

According to Kuvaja and Malmelin (2008) awakening to CSR often happens gradually, and companies initially communicate their responsibility efforts out of necessity and to a limited set of stakeholders. Even if the initial development of responsibility might be superficial or driven by marketing considerations, companies tend to evolve, depending on their industry and circumstances, toward a deeper understanding of responsibility. (Kuvaja & Malmelin 2008, 27.)

Regarding economic sustainability, companies seem to simply show their numbers, but they do not really think of these themes as sustainability values. However, this dimension is important and crucial to a company's survival. (Bogren & Sörensson 2021.)

Based on thematic interviews, the same has also happened in the target company. The desire to invest in CSR communication is now strong, as the company believes that responsibility will increasingly affect customers' purchasing decisions in the future.

> Our company's external CSR communication may still be impersonal. The certificates we have received are great achievements that we should communicate much more prominently internally as well. For example, on the intranet, there could be sustainability-related articles at least once a month. We should also talk more about those small actions all the time. (Respondent 3.)

A crisis communication should be included within the organization's general communication guidelines. For instance, principles for communicating during crises should be established in advance, so that responses are consistent and unified when a special situation arises. (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi & Murtola 2015, 112.)

Even though the target company has not faced major crisis situations, it is good to be prepared with an up-to-date crisis communication plan. During this research, it was revealed that the target company has created a separate crisis communication plan some years ago, but the knowledge of its existence was limited. Not even all the interviewed members of the executive team were aware of the crisis communication plan's existence.

> Although a crisis communication plan exists, it requires urgent updating. It must be said that fortunately, we haven't been in a situation where crisis communication has truly been put to the test. Several types of crises are entirely possible within the company. It's also necessary to ensure that all employees are familiar with the crisis communication plan and understand its contents. (Respondent 3.)

> For example, disappointments in customer experiences may no longer necessarily be communicated directly with the company; instead, negative experiences are reported to the media or social media. This is another reason for companies to keep their crisis communication processes up to date. Hoping that nothing will happen is not an option, and remaining silent during crisis situations is also not advisable. (Respondent 2.)

According to Juholin (2022, 107) the absence of strategic communication doesn't necessarily mean that a company's communication is in bad shape. Organizations often engage in numerous effective activities unconsciously and spontaneously.

However, problems can arise when facing completely unforeseeable situations or when key personnel are temporarily absent or leave permanently. Among other things, this was also a concern raised by the interviewees.

> The absence of a communication plan may be due to our old company culture and the way things were done in the past. Perhaps it hasn't been seen as necessary before. We also didn't have a written strategy earlier, and there is still room for improvement in that area as well. However, we have started thinking more comprehensively about where our focus should be, and likewise, a communication plan is once again a new solution to address that. I don't necessarily feel that we have been doing well without it. (Respondent 3.)

> So far, communicational matters have been proceeding on their own pace. On the tactical side, certain actions have always been carried out according to the annual plan. Each year, different subject areas have also been emphasized, but they haven't been documented. However, I would say that we've managed well up to a certain point. But now it is the right time to make a change in that. (Respondent 1.)

According to Marjamäki & Vuorio (2021, 51) strategic understanding should be followed by systematic implementation. In the target company, the new communication plan is planned to be presented next year during the staff infos. The executive team acknowledges that the new measures will also require resources and working hours to be implemented.

> Without a plan, we cannot know where we are heading. In simple terms, the most important task of a communication plan is to outline the tone of the message, identify the spokesperson, and clarify the communication objectives. (Respondent 3.)

The questions regarding measuring the success of the company's communication were presented only to the members of the executive team. Suggestions for suitable metrics revolved around numerical indicators. The goal was to set targets for communication, such as a specific number of press releases per year, a certain number of letters from the CEO per year, and a certain number of emails from HR Manager. Currently, the company's only

regularly recurring and structured communication function is the semi-annual staff info.

> Work community communication in the company has already been measured for a long time through employee surveys. These surveys use the NPS (Net Promoter Score) to indicate employee satisfaction in their work. (Respondent 4.)

> Regarding tactical communication, ROI is an easy metric. Similarly, measuring the reach of implemented actions is straightforward. Additionally, the percentage of the actions documented in the annual communication plan, which have been successfully carried out, could be another valuable metric. (Respondent 1.)

Juholin (2013, 54) suggests that instead of talking about the ROI of communication, companies could use ROC (Return on Communication), which aims to answer three questions:

- − What material or immaterial benefits can or should be achieved through communication?
- − What harm, damage, or danger can be prevented or reduced through communication?
- − What positive state or situation is maintained through communication?

However, it may not always be possible to measure communication results at the operational level, and it may be sufficient to focus communication metrics on determining, for example, employee satisfaction with the information they receive about the organization's strategy. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 143.)

6.2 Employee survey

The goal of work community communication is to ensure that everyone has the necessary information to carry out their work effectively, along with up-to-date knowledge about their work community and industry. In addition to fundamental information, work community members require updates on changes and future. (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi & Murtola 2015, 61.)

When asked about the state of information flow within the target company, there was significant dispersion in the responses from the employees (see Figure 7). Nearly 21% of the survey respondents believed that communication within the

company had improved over the last five years. On the other hand, almost 29% felt that communication had weakened. One-third answered that there had been no changes in company's communication in the past five years. Nearly 18% of respondents were unable to assess the change over the past five years.
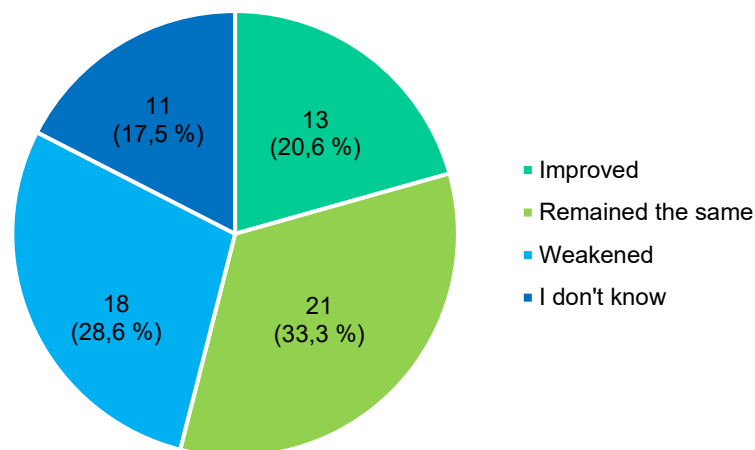

Figure 7. The distribution of staff responses regarding information flow in the company over the past five years (n=63).

The question about information flow also gathered the highest number of open-ended responses in the entire survey. One-third of the respondents also wanted to provide a voluntary open-ended response to this question.

The comments particularly highlighted the need for more clarity and consistency in communication. Some responses mentioned that certain communications reached the wrong people, and those whom the matters concerned, sometimes remained completely uninformed.

The responses also noted that the views, desires, and visions of the management did not translate into practical implementation, and that practice and vision often followed different paths. Employees felt that they were not being heard. There was also a desire for faster communication. Some felt that they had to read about certain, bigger company-related news in the media before hearing about it internally.

However, some responses also acknowledged improvements in work community communication. In one response, it was pointed out that over five years ago, there was practically no internal communication, and there has been a clear focus to improve this aspect in recent years.

During the last few years, the environment of internal communication has significantly changed, mostly under the influence of new technologies (Tkalac & Špoljarić 2019). The target company has stayed abreast of developments and currently utilizes various communication channels − partly out of necessity, as the roles of the company's employees vary greatly, ranging from office workers to floor cleaners.

The most important communication channels in the target company were email, discussions with supervisors and colleagues, and the intranet (see Figure 8). Additionally, the company holds staff infos for the whole personnel semiannually, which employees can attend live or online. This was particularly valued in the executive team as one of the keyways to openly communicate the company's current status and what to expect in the next six months. In the staff survey, nearly 80% from the respondents found staff surveys to be very or quite important.

The least valued channels were digital communication tools such as online meeting tools (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet) or chat applications (Slack, Microsoft Teams), as well as the company's internal Facebook group. Instead, the community's own WhatsApp groups were considered very important or quite important by 68% of the respondents.

In the open responses regarding communication flow, it was also mentioned that there is sometimes too much reliance on email, and information is not shared verbally, or guidance is not provided for new matters. Information also tends to get lost in the message flood. Challenges were also faced in accommodating employees with different working hours: not everyone reads their email during traditional office hours.

In a couple of responses, there was a desire to move away from email in internal communication towards, for example, a Teams or Messenger-like environment.
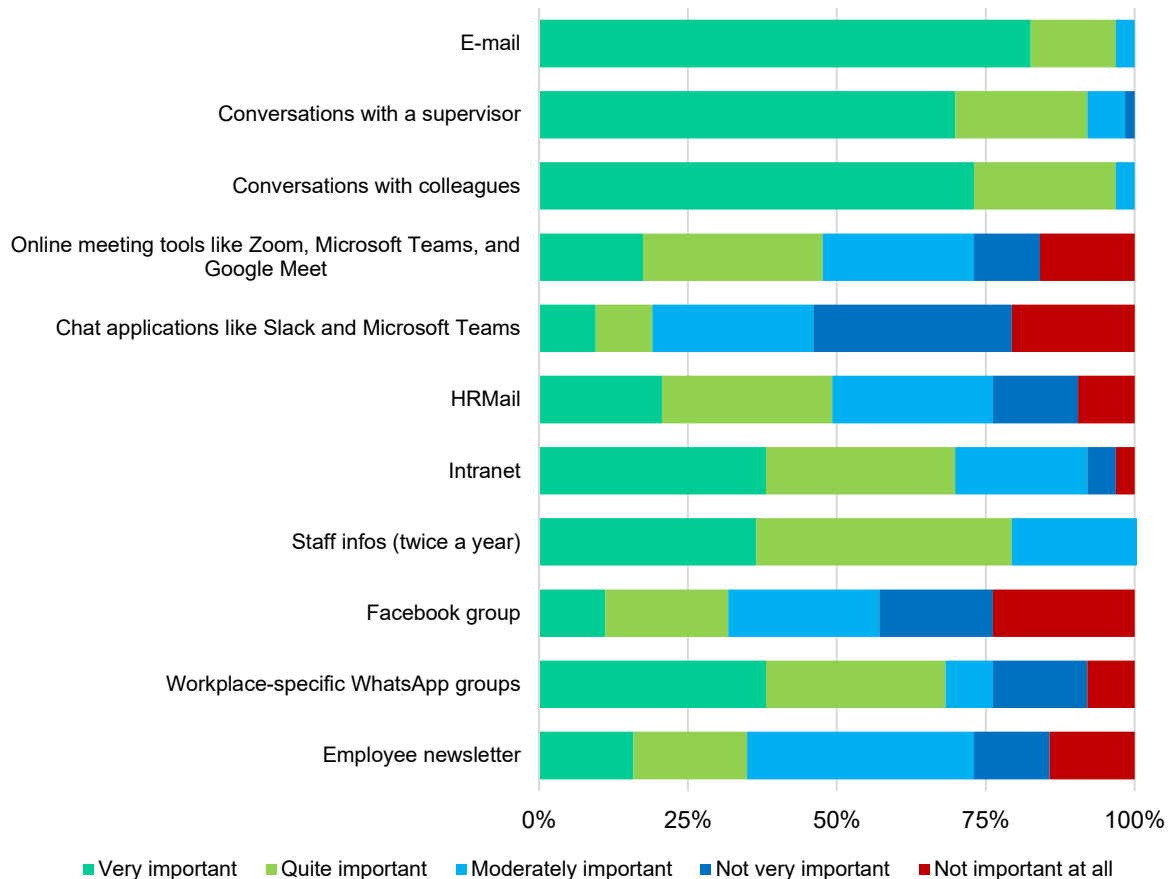

Figure 8. The distribution of responses regarding the most important channels for work community communication (n=63).

Nearly 70% of the respondents considered the company's intranet to be either very important or quite important as a communication channel. The problem with the company's current intranet is that it is technically outdated and does not function outside the company's own network, for example, on mobile phones. This, in turn, excludes non-desk workers from the intranet.

The purpose of work community communication is partially to ensure that all members of the work community have access to the general information they need and the opportunity to discuss and influence. (Juholin 2017, 129.)

Over 76% of the company's employees felt that the basic knowledge required for their work was at on a good to particularly good level (see Figure 9).

Dissemination of changing information was perceived to be one of the major challenges in the company. Over 55% responded that the communication of changing information was only moderately or quite poorly executed. Furthermore, more than 76% believed that they received information about the company's innovations and future moderately, quite poorly, or not at all.

To improve communication, more staff meetings were also desired. 38% felt that the adequate number of meetings among the staff was implemented quite poorly or not at all.
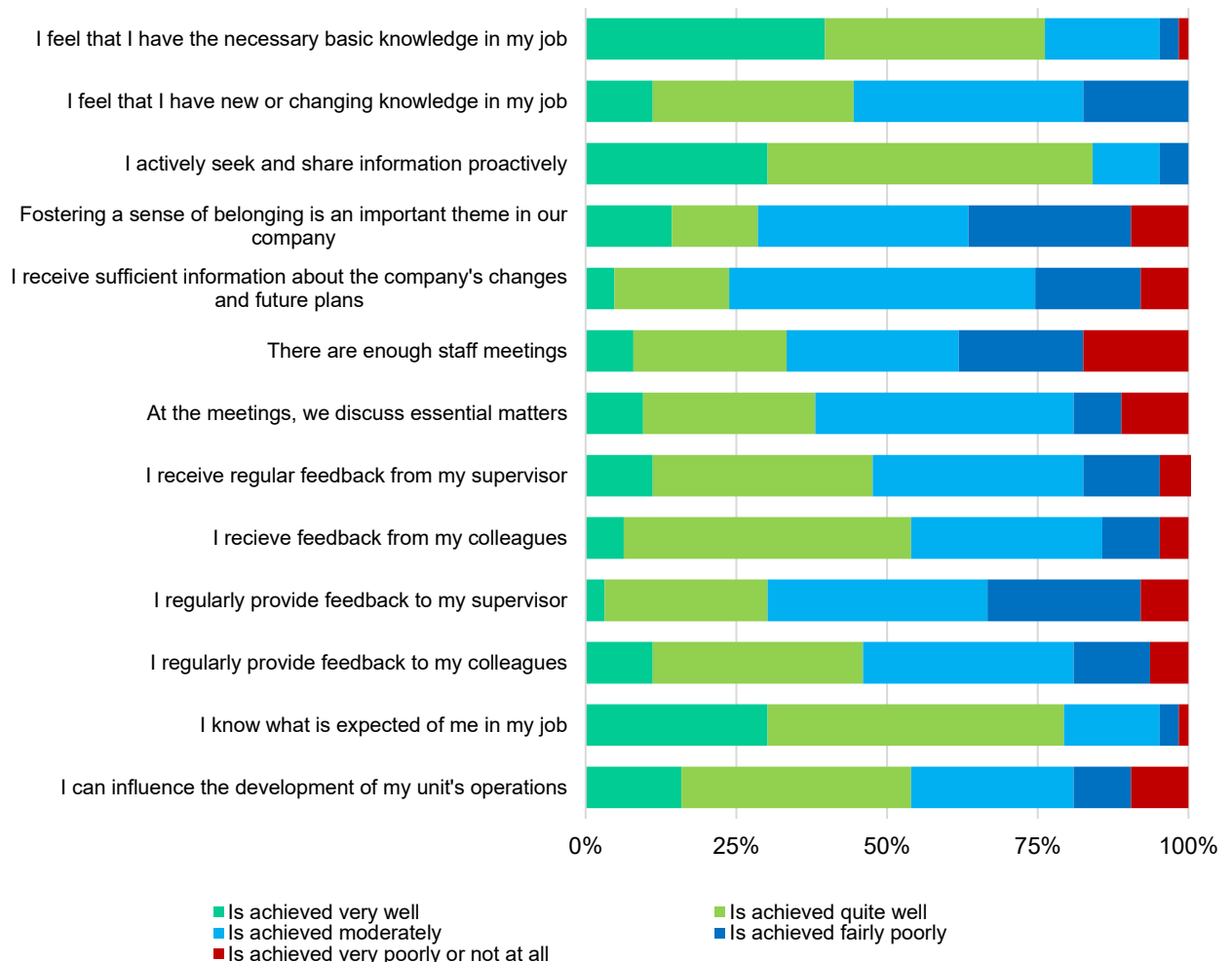

Figure 9. The distribution of staff responses regarding how they personally experience the following aspects in their own work (n=63).

All activities within the organization should be aligned, evaluated, and prioritized in relation to this strategy (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 32). The communication from the company's management and supervisors to their subordinates, including information about the company's values, vision, and potential changes, among other things, did not receive very high ratings.

Employees felt they received information least about new products and investments, employee training opportunities, and changes in the organization, services, or strategy. 55% felt that the company's values were communicated very well or fairly well by supervisors (see Figure 10).
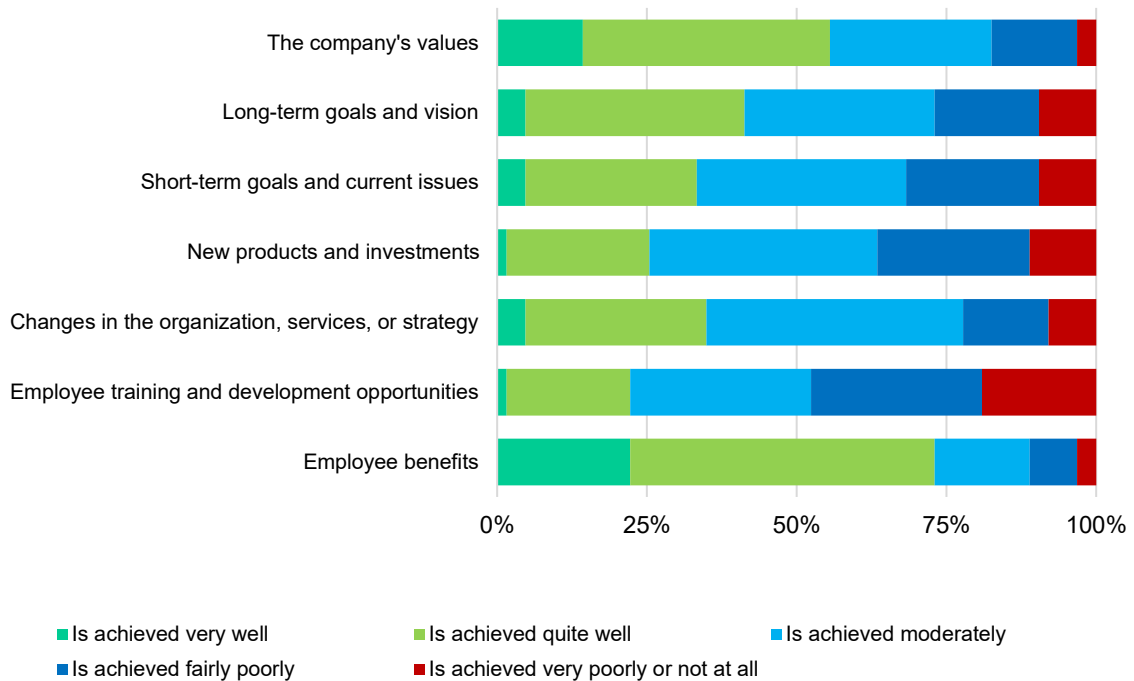
Figure 10. The distribution of staff responses regarding satisfaction with company's management and supervisor communication methods on following areas (n=63).

Successful corporate social responsibility communication requires a systematic approach by the company. To achieve the best results, responsibility communication should be developed in collaboration with the company's marketing and communication functions. CSR can be viewed as an ongoing process, and different phases of this process can run concurrently with various

campaigns or other communication situations. (Harmaala & Jallinoja 2012, 162.)

27% of the staff believes that the company's corporate social responsibility communication has improved over the past five years. Over 36% felt that there have been no changes in this regard (see Figure 11).
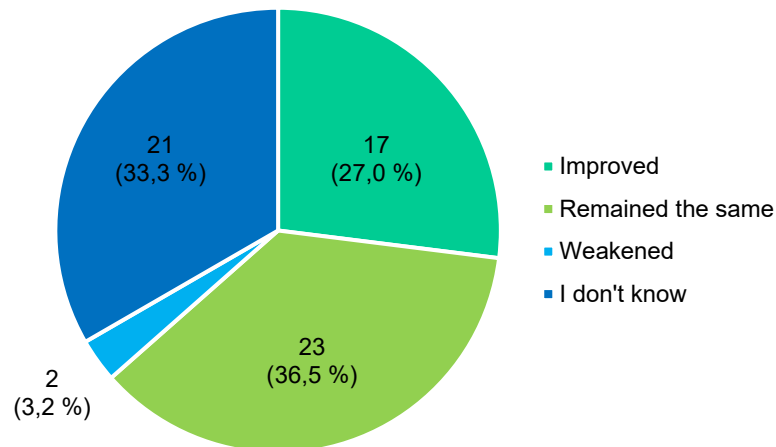

Figure 11. The distribution of staff responses regarding the corporate social responsibility communication within the company over the last five years (n=63).

Seven open responses were provided regarding CSR communication. Respondents felt that the company does several sustainability actions but doesn't know how to communicate them effectively. In the responses, there was a desire for open discussions about common sustainability goals and practices, as well as a genuine search for more responsible solutions in various practices. Furthermore, there was a desire to make the sustainability section of the website more comprehensive.

In the staff survey, when asked about how the company currently communicates with its employees or externally about sustainability, no area received top ratings (see Figure 12). Currently, the company performs best in communicating about compliance with labor obligations and salary recommendations in the industry and measures aimed at promoting employee well-being. The weakest areas in the company's CSR communication,

according to the staff, are related to the origin and ethics of the products in use, support for local associations or communities, and charity or volunteer work.
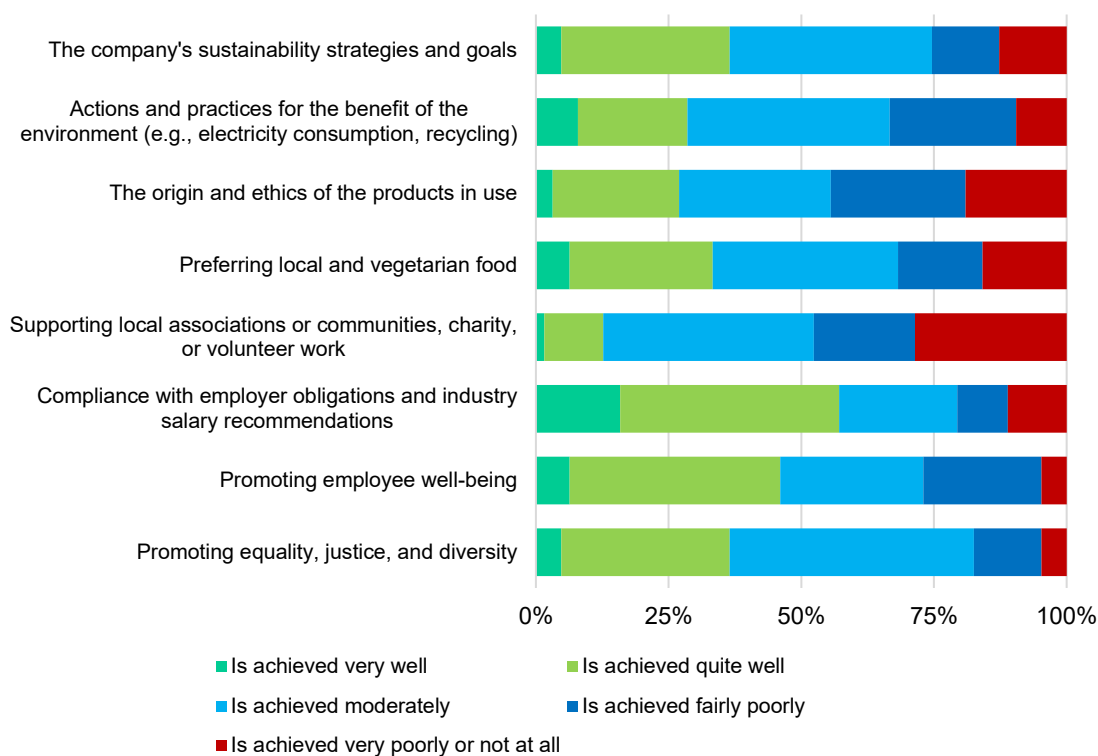
Figure 12. The distribution of responses from the staff regarding how the company currently communicates with its employees or externally on the following areas (n=63).

Communication plays a role in preparing for crises and reducing their impact (Juholin 2022, 274). In the survey, 46% of the respondents answered that their role in a crisis communication situation is not clear or clear at all (see Figure 13). In case of a potential crisis occurring in their own work unit, over 55% still responded that they know very or quite well who will communicate about it externally when necessary.

There were four open responses regarding crisis communication. Among them, it was mentioned that there hasn't been much discussion about crisis communication among the staff, and clear guidelines are not available. Thus,

the existing crisis communication plan has not been effectively disseminated to the employees, which was also reflected in the survey responses.
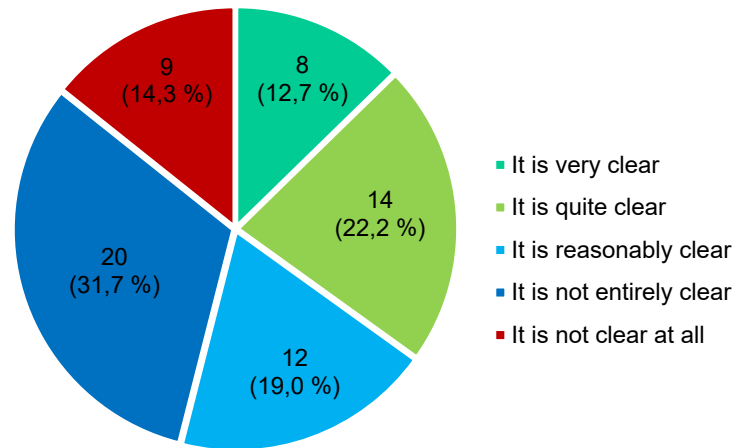

Figure 13. The distribution of responses from the staff regarding the clarity of their role in a crisis (n=63).

Integrating the strategy into everyday communication projects and situations is crucial to make communication visible and ensure that everyone understands their roles in it (Juholin 2022, 104). In the employee survey, participants were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, how likely they would be to familiarize themselves with the company's new communication plan (see Figure 14). A rating of five indicated that the respondent would highly likely familiarize themselves with the communication plan, while a rating of one indicated that the respondent's familiarity with the communication plan would be highly unlikely. Over 70% of the respondents gave a rating of 4 or 5, indicating that the majority believed they would familiarize themselves with the communication plan.

There were twelve open responses regarding the communication plan. In these responses, it was emphasized that employees considered the creation of the plan as an important step forward for the company, and many expressed their eagerness to see the plan's completion.
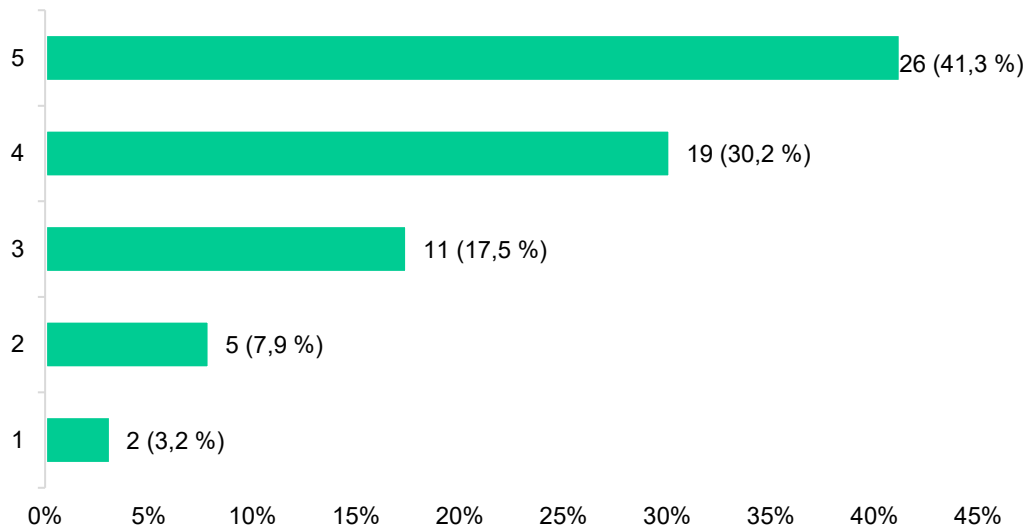
Figure 14. The distribution of responses from the staff regarding how likely they would you be to acquaint with the communication plan on a scale 1−5 (n=63).

The staff was also asked what communication guidelines or process descriptions could be helpful in their work (see Figure 15). According to Juholin (2011) different guidelines facilitate the smooth flow of communication. Guidelines can be created for any action where it is important to follow a consistent approach, and which is not self-evident to everyone. However, guidelines should not become an end in themselves but serve as a tool for action. (Juholin 2011, 120–121.)

Responses emphasized the need for crisis communication guidelines, data security and privacy guidelines, and brand guidelines. Over 60% of respondents considered crisis communication guidelines to be very or quite beneficial.
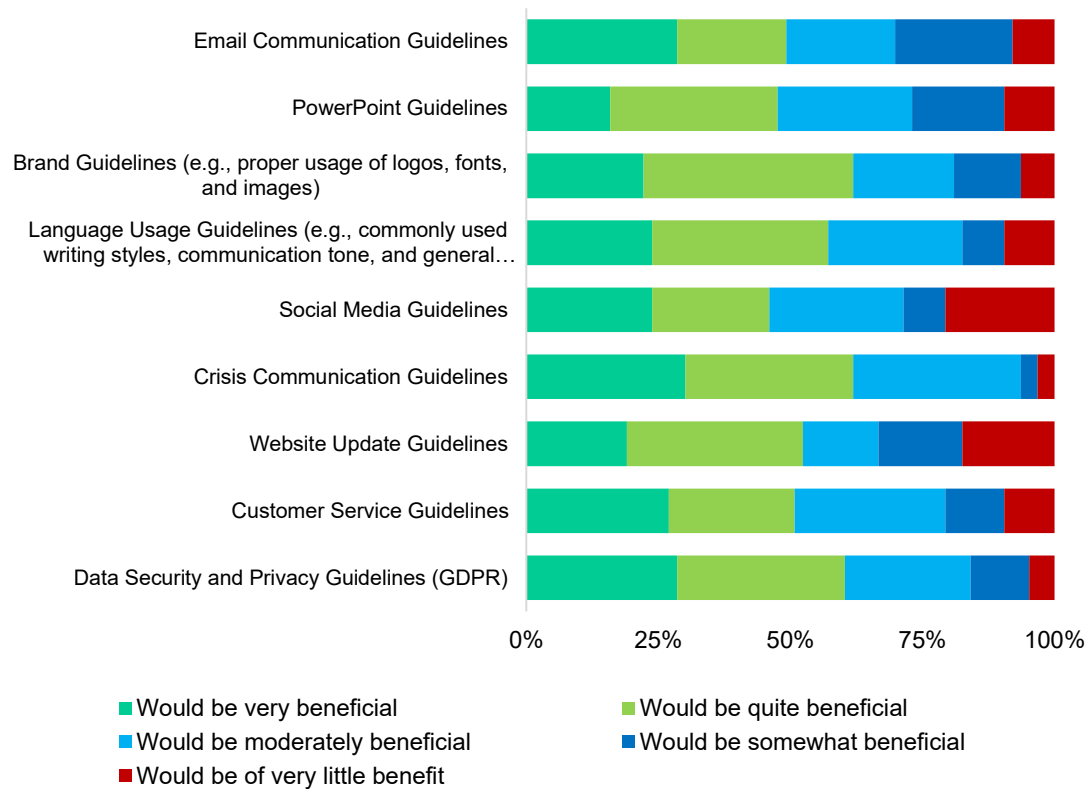
Figure 15. The distribution of responses from the staff regarding what communication guidelines or process descriptions could be beneficial in their own work (n=63).

7 Conclusions

This thesis focused on strategic communication. In the era of digitalization and social media, the importance of communication has increased in many organizations, and deficiencies or weaknesses in a company's communication can affect its success in several ways.

Based on this thesis, it can be concluded that strategic communication is becoming increasingly important for companies. For example, a corporate culture that emphasizes responsibility, employee well-being, operational transparency, and crisis communication preparedness are themes that every company should consider in its operations. No organization can attain success and progress along their organizational life without good communication strategy (Popa 2019). It is more crucial than ever for businesses to engage effectively with both their employees and stakeholders. As organizations become flatter, less hierarchical and more team based, managers' effectiveness depends on their ability to gain trust of their subordinates. (Pološki et al., 2021.)

Through communication, companies can build and strengthen their brand and manage their reputation. In times of crisis, effective communication is critical. It can help calm the situation and maintain trust in the company. Clear and open communication also increases employee engagement and improves the work environment.

The research aimed to explore the requirements of corporate communication in today's context and identify measures through which communication could be strategically enhanced in the target company. The study is supported by both literature and recent research findings to strengthen the research and conclusions.

The goal of this development work was to evaluate the current communication practices within the target company, point areas that need improvement, and develop a communication plan that improves the communication practices in the target company. A communication plan can help clarify the company's goals

and values for the staff, define communication responsibilities and roles, and contribute to creating a unified vision and commitment to the company.

In the current state analysis, a semi-structured thematic interview was conducted with key members of the executive team, and an electronic staff survey was utilized. As a result of these findings, a comprehensive communication plan was developed and specifically aligned with the organization's needs.

7.1 Incorporating the current state of the target company into the communication plan

Through the communication plan, the company is embarking on restructuring its communication in a more structured direction. This will undoubtedly bring a lot of new and previously unfamiliar communication practices.

The responses from the staff survey still emphasize the historical baggage from the time when workplace communication was non-existent. The company made a significant shift in this regard already a few years ago, and the company's leadership is strongly committed to continuing the path of change towards a more open working culture. This commitment is also documented in the company's strategy. And communication management begins with internalizing the organization's strategy (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 32).

Since the staff perceives work community communication as lacking in many areas, the new communication plan of the target company will document the communication responsibilities within the organization. Improving internal communication is an ongoing process, and the key is to be sensitive to the organization's needs and strive to continuously enhance communication practices. Communication responsibilities in the company can be divided based on factors such as organizational structure, job descriptions and organizational roles, communication areas, or stakeholders (Juholin 2022, 123).

Although communication responsibilities vary among the organization's employees, communication is not a separate area that only certain employees

within the organization handle; it is the responsibility of every member of the organization to build a positive communication environment. The communication plan aims to emphasize that the entire organization is involved in communication. This is likely to help, for example, immediate supervisors in understanding their communication responsibilities towards their subordinates and what information always comes from the top management.

Also, the new intranet is on the action list for the upcoming year in the communication plan. The new intranet reaches the staff beyond the company's own network, which is particularly important for numerous non-desk employees in the company. This will also contribute to improving information flow within the company.

Corporate social responsibility communication is not yet ingrained in the company's communication and adopting it will require the internalization of new ways of operating and communicating, as well as the courage to seek innovative communication methods. According to Renfors (2024) skills are required to communicate and report about the measures implemented by the enterprises, their goals, and efforts to transform towards green economies. It is essential to understand the concept of green washing and absolutely avoid it. Therefore, skills are required to report and communicate sustainability transparently to give no false expectations to the customers. (Renfors, 2024.)

According to the survey, the staff also wants to know more about the company's sustainability initiatives, such as the origin of products, ethical practices, and charitable activities. Information can be increased through systematic communication.

Corporate social responsibility communication activities have been incorporated into the company's communication plan through a separate year clock. CSR communication actions will be carried out regularly, covering various perspectives of sustainability and responsibility throughout the year. The goal for the first year is to make CSR communication visible and integrated into the company's overall communication. Through this, it is hoped that the actions

related to CSR communication will gradually diversify, increase, and become a solid and natural part of the company's communication.

Crisis communication preparedness is an important part of today's corporate communication. Regarding crisis communication, the existing action plan of the target company has been updated and added to the communication plan. For the upcoming year, the most crucial aspect is its implementation. The goal is to practice the possible crisis situations in the future, also from a communication perspective.

Many respondents to the staff survey expressed their interest in reviewing the communication plan once it is completed. According to Juholin (2022), if the communication plan is crafted within a small circle, it can be challenging to gain commitment from others and to get them to execute the strategy in their own work (Juholin 2022, 104). In the target company, the finalized communication plan will be presented to the entire staff in the upcoming staff info. To ensure that the communication plan doesn't remain solely a tool for those directly involved in communication, it will be stored in a platform accessible to all staff at any time.

7.2 Striking a balance − Integrating leadership and employee perspectives in the communication plan

The communication plan is highly anticipated within the company, both by the staff and the management. In particular, the responses from members of the executive team emphasized that it is high time to start improving communication systematically and more effectively. The executive team is acutely aware that the communication plan needs to be thoroughly implemented across the company, and the actions outlined in it should also be allocated resources.

It is also possible that the staff and the management have different expectations regarding the communication plan. Staff members may expect clarity and clear instructions from the communication plan and that it addresses their needs and concerns. On the other hand, the management may emphasize the strategic direction, goal achievement, and reputation management of the organization.

Regular dialogue and feedback collection from both the staff and the management can help ensure that the communication plan meets the needs of all parties in the best possible way.

All in all, with the new communication plan, the company will openly communicate to the entire staff what the company's communication aims to achieve. This alone can be eye-opening for many employees. However, the communication plan alone will not solve all the issues in work community communication within the target company. It requires more dialogue and training between the staff and supervisors. The importance of an open atmosphere and effective information flow should be further emphasized through the communication plan. Additionally, specific written guidelines may be helpful in improving communication throughout the company.

Good work community communication creates the conditions for employee satisfaction. Effective work community communication has been observed to directly impact a reduction in employee absenteeism and increase employee retention within the organization. Within a great work environment, information flows freely, and every individual is aware of their obligations and responsibilities. Communication is primarily about interaction, anticipation, consideration of different personalities and emotions, meeting others, and caring. According to Marjamäki and Vuorio (2021, 104) interaction is an engaging way to lead and communicate, ensuring that both internal and external groups are heard and can contribute to the organization's success.

Open communication also enhances awareness, understanding, a sense of belonging, and the desire to participate in collective activities. Good communication practices can create a safe atmosphere where even challenging issues can be addressed, and uncertainty can be dispelled. Open communication is truthful, realistic, and objective. By communicating both successes and challenges, the operations can be learned together and enhanced to the next level.

7.3 Let the learning of measurement and evaluation begin

In the thematic interviews, the most challenging topic that emerged was the question related to measuring communication. The responses to this question primarily revolved around numerical metrics. This is not surprising because the company has been very marketing oriented.

It is understandable that marketing easily becomes a central focus. However, according to Marjamäki & Vuorio (2021, 84) the most crucial aspect is not the measurement itself but what happens afterward: how the information is utilized and how actions are improved based on it. How to improve the NPS score obtained in the employee survey or how can press releases be more successful in the media? This will likely be the most significant challenge in the target company as well.

By creating more meaningful content for customers and other stakeholders, such as content related to corporate social responsibility, one metric to consider is the analysis of website visitors, time spent on the website, and the number of returning visitors (see Table 1).

If the communication plan for example will include a decision to increase and improve interactive, active, and promptly responsive dialogue with consumers, engagement on social media is also one metric.

Understanding the corporate image among customers could be explored through proprietary consumer research. Based on the data obtained from this research, communication efforts could then be targeted specifically to those areas that require improvement.

The hospitality industry has long been grappling with a shortage of workforce, and the competition for skilled employees is intense among different operators. Effective communication can influence the employer image of a company. Sharing employee stories, highlighting career opportunities, and communicating about sustainability efforts are effective ways to enhance the employer brand and attract potential employees. The success of communication measures is

sometimes measurable through the number of job applications and successful recruitments.

Table 1. Communications' KPIs in the target company's communication plan.

COMMUNICATION MEANS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Work community communication	Goal Completion Rate Employee Satisfaction Score Communication Effectiveness Index Feedback and Survey Scores NPS Figures
Brand perception and customer communication	Consumer preferences Web Traffic Enhancing Consideration Quantity of Complaints and Feedback Sentiment Analysis
Media communication	Media Coverage Earned Media Value Interview Requests from the Media Positive Media Sentiment
Marketing communication	Sales target achievement Enhancing Consideration Consumer Preferences Social Media Metrics Web Traffic
Corporate social responsibility communication	Social Media Metrics Web Traffic Enhancing Consideration
Employer brand	Number of job applications Retention Rate Recruitment Success Rate

It's essential to remember that the implementation of a new strategy in everyday work is the result of many different factors, and communication alone cannot entirely solve it. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 143.) However, it's important for the company to recognize the significance of communication and integrate it into their strategy. According to Brockhaus & Zerfass (2022) while various role conceptions for communication professionals have been developed in the past, there is consensus that the range of roles will grow in the future. For instance, coaching roles are gaining in importance as more and more employees become corporate ambassadors and speak about or on behalf of an organization. (Brockhaus & Zerfass 2022.)

Communication often emphasizes clarity of information and message, as well as conveying the organization's values and goals. Well-planned and cohesive communication can support marketing and enhance brand success by increasing awareness, trust, and customer loyalty. Maintaining a balance between marketing and communication can help achieve better business results.

References

Bogren, M. & Sörensson, A. 2021. Tourism companies' sustainability communication - creating legitimacy and value. Scandinavian journal of hospitality and tourism, 21(5), pp. 475–493. Accessed 21.11.2023. https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2021.1974542.

Brockhaus, J. & Zerfass, A. 2022. Strengthening the role of communication departments: A framework for positioning communication departments at the top of and throughout organizations. Corporate communications, 27(1), pp. 53–70. Accessed 19.11.2023. https://doi.org/10.1108/CCIJ-02-2021-0021.

European Comission 2023. Corporate social responsibility / Responsible business conduct. Accessed 28.9.2023. https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/industry/sustainability/corporate-sustainability-and-responsibility_en.

Harmaala, M. & Jallinoja, N. 2012. Yritysvastuu ja menestyvä liiketoiminta. 1. p. Helsinki: Talentum Media.

Henriksson, A. & Karhu, M. 2008. Skandaalit ja katastrofit, käytännön kriisiviestintäopas. Helsinki: Otava.

Hiltunen A. 2021. Johtamisen taito. Helsinki: Alma Talent.

Hämäläinen, V. & Maula, H. 2004. Strategiaviestintä. Helsinki: Inforviestintä.

Juholin, E. 2009. Communicare! Viestintä strategiasta käytäntöön. 5th revised edition. Helsinki: Infor.

Juholin, E. 2013. Arvioi ja paranna! Viestinnän mittaamisen opas. 2. p. Helsinki: Talentum.

Juholin, E. 2017. Communicare! Viestinnän tekijän käsikirja. 7th revised edition. Helsinki: Infor.

Juholin, E. & Luoma-aho, V. 2017. Miksi viestintää mitataan? Mitattava viestintä. Helsinki: ProCom - Viestinnän ammattilaiset ry.

Juholin, E. & Rydenfelt, H. 2020 Strateginen viestintä ja organisaation tavoitteet: Mihin viestinnällä pyritään? Media & viestintä, 43(1). Accessed 27.7.2023. https://doi.org/10.23983/mv.91081.

Juholin, E. 2022. Communicare! Ota viestinnän ilmiöt ja strategiat haltuun. 8th revised edition. Helsinki: Infor / Management Institute of Finland MIF Oy.

Komulainen, M. 2023. Menesty digimarkkinoinnilla 2.0. 3rd revised edition. Helsinki: Kauppakamari.

Kortesuo, K. 2016. Riko lasi hätätilanteessa: Kriisiviestinnän pikaopas johtajalle. Helsinki: Kauppakamari.

Kortetjärvi-Nurmi, S. & Murtola, K. 2015. Areena: Yritysviestinnän käsikirja. Helsinki: Edita.

Kuvaja, S. & Malmelin, K. 2008. Vastuullinen yritysviestintä: Kilpailuetua vuoropuhelusta. Helsinki: Edita.

Marjamäki, P. L. & Vuorio, J. 2021. Viestinnän johtaminen: Strategiasta tuloksiin. Helsinki: Alma Talent.

Mazzei, A., Ravazzani, S., Fisichella, C., Butera, A. & Quaratino, L. 2022. Internal crisis communication strategies: Contingency factors determining an accommodative approach. Public relations review, 48(4), p. 102212. Accessed 19.11.2023. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2022.102212.

Op.fi 2023. Mitä on vastuullinen liiketoiminta? Op.fi web site. Accessed 26.8.2023. https://www.op.fi/fi_FI/yritykset/asiakkuus/yrittajan-talousvalmennus/vastuullisuus/vastuullinen-liiketoiminta.

Piha, K. 2015. Rytmihäiriö: Tartu mahdollisuuksiin tai kuole. Helsinki: Talentum Pro.

Piha, K. & Puustell, A. 2012. Mitä tapahtuu huomenna? [viestinnälle]: maineenhallinnasta mahdollisuusviestintään. Helsinki: Ellun Kanat - Ajatushautomo.

Pološki Vokić, N., Rimac Bilušić, M. & Najjar, D. 2021. Building organizational trust through internal communication. Corporate communications, 26(1), pp. 70–83. Accessed 23.11.2023. https://doi.org/10.1108/CCIJ-01-2020-0023.

Popa, B. M. 2019. Strategic communication. Journal of defense resources management, 10(2), pp. 174−179.

ProCom – Viestinnän ammattilaiset ry 2020. Viestintä on muutosvoima! – 2020-luvun uudet haasteet. Accessed 12.9.2023. https://www.procom.fi/viestintaala/ohjeet-ja-periaatteet/procom-yhteisoviestinnan-periaatteet-2020/

Puusa, A., Juuti, P. & Aaltio, I. 2020. Laadullisen tutkimuksen näkökulmat ja menetelmät. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.

Renfors, S-M. 2023. Supporting green transition in the Finnish tourism sector by identifying green skills. European Journal of Tourism Research, 36, pp. 3612−16. Accessed 21.11.2023. https://doi.org/10.54055/ejtr.v36i.3223.

Sorainen, A. 2018. SORI: Johtaja ja julkisuus kriisissä. Helsinki: Alma Talent.

Tkalac Verčič, A. & Špoljarić, A. 2019. Managing internal communication: How the choice of channels affects internal communication satisfaction. Public Relations Review. Volume 46, Issue 3. Accessed 19.11.2023. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2020.101926.

Valli, R. & Aarnos, E. 2018. Ikkunoita tutkimusmetodeihin: 1, Metodin valinta ja aineistonkeruu: virikkeitä aloittelevalle tutkijalle. 5th revised edition. Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.

van Ruler, B. 2018. Communication Theory: An Underrated Pillar on Which Strategic Communication Rests. International journal of strategic communication, 12(4), pp. 367–381. Accessed 25.11.2023. https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2018.1452240.

van Ruler, B. 2019. Agile communication evaluation and measurement. Journal of communication management (London, England), 23(3), pp. 265–280. Accessed 25.11.2023. https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-12-2018-0136.

van Ruler, B. 2021. Communication Planning: Agility is a Game Changer in Strategy Development. International journal of strategic communication, 15(2), pp. 113–125. Accessed 21.11.2023. https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2021.1898117.

Vehkalahti, K. 2014. Kyselytutkimuksen mittarit ja menetelmät. Helsinki: Finn Lectura.

Viesti ry, Julkisen alan viestijät JAT ry, ProCom ry 2023. Viestinnän ala 2023 -research. Accessed 30.11.2023. https://www.viesti.fi/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Viestinnan-ala-2023_tutkimusraportti.pdf.

Zerfass, A. & Volk, S. C. 2018. How communication departments contribute to corporate success: The communications contributions framework. Journal of communication management (London, England), 22(4), pp. 397–415. Accessed 21.11.2023. https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-12-2017-0146.

Åberg, L. 2006. Johtamisviestintää! Esimiehen ja asiantuntijan viestintäkirja. Helsinki: Inforviestintä.

Åberg, L. 2022. Merkityksellistävän yhteisöviestinnän malli. toim. Juholin E. Helsinki: Infor / Management Institute of Finland MIF Oy. Accessed 28.9.2023. https://www.procom.fi/site/assets/files/6516/leif-aberg_merkityksellistavan-yhteisoviestinnan-malli-toimittanut-elisa-juholin.pdf.

Interview questions for the members
of the executive team

- What is the current communication culture in the company in your opinion? Have there been any changes in this regard? Do you feel that the demands for communication have grown within the company?

- How is the company performing in the following areas of communication? Where are the most significant challenges? What is well-managed? How could different areas be improved?
  - Work Community Communication
  - Employer Branding
  - Corporate Social Responsibility Communication
  - Crisis Communication
  - Stakeholder Communication
  - Media Communication

- What kind of feedback is the company's leadership currently receiving regarding communication?

- How is the company currently trying to convey its values/strategy through communication?

- What are the communication goals of the company? What does the company want to convey and represent?

- Why doesn't the company have its own communication strategy or plan yet? Do you feel that the company has been doing well without it? What benefits could one bring?

- How could a communication plan be made known to the entire staff?

- How could the staff be involved in the company's communication?

- What do you hope the future communication plan will include? What is the most essential element that needs to be included?

- How could the success of the company's communication be measured and analyzed? (Pulse surveys for employees, the number of press articles per year, etc.)

Employee survey questions

In workplace communication, what is important to me is:

	Very important	Quite important	Neutral	Not very important	Not important at all
Openness	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Clarity	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Consistency	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Quickness	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Sharing positive feedback

	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Information is easily accessible

	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Diverse communication channels

	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Dialogue between management and employees

	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Communication considers diverse employees and their needs
(e.g., different native languages)

	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

How do you personally experience the following things in your work?

	Is achieved very well	Is achieved quite well	Is achieved moderately	Is achieved fairy poorly	Is achieved very poorly or not at all
I feel that I have the necessary basic knowledge in my job	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I feel that I have new or changing knowledge in my job	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I actively seek and share information proactively	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Fostering a sense of belonging is an important theme in our company	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I receive sufficient information about the company's changes and future	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
There are enough staff meetings	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
At the meetings, we discuss essential matters	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I receive regular feedback from my supervisor	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I receive feedback from my colleagues	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I regularly provide feedback to my supervisor	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I regularly provide feedback to my colleagues	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

I know what is expected of me in my job

( )   ( )   ( )   ( )   ( )

I can influence the development of my unit's operations

( )   ( )   ( )   ( )   ( )

How does the management and supervisors in Company X currently communicate on the following areas?

	Is achieved very well	Is achieved quite well	Is achieved moderately	Is achieved fairy poorly	Is achieved very poorly or not at all
The company's values	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Long-term goals and vision	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Short-term goals and current issues	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
New products and investments	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Changes in the organization, services, or strategy	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Employee training and development opportunities	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Employee benefits	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

How useful do you consider the following existing work community communication channels?

	Very important	Quite important	Moderately important	Not very important	Not important at all
E-mail	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Conversations with a supervisor

	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Conversations with colleagues

	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Online meeting tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet

	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Chat applications like Slack and Microsoft Teams

	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

HRMail	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Intranet	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Staff infos	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Facebook group

	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

WhatsApp groups (Workplace-specific)

	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Employee newsletter

	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Information flow within the company over the past five years has:

( ) Improved

( ) Weakened

( ) Remained the same

( ) I don't know

If you wish, leave an open comment on information flow and work community communication at Company X.

If a crisis occurs in my unit, it is clear to me who would communicate about it externally if necessary?

( ) It is very clear

( ) It is quite clear

( ) It is reasonably clear

( ) It is not entirely clear

( ) It is not clear at all

In a crisis, my role would be clear:

( ) It is very clear

( ) It is quite clear

( ) It is reasonably clear

( ) It is not entirely clear

( ) It is not clear at all

Over the past five years, the company's crisis communication appears to have:

( ) Improved

( ) Weakened

( ) Remained the same

( ) I don't know

I would like for my unit to practice potential crisis communication situations.

( ) It would be very important

( ) It would be quite important

( ) It would be moderately important

( ) It wouldn't be very important

( ) It wouldn't be important at all

If you wish, leave an open comment on crisis communication at Company X.

How does the company currently communicate with its employees or externally on the following areas?

	Is achieved very well	Is achieved quite well	Is achieved moderately	Is achieved fairy poorly	Is achieved very poorly or not at all
The company's sustainability strategies and goals	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Actions and practices for the benefit of the environment (e.g., electricity consumption, recycling)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
The origin and ethics of the products in use	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Preferring local and vegetarian food	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Supporting local associations or communities, charity, or volunteer work	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Compliance with employer obligations and industry salary recommendations	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Promoting employee well-being

( )   ( )   ( )   ( )   ( )

Promoting equality, justice, and diversity

( )   ( )   ( )   ( )   ( )

Over the past five years, the company's corporate social responsibility communication appears to have:

( ) Improved

( ) Weakened

( ) Remained the same

( ) I don't know

Would you wish the company to emphasize its responsibility more to its employees and stakeholders?

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) I don't know

I would like to get more involved in my workplace's sustainability efforts, such as joining the sustainability team or developing sustainability initiatives in my own unit.

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) I don't know

If you wish, leave an open comment regarding corporate social responsibility communication at Company X.

Over the past five years, the presence of company X on social media appears to have:

( ) Improved

( ) Weakened

( ) Remained the same

( ) I don't know

Company X manages 12 Facebook accounts in total. I follow my employer on one of its Facebook channels (excluding the company's internal Facebook group).

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) I didn't know that my employer is on Facebook.

( ) I'm not on Facebook.

Company X manages a total of 8 Instagram accounts. I follow my employer on one of the channels on Instagram:

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) I didn't know that my employer is on Instagram.

( ) I'm not on Instagram.

Company X manages two LinkedIn accounts. I follow my employer on LinkedIn:

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) I didn't know that my employer is on LinkedIn.

( ) I'm not on LinkedIn

Company X manages two TikTok accounts. I follow my employer on TikTok:

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) I didn't know that my employer is on TikTok.

( ) I'm not on TikTok

Company X manages one YouTube account. I follow my employer on YouTube:

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) I didn't know that my employer is on YouTube.

( ) I'm not on YouTube

The company should consider leaving one of the following social media channels:

( ) Facebook

( ) Instagram

( ) LinkedIn

( ) TikTok

( ) YouTube

( ) The company does not need to leave the social media platforms it is already on.

The company should also join the following social media channels in addition to the existing ones:

( ) X (formerly Twitter)

( ) Snapchat

( ) Pinterest

( ) WhatsApp

( ) Telegram

( ) BeReal

( ) The company does not need to be on other social media platforms than it already is.

I have sometimes talked about my job on my own social media channels.

( ) Yes, I have talked about my job positively on my own social media channels.

( ) Yes, I have talked negatively about my job on my own social media channels.

( ) I do not discuss work-related matters on my personal social media accounts.

( ) I'm not on social media.

I would be willing to talk about positive aspects of my job on social media if I received guidance for it.

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) I don't know

( ) I'm not on social media

I would like my employer to provide social media guidelines in general.

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) I don't know

( ) I'm not on social media

I would like to get more involved in my workplace's social media efforts, such as responding to customer messages and comments or creating posts.

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) I don't know

( ) I'm not on social media

How do you perceive company's visibility in the media? Please rate the current media visibility on a scale of 1-5.

If you wish, leave an open comment about the Company X's communication on social media.

I follow what is being said about my employer in the public domain: (media, social media, discussion forums)

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) I don't know

Would you like the company to be more prominently featured in the media?

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) I don't know

Over the past five years, company's media visibility has:

( ) Improved

( ) Weakened

( ) Remained the same

( ) I don't know

Over the past five years, the tone of news (negative/positive) produced about the company in the media appears to have:

( ) Improved

( ) Weakened

( ) Remained the same

( ) I don't know

What topics would you hope for the company to communicate with the media about?

( ) New products and innovations

( ) New investments and renovation projects

( ) The financial situation

( ) Professionals working in the company

( ) Rehabilitation activities

( ) The impact of operations on the business environment in Southwest Finland

( ) Corporate social responsibility

( ) Public statements from the hospitality industry

( ) Something else

If you wish, leave an open comment regarding Company X's media communication.

If you were given a company's communication plan to read, how likely would you be to review it? Rate it on a scale of 1-5.

If you wish, please provide reasoning for your response.

What communication guidelines or process descriptions could benefit you in your own work?

	Would be very beneficial	Would be quite beneficial	Would be moderately beneficial	Would be somewhat beneficial	Would be very little beneficial
Email Communication Guidelines	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
PowerPoint Guidelines	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Brand Guidelines (e.g., proper usage of logos, fonts, and images)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Language Usage Guidelines (e.g., commonly used writing styles, communication tone, and general terminology within the organization)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Social Media Guidelines	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Crisis Communication Guidelines	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Website Update Guidelines	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Customer Service Guidelines	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Data Security and Privacy Guidelines (GDPR)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

If you wish, leave an open comment regarding the future communication plan or this survey.