GLOBAL MINDSET
ENHANCING A COMPANY’S GLOBAL APPROACH

Bachelor Thesis
Autumn Semester 2006
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In spring 2006, discussions with a long-term employee at Permobil took place, which encouraged us to write our essay concerning the company. The choice of subject was not an issue since we both are equally interested in management and wanted to increase our knowledge on the subject. Our focus on global mindset came about after a few days of research and brainstorming. This management topic is indubitably in question because of the fast pace global development, which has created a need of managers with a broadened cultural awareness. The fact that very few seem to understand the meaning of global mindset makes it an even more fascinating area to investigate.

Greatful appreciation to Anders Uddén, our contact person at Permobil, for inspiring us and for being available at all times. If it was not for him we would not have had the chance to spend a wonderful and enlightening week in Nashville.

Many thanks for all contributions to Hans, Göran, Tomas, Jon-Erik and Anders at Permobil AB. We also wish to thank Larry, Tom, Bertil, Barry, Darin and all our new friends at Permobil Inc. for their contribution and for making us feel at home. Special thanks to Medhi and his faboulus family for their kindness and warm reception.

Last but not least we would like to thank Anders Isaksson, our supervisor at Umeå University.

Writing this thesis has definately broadened our views and we have enjoyed every second of it.

Umeå January 2007

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ABSTRACT

How is it possible for organizations to manage the fast paced changes and imperative demands that increased globalization implies? In order to become successful in the global market, it is vital to be aware of cultural influence on business and how to approach diversity. Consequently, management plays a significant role, and the challenge is therefore to cultivate a global way of thinking among managers.

The main purpose of this thesis, which is to create a deeper understanding of a company’s global approach has lead to the following question:

How can managers increase their global mindsets so as to improve a company’s global approach?

As Permobil is an international company eager to expand, we have focused on understanding their global approach using a hermeneutic perspective. In order to do this, ten interviews with managers at Permobil have been conducted. A comparison between managers in Sweden and the United States has been performed, and furthermore we have searched for signs indicative of a global mindset. The method of reasoning has been deductive, which implies that the empirical results have been analyzed together with recognized theories.

This research shows that managers in Sweden and the United States possess a number of valuable qualities that contribute to a global way of thinking, although there are differences between the two countries. A prerequisite is that managers understand the value of a global way of thinking. In order to stay successful internationally, the Permobil Corporation should for instance increase the global communication, strive for a more diverse workforce and attain a better balance between local and global focus. Our conclusion is that the managers more actively have to look for improvements and stay open-minded when facing diversity. This would contribute to the development of their global mindsets, which in turn would meliorate the company’s global outlook.

“It’s not an IKEA concept with blue-yellow products and meatballs and stuff like that. We’re supposed to be international. And then you can’t start every sentence with ‘In Sweden we do like this’, and being dressed in a blue-yellow costume. It doesn’t work.”

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.2 **BACKGROUND**

In order to survive in the global marketplace, companies in the 21st century are bound to face the possibilities as well as the predicaments of globalization. The competition is significantly increasing\(^1\), which contributes to shorter product cycles and, moreover, a demand for companies to expand into new markets\(^2\).

A market that has gone through major transformations the last two decades is the wheelchair market\(^3\). The changes, which have come about in both Europe and the United States, are caused by modifications in the distribution channels from the end of the 90s up until these days. The distributors have gone from smaller family owned companies to larger chains via purchase organizations who negotiate on, for instance, prices.\(^4\) According to Research and Markets, which is the largest resource for international market research and market data\(^5\), the wheelchair market will expand the following years similar to the baby boomers age. This statement is based on the aging population, which will change the market and moreover be willing to pay for the chairs due to the improved possibilities of reimbursement.\(^6\)

One of the companies within this field is the Swedish founded Permobil. In the year 2000 their sales were at 440 million SEK, however, in 2006, the number reached over a billion SEK. Because of its pace of growth, the company is definitely affected by the worldwide expansion of the market. Nonetheless, the velocity can also cause difficulties adjusting to the global arena. Many corporate problems arise due to a lack of cultural understanding\(^7\). A survey from 2004, performed by Professor Allen Morrison on 108 executives from around the world, showed that 75 per cent of the managers believed that their company required more global leaders. In addition, in a similar research from 1989, 40 per cent of managers lacked the ability of adjusting to local surroundings in business situations.\(^8\) Although this can be viewed as an old research, and considering the augmentation of cultural influences the latest years, we do not know to which extent managers operating in today’s business world have improved their adjustment capabilities. An indication that setbacks still exists is the phrase: “You can’t do that here”, which is still often stated in business situations around the world\(^9\).

To be able to bridge cultural issues such as this one, all companies should reflect upon their attitude to other cultures and how they handle similar cultural concerns.

A way of describing individual as well as common attitudes towards the global world is trough “global mindset”.\(^10\) The increased demand of high quality and world class products on

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\(^3\) Both regarding the manual and power wheelchair markets.

\(^4\) Uddén, G., 2007-01-09.


the global market has forced companies operating on the world market to broaden their mindset.\textsuperscript{11} Moreover, management has naturally come to play a more central role than before. Business across borders above all forces managers to reframe their mindsets and develop a more global frame of mind.\textsuperscript{12} A global manager would not accept the phrase “You can’t do that here”. The manager would use his or her broad cultural knowledge to overcome cultural excuses such as that.\textsuperscript{13} Consequently, for international managers to be successful, they have to obtain a global mindset.\textsuperscript{14} In this thesis we strive to address the issue of global mindset in a company that is actively looking to expand globally, through its managers.

1.2.1 ABOUT THE COMPANY

In 1963, the doctor, inventor and father of nine, Per Uddén developed the first powered wheelchair that was soon to be called Permobil. Per Uddén had the determinacy and belief that nothing was impossible which made him build an innovative corporation, Permobil AB, with focus on the needs of physically disabled.\textsuperscript{15}

Since the cost of producing permobils was high, Per Uddén worked hard until he finally got the chairs financed by the state. He could not find the same kind of financial support in other countries and therefore the business had to stay put in Sweden. It was not until the middle of the 1980s that the financial support had grown stronger in other countries and Permobil AB could start operating abroad. The first subsidiary was established in Norway in the 1980s, and that success lead to rapid movement to, for instance, Western Europe, North America, during the years Permobil has grown to such an extent that they today are global leaders in manufacturing specialized wheelchairs. In 2006, the company delivered close to 10 000 wheelchairs to twenty countries, which means that they are the world’s third largest wheelchair supplier.\textsuperscript{16} The head-office is since 1967 placed in Timrå where 130 of the 500 employees are working.\textsuperscript{17} However, more than half of the sale takes place in the United States at the subsidiary Permobil Inc., where no less than 95 employees work.\textsuperscript{18}

Permobil started its business in the United States in 1985, through direct sales to hospitals around the Boston area. However, the hospitals were connected to dealers which Permobil rapidly understood that they had to go through to be able to increase the sales to the hospitals. Yet, another problem arose. Because of the advanced technology of the wheelchairs, it was hard to find the right service for them in the United States. Not until they standardized the electronics of the chairs did it become possible to get the service they needed and get the sales going. Permobil Inc. operated at a loss for the first five years but as soon as they learned more about how the market functioned, the number of sales increased. Today, Permobil Inc. is the largest subsidiary in the Permobil Corporation and has had a stable growth since the start in 1985.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{16} http://www.permobil.se/templates/Page.aspx?id=2530
\textsuperscript{17} Uddén, A., 2006-10-30.
\textsuperscript{18} http://www.permobil.se/templates/page.aspx?id=2657
\textsuperscript{19} Uddén, A., 2007-01-09.
To keep up with today’s fast paced globalization, the owner of Permobil and the Uddén family decided to sell parts of the family owned company in 2005. Nordic Capital, a group of private equity funds, now owns about 85 per cent\textsuperscript{20} of the company while the Permobil management is in possession of the rest and also continues to manage the company. The change in ownership will not only help Permobil in its internal development but also increase the possibilities of even greater expansion in the future.\textsuperscript{21} To be able to succeed it is important that Permobil develops at an even faster rate of growth since their two largest competitors, Invacare and Pride Mobility, both are more than double the size. Even though the company has much better prerequisites now than they had ruled by the former foundation, they still constantly need to change and improve.\textsuperscript{22}

Since a significant part of Permobil’s organization is located in Sweden and the United States, this research will elucidate managers’ mindsets in the two countries. Previous studies regarding managerial differences in global organizations have shown that American managers fail strikingly more often while taking on assignments abroad than do European managers\textsuperscript{23}. It is argued that the explanation to these statistics is that Americans find it more difficult to adapt to new cultures since they in most aspects have managed well on their own during the last decades\textsuperscript{24}. The importance of adapting to new cultures has increased at the same pace as the world seems to shrink. In order to keep up with the globalization, we consider it vital to have an understanding of diversity.

1.2.2 MULTICULTURALISM

International influences can be of great advantage for organizations, although this is something that can be difficult to manage at times\textsuperscript{25}. As an international company aiming to expand even further, Permobil can make use of the cultural differences within the company if handled the right way. Management is a key factor when it comes to making a multicultural organization work more effectively\textsuperscript{26}, and even though we, at the moment, do not know enough about how the Permobil management operates, we find it important to enlighten the influence that an international perspective among managers has on the company’s future conditions. Learning about managers’ way of thinking, as well as the complexity of internationalization, will make Permobil more prepared when facing a long period of expansion.

Per Uddén was a man who instantly understood the importance of multiculturalism and therefore he came to influence the corporate culture a great deal from the start. As early as in the 1960s, he brought an Indian, a Swiss, an American and an Australian to Sweden to work for Permobil AB. The multiculturalism was also demonstrated by the first commercial, also produced in the 1960s. It had ten people from different countries, advertising the Permobil in their own language.\textsuperscript{27}

Today, both Permobil AB and Permobil Inc. have fewer than five employees from other countries working at their offices. It therefore becomes obvious that although Uddén

\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{21} http://www.permobil.se/templates/Page.aspx?id=2530
  \item\textsuperscript{22} Axelsson, O., (2006), p.33.
  \item\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 225.
  \item\textsuperscript{25} Harris, P. R., Moran, R. T., (1999), ‘Managing Cultural Differences – Leadership Strategies for a New World of Business’, Houston, Gulf Publishing Company, Fifth Edition, p. 27.
  \item\textsuperscript{27} Uddén, A., 2007-01-09.
\end{itemize}
influenced the company a lot in the beginning, not much have happened during the four decades that has passed. When asking Per Uddén’s son Anders, who also works for the company, about why they do not have a more diverse workforce, he could not answer that question. He stated though that, at least at Permobil AB, they only make use of local advertisements when searching for employees. The few employees that do work at the company are handpicked by the management. When considering this, one start to wonder what has happened with the company’s former visibly more open mindset? Consequently, it becomes a very interesting topic to investigate further.

1.2.3 GLOBAL WAY OF THINKING

Developing a global mindset among managers has become one of the most crucial concerns when facing international competition. Globalization obliges managers to adapt an approach that differs from the traditional way of managing. Rhinesmith, one of the leading experts within this field, has expressed the following lines:

“A ‘global’ mindset means that we scan the world from a broad perspective, always looking for unexpected trends and opportunities to achieve our personal, professional, or organizational objectives.”

A global mindset is in other words a major competitive advantage, and the benefits that come with it are countless. The company will trough a global mindset, for instance, be able to:

- Help managers seeing possibilities when opportunities arise and share best practices with the surroundings.
- Speed up the cross-country sharing of information.
- Enhance the capability of risk-taking.
- Get products on the market in shorter time.
- Facilitate the convergence of local adjustments with global standardization.

In a recently performed research with 1500 managers from 12 companies situated in different countries, the most important managerial values were brought forward. Quite remarkably, even though most of the companies were seen as global, possessing a global mindset came last at the list of the values.

In a dynamic landscape, the importance of managers with global mindsets cannot be neglected. Culture affects individuals and their behavior. Our fundamental idea is that individuals, in this case managers, influence the organization as a whole. It is the individuals that form the organization, not the organization that forms the individuals. This is why this

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32 Ibid., p. 119.
35 Ibid., p. 119.
thesis specifically will focus on managers’ mindsets. It is of great interest to understand the mindsets of managers, as they have a significant influence on the organization and its development. The following examination of the subject as well as a comparison between managers in the two countries will hopefully make companies aware of that a global mindset is a complex phenomenon that can always be improved.

1.3 PROBLEM

How can managers increase their global mindsets so as to improve a company’s global approach?

1.4 PURPOSE

Our main purpose is to develop a deeper understanding of an organizations’ global approach. In order to do this, we will search for signs among managers that indicate a global mindset. By doing this, we will be able to distinguish areas that can be improved. A comparison between managers in Sweden and the United States will be made, with the aim to enlighten that managers from diverse cultures can learn from each other.

By bringing up the topic global mindset, we also wish to increase the awareness of global mindset within organizations.

1.5 DEFINITIONS

Global Mindset: “...combines an openness to and awareness of diversity across cultures and markets with a propensity and ability to synthesize across this diversity”\(^{38}\).

Manager/Leader: The word “leader” may be more appropriate by definition, but we will use the word “manager” as it is more frequently used when discussing global mindset.

Permobil/ The Permobil Corporation: Used when talking about the whole corporation or the product.
Permobil AB: The Swedish Company, which also is the head-office.
Permobil Inc.: The American subsidiary.

(Note that other researchers and authors cited in this thesis use similar definitions.)
1.6 Layout of the Study

In this chapter, we present the necessity of a global mindset, as well as the problem and purpose of this thesis. We also provide the reader with background information about the Permobil Corporation and the wheelchair market.

Established theories created by some of the most prominent researchers within the area of global mindset are presented and discussed in this chapter.

The method section brings up our theoretical and practical methodology. The aim is to give the reader a deeper understanding of how this research has been performed.

The results of the conducted interviews with Swedish and American managers at the Permobil Corporation are in this section thematized and presented.

An analysis based on the empirical results is presented. Moreover, are matching theories connected and analyzed together with the empiricism.

Conclusions divided into theoretical and practical contribution are brought up. Thereafter, recommendations to the Permobil Corporation are suggested.
2. Theory

In this section, established theories created by some of the most well-known researchers within the area will be presented and discussed. Some of the more prominent theories in this area started to develop as early as three decades ago. However, not many of the more recent researchers have gained the same attention. Among the great names are Rhinesmith, Perlmutter and Hofstede, which all have developed recognized theories concerning global corporations and its mindsets. Since we are dealing with two countries, we will start by presenting international differences, which foremost have to do with people’s cultural background. Secondly, theories regarding attitudes towards global thinking will be presented, both when it comes to managers and the company they are working in. Thereafter, global mindset and the characteristics affecting it will be brought up, as well as concrete actions towards improving it. Lastly, we will present a supplementary view, which is a combined local and global way of thinking, a glocal mindset.

2.1 International Differences

There are sources that point out that Americans are less global minded than Europeans. Consequently, we choose to bring up theories that explain the fundamental differences that cause the diversity. However, illuminating all the international differences that affect individual’s mindsets is not possible, as the topic is far too vast and widespread. Therefore a restricted number of theories will be brought up. Some theories that will be presented concern individuals, since we believe that it is the individuals that create the organization and not vice versa.

2.1.1 Cultural Influences

The purpose in this section is to make the reader aware of that business may be conducted differently in Sweden and the United States, and that this is due to cultural diversity. It is also necessary that the reader understands that culture influences individuals, which in turn affects the whole organization.

Although one should be extremely careful before drawing conclusions on people’s behavior based on nationality, indications show that nationality has a significant impact on a manager’s behavior and characteristics. Americans, for instance, are said to be exceptionally positive towards change. They see change as something natural and necessary that will facilitate the strengthening of the nation’s competitive advantage on the global market. However, when it comes to time orientation they are much more short-term oriented than Europeans, which means that they want to see results of their actions particularly quickly. Several researchers’ have enlightened the mentioned points, Hampden-Turner, Hofstede, Robinson and Trompenaars to mention a handful of the most recognized researchers’ within this field.

Hofstede is a researcher who enlightens the influence that culture has on business relations. He means that culture depends on the social environment one has experienced, and that demographic factors, such as race and social class, will influence one’s mindset. The metaphor he uses when describing this phenomenon is “mental software”, as it affects our

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mentality and behavior. Moreover, Hofstede is of the opinion that it is important not to have stereotypical views when studying different nationalities, although it may be difficult to avoid it completely since data very often is collected from nations. This means that one should be very considerate towards making statements that Americans behave in a certain way and have a certain mindset, while Swedes act in a profoundly different way. However, since it has been suggested that nationality does affect a manager’s behavior, it should not be entirely neglected.

2.1.2 INDIVIDUALISM AND COLLECTIVISM

Theories about individualism and collectivism are important when exploring cross-cultural differences. Most people are collectivistic and believe that the group’s interests should be given priority to rather than individual’s interests. Individualistic people have a dissimilar view, which means that they prioritize their own personal interest.

A mixture of nationalities within a company from both individualistic and collectivistic countries has appeared to be advantageous when it comes to generating greater ideas. Moreover, a combination of people from individualistic and collectivistic cultures brings different values, which at the beginning affect the employees’ behavior and attitudes and then continue to shape the whole organization. Fujimoto and Hörtel have stated that roughly 70 per cent of the world population lives in collectivistic cultures. Organizations should therefore be careful and think through their possible strategies towards a more individualistic-collectivistic workforce if they want an even allocation of personnel.

Hofstede has done one of the most thorough studies that distinguish between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. Worth mentioning is that the United States was on top of the list when measuring individualism in 74 countries in 1994. Sweden was number 13/14 on the same ranking. Hofstede believes that these figures also reflect the rate of individualism and collectivism in companies within a nation. A question that arises is whether all managers believe that internationalization combined with a global mindset is the right line of attack in order to reach status quo? Or is thinking individualistically and keeping the focus within national borders a more effective way to reach the goal?

The reason why we chose to include the above theories is because they are among the most well-known theories that can be related to our topic. Moreover is Hofstede one of the most recognized researchers within this field, which is why he is worth mentioning at an early stage in this thesis. However, although we state that it is the individuals that create the organization, we have decided to apply this theory on the organization as a whole, not on its managers. The way we have used this theory is to see an organization as individualistic or collectivistic.

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42 Ibid., p.32.
47 Ibid., p. 213.
49 Ibid., p. 95-96.
50 See Source Critique, 3.6.2, for further discussion.
In that sense, an individualistic company focuses solely on its own progress, while a collectivistic company focuses on the whole corporation.

2.1.3 DIVERSITY
Understanding international differences between Sweden and the United States and make utmost use of the cultural diversities are within the core of this particular thesis. Therefore the following words by L. A. Beer become memorable:

“When two equally powerful but divergent mindsets merge, the result is an even stronger entity that offsets the weaknesses of the other and provides a counterveiling balance.”

A diverse workforce is very helpful for companies in order to gain competitive advantage. However, they will not achieve economical benefits only by employing people from different cultures; they need to really value their differences. Even though there are both advantages and disadvantages with a cultural mix of personnel, the benefits seem to predominate. A multicultural organization can, for instance, make the most of the knowledge and proficiency of the employees, which moreover create a more innovative and creative corporation. It has even been said that a company’s success has its roots in its openness to cultural diversity.

However, disadvantages with diversity in organizations have become visible to researchers. What can happen when putting people from different cultural backgrounds together is that although they might produce effectively; they will not have the same group-belongingness as they normally have. Consequently, they will be less devoted to the company with a lower job satisfaction. In order to prevent these attitudes, and still increase the competitive advantage through its multicultural workforce, companies do not only need to possess an open mindset but also a well functioning Human Resource Management (HRM).

In the above section we aim to underline that although diversity in most cases is an asset to an organization, it can at times be troublesome when different cultures interact. The reader should keep this in mind in order to understand the complexity of running a global business and cultivating a global mindset.

2.2 ATTITUDES TOWARDS BUILDING A GLOBAL ENTERPRISE
When measuring a manager’s global mindset one has to unearth his or her genuine attitude towards the world as a workplace. When it comes to creating a global business, three central mindsets have, according to Dr. Howard V. Perlmutter and in compliance with Mahmoud and Gordon, appeared to be distinguishable: ethnocentrism, polycentrism and geocentrism. These mindsets can for instance be used to identify where the company is heading and the

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53 Ibid., p. 213.
54 Ibid., p. 204-205.
55 Ibid., p. 213.
56 Ibid., p. 214.
57 Ibid., p. 206, 214.
sources of employees. In addition to the three initial mindsets, Dr. L.A. Gordon has presented a fourth and innovative mindset: cybercentrism, which also will be presented.

We have chosen to bring up the theories regarding mindsets, as they are within the core of the topic global mindset. Knowing about the different outlooks is important in order to understand the subject of our study. However, apart from the four mindsets that we bring up, there is one called regiocentrism. We have thought decided not to make use of that mindset since we find it very difficult to distinguish from geocentrism.

### 2.2.1 Ethnocentrism

"Culture is considered only from the standpoint of the country producing the product".

Ethnocentrism embodies the belief that the way of ones home country is always the right way when it comes to doing business. Decision-making and evaluations take place at the head-office, where, in this view, people are best suited for those tasks. The ethnocentric company recruits only host country nationals and rarely changes its organizational structure. Since the head-office has the highest rate of savoir-faire, the ethnocentric organization is relatively simple. The absence of cooperation between head-office and subsidiaries can generate costs for the ethnocentric company in terms of ineffective planning and less innovations and also create risks such as diminished sympathies for the local subsidiary. The way an ethnocentric person act is very much depending on the group to which he or she belongs, which moreover is characterized by, for instance, language, accent and religion. It is all about putting your group first while finding others insignificant. An ethnocentric manager is one who views the world from his or her own cultural perspective. However, our belief is that all people view the world based on his or her cultural background to some extent, which can make ethnocentrism hard to separate from other centrism theories.

### 2.2.2 Polycentrism

"We want to be a good local company".

Polycentrism is a mindset that focuses on the host country with the supposition that cultures and people fundamentally are dissimilar. Hence, polycentric companies and managers believe that locals in the hosting country recognize what is best for them and therefore try to preserve the local identities to the greatest extent possible. Each subsidiary get to decide on pricing and promotions and home country products are adjusted to match local requirements.

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64 Mahmoud, S. (1975), p. 27.
65 Perlmutter, H. V. (1969), p. 11-12, 16.
69 Perlmutter, H. V. (1969), p,11-12, 16.
70 Ibid., p. 13.
71 Ibid. p. 12-13, 16.
Furthermore, locally hired employees perform the sales.\textsuperscript{72} Polycentric managers tend to be very knowledgeable because of their focus on the home market, which for instance can contribute to improved sales statistic. One of the difficulties with a polycentristic mindset is that companies in the same corporation have very weak relations and thus do not understand each other’s business, which can make multinationalization hard.\textsuperscript{73} Polycentric corporations often start by employing personnel from the home country.\textsuperscript{74} However, this can be difficult for employees who are aiming for positions elsewhere than in their host country since the companies are so highly detached. Similar to ethnocentrism, polycentrism creates costs because of duplication and disorganization and risks to put globalization aside because of too much focus on the local business.\textsuperscript{75} Moreover, the polycentric companies can do so well in the host countries that the local inhabitants actually cannot tell the difference from local firms.\textsuperscript{76}

2.2.3 GEOCENTRISM

“The ultimate goal is a worldwide approach in both headquarters and subsidiaries”\textsuperscript{77}

All companies in a geocentric corporation are highly integrated and they are all viewed as equally essential to the global corporation. Problems might occur due to different legal systems and customs in the countries, although, they need to be considered and utilized in decision-making.\textsuperscript{78} The recruiting and promotion is based on the knowledge and experience of a person and not on his or her nationality. The level of acceptance for each other’s views is high, which shows in the aim to be exceptional not only locally but also worldwide.\textsuperscript{79} Many companies are recruiting internally to take advantage of their employees’ multinational backgrounds. They help them to further develop their skills as well as give them the right prerequisites to understand the organization as a whole.\textsuperscript{80} Among the advantages with a geocentric company are the improved products and services and the increasing number of resources available when the entire world functions as a provider. Other essential incentives are the increase in profit, a more powerful corporation and, not to forget, the enhanced cultural acceptance pervaded in the company. Although geocentrism is what all companies wishing to be multinational should strive for, it can be seen as an unattainable stage before it is reached. For instance, the road to geocentrism can be very expensive for the company in terms of travels, further education and other methods needed to increase the mindsetting among employees.\textsuperscript{81} We thus wish to enlighten that although travels and further education can be expensive for a company, the pros will most likely exceed the cons in the long run.

\textsuperscript{72} Wind Y., Douglas S. P., Perlmutter H. V. (1973), p. 15.
\textsuperscript{73} Perlmutter, H. V. (1969), p. 12-13, 16.
\textsuperscript{74} Mahmoud, S. (1975), p. 28.
\textsuperscript{75} Perlmutter, H. V. (1969), p. 12-13, 16.
\textsuperscript{76} Mahmoud, S. (1975), p. 28.
\textsuperscript{78} Mahmoud, S. (1975), p. 29.
\textsuperscript{80} Mahmoud, S. (1975), p. 29.
2.2.4 Cybercentrism

“A real-time vision of market realities without physical size limitations to corporate operations and growth”\(^{82}\)

Companies must look through their current communication strategies to be able to change and grow in a world that is influenced by new technology and an increased demand of information. Cybercentrism involves instantaneous management of virtual enterprises in order to match the constantly increasing consumer needs. The result is flattened organizations with intranets and service-centers, which are able to handle rapid decision-making supported by good information. Cybercentristic management involves a new generation of computer-knowledgeable people and a new model where the IT-department plays a much greater executive role than previously. The goals they aim for are flexible since the market constantly changes, which also demands contract personnel and consultancy in contrary to lifetime employment.\(^{83}\)

2.3 Four Types of Managerial Mindsets

The reason why we decide on presenting the following types of managerial mindsets is because each mindset is closely bound to the manager’s way of doing business. Furthermore, a manager’s way of doing business is connected to the level of global mindset within the company\(^{84}\). As a consequence, understanding different management styles and mindsets become crucial.

According to Kedia and Mukherji there are four central mindsets that are typical to managers: Defender, Explorer, Controller and Integrator.\(^{85}\)

2.3.1 Defender

The defender is the most conventional of the four mindsets. When it comes to doing business, the defender is aware of the existence of companies at other markets but is not interested in them, or in their cultures. One can also establish that the defender finds other people and cultures intimidating and even dangerous which is illustrated by the majority of domestic execution of business activities. A defender is eager to follow laws and restrictions for protection from the outside world to prevent others from exploring the home market.\(^{86}\) We believe that no manager is likely to express in an interview that other cultures are intimidating and scary. However, we decide to keep the description of a defender just to make clear how a manager without a global mindset can be described.

2.3.2 Explorer

Even though the head-office in the home country is in control of the business, the explorer mindset allows movement into other markets. All new cultures and markets are, however, vigilantly observed before entered in search for new products, customers and services. Notwithstanding the new businesses possibilities abroad, the explorer manager makes sure the

\(^{83}\) Ibid., p. 676-684.
\(^{86}\) Ibid., p. 242.
head-office continues to handle all decision-making and also operates the foreign companies in terms of, for example, threats, competitors, and communication and distribution lines.\textsuperscript{87}

\subsection*{2.3.3 CONTROLLER}

The controller is comparable to the explorer in terms of understanding the foreign market and culture. Nevertheless, a controlling manager is more home country oriented and wants to apply systems that work well domestically at companies abroad. Home country strategies are in fact crucial to the controller who would, if possible, implement them at any business prospect at any time. The controller can for that reason be compared with the ethnocentric mindset, which also honors the head-office and its way of working. In addition, the controller has similarities with the polycentric mindset and can therefore be seen as a sort of bridge between ethnocentrism and polycentrism. The polycentric company is very focused on the local possibilities as is the controller.\textsuperscript{88}

\subsection*{2.3.4 INTEGRATOR}

The integrator is the manager with the most broadened global mindset. He or she has the right expertise and knowledge to understand other business cultures and the ability to manage the diversity, not only in the daily operations but also in longer terms. As an integrator, one has an extensive set of connections around the world such as customers, distributors, developers and suppliers as well as closer relation- and partnerships. These kinds of relations can grow strong due to the integrators alertness and understanding of potential of win-win situations. The integrator manager functions like a controller that coordinates the worldwide business and manages the information flow within the global system.\textsuperscript{89}

\subsection*{2.4 A SUMMARIZING MODEL}

In order to recapitulate the above-mentioned theories concerning managers’ attitudes and their different kinds of mindsets we have created a simple model. The model shows the connections between the possible mindsets and attitudes of a manager, in comparison with global orientation and cultural understanding. For example, a geocentric manager has high cultural understanding and work with high global orientation, which is similar to the integrator manager who is someone very skilled at performing global business with great cultural knowledge. The global mindset is moreover, as the arrow indicates, very high at that point. The reason cybercentrism is put above the others is since it is an approach that necessitates a much broader way of thinking and working. Keep in mind that the figure is very simplified. For instance can an individual have multicultural understanding and still be very focused on the local market.

\textsuperscript{87} Kedia, B. L., Mukherji, A. (1999), p. 243.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., p. 244.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., p. 245.
Stephen H. Rhinesmith is one of the researchers within the field of global management whose theories, according to us, seem to have received great attention worldwide. In order to enlighten the difference between people that has global mindsets and those who do not, Rhinesmith has come up with approaches that signify a person with a global mindset. For instance, a global minded individual has a longer time-perspective than others and constantly view the world with a broad perspective, search for context, is open to surprises and is indefatigably when it comes to learning new things. Moreover a global manager is creative and sees possibilities where others might see conflicts. He or she has an extensive knowledge about different cultures and how to make the best use of diverse teams.\textsuperscript{91}

### 2.5 Global Mindset

Stephen H. Rhinesmith is one of the researchers within the field of global management whose theories, according to us, seem to have received great attention worldwide. In order to enlighten the difference between people that has global mindsets and those who do not, Rhinesmith has come up with approaches that signify a person with a global mindset. For instance, a global minded individual has a longer time-perspective than others and constantly view the world with a broad perspective, search for context, is open to surprises and is indefatigably when it comes to learning new things. Moreover a global manager is creative and sees possibilities where others might see conflicts. He or she has an extensive knowledge about different cultures and how to make the best use of diverse teams.\textsuperscript{91}

### 2.5.1 Characteristics Associated with Global Mindset

Although the concept of a global mindset is in the spotlight it has been proven difficult to scrutinize the correlation between a global mindset and, for instance, a person’s ability to manage a company. However, there are six personal characteristics that are closely related to

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a global way of thinking: knowledge, conceptualization, flexibility, sensitivity, judgment and
reflection. One cannot imply that these are skills which will form a manager with a complete
global mindset. It is rather a question about the manager being alert and having an awareness
of the many characteristics so that he or she further can develop these valuable qualities.

In this section we want to briefly show what qualities a global manager should possess.
Understanding the value of these characteristics also make it possible for an individual to
understand one’s strengths and weaknesses. In order to get a clearer view of these
characteristics, we have constructed the following model:

![Figure 2. Personal Characteristics.](image)

The most crucial points regarding knowledge are that a manager with a global mindset
possesses a wide perspective with paramount knowledge about technology, business and
industry. Conceptualization involves analytical skills as well as an understanding on how
globalization influences numerous parts of a business, such as vision, mission and strategy.
Flexibility is a characteristic that might be seen as a matter of course in this context. It is a
quality that is necessary since the environment goes through constant changes, globally as
well as domestically. This characteristic includes being open minded and willing to change
old habits in order to explore new ways to deal with situations. Sensitivity to different cultures
is vital. A global minded manager has to accept that individuals might have different values
and beliefs than do the manager. This may sound easy, but is actually a characteristic that is
mastered by remarkably few since it requires that the manager is fully confident about ones
own situation. Self-confidence is also required when it comes to judgment. Today’s business
environment contains more uncertain situations than before, and therefore a certain level of
self-confidence is required in order to make a decision, a self-confidence that often comes
from previous experiences rather than training. Reflection is considered necessary given that a
global minded manager always strive to learning about new phenomena and constantly seek
for improvements, improvements that cannot be made without reflection.

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95 Ibid., p. 65-66.
2.5.2 HOW TO IMPROVE GLOBAL MINDSET

Companies striving to become world leaders should consider the importance of a global mindset. Although it can take years to implement in a corporation and seem to be beyond reach, one has to initiate the mindset somewhere. One solution is to start among managers, since they have high influence in the corporation. A team of multicultural managers can, with its diversity, bring about extensive knowledge and provide a broad perspective to the business. However, initially, the managers need to put the focus on themselves and their way of thinking to be capable of passing the global mindset forward to the other employees.

In this section, we aim to further develop the understanding of the topic, as well as underline that a global mindset can always be improved, thus you have to work actively to improve it.

As mentioned previously, Rhinesmith has found a number of approaches that are important when working towards a global mindset. These outlooks develop a deeper insight to our thoughts regarding the world we live in as well as ourselves.

The first approach, driving for the bigger, broader picture, has to do with global information research. To apply this into the daily life as a manager, one can, for instance, read newspapers from around the world in the search for new ideas and inspiration. The key way of thinking is “outside the box”, which will originate new perspectives on life.

The second, balancing paradoxes, handles the capability to deal with the relations that affect the company in terms of personal and organizational effectiveness. This approach requires a manager who not only allows diversity within the company, but also utilizes it to develop his or her own skills and way of thinking. The center of attention should be on converging ideas, not keeping them to oneself. Another valuable quality that a manager can work on is to be able to handle conflicts that occur in different parts of the corporation.

The subsequent approach is trusting process over structure. A manager should be able to distinguish the importance of all processes, and the way they are connected to each other. To improve this quality, the manager can take courses concerning the areas of the business he or she are less familiar with. It can also be useful to become absorbed in the inevitable process of future technology trends.

Managing differences has become an increasingly important skill for managers active in the 21st century. This is why the forth approach, valuing differences, is so important. As it refers to, it is about understanding the diversity of people at dissimilar sections within the company and of different cultures. As advised previously, a manager can take action by reading newspapers as well as books about managers in other cultures. However, before understanding others, it is essential to know ones own strengths and weaknesses as a manager. Hence, taking courses to recognize ones way of thinking and working can be very helpful for the future global career.

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98 Ibid., p. 37.
100 Ibid., p. 38-39.
102 Ibid., p. 41.
Managing change has been developed as a fifth approach. It is one of the greatest challenges for managers because of the long process it is a part of, and the world-class performance that is expected from them. Among the concrete actions to take are analyzing the current work situation in order to find the aspects most exposed to change as well as scrutinize the conditions affecting oneself at work and at home, with the purpose of increasing one's overall effectiveness and openness to change.\textsuperscript{103}

The sixth and last of the approaches is seeking lifelong learning. This mindset connects all of the ones presented earlier by once again pointing at the importance of constant learning.\textsuperscript{104} Professor S.R. Chatterjee is another researcher who mean that a global mindset require learning. From his point of view, learning is about education in self-awareness, to challenge values and beliefs and to deal with differences.\textsuperscript{105} According to Rhinesmith, a manager can take action towards increasing his or her knowledge by, for instance, pretending to be a new employee at the company. Gathering, analyzing and reflecting on information with the eyes of a novice can contribute to increased insights. It is also a necessity to be attached to the current job and to constantly have a feeling of working for a reason. To be able to wake up every morning, longing for work and the challenges of the day, the manager has to appreciate the meaning of his or her work and its affect on others.\textsuperscript{106}

Similar to Rhinesmith, Kedia and Mukherji present knowledge as an important factor towards a global mindset. A manager should, for instance, be perceptive concerning new technology, and be able to use it in daily communication. Yet, it is also imperative to understand its importance when it comes to the global operations of the corporation. A manager should be attentive and aware that, for example, product cycles and production processes are affected by technology and the fact that the company can take advantage of it to stand out in the global competition.\textsuperscript{107} Another type of essential knowledge is on socio-political factors. That is, to be aware of these issues in different countries and the way they are affecting businesses. The last type of relevant knowledge is the awareness of culture and cross-cultural issues and the way they affect management.\textsuperscript{108} Risk-taking is a quality brought up by Ananthram and Chatterjee. They believe taking risks contribute to shorter decision-making, which consequently will bring about better profits.\textsuperscript{109}

Even though focus on the manager’s personal strives for a global mindset is principal, one should not forget that for the mindset to be applied throughout the organization, it has to go through the whole workforce.\textsuperscript{110} Uniting the employees towards common goals using a widespread mindset will surely help companies toward further success.\textsuperscript{111} According to Gupta and Govindarajan there are a few central factors that need to be considered when it comes to improving the global mindset within a company. These factors include distinguishing the existing mindset among employees, as well as broadening their interest, knowledge and

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., p. 41.
\textsuperscript{105} Chatterjee, S. R. (2005), p. 44.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., p. 237.
awareness of new cultures and markets. It is also vital to foster the capacity to join beyond borders in order to accumulate a wider range of global knowledge. Meetings across borders might, however, be hard to perform because of political, social and corporate regulations. On the other hand, with today’s technologies networking is effortless for any company and its employees and can contribute to a greater user of resources from all over the world.

Among some of the hands on methods for companies to apply in order to enhance the global mindset of each and every employee are meetings and projects around the globe, formal education, training programs abroad and increased geographic and cultural cultivation among managers. Another solution when it comes to cultivating global mindset in a corporation is to contemplate employment of a younger workforce. They not only have a greater curiosity towards new cultures but are also easier to affect when it comes to their resoluteness to work with and enhance their global mindset. According to Begley and Boyd, a global minded corporation also necessitates a mutual corporate vision, a functioning framework consisting of local and global structure, process and power. Moreover, the company needs to reach a state of equilibrium when it comes to formalization and flexibility as well as standardization and customization of products. In order to simplify the local and global structure within the company, solutions could be developing communities of practice or modular networks. It could be introducing a global intranet site or letting in consultants who can help improving cross-unit communication and collaboration.

2.6 GLOCAL WAY OF THINKING

Worth mentioning is that multinational companies often demand a sort of “glocal” mindset, which means that one has a deep understanding of how companies work locally. Glocalization is thus very similar to polycentrism, where focus at first hand is directed to the local prerequisites. As the model indicates, there are currently four important strategy approaches. At first, focus is on the local strategies and the importance of being aware of what affect the local marketplace. Secondly is the international strategy approach, which handles the implementation of local strategies on an international level. Thirdly, multinational strategies concerning several foreign markets are implemented. Lastly, focus is laid on the global strategies. At this point, companies wish to sustain homogeneity among the businesses around the world. Since this seems to be a rather hard stage to handle for companies, the glocal strategy approach has been developed in order to get a balance between the local and global strategies. In addition, a recent research performed by Professors Begley and Boyd found that managers with a combined local and global way of thinking is essential to a global mindset within a corporation.

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116 Ibid., p. 95.
Including the concept of a glocal way of thinking in our thesis emphasizes that thinking globally is not enough. An organization that strives to grow internationally, should not forget that the local market has to be looked after as well. Keeping this in mind, the reader will understand the complexity of running a global enterprise.

Figure 3. The Concept of "Glocal" Strategy\textsuperscript{122}.

3. Method

This chapter will present our theoretical as well as practical methodology. The purpose is to provide a deeper understanding of why and how we choose to perform certain parts of the thesis.

3.1 Prior Knowledge

Prior knowledge regarding a subject can be divided into primary and secondary prior knowledge. Primary prior knowledge is connected to work experience while secondary prior knowledge has to do with former education.\(^{123}\) As one of us has worked for Permobil, both in Sweden and in the United States, and have developed a closer connection to the company and its employees, we consider the primary prior knowledge about the company to be rather high.

The fact that none of us had prior knowledge concerning the theories on global mindset we simply saw as a challenge and an opportunity to increase our knowledge in a new subject. Nevertheless, we have through our education received secondary knowledge from courses such as organization and leadership and international business and economics, which will contribute to the essay by some means.

3.2 Scientific Perspectives

The main scientific perspectives that appear within a research project are hermeneutics and positivism. Hermeneutics can be explained as the art of interpretation and development of a general understanding, in contrast to positivism, which through formal logical systems describe and explain the reality.\(^{124}\)

Since hermeneutics is an approach that facilitates the understanding of the behavior of human beings and as we want to interpret the situation, we found it to be the right starting point for this research. Important to consider in hermeneutics is the meaning of language and dialogue between the researcher and the interviewee. The use of different languages can, for instance, aggravate the comprehension and may thereby affect the research.\(^{125}\) Although both authors speak and understand English very well, we have to consider the fact that we are Swedish and that the American interviewees might misinterpret some of the questions asked during the interview at the same time as we may misread them.

3.3 Methods of Reasoning

To reach conclusions within a thesis, the researcher can use either a deductive or inductive way of reasoning. When using the deductive method, one starts working with existing theories, continues by developing hypotheses and then applies them by making observations. The inductive method, on the other hand, starts with real life observations that result in theories or models.\(^{126}\)

\(^{125}\) Ibid., p. 222.
\(^{126}\) Ibid., p. 220.
There are two reasons to why we have decided to carry out a deductive research method in this thesis. First of all, given the time constraint carrying out this thesis, a deductive research method is preferable. Second of all, it brings more creditability to let recognized theories function as a base to our research. Consequently, we will follow the existing theories concerning our research subject and further make our observations in order to understand the reality.

3.4 Research Design

As this research is conducted on a specific company, the research design will be a case study that consists of an investigation of the Permobil management. However, within the case study a comparative research will be carried out, with the aim to scrutinize probable contrasts between managers’ mindsets in Sweden and the United States.

3.4.1 Deciding on a Qualitative Method

A fundamental selection for a researcher is between quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative research methods are generally used when it comes to examining frequencies, and are most often performed by questionnaires. Qualitative research methods are, one the other hand, regularly interviews utilized to discover varied patterns or develop an understanding of people’s way of thinking and reacting in certain situations. A Qualitative research design aims to describe and get a deeper understanding of a subject rather than generalizing and explaining, which quantitative methods intend to do. Whichever method one decides to apply, it is vital that the final option is strictly related to the purpose of the thesis.

As far as we are concerned, most previous studies regarding global mindset have been quantitative. For example, Kefalas and Neuland developed a questionnaire consisting of 40 questions. These questions handled two different perspectives. First of all, the conceptualization concept versus the contextualization concept, which is Kefala’s and Neuland’s way to measure global mindset. Thereafter demographic information was examined. Respondents were requested to specify, on a scale, whether they strongly agreed alternatively strongly disagreed to certain statements. Numeric values were given to the different answers, so that managers’ approach could be investigated statistically. The research resulted in a number of conclusions that were statistically significant. Gupta and Govindarajan, both award-winning scholars and teachers, are others that have presented ways to measure global mindset by using a quantitative method. Their research method was very similar to the method used by Kefala and Neuland, and their result also showed clear differences in mindsets between individuals. Quantitative methods seem to measure global mindset quite well, which previous studies have shown. However, in our research we aim to look upon global mindset from a different angle by using a qualitative research design. Global mindset deals with people’s interpretations, as the name imply. Given that it is an exceptionally complex topic we find it relevant to understand the managers’ opinions.

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qualitative research design enables the development of a deeper understanding of an individuals’ way of thinking and through this line of approach one can examine factors that can be improved in order to meliorate the managers’ global mindset.

3.4.2 Structure of the Interviews

Within the qualitative area, there are a variety of interview methods to apply. We will in this composition apply qualitative/informal interviews, which focuses on the interviewees’ feelings, way of thinking and attitudes\(^{133}\). The interviews will have a frame that is relatively low in standardization, which means that possibilities of variation increase since the questions somewhat differ from person to person. When it comes to the structure of an interview, it can have several meanings. Our choice is to use the term implicating that an interview is structured if it handles a specific theme.\(^{134}\) This is also why we will use an interview guide consisting of different topics to make sure that we handle the same themes in all interviews, before the interviewee has a chance to mediate more evasive answers. Some supporting questions are added to our interview guide, but those will only be used if necessary. Not to forget, since qualitative/informal interviews are flexible, it enables the interviewee to bring up topics that we have not considered. Consequently, although the interviews will be structured in the sense that they will be handling a specific theme, we would like to emphasize the importance of flexibility when holding interviews about such a multifaceted topic as global mindset.

Before interviewing the managers in Sweden and the United States we carried out a test interview with a person in similar position. The purpose with the test interview was to ensure that our interview guide did not consist of obvious weaknesses. The test interview ran smoothly, and we decided not to make any major changes in the interview guide.

3.4.3 Empirical and Analytical Methods

Description and interpretation are two closely bound terms, which together create the purpose of the qualitative research interview. In order to make the best out of collected interview material, one can make use of different techniques.\(^{135}\) However, it is important to realize that within qualitative research analysis there is no right and wrong, there are no mutual rules of the game. Instead, one has to perform it with a creative and imaginary mind.\(^{136}\)

After completing the interviews, we transcribed both the English and Swedish ones literally, using the managers’ spoken language. To make sure that we interpreted the managers correctly, we sent the transcribed material to each and one of them. This is an important part of the process since the managers get the opportunity to change and comment their statements\(^{137}\). When presenting the empirical result we apply a method brought up by Kvale\(^{138}\) that focuses on the content of the interviews with the purpose of sorting out and develop themes. Long statements are thus shortened down and the essential meaning is extracted\(^{139}\). The answers are thematized under six categories: Cultural meetings and network, Local or global, Change, The United States vs. Sweden, Management and Global mindset.

\(^{134}\) Ibid., p. 19-21.
\(^{138}\) Ibid., p. 177-178.
\(^{139}\) Ibid., p. 174.
During the classification of interviews, patterns appear and analytic questions arise. Empirical reporting and analysis are therefore closely connected.\textsuperscript{140} For this reason we have decided to carry out an analysis primarily based on the empirical results. The reason for focusing more on the empiricism than on the theories is not only because we find it essential to enthrone the managers’ opinions but also because our goal is to draw inferences concerning the two companies in the Permobil Corporation.

### 3.5 Sample

When cultivating a global mindset within a company it can be advantageous to, at least initially, focus on the employees who on a daily basis are in touch with people in other countries.\textsuperscript{141} In fact, it is argued that it is the top management that is responsible for the creation of a company’s global mindset, and that a multicultural management enhance the development of the very same\textsuperscript{142}. This is the reason why we in this research chose to focus on managers. Our contact person at Permobil, Anders Uddén, has provided us with names of managers in Sweden, selected by stratification which is used when a proportional representation of people are wanted.\textsuperscript{143} The chosen managers are: the CEO, marketing director, marketing manager, finance director and logistic director. The reason for selecting two persons involved with marketing is due to one of them being Norwegian, and marketing director for both Sweden and Norway, and the other because of his former experience of working in the United States as well as him being marketing director for the corporation. Since we to the fullest extent possible wanted the managers in Sweden and the United States to have the same positions within the company, we contacted the ones in the United States who best corresponded to the Swedish managerial titles. All managers that were contacted were positive about the request and accepted to be interviewed. We decided to interview ten persons, five from each country. If time would not have been as limited, we would have done more than ten interviews. However, we consider the selected managers rather representative for Permobil, since all are in powerful positions and represent influential parts of the company. Moreover, our sample did not suffer any falling off, which means that the risk of distortions in our research decreases.

Permobil has a fairly homogenous management consisting of mainly male Caucasians, and therefore only men will be interviewed. The overall answers might have had a different touch to them if women were involved and the conclusions might have been dissimilar. However, the lack of female managers can be an interesting issue since this research handles strive for global mindset and for a sense of openness in the managers to employ the best-suited persons despite sex and nationality.

\textsuperscript{140} Trost, J. (2005), p. 132.
3.6 Source Critique

The sources used in this thesis will be divided into primary and secondary sources and thereafter evaluated separately. Relevance, authenticity and trustworthiness of sources are among the most essential criteria and will thus be enlightened and evaluated.\textsuperscript{144}

3.6.1 Primary Sources

The primary sources used in this study are qualitative/informal interviews, which we believe is an effective way when endeavoring to share individuals’ line of thoughts. However, in spite of the advantages of using a qualitative research method outweigh the disadvantages in this particular case, it is necessary to look upon limitations that the selected method may involve. The chosen method is as mentioned a flexible process that enables a more intimate relation to the interviewee than do a qualitative method. On the contrary, if interviews turn out too flexible it may be difficult to obtain reliable and equivalent information from the different respondents, which make the research lose value\textsuperscript{145}. By keeping this in mind focus has been laid on ensuring that the interviews are flexible yet structured, and that each interview has the same starting point.

Authenticity involves general research questions about how the studied group, in this case interviewed managers, may have been influenced by the research\textsuperscript{146}. This can include the awareness of their possibilities to change their present situation or if they have created a deeper understanding of the research subject\textsuperscript{147}. To ensure an authentic interview, we have looked at previously used interview questions formulated by researchers within this area. However, as our research is a qualitative study we have decided on making an interview guide (see Appendix) consisting of a number of themes instead of formulating exact questions. Nevertheless, for interviews to be a truthful source, it is very much dependent on a reliable interview process. This includes the influence that the interviewer might have on the interviewee. Since one of the authors of this thesis has a close relationship to a number of influential people within the company, we have to consider the affect this might have on the given answers. Although we have decided to keep the managers anonymous, they might still decide not to mention opinions they believe can be used against them. Another issue that needs to be brought up is the fact that analyzing interviews require previous experience, experience that we may not have. We have looked at other researches about global mindset to get an understanding of its complexity and to minimize the risk of making mistakes in our study. A problem that though might appear in our study is lack of objectivity. In order to attain a more truthful picture, we should have combined the interviews with a qualitative study to let the employees portray their managers. A combination of qualitative and quantitative studies would probably make it easier to state whether a company has a global approach.

Although we are of the opinion that a qualitative research will contribute to an increased understanding of an organizations global approach, we wish to enlighten that analyzing managers global mindset is a complex task. It is not possible to decide whether a manager is global minded or not after a short interview, but we can probably see indications of strong and weak points. This will in turn enable us to give some recommendations in order to enhance their global mindset. A problem is though that since we keep the managers anonymous in the

\textsuperscript{145} Magne Holme, I., Krohn Solvang, B. (1997), p. 82-83.
\textsuperscript{146} Bryman, A., Bell, E. (2005), p. 308-309.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., p. 308-309.
empirical presentation, we will not have the chance to draw parallels between, for example, their background and something they state in the interview. Our analysis and conclusion would probably have become more meaningful if we had considered more aspects concerning the managers. Nonetheless, since the managers are so few, and as we wanted to get as honest answers as possible, we choose to keep them unidentified.

The transcribed interviews were handed over to the interviewees so that possible corrections and clarifications could be made in order to eliminate misunderstandings. In spite of the fact that utmost effort has been made to minimize erroneous interpretations, one has to consider that questions are not always entirely truthfully answered.

As our aim is to look upon a company’s global approach it is difficult to come to clear conclusions. Interviewing five managers in each country is not enough to make a statement whether an organization has a global approach. However, definite conclusions of the company’s approach are not crucial, as long as a deeper understanding of the topic and managers way of thinking is achieved.

3.6.2 SECONDARY SOURCES

The secondary sources used in this study are scientific articles, books and the Internet. We have paid attention to ensure that all material is valid and relevant for this thesis. As a consequence, a majority of the sources utilized to scrutinize the background and theories regarding global mindset are scientific articles, since we found that most previous studies regarding the topic in question are presented in these types of sources. In addition, the sources used to compound our method are books, some of them recommended by supervisors at Umeå University. Using literature recommended by people that are well acquainted with this area contributes to a higher rate of reliability. In addition, since we are performing a qualitative study these books have been complemented with literature that focuses entirely on qualitative methods. A weakness when it comes to the choice of literature, especially regarding the method books, is that they all are in Swedish. We should have utilized sources written in English in order to facilitate for the American readers of this thesis.

A majority of the articles have been found at the research database Business Source Premier. Our aim has been to mostly use up to date sources that are either peer-reviewed or widely accredited by researchers. An article by Perlmutter, “The Tortuous Evolution of the Multinational Corporation”\(^ {148}\), is from 1969. The reason why we chose to include such an old article is due to the fact that Perlmutter was one of the first researchers that brought up the topic global mindset. Most scientific articles quoted by us are in turn cited by several others and can therefore be considered as generally accepted. However, “An Explanatory Analysis of Global Managerial Mindsets: a Case of U.S. Textile and Apparel Industry”\(^ {149}\), one of the peer-reviewed articles used, is an exception as it did not present any citations. Yet we decided to use the article as a source, as we found it highly relevant for this study and since it had previously been used by well-known researchers. Another frequently cited scientific article, “Global Managers: Developing A Mindset For Global Competitiveness”\(^ {150}\), handled a theory referred to an unpublished article by Baird, L., an article that we could not find.

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\(^ {150}\) Kedia, B. L., Mukherji. A. (1999).
Two of the articles used in this thesis were found on the Internet, and these are not peer-reviewed. The two articles are “Weaving the Threads of a Global Mindset in Work Organizations: Managerial Roles and Responsibilities”\textsuperscript{151} and “The Challenge of Global Mindset Development for Managers: Towards a New Framework for Empirical Tool Building”\textsuperscript{152}. We decided to use these articles in our thesis, as a professor that has had other well-cited articles published have been involved in both articles. Apart from these two articles, Internet sources have been used sparsely since we are of the opinion that it is not the trustworthiest of sources. As a consequence, apart from Permobil’s homepage, Internet has mainly been used to come across ideas. Furthermore we have throughout the entire process considered possible interests of the authors as well as investigated whether sources may be dependent on each other. In other words, we have tried to stay critical to all sources so as to produce a work that is reliable and useful for Permobil in particular, and also for other companies striving to expand successfully on the global market.

When it comes to theories regarding managerial mindsets, we only chose to use one source, the theory presented by Kedia and Mukherji. There are several other theories that deal with managers’ way of thinking; however, we cannot present them all. The reason we decided to bring up this specific one is that we could find a clear connection between this theory and Perlmutter’s centrism theory.

Worth mentioning is how we have decided to interpret one of the theories. We believe that Hofstede’s theory about individualism and collectivism is most often used when analyzing individuals and not an organization as an entity. However, we have chosen to utilize Hofstede’s theory in a different way, which means that we have modified a highly accepted theory. For instance, by saying that a subsidiary is individualistic, we do not mean that the company consists of individualists. The point that we then wish to make is that the organization only think about its own business and not the whole corporations business. A collectivistic subsidiary on the other hand, is one that will try to cooperate with the other subsidiaries in the corporation. We are aware of the fact that it might be wrong to modify a theory by such an accredited professor as Hofstede. However, we decided to do it anyhow since we find it interesting to look upon his theory from a different point of view. We though realized that we also should have used this theory in its original form, as it would contribute to a deeper understanding of the different management styles. Hence, as our interview guide did not lead the interviewee to talk about his thoughts regarding this matter, we unfortunately can not use the theory as planned.

A subject that we do not present theories regarding is company culture. The reason for this is that we have not found it in theories concerning global mindset. Although, we find it very important to discuss, as it for instance helps the workforce to strive for the same goals. In addition, our opinion is that a strong company culture can help strengthen a company’s brand and attract new employees. Our belief is that these factors together will contribute to a more successful global corporation.

\textsuperscript{151} Chatterjee, S.R. (2005).
\textsuperscript{152} Ananthram, S., Chatterjee S. R., (2004).
3.7 Quality Criteria

The trustworthiness of this study can be divided into four categories\(^{153}\), all of which are further presented and analyzed below.

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility means that the researcher has to make sure that the results of, for instance, an interview are reported back to the interviewee for control. The interviewee should also confirm that the researcher has understood its social reality and is able to present it in a respectable way.\(^{154}\)

After the transcriptions of the interviews, we e-mailed them back to each and one of the managers. Some of them, but not all, reported back to us after having read the interview trough, however, only a few of them wanted to make changes. The ones that we did change either involved misunderstandings or information the managers did not want us to mention. We do not regard it as a problem that not all managers reported back to us, as we believe they would have let us know if there was something they disagreed on.

3.7.2 Transferability

Since a qualitative research focuses on the depth of the empirical results instead of aiming for a broad perspective, it can be difficult to transfer the results to another situation. For that reason it is necessary that the researchers present as many details as possible concerning environment and culture and leave for the reader to judge its transferability.\(^{155}\)

In order to facilitate for individuals or companies wanting to transfer the result, we have tried to include as much information possible in the background and in the empiricism concerning the managers and the company. However, as mentioned above, one has to be very careful transferring results since all people and organizations are different because of diverse prerequisites. Moreover, we do not know everything about the managers or the organization, and we might have missed bringing up information that could possibly improve the transferability.

3.7.3 Dependability

Some researchers have pointed out the importance of making the research dependable by making sure that a complete account of every part of the research is available for others. However, since qualitative research often produces material that can be redundant even for the researcher, this is a complicated and not often performed task.\(^{156}\)

Since we transcribed the entire interviews and saved all e-mails, both from us and the managers, every piece of our empirical material are accessible to others. We therefore consider the dependability of this thesis high.

3.7.4 Confirmability

After performing the qualitative method of choice, the researchers have to confirm their act in good faith. This means that one can prove that for example personal values not have affected the research.\(^{157}\)

\(^{154}\) Ibid., p. 207.
\(^{155}\) Ibid., p. 307.
\(^{156}\) Ibid., p. 307.
\(^{157}\) Ibid., p. 307.
Both authors have tried to keep an objective approach throughout this thesis. However, just as we brought up in our theory chapter, Hofstede mentions that culture do affect ones way of thinking and behaving\textsuperscript{158}. Our cultural background will therefore affect the choices we make, for example when it comes to which research method we decide to apply, and how we choose to perform our analysis. Moreover, the connection that one of us has to the company and its employees is also likely to affect values and decisions. In which way, however, is hard to state.

4. **Empirical Results**

In this section applicable information received from the managers in Sweden and United States respectively will be presented. Our personal opinions and comments will be left out, as we solely wish to present the contents of the interviews. Names will be omitted, since our wish is to obtain honest answers within areas that can be regarded as somewhat delicate. Keeping the respondents anonymous is likely to increase the possibility to attain more truthful and relevant information.

4.1 **Sweden**

We spent a few days at the head-office in Timrå, where interviews with the Swedish managers were held. All interviews took place in the same room, which was a neutral area situated in the main building of the company.

4.1.1 **Cultural Meetings and Network**

Exploring new cultures is likely to increase one’s global mindset. Therefore we were curious about the managers’ network and cultural meetings and how it has affected them.

When talking about the managers’ background, we found that two of them had worked abroad, one of them for several years. However, the other three have also gained noticeable international experience by traveling. One of them has predominantly gained his foreign experience when starting working at Permobil, a job that involves a lot of traveling. The managers who have worked abroad also are the ones that have traveled the most outside the job. Moreover, when it comes to knowledge of languages, all managers feel comfortable using English; one of them claims that he uses it half of the time at work. As for foreign languages, three of them speak one or two languages except from English.

All Swedish managers like traveling to new cultures. One considers meetings with new cultures as fascinating and exciting, another claims to be very respectful, yet open minded, towards other cultures. Three of the Swedish managers enlighten that an open mind is vital in the meeting with new unexplored cultures. Individuals need to possess the right mindset in order to succeed, adds one of the managers. The same person claims that the Permobil culture and its openness towards other cultures have been influenced a lot by Per Uddén. Uddén loved to bring people with different nationalities home, and the more unlike they were, the better. One manager compares himself with a chameleon, which adapts very easily to whichever culture. Another manager has spent time on learning about the new cultures, which actually was compulsory at his former job. Meetings with people from other cultures are seen as the foremost advantage of traveling, states one of the managers. He has learned a lot from his travels, especially in forms of mistakes that occurred because of cultural differences. All nationalities have their different traits and people have prejudices against each other. Furthermore the manager explains to us that in order to handle diverse characteristics in all situations, one has to have several paths to choose from instead of following the same track.

Three of the managers claim that a person’s nationality does not matter at all when employing a new person. It is the personal prerequisites that are decisive, such as a nice personality, says one of them. Another manager informs about the internal movement of employees between countries, which contributes to a more diverse workforce. He though believes that Swedes adapt much easier to new cultures than do people from other cultures, although it is individual. He is of the opinion that a person should have been working at Permobil long enough to be able to really understand the culture of the company in order to reach a high position, but the nationality of the person is not important. Two of the managers mention that
nationality, or cultural background, might have an influence when employing a new person. One manager considers it easier to adapt to the western or Christian values in comparison to the Muslim values and how that religion, for example, view women and because of its prevailing fundamentalism. Another manager believes that it in some position may be valuable to get people with other cultural backgrounds, which, in one way can be seen as a kind of discrimination. Apart from that, he does not believe that a person’s nationality matters. Two managers emphasize the importance of multicultural teams in this context. One of them because he believes it helps managers to be less narrow-minded. He says that employees at Permobil work with minorities and therefore might be more open to other groups than people generally are. Though, he believes that although the company aims to be neutral in this question, he is not convinced that they manage to be. Contradictory, one manager believes that both nationality and sex actually do matter at the head-office. He believes that there is a lot to be done in Timrå concerning the policy of the company. As for himself, he puts individuals from other cultures first when he recruits. He believes that these people have competence that often is overlooked by employers because of their nationality. The bottom line is that diverse nationalities are an asset to the company.

Four of the managers have daily contact with co-workers at subsidiaries around the world. One of them also states that he has a big international network outside his job. The same manager claims that relationships with employees seem to be closer the shorter the distance is from Sweden. For instance, he believes that Americans are not as inviting as are Swedes, which is a cultural difference. The international relations do not seem to get very deep, according to another manager, since they all are very busy and focused on their own markets. Another manager has worked several years at one of the subsidiaries, and therefore he has obtained more and better contacts there than elsewhere in the world.

4.1.2 LOCAL OR GLOBAL

“Permobil has for a long time been a group of islands”, explains one of the managers. However, the company has during the last years become a fast expanding corporation, which is why some decisions now are made more centrally. We investigated the thoughts regarding this issue among managers at the head-office.

To be able to bring in viewpoints from all countries, a well functioning communication system becomes vital says one of the managers. The company has therefore created P1, a joint computer system with the purpose to enhance the overall effectiveness. In agreement, another manager believes the communication has to work well in order to prevent the head-office from making wrong decisions. Three of the Swedish managers claim that Permobil has to concentrate on the global market to be able to establish on the local markets. One of which also bring up that the company has to be run by the parent company and that it is essential to create a stronger “head-office feeling”. If Permobil does not do this, they will end up with several dissimilar cultures and weak brand equity. The same manager believes that all major decisions should be made by the parent company, as well as the strategic decisions, in order to set the subsidiaries in motion. Similarly, another manager points out that the company should control the management very hard from the parent company. To be able to sustain the company culture and values and keep it Swedish, Swedish people have to be available at the subsidiaries. Furthermore, foreign managers should have long term experience from working in Sweden to really understand the fine print and be able to read between lines, as he says.
Whether focus is laid primarily on the local or global market varies from person to person, says one of the managers. As for him, the center of attention is on the global market, but it still depends on the subject of the day. Yet, he believes that the subsidiaries should be run locally to the greatest extent possible. He tells us about two perspectives, the operational and the strategic. The latter should be in cooperation between the local company and the parent company, concerning development of activities. The operational perspective, that is the daily business, should however be handled locally.

When it comes to the products, the development costs continue to rise, while the unit prices are the same. Therefore, one manager explains, Permobil need to work together globally in order to create world models with influences from Scandinavia, Europe and the United States to be able to generate volume. To perform this the best way possible, they need to have clear strategies and, once again, central control.

4.1.3 CHANGE
A couple of the managers have lived abroad, and even those who have worked in Sweden have experienced major changes, at least within the organization. How willing are they today to go through big changes in their personal lives, and how do they look upon the constant organizational changes?

As for change within the organization, one manager explains it as an ongoing process that should not be stopped, as it would hinder the development. A manager that agrees with him even calls the employees at the head-office “change-yankees” because of the company’s constant alterations. This has, as he puts it, created a decent open mindset. Another manager claims that the process of change has been slow, however, that huge structural changes are currently being implemented in Europe. A number of people will be dismissed, which he sees as tough. Yet it is necessary in order to secure the company’s future conditions. Modifications are also in progress at the head-office in Sweden, although they are not public at the moment. To summarize, the coming changes imply that the organization will flatten out, which mean that some managers have to step down. Another manager also talks about this process of change, which he sees as a very positive alteration from the former atmosphere at the company, which was much slower.

When it comes to big personal changes, such as moving abroad, three of the managers can imagine that change. The problem though, as two of them put it, is their families and the age of their children. Although, one of them states that he truly believes that he could live a satisfying life in whichever new culture. Unlike the others, two managers could not picture themselves moving abroad. They both feel much more deep-seated in Sweden today than some years ago, when the probability of moving would have been bigger. Although, one of them thinks change is essential, but he would rather describe change as improvement. He has had the opportunity to work at different companies and experienced both ups and downs including forcing changes, which is very different from Permobil where changes have been mainly positive.

4.1.4 SWEDEN VS. THE UNITED STATES
Differences between the organization in Sweden and the United States should not be ignored. Among other diversities, we have looked upon differences in the company culture. As the company was founded in Sweden, we wish to investigate whether the company culture really is that much stronger in Sweden than in the United States.
Empirical Results

Three of the Swedish managers have very strong bonds to the company. One describes it as a passion and a lifestyle; that it does not feel as a traditional job. To be able to feel that way, he says, it has to be something that you really support and that you truly believe in. Another manager is brought up with the company and therefore sees it as a natural part of his life. In contrast to the others, one manager does not feel like he has any other relation to the company than being an employee.

The company culture is very strong at Permobil. One of the managers believes that the company culture is strongest at the head-office, almost as if it is in the walls. He is of the opinion that the co-workers at Permobil Inc. have adapted well to the company culture. Though, in the beginning, when business had just started in America, it was very difficult to maintain the company culture. They started to sell their products under the supervision of an American vice president, which did not work out at all. However, as soon as the Swedes came over, told stories about the company culture and showed them how to use the products, Permobil Inc. got on the right track. To inform about the company culture is important in Sweden as well. The manager talks about them being about ten people that are so called “high-risk carriers” of the Permobil culture, and their job is to spread it to people throughout the company. If they would not cultivate the culture among the employees, they would end up with several sub-cultures both within Permobil AB and at the subsidiaries around the world. Another manager agrees and says it is vital for the corporation to cultivate their culture as well as cultural differences among all managers and employees in order to preserve Permobil as the company is today.

As mentioned, the company culture seems to be adopted by Permobil in the United States as well. When comparing Permobil Inc. with other American companies, one manager means that there are big differences when it comes to the company culture and how the employees view their work. Since Swedes were involved with building the company he believes that they were positively influenced right from the start. He claims that the loyalty at Permobil Inc. is high in contrast to other American companies. Very few have left Permobil Inc. over the years, which is not common for companies in the United States. The reasons for that might have to do with the strong company culture as well as the positive and helpful products they are working with. One manager states that the American employees are a lot more aware of the company culture that one might think, and that there might be parts of it that they do not like because it is not American enough.

Two of the managers consider employees from the two countries as very similar. One of them explains that they are at the same level, and can discuss problems and express opinions without it having to affect the cooperation. The other manager says that they are similar in the sense that they are hardworking and dedicated to their work, but at the same time leisure time is important.

To handle the differences that come about when working internationally, you have to have an open view to the business and towards different cultures, explains one of the managers. It is not appropriate to believe that the Swedish way is the right at all times. Permobil has been in this situation several times, for example regarding the fabric placed on the chairs that they were selling in the United States. Even though they had developed a high quality material, the Americans just did not like it, they wanted something completely different. Moreover, it has always been important for Permobil to follow their own path, and do things “the Permobil way”. Therefore, problems could occur if the Americans were in charge of the product development, it would not look as good, or be as good in quality as it is now. The very best
quality has been their key to success, asserts one of the managers. “We don’t do Volkswagen, we do Volvo and Mercedes”, is how he puts it. So product development will stay in Sweden. However, when it comes to marketing, they are not able to handle the global marketing in Sweden. The Americans are considered the best at marketing, and therefore they get to work with it.

When discussing differences between the two countries, three of the Swedish managers bring up rapidity. The American organization is, for different reasons, considered faster paced. For instance, two of the managers mention that decision-making takes longer in Sweden than in the United States. One of them believes the process is almost twice or three times as long in Sweden, and the rest of Europe, that it is in The United States. Another manager that brings up decision-making says that the weaker decision-making in Sweden, and how they are supposed to handle it, has been discussed with the management in the United States. As for which way of doing business he prefers, he says it depends on which country you are in. The Swedish way of course works better in Sweden, although they could push a bit more towards faster decision-making which means that everyone cannot take part at all times. At the same time the American management has to learn to let go a little bit more when it comes to trusting their employees when making decisions.

In regard of rapidity, two of the Swedish managers enlighten that the American organization operates not only with a higher speed, but also with a shorter time-perspective. One manager summarizes the American versus the Swedish way of working as “Speed comes before finesse in The United States and finesse comes before speed in Sweden”. Americans are very optimistic and fast working and Swedes therefore have a lot to learn from them, he says. However, as mentioned previously, Americans can learn more about the superior quality that exists in Sweden. Another manager is in agreement with Professor Philip Kotler, who has expressed that the United States can be illustrated by the following words: “more for less, but faster”. They want more, they want it cheaper and they want it fast, and they are of the opinion that everything is very controlled by time. He continues to explain that the Americans work in a much more short sighted way than do the Swedes. While their goals last no longer than a month, the Swedes set goals based on quarterly performance. It is all about delivering in The United States, he persists. In Sweden, on the other hand, they try to keep an even intensity at all times.

One manager points out the benefits of the individualistic society in The United States, and compares it to the more democratic conditions existing in Sweden. In Sweden, he says, people find group belongingness very important while an Americans feel more secure of themselves as individuals. He definitely prefers the American model, which he finds more stimulating and better.

Two managers mention that the different legal systems affect the two countries. Three of the managers mean that this is especially evident when it comes to the rights of the employees. It is, for instance, much easier to be fired in the United States than it is in Sweden because of the “fire on will” that prevails at Permobil Inc. Furthermore, one of the managers mentions that with lack of employee rights comes lack of loyalty. Therefore, lack of loyalty is more common in the United States, the manager declares.

The most obvious difference between Sweden and the United States, according to one of the managers, is when it comes to openness and sharing of information. The employees in many American companies are not involved as much as the ones in Sweden, is his reflections. He
claims that people, or in this case managers, are more open towards sharing information in Sweden. He is though trying to get them to open up more at Permobil Inc., because he believes it would create a stronger feeling of participation that will lead to them getting more out of the employees. It is vital that everyone is proud of Permobil and that they are aware not only of the company history, but also of details such as current sales statistics.

Additional differences between the two countries are brought up. One manager states that the differences between countries are countless. He believes that the Swedish people are more secure because of their higher basic training as well as their advanced general knowledge as people. This make the Swedish employees remain more active and committed to their work than the American workforce, he claims.

4.1.5 MANAGEMENT

The Swedish managers believe that their time perspective differ from the time perspective among managers at Permobil Inc. in the United States. Our wish is to get an explanation to these opinions. We also wish to get a description of what management style each manager believes in.

As for the management style, three of the Swedish managers clearly express that they do not have a very controlling leadership style. In the other two interviews, control was not discussed as such. One manager explains himself as human oriented and believes in “freedom under responsibility”. In similarity, another manager wants his employees to work independently but to follow clear goals. A third manager says he is unconventional and has not got much of a need to control his employees because he has good overviews over situations. It is important that the employees have the courage to try new things without anxiety of failure and that the management allows them to be inventive without reprimands, explains one of the managers.

All Swedish managers agree on the fact that managers in the United States work with a much higher pace. One of them says that the management in Sweden tends to consider several options as well as checking with different divisions within the company before making final decisions. Americans on the other hand are trained in another way, they want to keep their work as simple and fast as possible and leave out a long period of decision-making. This is something one of the Swedish managers would like to adapt, and he also gives communication as an example of how the learning process between managers could improve. Another thing that one of the managers has learned from managers in other countries is that making a quick decision might, in some cases, be better than carefully thought through decisions. Although making a quick decision might result in a solution that is not the very best, at least a decision has been made and you can move on. Another thing he learned is that a shorter time perspective sometimes can be just as good as a long time perspective. In a long time perspective, details are at times given too much attention.

When it comes to knowledge about the different divisions within the company, two managers believe they have the basic understanding needed. However, one sees a challenge in understanding the organization, especially at this point when it is about to be organized for the future with, for instance, deployed routines.

Business trips are brought up in all interviews. It becomes clear that the Swedish managers travel on a regular basis to the different subsidiaries worldwide. All managers travel at least every other month, one as much as five to six times each month, mostly to the United States.
but also to countries within Europe. In addition, many employees from around the world come to the parent company a lot so they get to meet each other rather frequently.

When asking the managers to briefly describe themselves, a broad variety of characteristics are brought up. Although some similarities among the managers have been presented, they seem to contribute with different personalities to the organization. One manager considers himself as strategic, analytic and with a long time perspective. Another manager says he has a really kind approach and he is visionary and believes it is easy to see possibilities. One of his negative sides is that he is unstructured and he would like to improve his knowledge within economics, business administration as well as languages. Another manager says that he is very easy-going and has high believes in himself, which he sometimes sees as a disadvantage since it can make him less efficient at times. He believes that he has developed a decreased openness to the values and opinions of the employees during the years. The reason for this, he claims, is not only because he is a bad listener but also since he has a clear view about things, which can make it hard for others to get through. The last manager describes himself as very result oriented and wants to receive fast results, although with a collegial approach. He believes it derives from his upbringing, where sports were important and moreover results. He is also very hands-on and likes to be part of most things, although it is getting increasingly hard since the society develops so fast. He bases his management style on knowledge about the company and deeply though trough strategies. “The Permobil way” is a part of those strategies, which means that they always have followed their own path with specific products and high quality. Another important part of the organization is its innovative nature.

A global manager within Permobil should, according to one of the managers, be someone that is well aware of the Permobil culture and who can keep the important Permobil atmosphere. Moreover, it should be someone who looks beyond boundaries and always does what it best for the company business wise. He believes it is tough for a Swedish company as Permobil to survive on the big global market, since the Swedish parts in a corporation often are very small. As he put it: “If you think global, well… we will disappear”. Three other managers all explain a global manager as someone who has an understanding for other cultures and the way people are. Many people, especially Swedes, believe that they know best and that the Swedish model can be implemented anywhere. These people have to realize that it is about adapting the business to the prevailing conditions, since the market is not going to adapt at your terms.

4.1.6 GLOBAL MINDSET

Showing global consideration is vital in order to handle the ongoing price war, says one of the managers. Clearly, Permobil managers are convinced that globalization means a lot to the company, which is why their thoughts regarding the matter are enlightened.

Four of the Swedish managers feel that they have contributed to global work and implementation of a global mindset within the organization. However, one manager feels that his position might have hindered for him from making a significant contribution to the global thinking within the company. When the management meets for discussions he though believes that he contributes with positive visions. Like other managers, he is of the opinion that communication and information are the best ways of cultivating the global mindset throughout the company. One of the managers explains that it is necessary to understand the importance of being open to the global world. You have to see the advantages, he says, and not fight them. Another manager has taken global responsibilities by, for instance, working towards solutions that can be applied worldwide and not only in one specific country.
When describing contribution to the globalization process more specifically, one manager says that his work concerning markets makes a contribution. For him, the most important way to educate the employees in global mindset is to develop routines, so that no one is depending too much on the other. Another important way to increase the global way of thinking among the workforce is to improve the communication, says this manager. To do this, he would like to see more traveling routines for the employees. He claims that although there might be large costs for travels, it should not hinder that process. If it did, it would be like “shooting oneself in the foot” as he puts it. Two of the managers mention that although computers, televisions and video telephones are much more used these days, one cannot exclude the most important form of communicating, which is through meeting your international colleagues in person. Meetings is not only important in regard of creating a stronger business culture, it is also a possibility for the employees to get to know each other on a more personal level. Personal meetings are valuable, because you get to see that we are alike but at the same time unlike. It is about accepting each other’s differences and simplifying the communication process by diminishing misunderstandings, adds one of the managers.

One of the managers has recently been abroad to a, for him, new culture with as many differences as possibilities, as he puts it. At the head-office, he now tries to preach about the country and its opportunities to the workers in order to decrease possible prejudices. It is all about increasing the awareness and to make everyone understand that Permobil is an international company. For instance, he does not like that some of their boxes are printed with “Made in Sweden” since Permobil should not sell on being Swedish, in opposite to, for example, IKEA. He would not mind if every country thinks that the products are made locally. Furthermore he states: “One again, we don’t sell Swedish meatballs here, but to include the thinking, and then add a local tweek to it, and sell it, that is idealistic”.

One manager points out the importance of working together towards common goals, which has not been always easy for them. For instance, some of the employees seem to have opinions against moving certain areas of the company abroad, which either is based on strong region political believes or simply because they lack information about the major possibilities in foreign countries. These attitudes also seem to have reached people at higher levels in the company, which is especially inappropriate since strategies involving all subsidiaries need to be strictly followed and implemented by the management. Permobil in Sweden, as he continues, is a service organization that needs to support the worldwide markets in order for them to sell as much possible.

Furthermore, a policy that one of the managers truly believes in is that all employees should, at least once, have visited the country towards which they are working. Another action towards increasing the global thinking is the availability of language courses for the workforce. The reason for starting this is since Permobil today has direct trade with many of the European countries and because they have understood the importance of being able to speak a few words or ask simple phrases to a person in the other country. Even though he believes they have made good progress at this area, he still thinks that they can do better. The focus on increasing the understanding between countries could for instance improve through teamwork or presentations of different functions in the different countries.
4.2 The United States

We spent one week at the Permobil office in Nashville in order to conduct five interviews with managers. As opposed to the interviews in Sweden these interviews were held in the managers’ own offices.

4.2.1 Cultural Meetings and Network

Since cultural meetings play a central role when developing a global mindset we decided to find out about the cultural meetings that the American managers have experienced. Topics that were brought up were previous experience abroad, knowledge of languages and international network.

When it comes to experience abroad, four of the managers have never worked outside the United States. However, international experience amongst them is noticeable, as all managers travel frequently. When conducting business, you have to be well aware of the cultural differences that affect discussions and negotiations, that is the advice given to us by one of the managers. One has worked with the Canadian and European market in a previous job, but never has he worked as internationally as he now does with Permobil. Another manager has had the opportunity to travel to various different countries in previous jobs. For instance, he has conducted business in China, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Canada and also just about every state in the United States. He states that he is very curious about new cultures, and how people from other cultures describe their business. The other two managers that have never worked overseas have also traveled internationally in their jobs, although one of them stated that it is really just during the last five years that business trips have become frequent. Only one manager, a Swede, has been working outside the United States. His former job included frequent business trips to countries in Asia, Europe and The United States.

The American managers do not present an extensive knowledge of other languages than English, a weakness that they are well aware of. The manager that comes from Sweden is the one that possess most knowledge of languages, as he, apart from English, is fluent in Swedish. He also studied two other languages at school but has not used them since he started working. Another manager speaks one more language apart from English, and he has had great use of that at a previous job. Three of the managers only speak English, although one of them is actively trying to improve his knowledge of languages, as he is studying Swedish. However, he does not yet feel comfortable using the language in business situations.

In three of the interviews we discussed the interest of watching foreign movies and read foreign books. All three hardly ever watch a foreign movie and neither do they read foreign books. Although, the person that is studying Swedish enjoys watching TV and reading newspapers when he is in Sweden to try to learn the language.

Since network is a topic widely discussed in our fast paced and global environment we decided to let the managers tell us about their thoughts regarding the matter. Without doubt, all of them regard an extensive network extremely valuable. However, all five American managers believe that although the network and communication within the company has improved, it certainly has its weaknesses.

One of the managers brings up the importance of keeping the network alive. To do this he has contributed to forming an International Quality Council, consisting of co-workers from other countries. The idea is to twice a year pull together people from all the major subsidiaries to
focus on quality, but it is at the same time a wonderful opportunity to network. He thinks that the CEO of the company has to continually push the subsidiaries to think more along the lines of how they are operating the global business, and maybe offer some ideas on how they can network more.

Another manager declares that he has a very extensive network in the United States. His network overseas is, apart from the upper management of the company, not as good. His relationship to upper management in other countries is both rewarding and fulfilling, and he explains the multicultural experience by saying “…the world just expands beyond what you ever thought it would be.” According to him they have just got to the point were they know their foreign co-workers, and it is during the last two years that they have really started supporting each other. He also mentions that they now have regular interaction with the CEO and Director of Finance at the head-office, but that it has been a struggle to get to that point. The most central function with well functioning communication within the company is to ensure that everyone has a clear picture of what the priorities are. Lately they have implemented more formalized meetings and some consistent measurements of performance, which he believes will increase the network strength.

One manager communicates with co-workers from other countries on a daily basis. During busy periods several times every day. Knowing one another simplifies communication and therefore it is particularly important that people meet. Networking only through e-mail and telephone is just not enough, he declares. Network also becomes valuable when conducting business with customers. He declares that personal relationships to customers can take the business to a higher level.

Another American manager communicates with colleagues in other countries about two or three times a week. Before they would only make contact with someone from Sweden once every three months, and they were really operating separately. As they have become a more global company, they have started communicating more frequently. One of the other managers explains that they are trying as a company to get together more often, and therefore they travel quite a lot. Although he is of the opinion that the network will probably never get where they would like it to be, as it is so hard. After all, people at the different offices have their own responsibilities and have their focus on different markets. He is eager to learn more about the different markets, and he is convinced that the more you learn of the different markets, the more you can help each other.

As multicultural teams contribute to a more global minded organization we asked the managers if a person’s nationality matters for the company. It turned out that all managers are convinced that multicultural teams are valuable in a global company like Permobil, and that this should be strived for. Diverse nationalities help a company, because you get a different thinking, which is how one of the managers explains it. Another one means that the fact that Permobil lets people from different subsidiaries move to another subsidiary to work is very effective.

In general, nationality does not seem to matter when employing people; it is what they can bring to the job that counts. One of the managers simply declares that whatever works works, and if it is an added bonus it is an added bonus. They do not go out and seek for an employee with a specific nationality. He means that foreigners are one example, but as another example he mentions one of the individuals working for the company who actually is in a wheelchair, a Permobil. This person did not get the job because he was in a wheelchair; it was his
knowledge made him the most appropriate person for the position. The fact that he is in a Permobil may be seen as an added bonus for the company, and the same thing, he means, works with nationalities as well. Although nationality does not matter he believes that having Swedish people working for the company help out. He declares that it gives credibility to their vision and their statement. The influence from Sweden is strong, but when filling a position it does not matter if you are a Swede, an American or from another country. Another manager also brings up that having Swedish people working for the company is an asset, as they can communicate more effectively to the head-office in Sweden. Apart from that nationality is, as mentioned, not considered when employing a person, as long as the person has broad knowledge of the market and the culture. The business culture sometimes differs significantly between markets, and you have to be well aware of those differences to perform successfully. Additionally, one manager brings up that the work force should reflect the society, in regard of nationality, sex and age.

4.2.2 LOCAL OR GLOBAL
As Permobil is a global company we examined whether managers in the United States think that focus should be laid mainly on the local or the global market. Their opinions are in most regards very similar. Four of them are totally convinced that their focus has to be on the local level to maximize the vast opportunities that exist. The only one who does not completely agree is the manager who is working within a field that has become increasingly global lately, marketing. His time is going to be split, about half and half, between local and global work.

One of the managers points out that the Permobil Corporation is very good at launching and developing new markets, although it is a time-consuming activity. To reach a critical mass of sales on a new market takes a long time, and he would hate to miss an opportunity to grow the business in the United States just because focus would be elsewhere. However, if the strategy globally would be to grow at an incremental rate of a long period of time, then a more global focus would tend to accomplish that, he states. If the strategy on the other hand is to grow quickly in a shorter period of time he believes that they have to be more focused on the local level in order to maximize the local opportunities that exist. One example is within marketing, he states: “...you take a picture of one product and you make it to Holland and Norway and Sweden, but that looks like a Danish guy, and Americans don’t want to buy a Danish guy and Danish guys don’t want to buy an American looking guy...”. This statement explains the complexity and importance of understanding and showing sensitivity towards the different markets. The fact that different markets demand different products and marketing should therefore never be neglected.

Decision-making is brought up when discussing local versus global. All five managers agree that some major decisions have to be made globally. However, they are convinced that anything business specific should be decided on locally, since no one knows the market more than the people that are working in it. Things have to be done the way the American market dictates, you cannot force feed the market, is how one manager puts it. One example is within marketing, he states: “...you take a picture of one product and you make it to Holland and Norway and Sweden, but that looks like a Danish guy, and Americans don’t want to buy a Danish guy and Danish guys don’t want to buy an American looking guy...”. This statement explains the complexity and importance of understanding and showing sensitivity towards the different markets. The fact that different markets demand different products and marketing should therefore never be neglected.

One of the managers brings up that any subsidiary should earn the right to make higher and higher level decisions. As long as that performance is obtained, then virtually any decision
should be allowed to be made. At the same time he says that Permobil is not far away from having clearly defined boundaries on decision-making. Another manager expresses a similar view. He feels that he is allowed to make a lot of decisions, although he would prefer to make even more of his own decisions in order to be able to move faster in different areas. Waiting for decisions to be made in Sweden slows down the business significantly at times. We are told that the decision-making process is comparatively slow in Sweden, and one of the American managers mean that they do not always feel that they have time to write a proposal to the head-office that has to go through a board and everyone has to decide on what to do. It takes far too much time, according to him, and time is money. July is the worst month, because that is when many of the Swedish co-workers are on a four-week summer holiday. This phenomenon, a four-week holiday, does not exist in the United States. It can be especially troublesome to get hold of someone from the head-office during this period, which means that business in The United States suffers.

4.2.3 Change
Permobil has grown rapidly during the last years. We are told that solely in The United States, they have grown approximately 30-35 per cent every year for five years, which have led to constant changes. In other words, the American managers are used to change. Therefore we examined the managers’ thoughts about working for a company that is signified by continuous change.

All five American managers are positive towards change. The challenge of the fast growth is that it can be difficult to find the right people for positions on time. But apart from that, change is seen as something necessary and, in most cases, fun. One of the managers says that if you do not change, you do not get challenged to grow. He adds “…with change comes birth, if you’re open to it.” If you work for a company like Permobil, you better like changes, explains one of the managers. He says that you have to have an attitude that everything will be fine, alternatively you have to be enough self-confident so that even if everything will not turn out the way it is expected, it will still be fine. It is better to be positive towards change and try to be as involved as possible, rather than work counter to it. Because even if a change does not turn out successful, you inevitably learn things when implementing changes. Important though, is to keep the employees informed of the changes so that they are able to share their opinions and feel involved in the process.

Reasonableness is one principle in the organization, states one of the managers. If something makes sense then they will make a change. They have never been stuck to one single philosophy, other than driving for the customer. Two of them mention that part of the success is their openness to change; without changes they would not have been able to accommodate the additional magnitude of business.

The managers also commented on changes regarding their personal lives, such as willingness to move abroad. Four of the managers could consider moving abroad. One manager possibly could, but he says that he will probably change less in the future, since he is settled with job, family and friends. One of the managers that could consider moving to another country feels that it would be exciting but scary, since you are completely plunged into the unknown. On the other hand, he believes that moving abroad would be a tremendous opportunity to grow and a once in a lifetime experience.
4.2.4 The United States vs. Sweden

Although the Swedish influences are very strong, the American organization differs from the Swedish market. The most evident difference is pace, something all American managers enlighten. Different payment system, company culture and the Swedes long summer holidays contribute to further differences.

When it comes to company culture, one manager claims that it is strong in the United States, but maybe not as strong as in Sweden. The reason may be because Permobil was founded there, and that many employees working in Sweden have met Per Udden, the founder. Permobil was not just about making money, it was providing a need, and that culture still exists today, explains one manager. Unfortunately, he says that the awareness of the company culture has weakened. The explanation is that the American organization has grown so fast during the last years, so they have not been able to educate everyone. In a perfect world, they would have wanted to spend 30 minutes with very new employee and inform them about the company, but at the moment they do not have time for that.

Another factor that possibly has contributed to the organizational differences between Sweden and the United States is the way the product is paid for. Two of the managers mention that it influences the business. Permobil in Sweden does not have to worry about payment since the government pays if an individual needs an electric wheelchair. In Sweden, the mentality is to develop the very best product to enhance people’s lives. “There is no sugarcoatin’ that” is how one of the managers puts it. The Swedes are driven by producing the best product. In the United States, they have built up a funding system, which means that the amount of money is limited. Therefore they are very dependent of how much people are willing to pay for a product, and as a consequence quality may not always be as high as in Sweden. One manager explains that it took them years to convince Sweden to make a chair less sophisticated and less expensive.

Comparing corporate America to corporate Sweden become central in all interviews. One of the American managers explains that they have been very conscious not to develop a corporate monster that simply lives by the rules. On the other hand, he believes that Sweden seems to be a little too relaxed on the rules. Four of the managers use the words “laid back” when describing their Swedish co-workers. Relaxed and casual are other words used when talking about the Swedes. The American managers say that deadlines mean a lot more to the US market. “The focus on deadlines and getting things done seem to be more relaxed in Sweden than it is in the United States. You know, here it’s very driven; we put a lot of pressure on ourselves to meet a deadline. And sometimes we sacrifice quality to do that.” These are the words of one of the managers. He also says that he in some regards respects Sweden for taking their time to make sure it is done right. On the other hand, the same strategy would never work in the United States, since their market is all about speed, and if you are not fast you will lose opportunities. Another manager believes that the Americans are more willing to work over time than the Swedes are. Staying late at night, working a weekend or skipping a holiday is expected of you, and is done regularly to keep up with the demand. He adds that it probably comes from the pressure of the culture, that in the United States you are expected to be a bit more of a military type organization.

The fact that the organization in Sweden runs at a slower speed is a problem, and they are trying to deal with this. One manager says that the Americans might sound like slave drivers, but states that it is not about that, it is about reaching goals. You set up a goal, and then you just do it, whilst the co-workers in Sweden might fix it next month. He continues: There is no
next month. You do it month to month, day to day, hour to hour. You don’t know what’s going to happen next month. Possible explanations to the differences are, for instance, that people have different priorities in the two countries, and that the American market is faster paced. Two of the managers state that in the United States, work is probably the most important thing. In Sweden on the other hand, a high quality life is the main priority. One manager enlightens the importance of a healthy balance in life. If you are working in a fast paced market, as in the United States, you are always challenged and pushed. Constantly being pushed keep you more creative, but it can also be stressful. When discussing the different paces, the Swedes four-week vacation is once again brought up. In The United States, if you take one month off you will lose your job, so we are told. Two of the managers add that whilst on holiday, they check their e-mails and voice mail every day.

When experiencing problems there are difficulties having the head-office in Sweden, since Sweden is seven hours ahead of the United States. Two of the managers see the time difference as a problem. As mentioned previously, the long holidays in Sweden are also a problem at times. One of the managers says that stopping the business for the entire month of July is getting increasingly hard, as Permobil has become a global company. Being a subsidiary that is still working during that month, and still needs support, is the biggest cultural problem more than anything, according to him. The American dealers or clients that are waiting on a chair that has to be customized in Sweden do not understand that they get a month off. The problem has grown bigger as the American market has increased. The development in the United States has been considerable during the last years. They are 50 per cent of the market now, and are still the fastest growing. Sometimes problems arise, due to the head-office being located in Sweden. Therefore, as a hypothetical question, we asked if it would help if the head-office had been in the United States instead. It ended up being an interesting issue to discuss. One of the managers said that the American market would probably grow much faster if the head-office had been in the United States, because then they would be able to operate faster. Another manager said that if the United States market grows to 60, 70 or 80 per cent of the total profit, then he truly believes that the head-office should be in the United States. He claims that from a global point of view, the head-office would be as suited in the United States as in Sweden. But as long as you are willing to travel a lot, the location does not matter.

4.2.5 MANAGEMENT

We let the managers tell us what management style they possess, according to themselves. When talking about management within Permobil, we were told that most of them were inexperienced managers before. They have learnt by doing and grown with the company.

A topic that was brought up in all interviews was what Permobil meant to each of the managers. Two of the managers started by saying that it is very inspiring since they care very deeply of the physically disabled. The user of the product is always the main priority, and decisions are always made regarding to that. This philosophy has not changed since day one. All five managers seem to be of the same opinion, that Permobil is a unique company that they are very proud to work for. Two of the managers have been working for the company for more than a decade, and one of which expresses that Permobil is like his blood now, and that he still smiles proudly when he sees a Permobil. The other long-standing manager means that not only has the company meant a lot to him professionally in terms of challenges and cultural meetings, it has also meant a lot to him personally. He explains that it has been amazing to watch the impact that a small company has had on a big industry, and how Permobil now has set the standard for the whole industry. However, not only the long-standing managers have
created strong bonds to Permobil. The other three, who have been at the company between four and five years, also make clear that Permobil is a great company. One of them came to Permobil because he was looking for a job that had more meaning to it than just a job, and as Permobil makes a difference in people’s lives this job is well suited for him. Another manager states that working for Permobil is a great cultural experience in many ways, and that it has broadened his horizons significantly.

When describing their management styles, words like straightforward, open-minded and collaborative are being used. One manager would rather call himself a coach, and another one prefers to act more as a co-worker than a manager. A couple of managers mention that employees have to be pushed to some degree in order to do a good job. One says that his approach is to figure out what individuals need in order to perform. He tells us: “I think that’s my style; trying to figure out what tools they need to do their job, and then force them to do it once they commit to those tools.”

If a person behaves badly or does not work, then it is the manager’s job to fire that person, according to one of the managers. He means that if another person would do a better job, then he has a reason to fire a bad performing employee. Giving ambitious individuals possibility to grow is mentioned as a key strategy by three of the managers. The biggest reward, according to one of the managers, is to match opportunities with individuals and see them grow. “We’ve created many rock stars”, he says. Another manager explains that he enjoys challenging individuals to learn new things, so that they feel that they contribute and are valuable. “I expect people to take advantage of opportunities”, he states. It is a lot of individual responsibility, and he makes sure that everyone knows what the goals are, and thereafter he ensures that the employees have enough room to reach the goals. Another manager is of the same opinion, and makes clear that if you believe in a person and put that person in a position with more responsibility, then you have to trust that person and let that person make his or her own decisions. Although he has the main responsibility in the end, he does not want to be too controlling. Being too controlling reduces the employees’ motivation, and it also sends conflicting messages since you have given the person authority. The biggest challenge is, according to another manager, to figure out if a person needs directions or if they only need space.

Every Monday and Friday mornings there is a short meeting with all employees. It can be talk about football or whatever; the topic does not really matter. The aim is to make everyone understand that they are working together as a team to achieve goals, and to cheer everybody up. It is essential that employees focus when they are at work, and leave personal lives aside during working hours. It is also necessary to inform employees of pending changes. One manager especially informs of the importance of people being involved in changes, although you cannot always wait for everyone’s opinions. He likes to be metrics driven and says that it is important that employees know how business is going. If business is going unfavorable, they have to set up goals to make business favorable. You do not want employees to develop erroneous beliefs. People can easily drift away from you if you do not pull them back by regular meetings, claims one manager. Open communication throughout the whole hierarchy is valued. However, if someone complains, they have to come up with a solution.

All managers mention their foremost area of knowledge, as well as possible weaknesses. One manager points out that his financial skills are not as good as they should be, another one complains about his business management skills and one about his poor knowledge of the global operations. A couple of the managers say that they wish to have better knowledge of
languages. However, you cannot be good at everything, mean three of the managers. Instead you should make sure that you hire people that are good at things that you may not be able to handle. Your responsibility as a manager is to contribute with your leadership style and make clear what the strategy is. Being curious is a good characteristic, adds one manager. Another manager indicates that he tries to learn something from everyone he works with.

The influences from Sweden are noticeable, and the Swedish management style is considered different from the typical management style in the United States. One manager makes clear that you should be careful not to generalize. Despite this fact, a few differences are brought up. The American management style is regarded as more forcible, more vocal and more demanding. American managers tell you what to do, whilst generally the Swedish seem more laid back, a lot less stressed, and do not feel as much pressure to get results. Another manager believes that the Swedish managers are more open and direct about their thoughts, which is due to Americans being more worried about political implications. The slow decision-making process in Sweden is also brought up by two of the managers. Among other underlying factors, this slow decision-making process possibly depends on that there is consensus on decisions in Sweden, and that more individuals are involved. One of the American managers means that it is better to make the wrong decision than no decision, to keep everyone from standing still; they have got to keep moving.

The managers were asked how a global manager should be like. They agree on that being a global manager is much more difficult than dealing with just one culture. To understand is the key word, according to all managers. Some managers refer to understanding everybody’s positions, while others mean understanding diversity. One manager mentions that you have to be very diplomatic and attuned of the different countries agenda. Another three mentions that you have to be very open-minded, and one adds that you also have to believe in your own ability to recruit skilled employees. Even as a global manager you cannot know everything about all the different markets, you have to give individuals the authority for other markets. Additionally, being a good communicator and a good listener are necessary skills that a global manager has to possess, says one manager.

One manager thinks what they, as a global organization, are struggling with is to figure out how to maximize the talents that they have and how to integrate those talents in terms of creating sub systems that works globally. At times it can be difficult to decide on what should have one single global platform, and what should be managed separately in each country. Small differences may make one thing suitable for one market, but not as appropriate at another market, and therefore it has to be adjusted. A global manager has to deal with these issues. Everyone is not as suitable being a global manager, believes one manager. He also thinks it would be easier for an American manager to get frustrated with the Swedish work ethic than vice verse, due to the different pace. He also believes that a European manager have more understanding of the different cultures than do an American manager. Being a global manager is not an easy job. One of the managers admits that he does not have all the skill-sets himself to be a global manager. For example, he does not know enough about other markets according to himself, and the reason to this is that he has not been exposed to other markets than in the United States.

4.2.6 GLOBAL MINDSET

Global mindset was brought up in all interviews, with the aim to investigate whether the managers reflect over the importance of thinking globally.
One of the managers starts by comparing Sweden and the United States. He brings up that Sweden for very long has had companies that concentrate on export. Swedish entrepreneurs realized at an early stage that you have to export if the aim is to grow, that the Swedish market is not big enough for that. American companies are not as dependent of export, as the American market is so huge. In other words, Americans have not needed to be as global minded as the Swedes in order to stay successful. One manager believes that the fact that many Americans live to work, while the Europeans work to live, make it easier for Europeans to travel and obtain a global mindset. Understanding the differences is how another manager interprets the words “global mindset”. To achieve this understanding, he believes that you have to travel a lot. He states that people in Sweden think they understand, but in reality they do not understand the local markets. He says that it is very difficult knowing everything about other markets. According to him, the best way is to get everybody at the same page and understand what is going on on each market; you do not have to know everything as long as you understand.

One manager said that most of the time he does not think globally, and the reason to that is, according to him, that he has not got the time for it. His responsibilities in the United States require him to focus on what is happening there. However, when he gets a chance to talk to someone from the head-office, then the focus becomes more global. Quite obvious, he says, are the people at the head-office very concerned about how they are expanding globally. Although he feels that time is sparse, he would like to learn more about the global work, such as what countries they want to go in to and what challenges they are currently experiencing in other countries and also what services he can do in order to help Permobil grow. The same manager believes that he has contributed to global work within the company. He points out that the contacts and the friends that he has in Sweden has helped him run the operations more effectively, and that he now understands more about the Swedish mindsets. When asked if he is working towards making the employees understand the importance of globalization he explains that this is not done as frequently as it should be. The reason is, once again, that they are focused on keeping up with the pace and growth in The United States, and therefore it is difficult to make the employees appreciate the global challenges. However, the employees are aware of that the United States is a big part of their total sales, and that Europe is another place where opportunities exist, they just do not know the details of the different markets. Although employees are not well informed of the global challenges, he believes that it would be beneficial for Permobil to keep the employees informed so that they understand that it is a global company, and not think that the business depends solely on one country.

A couple of the managers mention that they have contributed to global work within the company. They know that since they will do more of the global work for the company in the future, they really have to think outside the box, which they also communicate to the co-workers. This is not a problem though, says one manager, as everyone is very open minded and willing to work. He is not the only manager mentioning communication as a key element to enhancing a global mindset among employees. Another two mention the exact same thing, that communication is elementary. One of them mentions that by keeping the employees as informed as possible, they will easier understand that there may be different priorities for the global organization than in the local. The bigger picture mentality is vital. You have to be well aware of the global priorities, but sometimes they do not match with local urgent needs, which may cause problems.
5. ANALYSIS

The following analysis is based on the empirical results. Matching theories are thereafter connected and analyzed together with the empiricism. Our decision to have the empirical results as a starting point is because we wish to enlighten what was brought up in the interviews, rather than focusing on the theories that have been created in previous studies. Moreover will this chapter include a comparison between managers in Sweden and the United States, and possible explanations to the differences will thereafter be analyzed.

As the interviews were performed at different locations, we would like to start with mentioning the affect that this may have on the given answers. The Swedish managers were interviewed in a neutral place, not in their offices, as the American managers. Being interviewed in one’s office may make the manager feel more comfortable. The American managers gave us more developed answers, which may be a result of them feeling more confident with the location and the situation. However, we also believe that our interview technique improved, which may be another reason to why the interviews in the United States resulted in more personal and developed answers.

5.1 DIVERSE CULTURES AND WORKFORCE

The Swedish managers have more international work experience, although the American managers have traveled more or less frequently at work. However, the only manager at Permobil in the United States who has worked abroad is a Swede. Maybe this is not that surprisingly. The United States is a big country with a lot of possibilities, and there are many different cultures within the nation. Sweden has, in some regards, less to offer. Therefore Swedes are likely to be more open towards traveling and working in other countries. This may be the reason to why one of the managers believes that Swedes, generally speaking, adapt easier to new cultures than Americans. As Hofstede enlightens, one should be careful generalizing. However, individuals’ cultural background can affect one’s mindset, which includes openness, curiosity and understanding of other cultures. We think that American managers might be curious about other nations’ cultures as well, but they do not seem to actively look for cultural meetings.

Knowledge of languages is very broad at Permobil in Sweden in comparison to America, and only one of the Americans is actively trying to improve his language skills. This is likely to be connected to the fact that Swedes travel more frequently than the American co-workers. Not to forget, Permobil AB has a different role than its subsidiaries, which for instance implies more pressure on their language skills. However, none of the American managers did show indications of being interested in reading foreign books or watch foreign movies, which may be a sign of them not being as curious about diverse cultures. Rhinesmith recommends reading literature or newspapers from other cultures, since it increases one’s understanding of other cultures. This has to do with his idea of driving for the bigger, broader picture, as well as valuing differences. We do believe that Rhinesmith is correct in his statements, as, for example, literature often tells about a country’s current situation, history as well as its people. The ways things are described also differ between countries, which can be interesting and useful to be aware of. Also in this case, it is not really fair to compare the Swedish managers to the Americans, as there is by far less literature and movies created in Sweden than in the

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159 Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J. (2005), p. 32.
162 Ibid., p.38-39, 41.
United States, which naturally make Swedes look for what other countries have to offer. Although, if the American managers would be truly interested in what, for instance, European culture has to offer in this regard, then they would not have to make much of an effort to get hold of it. So in this sense, the Americans cannot be considered global minded.

Communication is a topic that received far more attention in the American interviews than the Swedish ones. One of the reasons to this may be because the Swedish management team does not experience any specific problems with communication, although it can always be improved. In contrast, all American managers believe that the network and communication within the corporation has some weaknesses. Although there are things that can be improved, we were told that the international network within the company has enhanced significantly during the last few years. This is an indication that the Permobil Corporation has become more global during the last few years. We believe that the company used to be rather polycentric, which means a focus on what is best for the separate local markets\textsuperscript{163}. Hence, they now understand the importance of a strong internal network and frequent communication, which implies that they have become more of a geocentric corporation. The latter approach signifies better cooperation within the corporation, as well as greater understanding of the globalization process\textsuperscript{164}.

Although Permobil has become increasingly adapted to the globalization, subsidiaries are still very focused on their own market, which is stated as one reason to why international relations are not always that strong. However, one of the reasons to why Permobil Inc. has stayed very local is because the development is too fast to have time to integrate and look at what is going on in the other markets worldwide. This is likely to have contributed to the Permobil Corporation having had polycentric\textsuperscript{165} influences, were local identities have been preserved. However, we are of the opinion that despite the fact that the American market is so fast paced, everyone would benefit if they had more frequent communication with the other markets. As mentioned, Permobil is now making an effort to increase the cooperation between the different countries. Both the head-office as well as the different subsidiaries, including the United States, can learn from each others’ experiences. Although the markets differ, one can look upon other organizations strengths and weaknesses and adapt the excellent parts. As in for polycentric companies, sale, pricing and promotion have been, and still is, the subsidiary’s responsibility\textsuperscript{166}. All managers agree that the locals know their market best, but when it comes to product development and marketing they are cooperating on a global level. Despite the fact that the different responsibilities seem to be pretty clear and thought through, the Permobil Corporation probably do have to struggle a bit to become a company where the head-office and all the subsidiaries work as one unit. When Sweden, the United States and other subsidiaries are on the same page, that is when the company can be regarded as a truly geocentric company. Our belief is that Permobil Inc. can make more effort getting to know other markets, just as managers from the head-office in Sweden can get out even more often in order to really understand the differences. The situation right now is quite good, but one can always learn more about how other markets function.

\textsuperscript{163} Perlmutter, H. V. (1969), p. 12-13, 16.
\textsuperscript{165} Perlmutter, H. V. (1969), p. 12-13, 16.
The different approaches that are brought up are clearly divided\textsuperscript{167}. Our opinion however is that the approaches are not as pure as presented. An organization is more likely to be characterized by different approaches depending on what part of the organization one focuses on, rather than being purely, for example, geocentric. We would for instance not call Permobil AB an ethnocentric company. However, we received some remarkable comments that are typical for ethnocentric individuals and the organizations that they create. First of all, one of the managers mentioned that the relationship to others often is stronger the closer the culture is to your own. Another manager stated that he finds it easier to adapt to Christian values rather than some of the Muslim values. A third interesting comment that came from a Swedish manager was that Americans are not as inviting as Swedes. This probably has to do with it being difficult to handle people with a different approach and a different cultural background. These comments are not extremely ethnocentric, but contain hints of it. Individuals naturally understand one’s own culture the most, and other countries can be seen as interesting and appealing, but in some cases strange. Ethnocentrism means that you view the world from your own perspective\textsuperscript{168}. In one way, we are of the opinion that everyone views the world from one’s own perspective, more or less, depending on how much one has experienced other cultures. Maybe the above opinions do not stand for the whole company. Though the opinions are not surprisingly, as you sometimes have more in common with people from your own culture than from diverse cultures.

There seem to be an interest within the company for different cultures and foreigners. As one said, this is likely to be an influence from Per Uddén, the founder, who was very interested in the unknown. One of the American managers states that he feels so grateful being part of Permobil, as he has learnt a lot from the cultural meetings. This curiosity and strive to learn new things all the time are characteristics that contribute to a global mindset\textsuperscript{169}. Per Uddén, was just like that, very curious about everything that was unexplored. If he would not have possessed these characteristics Permobil would probably never have been invented. We consider it important for the future development of the organization that managers and other employees are curious and keep exploring the unknown.

What the Swedes and the Americans have in common is that they believe they are good at approaching new cultures. However, this is of course a subjective opinion so we cannot say whether it is completely correct. Moreover it is more trustworthy when managers have given actual examples of when they have approached a culture, which is why we should have asked everyone to exemplify such a situation. One of the American managers brought up that you have to be aware of the cultural differences, for instance when negotiating. This knowledge about differences between cultures, as well as sensitivity, is a characteristic that Rhinesmith, Kedia and Mukherji mean is correlated to global mindset\textsuperscript{170}.

Generally, it is the personal traits and previous experience that are important when employing new staff, not nationality. Management in Sweden and the United States agree on this. As a consequence, the Permobil Corporation has a geocentric approach regarding employment of staff, since geocentric companies do not take nationality into account when employing\textsuperscript{171}.


\textsuperscript{168} Perlmutter, H. V. (1969), p. 11-12, 16.


However, one of the American managers stated that the workforce should reflect the society. This is a good reflection, yet, it does not show signs of a geocentric mindset. If the company where to have a totally geocentric approach, we believe that they would not only consider one society, but the whole world when it comes to a mirror image of their workforce. Applicants from other countries and cultures should be prioritized if the aim is to form a multicultural company. On the other hand, if a company is geocentric enough, and prioritizes skills and experience, then the workforce is likely to become multicultural.

Although managers may prioritize other skills in the team rather than a multicultural workforce, all off them showed an understanding of the value of multicultural teams. However, some managers mean that nationality may sometimes have an influence when employing new staff. The explanation to this is that bringing in people from other cultures is valuable, as it contributes to a multicultural workforce that looks upon business from different angels. That is also one of the reasons to why an International Quality Council has been created. Managers from both Sweden and the United States bring up that internal movement of staff is an asset, as it contributes to a more diverse workforce. According to Fujimoto and Hõrtel, a diverse workforce will contribute to a more innovative and creative organization, something that is connected to a company’s success.

Theoretically, it seems that Permobil is a company with a good attitude towards diversity, and that may be true. However, when walking around in the Permobil buildings, it becomes remarkably evident that there are a vast majority of men working for the company and few women, especially in higher positions. We have not presented any theories regarding equal sex ratio at companies, since our main subject is global mindset. Our aim is though not to investigate the balance between men and women at the workplace. Thus, as we see this as a weakness we decide to bring it up briefly. In this regard, Permobil can definitely improve, as not only different nationalities and cultures will contribute to a diverse workforce. To be able to look upon the business from different angles, there should be more women represented. The aim should, according to us, be that the company reflects the market, especially the users. Not only men use a Permobil, women do as well. We believe that this is an important point that the company should think of. Users do not only look for a high quality product, what the company stands for have some influence as well. Out of the ten managers that we interviewed, there was no woman represented. As the managers stated, they believe that skills and experience are the most important when employing, but we question whether no women possess the skills and experience they are looking for. A balance between men and women will be essential when the corporation continues to grow, as they will be increasingly exposed to media. Not only does it look better to be able to present a company where equality is a matter of course. If taken to an extreme, the corporation may not be favored for this reason.

5.2 GOING GLOBAL OR STAYING LOCAL?

The management in Sweden focuses on the global market, while the management in the United States mainly concentrates on the local market. When analyzing Permobil AB and Permobil Inc., it is important to remember that Permobil AB in Sweden play a different role. Permobil AB is the head-office, which means that they have different responsibilities than the subsidiaries, including Permobil Inc. in the United States. In addition, at the end of the day it is the head-office that decides how the subsidiaries should be run. The managers in the Permobil Corporation believe that major decisions should be made at the head-office, while

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daily business should be up to the different subsidiaries. This works quite well, most of the time, but sometimes the American managers wish they could make more decisions, mostly because the decision-making process can be slow in Sweden. The fact that decision-making is considered slower in Sweden will be analyzed later.

The American managers are very focused on what is going on solely on their market, and that the real opportunities are in the United States. Managers that are very focused on their own markets are in some cases called a controlling manager\(^{173}\), but as the United States is a subsidiary with local responsibilities, we cannot state that their management style is controlling. Being responsible for the American market is a delegated task; their job is not to look after the markets worldwide. Although their market is very fast paced, and that the development has escalated during the last years, it would definitely be a win-win situation if they spent more time on understanding what is going on in the other markets. In this context, we have decided to use Hofstede’s theory regarding individualism and collectivism. In this sense, Permobil Inc. can be regarded individualistic in its approach, as they are very focused on their own business. Of course, they have to be focused on their own market, but it is still important that the whole corporation strive for the same goal and not operate separately. In other words, they should think more collectivistically and what is best for the whole corporation. This is about creating a balance between local and global focus, which also is brought up by Begley and Boyd\(^{174}\) and Svensson\(^{175}\). The latter calls this balance a “glocal” mindset.

For an ethnocentric and polycentric organization, international cooperation is not taken into consideration\(^{176}\). Geocentric and cybercentric organizations on the other hand, see global cooperation as an asset\(^{177}\). As the Permobil Corporation plans to become world leader within its field, we believe that the corporation should strive for a geocentric approach. However, since the Permobil Corporation already has shown signs of being geocentric, they can at this point also consider a cybercentric approach.

Close cooperation between the countries could improve the products as well as the services, as the whole world would be regarded as a provider\(^{178}\). We are of the opinion that for a company to be successful in the long term, all the subsidiaries have to cooperate. Cooperation makes the organization more effective and help minimizing the costs. This is also brought up in the theories regarding mindsets, which mainly has been created by Perlmutter\(^{179}\). In Permobil, cooperation between countries is evident in areas such as product development and marketing. So when it comes to global cooperation Permobil have realized that it is important that everyone is striving towards the same goal, and that duplicate costs should be avoided if possible. We believe that the Permobil Corporation therefore also seems to have developed a “glocal” approach. They cooperate in the sense that they let the subsidiaries do what they do best, at the same time as global goals are followed. However, since the corporation seems to lack some of the qualities needed to be entirely global minded, one can still not state that Permobil has a complete “glocal” way of thinking at this point.

\(^{173}\) Kedia, B. L., Mukherji. A. (1999), p. 244.  
\(^{179}\) Ibid., p.12-16.
A lot of changes have been implemented during the last few years to make the organization more effective, which make us believe that the Permobil Corporation, in this regard, has moved from being Polycentric, to becoming increasingly global minded. The implementation of P1, a joint computer system, is an additional factor that indicates that Permobil is developing a more global approach. The head-office and all subsidiaries are all connected to this computer system, which imply that the company in some regards has a cybercentric approach\textsuperscript{180}. Managers operating in a cybercentric corporation not only have to be very IT-knowledgeable, but they also have to be open towards an expansion that does not have physical size limitations\textsuperscript{181}. As for the Permobil Corporation and the managers operating in it, we believe they would have to develop a way of thinking that goes further beyond the “outside the box” way of thinking, if they are to have a cybercentric approach in the corporation.

5.3 Approaching Change

All managers are positive towards change. It would perhaps be very difficult being a manager and not like change, as change is unavoidable in the business world. Permobil has been lucky and has not had to experience many negative changes, as development has been positive. The managers would probably not have been as positive towards change if they were experiencing the opposite type of change. Being flexible and willing to change is one of the six characteristics that are brought up in this thesis that will help developing a global mindset\textsuperscript{182}. From what the Swedish and the American managers describe, we believe that they meet this requirement. The Americans have actually gone through great expansion during the last years, which have made them used to changes. The constant changes are likely to have improved the managers’ ability to manage change, which is another important quality according to Rhinesmith\textsuperscript{183}. Moreover, we believe that Americans in general are very used to changes in their professional lives. Since there is no law similar to the Swedish law about employee rights, Americans are in one way forced to be more flexible, as their situation can change rather drastically from one day to another. Since an American manager can get fired if he does not follow the path that the head-office has decided on, an American manager is better off being flexible. We do not believe that Swedish managers have the same pressure on them, although others will probably oppose them if they do not cooperate.

Talking about changes can involve many different things, such as growth and reorganization. The American managers are as open to change as the Swedish managers, but they state that change is faster in the United States. Furthermore, the American mentality is that whether a change turns out good or bad, it always brings something, and you will inevitably learn new things. This can be seen as a connection to the faster decision-making process that exists in the United States. They do not seem to be worried about changes turning out bad, as long as decisions are made so that business can keep running at full speed. Most managers agree on that the organization has gone through rapid changes. However, one manager is of the opinion that change in some regards has been slow. We deem that the somewhat different opinions are a result of individuals perceiving change differently. One person may perceive a change as drastic, while others consider it too slow. As we did not dig deep enough into this topic in the interviews, we will not discuss it further.

\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., p. 676-684.
\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., p. 42.
Personal changes, such as moving abroad, would be very exciting according to some of the managers. In this regard, the Swedes and the Americans do not differ. The ones that are not willing to move abroad mean that they feel settled now, with family for instance. Moving abroad is for many regarded as a big personal change, but we suppose that working for a global company makes one more positive towards such a change. The managers that are working for Permobil have traveled a lot and they are likely to have developed a curiosity for other countries and their cultures. Maybe have they also realized that it can be possible to live a satisfying life elsewhere?

5.4 WHEN TWO COUNTRIES MEET

One of the Swedish managers implied that Americans are more individualistic and secure of themselves in comparison to the more collectivistic Swedes. This might be the reason why the Swedish managers consider themselves more open towards sharing information and that the decision-making takes more time, since they attempt to include as many people as possible when making decisions. Researches have shown that American citizens are more individualistic than the Swedish population\(^{184}\), which also have come to reflect this particular organization. Permobil Inc. has got more of a polycentric approach, which means that they are primarily focused on their home market. This is though something that can be, and is, controlled by the head-office, Permobil AB.

The Swedish management has stronger bonds to the company than do the American management. The American managers, however, also have a close connection to the company, especially some of them who have been working for the company for many years. Moreover, they are all proud of their work since it helps to make a difference in people’s lives and create a meaning to them personally. Being proud of your work is an important part of Rhinesmiths sixth approach towards a global mindset, seeking lifelong learning\(^ {185}\). We consider it vital that a manager not only understands the value that the job brings to themselves as individuals, but also their contribution to the global corporation. If a manager values his or her job in every aspect, it will contaminate the rest of the company and at last the whole organization towards a more global mindset.

The fact that the Permobil culture is stronger in Sweden did not come as a surprise for us since that is where the company was founded. Some of the managers have worked for Permobil AB for several decades and became close friends to the founder, Per Uddén. What can be seen as somewhat worrying is that the consciousness of the company culture appears to have weakened in the United States. The company culture is important as it brings a meaning and an understanding of the company. The management at Permobil Inc. does not have time to cultivate the culture throughout the company because of the fast paced growth they have had the latest years. We believe that the management in the United States is well aware of the company’s background and its strong company culture, but that they do not make that much of an effort spreading this culture to the rest of the employees. We understand that time is very constraint, and that cultivating the company culture may not be prioritized because of that. However, we believe that the different cultural backgrounds matter as well, just as Hofstede enlightens\(^ {186}\). At the head-office, managers are very focused on making the best product, as the company culture implies putting the user of the product at first hand. Moreover do the Swedes prioritize time off with friends and family, as well as long

\(^{184}\) Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J. (2005), p. 91.
summer holidays. Although the Americans wish they would have more time off like the Swedes, they seem to be more business oriented. These differences between managers from the two countries are likely to be a consequence of the tougher employment conditions in the United States. If you are not there to do your job, then someone else will take the job from you, explained one of the managers. To a greater extent than the Swedes, Americans live to work. Not that the Swedish management team does not live to work, as a matter of fact some of them do not separate their job from their spare time, as their job is such a big part of their lives.

Presenting good results is a key factor for the American managers, and therefore the company culture may just be regarded as an added bonus and nothing that is considered as necessary. This can be seen as a problem because the Swedish management is eager to spread the culture since they find it very important to preserve it as it is today. Furthermore, they do not want the company to end up with several different sub-cultures around the globe. Several different cultures would make the Permobil brand less valuable. Therefore, we would like to make clear that the company has to decide on how important it is to keep a strong global Permobil culture when expanding. The company culture may always stay strong in Sweden, since it is in the walls, as one manager expressed. But when growing rapidly, it will be difficult to save the company culture, just as the American managers told us.

Permobil wants to be a global corporation and does not want to sell products on being Swedish. It is, however, brought up that the Swedish company culture should remain. Since Swedes are considered the only ones that understand the fine print, a Swedish manager was sent to the United States when the subsidiary established. However, as for sales and promotion, the local managers in the United States were, and still are, responsible, as they are the ones that know the market. This is another typical sign of being at least a polycentric company\textsuperscript{187}. Although a company like Permobil should make sure that everyone is aware of the company culture as well as the globalization process, we believe that the local subsidiaries, including the United States, must not forget to focus locally as we consider a “glocal” mindset necessary. This is why we think Permobil has made a clever decision letting the subsidiaries have the authority to make decisions regarding their own markets. When it comes to the company culture, we believe it necessary that the Americans understand it, but that they also accommodate it to their own culture. If the company culture is strictly kept the Swedish way, it might feel somewhat forced, and the American co-workers may not relate to it.

The legal systems affect the funding source in the countries. In Sweden, more focus can be laid on the products and the quality, since the government pays for the products. In the United States, customers buy their wheelchairs, which is one of the reasons for them wanting to put more effort on reduced prices than on quality. The Swedish management wants to put the superior quality foremost in order to protect the Permobil culture and continue doing everything “the Permobil way”. If exaggerating, one could say that the Swedish way is to make the very best product to a handful of users, whilst the Americans wish to make an average product to a great amount of people. It is a balance walk to get the perfect mix of the two countries and their cultures. Permobil AB though, has come a long way regarding this issue since they have understood that it is vital to listen to each country’s specific needs since the markets are so different. Listening to others and letting them decide on subjects that concern their market is a polycentric way of behaving\textsuperscript{188}.

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., p. 15.
One of the Swedish managers said, in agreement with others: “Speed comes before finesse in America and finesse comes before speed in Sweden”. There is no doubt that Americans work at a higher pace than Swedes, that did all managers mention. As mentioned previously, the different funding system is one reason to this, as it forces the Americans to work fast in order to deliver on time and to keep prices down. Moreover, there are other factors that imply the recently cited words. For instance, decision-making takes less time in the United States, and the time-perspective is shorter than in Sweden. Their goals are very controlled by time and do not often last longer than a month, which creates an uneven intensity compared to Sweden. As a consequence, Beer’s\textsuperscript{189} statement that Americans often are more short-term oriented than Europeans seems correct in this particular case. When making quick decisions it is important with a certain level of confidence. The American managers are not afraid of making mistakes, however, if they do, they will deal with it later on. Consequently, Americans go well with the characteristic judgment, which ask for a certain level of self-confidence when it comes to doing business\textsuperscript{190}. Judgment in this context implies having enough courage to make a quick decision. Managers that lack this type of self-confidence will need more time before deciding on things, as he or she may be insecure of what results the decision will lead to. A manager that possesses the characteristic judgment contributes to an organization that is more fast-paced. As time is money, this characteristic should be highly valued. However, decisions should of course not be made too hastily, as this might lead to consequences that are not hoped for. A manager has to be able to balance pros and cons, without wasting too much time.

The Swedish employees are described as laid-back, relaxed and casual and not as willing to work by the rules as they are in the United States. The reason the employees at the head-office and the different subsidiaries act differently is likely to have its roots in their cultural background and the laws and restrictions of each country, as these are factors that affect an individual’s mindset\textsuperscript{191}. The Swedes holidays are one phenomenon that creates problems within the corporation, especially since they habitually take a month off in the middle of the summer. The employees in the United States on the other hand, cannot take such long holidays, which we believe is due to the fact that they have a prevailing cultural pressure hanging over them. Their culture, as well as the market they are in, would probably not accept if business stopped for a whole month. They would definitely lose customers, while the customers that the Swedish head-office serves are used to and accept the summer holiday to a greater extent. Not only the long summer holidays in Sweden create problems, so does the time-difference. The time difference though is an issue for both countries, since employees in each country can be hard to get hold of when needed, which consequently slows down the decision-making process.

As the market in the United States has the highest potential, it is interesting to picture how it would be if the head-office was situated there instead of Sweden. Managers in America told us that the growth of Permobil Inc. probably would be better if the head-office was located in the United States. However, we believe that it would be a long and complicated process to make such a huge change in the organization. In the long run it may be more profitable if the head-office was located where the biggest market is, that is the United States, so that business would not be slowed down by Sweden. Although, the Americans have from the start been very focused on their own market, which implies that they possess relatively little knowledge about Sweden and the other European markets. The American subsidiary has been able to act rather independently, apart from the fact that major decisions have been made in Sweden. If

the head-office were to move to the United States, the Americans would have to attain a more collectivistic approach. Hofstede has very recognized theories about individualism and collectivism\(^\text{192}\), and Americans are in general regarded as very individualistic\(^\text{193}\). Our belief is that this reflects the organizations approach as well, which would mean that Permobil Inc. as an organization is more individualistic than Permobil AB. As a head-office, you have to think what is best for all subsidiaries; it is not only about maximizing your own profits locally. American managers told us that they could handle it, but the question is whether Swedish management thinks it would be suitable to move the head-office from the country of origin?

No matter where the head-office is located, the two countries can definitely benefit from looking at each other’s strengths and weaknesses. Permobil AB can learn from Permobil Inc. to execute faster decision-making. Actually, the head-office is going through changes at the moment in order to make the organization flatter, which will lead to faster decision-making. Something the Americans can learn from the Swedes is rationalization. It is not always the amount that you are producing that is most important, but the quality of it.

### 5.5 Managing the Global Company

The management styles are mostly characterized by collaboration and coaching in both countries. The employees’ jobs are always at risk in the United States, and the management is not afraid to let someone go. Yet, the American management, in agreement with the Swedish, does not want to be too controlling and therefore the individual responsibilities are very high, and you are as an employee expected to take risks and advantage of opportunities. This once again shows the amount of judgment among the Americans. In order to have a global way of thinking, judgment, in form of being able to take risks and being self-confident is very important\(^\text{194}\).

One of the goals at Permobil Inc. is that all employees work as a team and that they all are involved in current changes. In this regard, the American organization is collectivistic. To live up to this, they have weekly meetings on different levels of the company. Open communication is an important part of the everyday operations. We believe that the meetings unite the employees towards common goals, which is brought up as an asset by Begly and Boyd\(^\text{195}\). However, the meetings mainly bring up what is going on at the local market. The most global minded approach would be to use these meetings to inform the staff about other markets worldwide, and other countries progress. This would make the employees understand that they are an important piece in the corporation’s jigsaw. Gupta and Govindarajan bring up the value of broaden the employees’ interest, knowledge and awareness of other markets\(^\text{196}\).

We consider that the managers play a central role when it comes to informing employees about the different levels of the organization and the different markets. To inform staff about what is going on in the corporation will not only create a feeling of belongingness and collectivism, but it would also give high scores on the characteristic conceptualization, which mean that they understand what their work means to the whole business. Conceptualization is one of the characteristics that will improve one’s global mindset, according to a previous research by Rhinesmith\(^\text{197}\). The meetings can also help provide other general knowledge about

\(^{192}\) Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J. (2005), p. 88.
\(^{193}\) Ibid., p. 95-96.
the organization. This type of knowledge is not only recommended by Rhinesmith\textsuperscript{198}, but also Gupta and Govindarajan\textsuperscript{199}. Clearly, the American management aims to make everyone in the subsidiary work as a team, and understand the meaning of what they are doing.

Herbert is one of the researchers that points out that if a company wish to succeed internationally, the cultivation of a global mindset has to go through the whole workforce\textsuperscript{200}. One of the managers brought up that all his employees get the opportunity to visit the company that he or she is working towards. Language courses are also offered to those who are interested. In agreement with Herbert, we consider that these opportunities that are given to the employees certainly help them creating a more global frame of mind, something that will contribute to the organizations global approach.

As mentioned, one of the characteristics associated with a global mindset is knowledge\textsuperscript{201}. Some of the managers still have more to learn before they honestly can say that they possess the knowledge needed for being a global manger. Knowledge is something that can always be improved, just like a global mindset, and most of the managers agree on that they have some weaknesses.

The American managers have understood the meaning of hiring the right people for certain tasks. The areas they want to learn more about are, for example, finance, global operations and languages. The Swedish managers, on the other hand, believe they have the basic understanding for the operations, however, they could learn more about, for example, understanding the organization. All managers though seem to have understood the importance of seeking lifelong learning, which is recommended by Rhinesmith\textsuperscript{202}. They although need to take more concrete actions towards learning and not see things as impossible. As far as we are concerned, only one of the managers takes courses in order to strengthen his weaknesses. However, there are obviously other ways than courses that can improve one’s knowledge, but the bottom line is that it is important to set time aside to make sure something is happening.

It is difficult to estimate whether the managers possess all the important characteristics that are needed for a global manager. We would probably have received a more truthful picture if we would have combined our study with a qualitative study and let the employees describe their managers. However, although letting the managers describe themselves is not objective, we hope that they have enough self-confidence and self-knowledge to explain their characteristics in a relatively true way.

In the interviews, we asked management in Sweden and the United States to describe their management style. The following adjectives describe how the managers at Permobil look upon their own management style as well as how they signify the managers in the other country:

\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., p. 65-66.
As shown above, both the American managers and the Swedish managers can learn from each other’s strengths and weaknesses. All managers think that the American managers work at a fast pace. The Americans seem to be particularly good at fast decision-making, something that is valued according to Ananthram and Chatterjee\textsuperscript{204}. They mean that fast decision-making, which normally includes higher risks, also results in higher returns\textsuperscript{205}. The Swedish management wants everyone to be involved in decision-making, which we consider a sign of them not wanting to take uncalled-for risks. Once again, this can be related to Hofstede’s theory which says that one’s cultural background affects the behavior\textsuperscript{206}. In addition, the behavior in turn affects the whole organization, including decision-making. However, as the Swedish head-office are about to go through a reorganization in order to make the organization flatter, we believe that they have realized the importance of fast decision-making. The reorganization will hopefully be beneficial not only for the head-office, but also for the different subsidiaries.

The Swedish management believes that they have a longer time-perspective than the American management team. A long time-perspective is associated with a global mindset\textsuperscript{207}. Since Permobil strives to become successful globally the Swedish management is, in that sense, more suitable working at a head-office than the Americans are. Although a long time-perspective is said to be correlated to the possession of a global mindset, we believe that it is very much the local market that decides what time-perspective a manager has. Especially as Permobil in the United States has grown significantly during the last five years, they probably have not had time to focus too much on the future as things have happened so quickly. We though wish to add that when deciding on future global strategies, a long time-perspective is preferable, no matter what the market says.

The Swedes consider themselves as result-oriented. In opposition, the Americans do not view the Swedes as very result-oriented. It is quite interesting that they have dissimilar views, although it is not that surprising. The Swedish managers work geographically close to other

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{Americans on Americans:} & \textbf{Americans on Swedes:} \\
Effective & Stress-free \\
Demanding & Open and direct \\
Result oriented & Not very result oriented \\
Fast decision-making & Slow decision-making \\
\hline
\textbf{Swedes on Americans:} & \textbf{Swedes on Swedes:} \\
Hard working & Easy-going \\
High tempo & Strategic \\
Simple way of running business & Result oriented \\
Fast decision-making & Slower decision-making \\
Short time-perspective & Long time-perspective \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Description of Management Styles in Sweden and the United States.\textsuperscript{203}}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{203} Interviews with managers at Permobil, 2006.
\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., p. 8.
European countries, and therefore they are likely to compare themselves to other European managers. Compared to managers in some of the Mediterranean countries, for instance, Swedes might be effective and result oriented. But, in comparison to the Americans, it might be true that Swedes are not as result-oriented. We do not wish to jump to any conclusions out of this discussion, as we do not want to generalize. Though, the core is that whether a manager is described as result-oriented or not possibly depends on what one compares with, as always.

A global manager should according to the American managers be able to understand other positions in the company, other cultures and diversity. The global manager should moreover be open minded, diplomatic and have the ability to recruit skilled personnel as a complement to his or her own skills. A good communicator and listener are other valuable qualities. They also believe a global manager needs to understand how to integrate different markets and create global strategies and systems. The Americans seem to have understood the most important qualities of a global manager; having broad knowledge, accepting others and their differences and understanding the connection of processes\textsuperscript{208}.

Among the characteristics that we state as valuable when it comes to developing a global mindset, the only one that the American managers did not mention is that a global manager should possess a long-term perspective. A long term-perspective was never brought up at any stage in the American interviews, which is an indication that they may not realize the value of it. Since their market craves fast deliveries and quick results, a short-time perspective has been cultivated. A question that arises is whether this weakness implies that the American managers are not global minded enough, or if it is just a consequence of the market’s demand? The different markets require different approaches, and an approach that is successful in one country might be ineffective elsewhere. In other words, the Swedish way of thinking, with a long time-perspective, may not be as suitable in the United States. Although the theories say that a global mindset requires a long-term perspective, we do not believe that this weakness alone means that the American management team cannot be considered global minded.

The Swedish management describes a global manager as someone who understands the Permobil culture. The global manager should moreover look beyond boundaries and have an understanding for different cultures. The Swedish management does not seem to have too much faith in the Swedish market because of its size. One of them said that he finds it hard to believe that a Swedish owned corporation could survive on the global market. What this manager should consider, is that in a geocentric corporation, all companies are alike\textsuperscript{209}. That is also the reason why cooperation is vital. Why would a Swedish owned corporation have problems surviving on a global market, if the whole corporation works as a team? According to Perlmutter, each country should take advantage of each other to make the best out of each market’s prevailing conditions\textsuperscript{210}. Most important of all, it is necessary to cultivate a positive mindset in the organization. It is about seeing the possibilities, as a negative mindset would not enable Permobil to continue its journey towards being a more global corporation.

The fact that the Swedish managers enlighten that a global manager has to understand the Permobil culture is another implication of how much the company culture means to the Swedes. No theories that we have brought up in this thesis stress that a global minded

\textsuperscript{210} Ibid., p.13-16.
manager should protect the existing company culture. Our opinion is that a strong company culture is important to become successful on a global level. However, the reason for this is because it helps motivating the employees, as it creates group belongingness. Moreover it conveys a message to the market of what the company stands for. No doubt is a strong company culture valuable, but it does not necessarily have to be exactly as the company culture is today.

5.6 GLOBAL MINDSET AT PERMOBIL

Due to the market being much smaller in Sweden than it is in the United States, Americans have not needed to be as global minded as the Swedes in order to be successful. The European countries are also geographically closer to each other, and therefore they travel more and can easier develop a global mindset. Once again, Hofstede's theory that an individual's background and culture affects one's mindset become apparent. American managers have to be more active in order to cultivate a global mindset, as different countries and their cultures are not very close at hand.

One of the American managers stated that Swedes think they know much more about markets than they really do, and that the best way of thinking globally is together. The Americans, however, do not seem to find time or be very interested in applying a global mindset. The most probable answer to why they do not have the same global concerns is their priorities. The American market is growing quickly and if they want to maintain the pace, they need to keep focus on their own market. Although this thesis focuses on global mindset, it is important to understand that thinking globally is not enough. One also has to have a deep understanding of the local business in order to be successful. Therefore Begley, Boyd and Svensson bring up the necessity to obtain a “glocal” way of thinking, which implies a balance between thinking globally and locally. As one of the Swedish managers stated, things cannot solely be made the Swedish way, as it has to have a local tweak. This is an indication that this manager has understood the importance of a balance between global and local way of thinking. We consider this balance rather difficult to achieve. Permobil seem to manage quite well, but improvements can be made. In Permobil, the Swedish head-office contributes to most of the global strategies and way of thinking, while the United States focuses on their local market.

Educating the employees in global thinking seems to be a tough task in the United States, since their own business is going so well at the moment. They seem, however, aware of that they are part of something big, and the managers try to keep the employees informed about how the corporation as a whole is doing, although they mostly focus the home market. Communicating the message of thinking outside the box is also important in the United States. They strive to keep everyone open minded and to make employees understand the global priorities of Permobil. This is totally in agreement with Gupta and Govindarajan and their guidelines on how to cultivate the global mindset among the employees. Also in Sweden, the management tries to enhance the understanding of other cultures by telling the employees about them, this in turn will contribute to a broader picture. It is vital, but not always easy, to work towards common goals and to expand the company together. What the Americans and the Swedes are doing at that point is driving for the bigger, broader picture.

They have recognized the importance of thinking in a broader perspective, and using the employees to increase the mindset of the organization. Swedish management works more actively towards this, which does not come as a surprise since they have a different role in the corporation. If one of the employees at the head-office was working internationally without possessing an understanding of the whole company, it would be rather devastating.

Our opinion is that it would be preferable if all managers within the Permobil Corporation had a mindset similar to an integrator. Integrator is the management style that, according to Kedia and Mukherji, is the best when it comes to coordinating a worldwide business. As the Swedish management team has a deeper understanding of the whole corporation, we consider them more alike an integrator than the American managers.

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6. **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Companies operating on the global market have come to experience a great deal when it comes to competition, expansion of possibilities and cultural encounters. It has become increasingly important to possess a diverse workforce in order to broaden the mindset and strengthening the competitive advantage. Consequently, we found it interesting to create an understanding of a company’s global approach by looking at managers’ global mindset. By doing this, we have been able to distinguish areas that can be enhanced. Moreover, by bringing up the topic global mindset, we wish to increase the awareness of global mindset within organizations.

6.1 **THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION**

Different global mindsets and the attitudes connected to it are often clearly divided in theories, such as theories regarding individualism and collectivism, managerial mindsets and global approaches. In this thesis, we therefore wish to illuminate our thoughts that theories are somewhat connected to each other. As an example, we created a simple model (See Figure 1) that shows probable correlation between managers’ mindsets and an organizations global approach. Moreover, we have slightly modified Hofstede’s theories about individualism and collectivism in order to make it useful when discussing global mindsets within international corporations. What we have done is to think of an organization’s approach as individualistic or collectivistic, so that it can be used in comparison to the theory about “glocal” mindset, that handles a balance between a local focus and a focus on what is best for the whole corporation. In addition, we have brought forward the value of a strong company culture, and how it can be connected to a company’s global approach.

6.2 **PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTION**

Our aim has been to develop a deeper understanding of Permobil’s global approach. Therefore, we will start by presenting the most evident indications of global mindset among managers at Permobil AB and Permobil Inc.

Managers in Sweden and the United States seem to possess many valuable qualities that contribute to a global way of thinking. A majority of the Swedish managers believe they have helped cultivating a global mindset within the corporation. Among the most important things are; being open to the global world, taking global responsibilities and communicating the message to the employees. Permobil AB is also about to go through a reorganization, which for instance will lead to faster decision-making, something Permobil Inc. in the United States already is good at. Since globalization implies constant changes, a fast decision-making process becomes valuable. As a consequence, the reorganization is another indication that the Permobil Corporation strives to be prepared for international competition.

As a corporation, the implementation of a joint computer system, the more formalized meetings and the close cooperation within product development and marketing are typical signs of an increasingly global approach. Most indications point out that the Permobil Corporation has a geocentric approach, with hints of cybercentrism. However, Permobil Inc. has some polycentric indications, which is likely to be a result of the corporation’s “glocal” approach. We wish to enlighten that some of the differences between the two countries depend on the different roles that Permobil AB and Permobil Inc. play in the organization. As a head-office it is vital to attain a broad perspective and to be acknowledgeable regarding the different subsidiaries. A subsidiary, on the other hand, needs to be aware of the requirements
obliged by their own market. However, it is beneficial that individuals working at a subsidiary possess knowledge about the other markets, so as to make sure that the whole corporation strives towards the same goal.

6.2.1 RECOMMENDATIONS DIRECTED TO THE COMPANY

*How can managers increase their global mindsets so as to improve a company’s global approach?* This thesis has specifically looked upon the situation at the Permobil Corporation. Although we formerly described the theorists main points regarding cultivation of a global mindset, we would like to give our assembled recommendations to Permobil and its employees. We consider that the company should pay attention to the following points:

- Increase communication
- Improve overall routines
- Strive for a more diverse workforce
- Create clear strategies
- Obtain a better balance between local and global
- Learn from other countries
- Stay open towards new influences

In order to enhance the communication, we believe that routines need to be implemented, for example when it comes to traveling. To make the head-office and the subsidiaries work as a team in order to reach common goals, it is necessary that they meet face-to-face more frequently. If they do not travel enough, they might become what they were before; like separate groups of islands. Moreover, although Permobil has a fairly good balance between local and global focus, we believe that it would be beneficial if Permobil Inc. was more acknowledgeable about other markets. We are also of the opinion that overall routines should be considered in the organization, as many of the “high risk carriers” of the Permobil culture will retire within ten years. The long-lasting managers possess valuable knowledge about the company culture as well as other nations’ cultures. This knowledge should be highly appreciated and, if possible, passed forward within Permobil, as we believe it is an asset that will make the globalization process run smoother. Although noteworthy knowledge and experience will be lost when some managers leave, Permobil AB can take this possibility to enrich the company with people for different countries and also hire younger employees, who often have a higher rate of global mindset and are very interested of the thought of performing global business. If the managers use their knowledge and pass it forward to new and old employees they will probably not risk loosing their strong company culture. Not to forget, Permobil have to consider employing more women, both at management level as well as lower levels. A global mindset is obviously very important, but we are of the opinion that a global minded company has to have a balance between male and female employees as well. A “male-mindset” within a company can turn out pretty single-tracked, which is no better than thinking too locally and in that sense being narrow-minded.

Conclusively, when it comes to managers’ global mindsets, the most important factor is that they are open towards diversity and develop a broader mindset, which subsequently will affect the company’s global approach. As for the managers working in the Permobil Corporation, they should especially think about communicating clear strategies of where they are heading globally, and if they want to put most of their effort on their biggest market with the risk of losing a well-established company culture. Most importantly, they all should continue keeping an open mind so as to be stronger and resistant to any possible hinders during their forthcoming conquest of the world.
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WORKING PAPERS

APPENDIX – INTERVIEW GUIDE

• BACKGROUND
  o Position.
  o Number of years at Permobil.
  o What the company means, personally and professionally.

• EXPERIENCE ABROAD
  o Previous experience abroad.
  o Knowledge of languages.
  o Interest of reading foreign literature, newspapers etc.

• CULTURAL MEETINGS
  o Curiosity and openness to other cultures.
  o Exploring a new culture.
  o How to approach different nationalities.
  o Differences between the Swedish and the American co-workers.
  o If nationalities matter to the company.

• OPENNESS TO CHANGE
  o Moving to another country.
  o Attitude towards personal and organizational changes.

• YOU AS A MANAGER
  o Management style.
  o How a global manager should be.
  o Learning from managers in other countries.
  o Foremost knowledge. Areas that can be improved.
  o Openness to the employees’ values and opinions.

• NETWORK
  o Contact with co-workers in other countries.
  o Close friends from other countries.

• BUSINESS TRIPS
  o Frequency etc.

• LOCAL OR GLOBAL
  o Where the focus is.
  o Where decisions should be made.
  o Importance of globalization.
  o Multicultural teams.

• GLOBAL MINDSET
  o How to cultivate a global mindset within the organization.
  o Contribution to global work.
  o How to improve the awareness among employees.
  o Value of cultural diversity.