Percy Barnevik’s 200 Advice: Corporate Bullshit or Scientifically Proven Praxis

[A picture of how well Guru Theory in general and Percy Barnevik specifically is connected to management research and practice]

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Abstract

Percy Barnevik is one example of a renowned leader publishing a book, “Leadership- 200 advice”, on his experiences as a manager. The overall quantity of this so called Guru Literature on the market demonstrate that it exist a great interest in advice from business leaders but further raise a question of soundness of the advice. The aim with the thesis is to generate a picture of how well Guru Theory in general and Percy Barnevik specifically is connected to management research and practice. What constitute evidence is often debated within the management research field and scholars mean that one cannot assume a fact without any evidence created from research. This leads to a discussion about rigor and relevance and how management research should be designed to create a rigorous study, without overshadowing its practical relevance to the operating business. To answer the research question, interviews were executed with complementary questionnaires. In order to create a picture of what kind of anchoring Barnevik’s advice have in management theory a literature review was conducted. It is possible to see that the majority of the practitioners compared to research have a different level of cohesiveness with Barnevik regarding the studied advice. Practitioners, tend to a high level agree with Barnevik although management research stand for a more hesitant approach. Our conclusions are that management researchers should consider Guru Theory to a greater extent rather than discard it. This we believe could generate relevant research contributions to practitioners and add rigor to an unscientific field of theories

Keywords: Percy Barnevik, Advice, Rigor, Relevance, Evidence, Guru Theory, Evidence Based Management, Managers, Practitioners, Management Research
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1. Introduction and Problem

The number of Guru Theory and experienced based leadership books published by business leaders are extensive and many have been sold in millions of exemplars (Ireland and Ketchen, 2008; DTS International, 2014). This quantity of Guru Literature on the market demonstrate that it exist a great interest in advice from business leaders but further raise a question of soundness of the advice (Ireland and Ketchen, 2008). Some of them are more or less abstract including tips and advice, as well as anecdotes and narratives from leaders and managers working life experiences. Considering the possible influence of publications like these it is interesting to acknowledge and study what they really say; are these advice relevant for managers and do they actually work in practice? Management scholars often mean that one cannot assume fact without any evidence created from research. However practitioners often put their trust in experience and that experience in itself is evidence of what and how to do things (Bazerman and Moore, 2009 p. 186-188).

In March 2013 the Swedish business leader Percy Barnevik released his book “Ledarskap- 200 råd” (Leadership- 200 advice) in which he shares his experiences, advice and stories from 40 years as a business leader. According to Taylor (1991) among others, Barnevik can be seen as a corporate pioneer, known for his role as managing director at several large companies in different sectors and successful leadership style. He is further claimed to be one of “the most influential manager in the world” (Barham and Heimer, 1998, p.ix). This makes Percy Barnevik a good example of a renowned leader publishing a book on his longtime management experiences.

Percy Barnevik believes that there is a great need for experienced based literature (SVD näringsliv, 2013-03-13) at hand for managers, something he himself found was missing during his career. Barnevik (2013) further states that the aim of his book was to provide literature both for management students as well as experienced leaders. What Barnevik, among others, has seen is the need for practical advice to managers of how to lead an organization. It is often spoken about a gap between management research, which can provide practical and relevant leadership advice, and practitioners (Baldridge et al., 2004; Eppler et al, 2011; Wolf and Rosenberg, 2012; Gualti, 2007; Glass, 1976; Vermeulen, 2005). Many mean that researchers are not able to communicate what they have found and the practitioners lack the interest to read and interpret (Vermeulen, 2005). Considering this, Barnevik’s book can be seen as a step forward in closing the gap between management research and practice, this further reinforce the choice
of Percy Barnevik’s book for this thesis. His book has already gotten great response and been sold in many exemplars further legitimizing his value as a great business leader.

Are Percy Barnevik’s advice on one hand anchored in practitioners’ way of thinking and operating and on the other hand are they anchored in management research? Furthermore do researchers and practitioners have a cohesive view regarding if Percy Barnevik’s management advice are useful or not?

With these questions in mind, the aim with the thesis is to generate a picture of how well management literature is connected to management research and practice. By combining the popular scientific contribution with theoretical and empirical research of management practice the aim is to find a way to minimize the gap between management practice and theory. This will further generate knowledge about whether Guru Theories are a good platform in generating evidence.
2. Prevailing Research and Current Methods

For whom is research done? Is it just a way to create rigorous studies or does it provide relevant results that practitioners can use? According to Ireland and Ketchen (2008) there is need for a greater synergy between practitioners and management researcher and that it would benefit both parties. They further argue that it is important for researcher to create interesting studies and results in order to get attention from managers. The debated field of Guru Theory can be argued to be seen as an attempt to generate a greater connection between practitioners and management research (Collins, 2001; Salaman, 1998). The discussion regarding the gap between management research and managers often ends up in a discussion regarding rigor and relevance, facts and fads, evidence and advice. The literature review that follows, attempts to present these discussions and the different opinions that exists.

2.1 Rigor and Relevance - a Constant Discussion in Management Research

Rigorous studies and research (Vermeulen, 2005) in the management field are continually accomplished by academics, but for what reason? Do the researchers fulfill their own desire to produce and leave a footprint in the field or are the studies actually able to influence management practice? The discussion about rigor and relevance basically revolves around how management research should be designed and that the aspiration of creating a rigorous investigation should not overshadow its practical relevance to the managerial decisions (Baldridge et al., 2004; Ireland and Ketchen, 2008; Eppler et al, 2011; Wolf and Rosenberg, 2012; Gualti, 2007; Glass, 1976). Gualti (2007) and Vermeulen (2005) mean that this discussion has been ongoing since the 1950’s and 1960’s and that it can be hard for researchers to successfully combine the two concepts. According to Vermeulen (2005) and Ireland and Ketchen (2008) researchers often seek to answer questions that practitioners often do not care about. However, Vermeulen (2005) further argues, writing articles that are relevant and interesting to practitioners on the behalf of rigor are on the contrary not the answer, which will not make a claim relevant. Thus that asking the right research question where both importance to academia and practice, rigor and relevance, is facilitated is to be the solution (Vermeulen, 2005; Irleand and Ketchen, 2008). It is further insisted by Gualti (2007) that management researchers continue to strive to find a middle ground between rigor and relevance. This distance Wolf and Rosenberg (2012) mean is not solely a consequence of the currently prevailing institutional context in the scientific system, but also created by individual researchers’ actions. Inquiries have shown that managers are well aware that they could benefit but further mean that
scholars often does not tend to be appealing and that management researchers need to change their methods and presentations in order to minimize the distance between practitioners and researchers (Wolf and Rosenberg, 2012).

2.2 Research vs. Experience- What is Evidence?

Is it possible to generate rigid evidence without any foundation in research? Experienced based evidence versus research-based evidence is often debated within the management field. Management scholars often mean that one cannot assume a fact without any evidence created from research (Vermeulen, 2005). However practitioners often put their trust in experience, which additionally may be a reason to the significant number of management literature written and published by former practitioners (DTS International, 2014). There is an ongoing discourse regarding whether research is getting too narrow and that the aspiration to find a research gap minimizes the usefulness of the results (Alvesson & Sandberg and Alvesson, 2011). In that case research evidence would not be of any value as long as it does not constitute a set of breakthrough ideas. On the other hand experience might be flawed and biased due to that people tend to overemphasize decisions and outcomes as well as causality and correlations (Bazerman and Moore, 2009). In addition to that, evidence derived from experiences would equally not be valued as relevant. Ireland and Ketchen (2008) further argue that it is important to be aware of that an interesting advice or research result still can fail in contributing to any real progress or lessons. They state that this occur when research is completed without any rigor or managerial advice are grounded in fads rather than in rigorous fundamentals.

2.3 Guru Theory Often Considered as Fads

Management advice belongs to a group of literature and concepts often called Guru Theory referring to ideas and management knowledge written and disseminated to management users by renowned managers, consultants and academics (Salaman 1998). Guru Theory is limited and it is mainly driven by a ‘fashion-setting community’ (p.187) stated by Collins (2001) referring to Micklethwait and Wooldridge’s (1997) study. Micklethwait and Wooldridge’s (1997) further mean according to Collins (2001), that what are produced are rather distorted realities. On the other hand Collins’ (2001) position is that researchers consciously neglect and trivialize Guru Theory and that we should look more carefully to their advice and ideas. There are many critiques to management gurus but some also argue that gurus are important as a representation of reality according to Collins (2001). Research on management gurus
are limited and Salaman (1998) explain that it gets more vital to study the phenomenon due to considerations of whether it is just reinvention of already established ideas as well as its efficacy.

Much of Guru Theory is considered as fads, which tend to spread widely during a short term and critiques are sceptic to whether these theories do any good (Collins, 2000; Jackson, 1996). Jackson (1996) consequently argues that a reason to why Guru Theories seem to become popular lies in that practicing managers (followers) understand and recognizes what is brought up as well as the literature attend to their needs and pre-occupation. While many researchers dismiss the usage of Guru Theory as theoretically underdeveloped (Jackson, 1996), Collins (2000) argues that it should be taken seriously and that researchers will make more substantial contributions for both practitioners and researchers.

2.4 EBMgt in the Wake of the Rigor and Relevance Discourse

The discussion regarding rigor, relevance and evidence are subjects frequently discussed in the research area of Evidence Based Management (EBMgt\(^1\)). EBMgt can according to Rousseau (2005) and Briner et al. (2009) be seen as an attempt to create a bridge between research and practice and thus help it, rigor and relevance, to become more congruent. According to Rousseau (2005) it exist a research-practice gap, which prevents managers and organizations to base practice on best available evidence. Rousseau (2005) further states the importance of an organizational culture in which managers learn from evidence but furthermore that it leads back to a systematic error in the educational system at business schools and universities.

2.4.1 “Knowing What You Know and Knowing What You Do Not Know”

The essence of Evidence Based Management according to Rousseau (2005) is translating principles that are based on best evidence into organizational practices. Pfeffer and Sutton (2006) agree and add that the logic behind the concept is that managers always should ask for evidence of the specific methods’ efficacy, when someone for instance wants to implement a change in an organization. Moreover it is argued that looking at your organization as a prototype and constantly adjust to new conditions and adopt a trial and error approach will enhance decision making (Bazerman and Moore, 2009; Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006). Consequently, Rousseau (2005) means that EBMgt will turn managers into experts and make them act on the basis of existing scientific evidences instead of their own personal preferences.

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\(^1\) In Briner et al. (2009) Evidence-based Management: Concept cleanup time? uses the abbreviation EBMgt to make a distinction from Evidence-based Medicine, abbreviated to EBM.
She further means that EBMgt has partly grown strong due to the critique that exists towards management research and that much research results lack context, which as mentioned before creates a debate regarding rigor and relevance.

That could mean that a manager cannot only base decisions and methods on what have worked before and old established truths but has to consider research and whether these factors are supported by evidence in the management research area. Furthermore the implication is that management advice from profiles such as Percy Barnevik is of no better use than advice from any other managers as long as they are not backed with some kind of management research.

Managers that dare to realize that they do not know it all and that the best available treatment is also not a constant are the ones that perform EBMgt the best. Although Pfeffer and Sutton (2006) says it can be hard for senior managers with a big ego to use this philosophy. It is all about “knowing what you know and knowing what you do not know” (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006a). EBMgt advocates (Rousseau 2005; Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006a; Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006b; Briner et al. 2009) consider that this way of acting could be an answer to many poor performances and that if managers would have questioned what they need to know more about and gathered complimentary facts actions may have taken another direction. Although there are always two sides to a story, according to Pfeffer and Sutton (2006a) the amount of management information that exists today could make it harder for managers to find the evidence that they need in order to create an EBMgt culture in their organizations. Managers can often, according to Pfeffer and Sutton (2006b) found them confronted with half-truths and evidence that does not really apply to their organization.

Necessary to consider is what Reay et al. (2009) found. Their study investigated the level of evidence each article that discusses EBMgt (both positively and negatively) offers. Their results points towards a trend that what most articles publish do not provide any strong evidence that EBMgt is an efficient method and as a result EBMgt is contradicting in itself. Although critique has been raised towards the efficiency of EBMgt and the current lack of research supporting it, the debate about rigor and relevance is supporting the concept, and the question is rather to match proper research that is relevant to practical organizational operations.
2.5 What We Have to Keep in Mind

In the presence of the discussion regarding research versus experience as well as the debate of rigor and relevance a middle ground is necessary according to most researchers. In general one can see that management scholars often mean that one cannot assume fact without evidence created from rigor research. A claim’s relevance and whether it might be interesting is not good enough (Vermeulen, 2005; Ireland and Ketchen, 2008). Practitioners tend put their trust in experience and personal opinions and Vermeulen (2005) thus mean that Guru Theories tend to become popular due to that practicing managers (followers) understand and recognizes their needs and pre-occupation. Many critiques of this kind of literature consider these theories as fads without proven efficient outcomes. However Collins (2001) mean that we should look more carefully to their advice and ideas because of their popularity among practitioners.

In the wake of this debate the concept of EBMgt has grown strong. The core to the concept lies in translating principles that are based on best evidence into organizational practices (Rousseau, 2005) and that managers always should ask for evidence of the specific methods’ efficacy (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006a; Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006b).
3. How the Study Was Executed - a Question of Reliability and Validity

In an attempt to answer the question whether practitioners use management advice like those provided by Percy Barnevik and whether these are anchored in research, 19 interviews with complementary questionnaires as well as 20 additional questionnaires were executed. The study further involved a literature review for each advice based on academic inputs and guidance. Each step of the study will in detail be considered as we precede our methodological discussion. (Patton, 2001; Kavle and Brinkmann, 2009; Neuendorf 2002)

3.1 Initial Sifting of Percy Barnevik’s 200 Advice

Sifting among the 200 advice was considered essential. The initial sifting of the advice was done to reduce the number of them to a more comprehensive amount. Furthermore, to screen out those advice that were considered too general or not really anchored in organizational theory for example “Keep fit - a challenge against overweight and alcoholism” (Barnevik, 2013 p.78) and “Powernap -Sleep wherever and whenever you can” (p.71). This initial step reduced the number of advice from 200 down to 50. The second sifting aimed to generate ten advice to create a comprehensive foundation of advice to build the empirical study on. Like non-probability sampling techniques can vary as long as it follows a logical pattern and there is a clear connection to the purpose and the research question of the study (Neuendorf 2002).

The screening was based on our academic knowledge in management and organizational theory and what we found most relevant to study more in depth in a theoretical and practical perspective. In order to generate a more objective screening a Senior Lecturer, at the Department of Business Studies at Uppsala University, did a separate screening and also reduced the number of advice down to 50.

To create a more firm foundation for the choice of advice used in this study, we also looked into relevant business literature written about Barnevik’s career and the companies he has been involved in (Barham and Heimer, 1998). With the help of that literature we were able to find general themes, which we thereafter translated into some of the advice one can find in his book “Ledarskap -200 råd” (“Leadership- 200 advice”). A short text analysis enabled us to pick relevant advice both in the sense of Percy Barnevik’s aspects as well as relevant in the sense of academia (Patton, 2001; Saunders et al., 2012). Sifting the 200 advice systematically in different steps was believed to generate a better and more relevant set of advice.
Awareness exist concerning that the way of sifting that was used is not fully replicable and that the chosen advice may vary depending on who does it and what research area one is representing (Patton, 2001). This thesis is written in the field of management controlling and therefore certain skewness towards this area is apparent. This skewness towards management could further be argued to be logical and also that it should exist in order to generate a set of advice relevant to study for this thesis. However it can also be argued that the sample and the advice it consist of is not vital for the results but rather that the sampling was made to make it comprehensible. Furthermore our legitimacy in sifting among the advice may be questioned. Although our belief is that the knowledge in management theories we have gathered during almost five years of studying at Uppsala University and at Queen’s University in Canada can be assumed to be adequate to generate a good set of advice. (Patton, 2001)

Table 1: The Chosen Advice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#*</th>
<th>Advice</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Delegate does not mean abdicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Walk the talk- be a role model in every area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146</td>
<td>Communication - it is hard to reach out- talk to many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>Stretch targets- Ambitious goals should permeate the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Sense of urgency- a strong sense of what things are urgent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>Overflow of reports- do not drown employees with demands to report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Globally and locally - Think global act local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Meetings - often horrible time consumers and responsibility dissolvers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Change is necessary - the obstacle are resistance from people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129</td>
<td>Risk Taking is inevitable but have to be controlled</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The number (#) represents the specific number in Percy Barnevik’s (2013) “Ledarskap- 200 råd”

3.2 The Literature Review of the Final Set of Advice

In order to create a clear picture of what kind of anchoring the final set of advice have in management research a literature review (Patton, 2001) was conducted for each advice. The literature review was partly a way to give a picture of where in the field of management theory the advice can be placed as well as it further helped to shape an answer to the research question of whether the advice can be connected to management research or not.

The complexity we came across was how to determine when the literature reviews were considered anchored in management theory. For each advice and concept there is a multitude written in the
management research field and to establish a trustworthy and objective foundation was therefore a complicated piece (Saunders et al., 2012). Considering the complexity we asked well established professors and lectures at Uppsala University for help (Patton 2001). The main questions were; “who the biggest opponents and researchers in a specific area are, which the most distinct streams of the concept are and who the greatest critics are”. Based on the answers we received, we begun a data collection inspired by a snowball collection (Saunders et al.2012). The researchers and articles mentioned by the professors and lectures were used as tips and our starting point. These tips were considered and evaluated as well as the specific articles references was considered to further enhance our review. We have put great effort in scanning each research field and been reading a multitude of articles to enhance our understanding. Thus, the chosen references for each advice constitute a well-chosen set of research considered relevant for the specific advice.

Biases depending on the professors’ and lecturers’ academic origin are validated as theis opinions only worked as a springboard and were, as mentioned, complemented with additional sources. Thus, the literature review is in the presence of this method considered a representative review anchored in good and relevant research. (Patton, 2001)

3.3 Interviews with Practitioners to Back the Discussion

The next part of the study was to perform about 19 semi-structured interviews (Rubin and Rubin 2012; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) with questions based on the ten selected advice. Our aim with the interviews was to gather data regarding the practitioners’ picture of Percy Barnevik’s advice. Data we sought to get from management research, the literature review, regarded the question whether one is able to see any theoretical connection to Barnevik’s advice. The interviews with the practitioners aimed to back the discussion whether managers thought the advice to be useful and relevant in order to lead an organization. (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Rubin and Rubin, 2012, p. 5-7)

With the help of the empirical data collected from the interviews the goal was to generate a discussion whether management literature written by gurus have any real connection to management theory or not. Furthermore the intention was to create understandings of what management research present about the advice that are established from experience instead of theory. (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009)
3.4 Who Was a Part of the Study?

The selection of 19 respondents, who were a part of the study, were all managers with some sort of employee responsibility. The choice of managers with employee responsibility was made to facilitate the set of advice (Marshall, 1996 p.523). Many of the advice are employee oriented and thus some knowledge in that field was considered necessary in order to generate adequate responses. In order to enable a generalizable sample the intention was to interview managers from various organizations and with different backgrounds (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Additionally, the organization per se was not considered as relevant as the position of the manager and therefore no selection towards certain business areas or industries were made.

The respondents were all found with the help of our personal and professional networks (Marshall, 1996 p.523) and contacted by e-mail to let the respondent in its own time consider the proposition and thereafter respond. All organizations and respondents are kept anonymous throughout the thesis. This decision was made in order to get as many managers to participate as possible. The belief was that more managers would be willing to take part of the study if they were able to stay anonymous (Patton, 2001; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Furthermore, the conviction was that the anonymity did not affect the results, but rather the objective was to get personal professional opinions of the managers and not their opinions as a representative of an organization.

A minor omission occurred, primarily believed to be due to the respondents’ lack of time. Omissions were also experienced as a result to the approached managers belief to not be a relevant contribution to the study. However these non-responses were presumed not to affect the outcome of the result of this study to any greater extent as 19 interviews still were conducted, which was believed to be a passable number. However as will be presented below the questionnaire was sent to a larger number of managers in order to validate the interviews (Patton, 2001).
3.5 Preparation of Material before the Interviews

Each respondent was prior to the interview e-mailed a questionnaire, which aimed to let the respondent form an opinion regarding the ten chosen advice. The respondent answered 20 questions, two for each advice, which dealt with the usefulness and the relevance of the advice (See Appendix 1) (Patton, 2001; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

The first question aimed to capture whether the respondent believed if the advice given is useful at all for a manager. The answer was an indicator of how well Percy Barnevik’s advice corresponds to what managers, the respondent, believes is an adequate tool or method in practice.

The second question intended to capture to what extent managers, the respondent, consider the advice to be relevant in practice. The underlying logic behind was for us to be able to evaluate how well managers believe the advice will work in practice and from there relate it to current research. This generated a foundation to analyze the cohesiveness between Barnevik and practitioners, Barnevik and research as well as practitioners and research.

Usefulness and relevance can be seen as synonyms to each other but by using them differently with different scales we have been able to capture a contradiction. Some respondents thought a advice was useful but at same time they could not decide to what extent they believed it to be relevant.

Contrary to the common usage of questionnaires this questionnaire mainly functioned as a material to prepare the respondent for the discussion at hand as well as it generated fundamental data and points of analysis. The intention was to let the respondent form an opinion before the interview and further let the interview be an opportunity to comment on the specific advice presented (Saunders et al., 2012).

3.6 Execution of the Interviews

3.6.1. The Interview Guide

The interviews were conducted using the questions from the questionnaire. Although these questions worked as a base it was considered necessary to have an interview guide with additional questions to encourage a better flow to the conversation (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Patton, 2001). Instead of directly asking the questions from the questionnaire the interview guide aimed to get the respondents’ to
consider the phenomenon, method or tool once again not biased and bounded to previous beliefs made up during the preparation to the interview (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The aim with this approach was to get a conversation rather than a straight up answer to a direct question. It encouraged the respondents’ to more freely deliberate and give examples (Patton, 2001).

The interview guide also provided a tool for the interviewer to keep the interview going in a clear direction. Furthermore it established structure to the interview considering that the same set of questions were asked to all respondents and thus eased the analysis and founded validity to the survey (Patton, 2001). However during every other interview the questions were asked in a backward order. This was decided due to that it existed a risk that some questions would be more thoroughly answer because they were asked in the beginning of every interview. (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Patton, 2001)

3.6.2 Performing a Test Interview

Before conducting the interviews a test interview was performed (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The test-respondent was first handed the questionnaire to answer and was after that asked to evaluate it (Stone, 1993). All comments were considered and necessary changes were done in order to improve the questionnaire. Furthermore an interview was conducted to test how well the questionnaire and the interview guide worked in practice. This method gave us valuable inputs about factors and questions that were needed to be considered and changed, what questions that worked well and what in the interview that worked less well. (Patton, 2001)

After the interview the test- respondent was further asked what she/he thought about the questions specifically and the interview in general. Considering these inputs we gained a better understanding of how the interviews henceforth should be executed, and also a tool to develop the material.

We were sometimes biased by the knowledge we have within the studied field of research, which further could affect what and how questions were asked (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). By performing a test interview some of these biases were possible to avoid and the results thus got more reliable.
3.6.3 How the Interviews Were Conducted- Their Biases and Errors

The interviews were conducted mainly by both of us but at some occasions of solely one of us during a time period of six weeks. As all respondents were not interviewed by the same person it could have impacted the results from the interviews to some extent. However, the interview material was partly an attempt to minimize the impact the interviewer had on the respondents considering that the questions were fixed and all respondents were in advance presented with the same set of questions. Thus, all respondents received the same set of information to base their opinions on (See Appendix 1) (Patton, 2001).

The questions were sent to all the respondents before the interviews were conducted with the intention to generate an opportunity for the respondents to prepare before the interview. It is not possible to know if all respondents used this opportunity or to what extent they used it which could imply that some respondents prepared well thought out answers and others gave the first answer that came to their mind during the interview. Awareness exist about that this possibly could affect the results in the way that if one would conduct the interviews a second time with the same respondents one might get a different result. Some might for example change their minds regarding the advice if they were given a chance to reflect more on the advice.

To ease the analysis of the gathered information all interviews were recorded (Patton, 2001 p. 347). Together with notes taken during the interviews this acted as the foundation for the analysis of what the practitioners opinions and experiences was towards the advice. The recordings further made it easier to administrate the gathered information even though some interviews were conducted by only one of us. Notable though is that the first five interviews were conducted by both of us together in an attempt to get a common approach to how the interviews should be executed. (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009)

The interviews as discussed previously aimed to get a comment to how managers perceive the advice useful and relevant as well as a comment on the respondent’s experiences as a manager. Thus transcribes were not considered research economically defendable as it were not considered to further improve the compilation of information. (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009)
3.7 Additional Questionnaire

In order to validate the empirical data gathered from the interviews and the questionnaires a third step of data gathering was added (Patton, 2001). However a second set of interviews was believed to “cost” more than it would have contributed to the result and the analysis and thus just the questionnaire was considered enough.

The additional data gathering consisted of respondents that received and answered the questionnaire via mail. The same set of questions was used in this step but the respondents were not interviewed. The sample was made in a similar way as for the first set of respondents, through personal and professional contacts as well as asking the respondents from the interviews of possible additional respondents. Like in previous steps all respondents were managers with some sort of employee responsibility.

This set of questionnaires was created as an online form. Awareness exist regarding that this could affect the result as the respondents might have interpreted the advice in different ways, given that they only had access to the information given in the questionnaires (Saunders et al., 2012; Hand, 2008). The fact that the first set of questionnaires was connected to interviews gave the respondents an opportunity to ask questions and straighten out any potential misunderstandings regarding the advice. Further, the risk of other data selection biases due to that the questionnaire was sent out by e-mail, was also taken into consideration (Hand, 2008). However, as mentioned before the aim was not to gather new information but rather validate the data that already had been collected with the help of the interviews, which made this group of respondents a sort of control group to the interviews.

In this third step it was possible to see a slightly greater omission than in the previous steps of the data collection. This is thought to be due to that this set of questionnaires were sent out to respondents further out in our personal and professional networks, and also to respondents at randomly chosen companies. The questionnaires were by that sent to a larger number of respondents, which in turn in itself generated a larger number of non-responders. The fact that the respondents were found further out in our personal and business networks could have impacted their motivation to be part of the study. Another reason for the omission could be that the questionnaire did not lead to an interview, which also was believed to have affected the response rate to some extent. It was believed that a possible interview perhaps would have enhanced the motivation of the respondents to answer the questionnaire. (Patton, 2001; Hand, 2008)
3.7.1. How the Responses on the Questionnaire Were Measured

In order to capture the respondents’ opinions towards the advice we used a scale going from believing the advice is not relevant at all to believing that the advice is relevant to a great extent. Like a numeric scale the respondents’ experiences were measured based on the alternatives augmented nature, which generate a more defined set of opinions (Saunders et al., 2012). The respondents’ were additionally given the option to answer, don’t know (Stone, 1993). This option was given as respondents that answered; don’t know to the first question should be able to answer don’t know again. There is a risk that respondents in cases of disinterest chose this alternative, which minimizes the frequency of respondents. Though, as the questionnaire was mainly a preparation tool this bias was believed to be adjusted with the help of the interviews. Furthermore, it was important that the respondents made a clear choice considering that the questionnaire was used as a base for the face-to-face interviews. Additionally, our method of measuring the results from the questionnaire was used on both the preparation questionnaire sent out before the interview as well as the additional questionnaire.

3.8 What Was Done With the Data?

The first step in the data analysis was to gather and compile the information from the questionnaires we sent out to the respondents. As mentioned before this initial part aimed to establish a snapshot of the respondents’ opinions about each advice. Each set of questionnaires was first compiled separately to see if there were significant differences. No significant differences were found between the results from the first and the second set of questionnaires, therefore the choice was made to present the compiled result together with the interviews.

Secondly, each interview was listened to once again and quotations and comments were gathered to reinforce the data from the questionnaires. The interviews further captured more narrating answers, which were compared against the answers from the questionnaires. (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Neundorf, 2002; Hand, 2008)

To capture whether any cohesiveness were to be found an analysis between the three respective perspectives were necessary. In an attempt to generate an overview of our findings of cohesiveness a table was constructed (see p.37). The table concludes if the cohesiveness was considered high, medium or low between on one hand practitioners and Barnevik and on the other management research and Barnevik. Lastly, a compounded level of cohesiveness was added to capture the overall sentiment.
between practitioners and Barnevik and Barnevik and Management research.

The discussion and conclusion draws upon this table and the theoretical discussion about the discussion regarding rigor and relevance and the creation of evidence as well as the concept of evidence based management. This enabled us to answer the research questions; whether practitioners agree with advises like those provided by Percy Barnevik and whether these are anchored in research as well as what constitutes evidence.
4. Who is Percy Barnevik?

Percy Barnevik’s accomplishments are well known. His roles in successful companies and organizations have provided him with the reputation as one of the most influential managers in the world (Barnevik, 2011, Barham and Heimer, 1998). His many years as a business’ leader has earned him a long resume including CEO/Chairman of Skanska, ABB, Investor, AstraZeneca and Sandvik (Barnevik, 2011, Barham and Heimer, 1998). In addition to this he is also a former board member of American Du Pont and General Motors as well as he remains an Honorary Chairman of the Board of Sandvik (Hand in Hand, 2011).

Barnevik started his career studying at Gothenburg’s School of Business where he later earned a business degree. His great interest in advanced computer science gave him a scholarship to study at Stanford Graduate School of Business (Barnevik, 2011). After several years of studies Barnevik’s professional career begun at the Swedish computer company Datema (part of the Johnson Group) (Barnevik, 2011, p. 45) where he showed great potential as a future leader, according to both other employees as well as top managers. Nevertheless, Barnevik left Datema in 1969 to join the Swedish industrial company Sandvik as he felt that Datema could not help his career forward any longer (p. 53).

Barnevik (2011) himself says that Sandvik is the organization where he felt he progressed the most as a leader. He always speaks fondly about his years at Sandvik and means that it was there he made all his mistakes and got support and advice from more experienced leaders. In 1974 he was given the responsibility of the American branch, which at that time was experiencing great losses, something that Barnevik during his time was able to turn around. After his successful years abroad and a few years back in Sweden, and at Sandvik, he announced that he was to leave Sandvik to join another Swedish organization, ASEA at the end of the 1970’s (p. 56-57, p. 98).

Making Barnevik the CEO of ASEA came as a surprise to many and some were of course skeptical to his advancements. At that moment he was still considered young, inexperienced and unknown. Initially he begun a gigantic reconstruction begun, cutting headquarters staff drastically as well as restructuring profits center in an attempt of gaining greater awareness and accountability among managers. Barnevik also promoted a more flat organization and a part of the reconstruction was to eliminate bureaucracy. As a response to his drastically changes and the successful outcome he quickly gained recognition among managers all around the globe (Barham and Heimer, 1998; Barnevik, 2011)
In 1987, Barnevik played a vital part in one of the largest fusions at that time, when ASEA merged with its Swiss competitor Brown Boveri & Cie Ltd (BBC) and became ASEA Brown Boveri (ABB) (Barnevik, 2011, p98-125). The whole merger between BBC and ASEA was characterized by great determination and potential failure was never something that the team was discussing according to Barnevik (Barham and Heimer, 1998). In addition to this Barham and Heimer (1998) explain, what also is stated to be a factor in the ABB case was the approach of realizing the problems of culture, cutting staff and to communicate the implications of the fusion. In addition to this Barnevik’s vision has always been to create smaller divisions in large companies where all employees can feel appreciated and recognized (UR Access, 2011).

Barnevik held the position as CEO of ABB until his resignation in 1996 (Barham and Heimer, 1998 p. 98-122) and were a vital factor of making the company the global leader in its market during this time. The fusion to ABB is a well-known case that have been studied and written about at several occasions. The fascination about how ABB and Percy Barnevik created such a successful company has earned them a reputation as pioneers and groundbreakers establishing a new way of being a global institution.

However, in 2002 Barnevik became part of large financial scandal due to the pension he received from ABB a few years earlier. Because of Barnevik’s successful years at ABB he received a one-off payment of 148 million Swiss franc (930 M. SEK) when he retired as the CEO in 1996 (Nachemson-Ekwall, 2002). It was supposed to be an annual review of the pension agreement before the ABB Board of Directors, which was never realized. When Percy Barnevik took over the post of chairman of the board, the rest of the board were never informed of the pension agreement according to some sources. Instead, it was Percy Barnevik himself who gained control and he was then able to decide how the money should be handled. When the arrangement was discovered, Barnevik was criticized by the current direction at ABB in the early 2000s. (Nachemson-Ekwall, 2002; Swissinfo, 2002)

In March 2002, ABB and Barnevik reached a settlement in the case were Barnevik agreed to repay the larger part of his pension, about 548 million Swedish kronor. Despite the settlement, Barnevik has always been clear about that it did not involve any admission of a violation nor that he considered himself obligated to repay any amount, but even though his reputation experienced some setbacks after this episode (Nachemson-Ekwall, 2002; Swissinfo, 2002; The Economist, 2002).
4.1 Why is Percy Barnevik Relevant in our Study?

By looking at Percy Barnevik’s career the assumption that he has been a vital part in Sweden’s business environment during a long time is easy to make. He has also been an important force in the global market as a successful manager and board member in large companies. Barnevik’s involvement in many large global companies and his successful years at ABB has earned him respect from great parts of the global business scene. Even though he has been involved with negative publications after his retirement from ABB and that he today is retired from the ‘business world’ he still is seen as one of Sweden’s greatest and most powerful business leaders (Barnevik, 2011, p. 309-367; Barham and Heimer, 1998; SVD Näringsliv, 2013-03-13; SVT Forum, 2013; UR Access, 2011).

Thanks to his many years as a successful manager Barnevik have had the honor to several times be awarded for his skills and it would be fair to say that (Hand in Hand, 2011, Barnevik, 2011, p. 481-482) Percy Barnevik has enough experience in order to generate good advice and is accordingly considered a valid option for our study. Furthermore, looking to the number of books Barnevik has sold one can assume that there exist great interests for his knowledge among managers today (Sanoma, 2013). Barnevik also states that the aim with the latest book of advice was to provide good concrete advice for both managers as well as management students (SVD Näringsliv, 2013-03-13; SVT Forum, 2013).

Consequently Percy Barnevik’s advice can be argued to be both interesting and vital to study in connection to practitioners and researchers. This is furthermore the reason for the choice to use Barnevik and his advice for this study and thesis.
5. The Advice through the Eyes of Percy Barnevik, Practitioners and Research

In this chapter a thorough presentation of each advice will be made. Each advice will first be presented from the perspective of Percy Barnevik and his recommendations. Thereafter the answers and the comments from questionnaires and interviews will be presented. Third, our literature review will follow representing the opinion of researchers. It is a large piece of text and to generate a better overview of our empirical findings and possible the cohesiveness or divergence a summarizing table is created which can be found in the last section (p. 37).

5.1 A Thorough Presentation of Each Advice

5.1.1” Delegation Does Not Mean Abdication”

More delegation requires higher control and the ultimate responsibility still belongs to the person who delegate, this is clearly stated by Barnevik. The closer to the operation a decision is made the better although it can sometimes be a tough call for many executives and managers often due a perception of subordinates doing a poor job. Barnevik explain that information is an important part as well as not executing “delegation through dumping”. Delegation is the most complete entrustment of responsibility comparing to direct orders, which is the least complete entrustment of responsibility. (Barnevik, 2013 p. 22-24)

All respondents agree with the advice and believe that delegation is important and that it do not mean abdication as a leader. All, of the respondents believed the advice useful and a majority of them believed it relevant to a very great extent. Some though were more hesitant towards its relevance as a managing advice.

Some themes and reasons to delegate are visible; lack of detailed knowledge which your subordinates possess, lack of time as well as to generate trust and responsibility among the employees and also about you (the manager) trusting your employees. "... why shouldn’t I delegate to people who may know this better than I do” (Respondent 12). However the some respondents mean that to what extent managers are able to delegate is depending on the group and how well functioning, mature and autonomous the group is. A common opinion about delegation is that one person cannot do it all.
Delegation is also about making yourself dispensable, that the workflow should not be too dependent on you explicitly as a manager. Though as one respondent says “...it is still important that a leader does not become invisible” (Respondent 9) managers must learn what decisions and tasks to keep for themselves and what one can delegate to one’s employees”. Many respondents witness that it is quite hard to learn to let go and not be able control everything though as one respondent says “Abdicate for me is to not follow up, not to be close and not to be informed” (Respondent 14)

Delegation as well as empowerment and decentralization are a set of terms explaining the phenomenon of shifting responsibility and accountability downwards in the organization. Decentralization is often seen as efficient (Richardson et al., 2002) contrary to bureaucratic and central authority, and has shown great effect on employees. Conger and Kanungo (1988) argues that organizational power and effectiveness grow when responsibility is divided and shared. The essence of empowerment and decentralization are that employees will feel more valuable and will evaluate their results as a part of the organization’s result and thus enhance the performance (Hempel et al., 2012; Richardson et al., 2002; Conger and Kanungo, 1988). Management research articles present a huge interest in empowerment and decentralization, but according to Richardson et al. (2002) it tend to be hard to find evidence of positive organizational outcomes (financial). Furthermore, Richardson et al. (2002) state that the effect of decentralization mainly is related to attitudinal benefits rather than organizational outcomes and thus that the common belief concerning decentralization instead is much more complex than what previously have been believed.

5.1.2 “Walk the Talk- Be a Role Model in Every Area“

“Walk the talk” according to Barnevik means that you should act accordingly to what you believe and communicate to your employees to create trust and credibility. It is often easy to tell people what to do but much harder to do it yourself. (Barnevik, 2013 p. 24)

The respondents all agree with that “walk the talk” is an important advice and some even mean that it might be the most important one. If you want to create a trust for leaders, it is vital to practice what you preach. One respondent explains that “If you are to gain trust one has to be consistent” (Respondent 4) and another respondent argues similarly saying that “If you say one thing and do not live up to it, it gives a very strange impression” (Respondent 7).
However some respondents also meant that the advice is more applicable on some areas of the manager role than on others, that it still should be a visible difference between the roles of managers and employees and accordingly what they do; as one respondent put it “everyone has different roles and it can sometimes be difficult to be a role model and one should not always be one” (Respondent 16).

Common themes that appeared of when being a role-model and “walk the talk” is always important which were when it came to attitudes, following the rules and how one treat one another.

“Walk the talk” could be related to the well-established area of transformational leadership as well as theories of role modeling. In short transformational leadership revolves around idealized visions and the existence of leaders listening to needs and acts as a mentor and coach (Bass, 1999). Consequently, transformational leadership have found support in literature e.g. in Judge and Piccolo (2004). Bass (1999) further explain that if changes are to be introduced top level behavior will work as good symbols.

According to Gibson and Barron (2003) as well as Lockwood et al. (2002) it is possible to see a growing recognition of a need for managers to act as role models and inspire their employees. However they further mean that the need changes throughout one's career. An employee in the early stages of his or hers career need a different type of role model than a more experienced employee. An older and more experienced employee tend to have more confidence in the way they act and make decisions and by that does not have the need for an equally active role model as a less experienced colleague (Gibson and Barron, 2003). Lockwood et al. (2002) state that it is also important that there is a goal-congruence between the role model and the employee. This means that it is important for the managers to be intuitive of what kind of leadership and role model his or hers employees need in order to be an effective manager. Sealy and Singh (2009) further state the importance for women to have role models during their career and mean that the lack of female manager role models might act as a barrier for women in the business world.

5.1.3 “Communication - It is hard to Reach Out- Talk to Many”

According to Barnevik you cannot as a manager inform too much. Additionally Barnevik argues that if you are looking to inform employees, the best way is to gather as many as possible physically at the same place at the same time. He also means that when talking to your employees you have to make it personal and become a part of your message if you want people to buy into it. Communication is tough,
Barnevik explains, and messages tend to get modified along the way, this is why he urges us to speak directly to as many as possible. (Barnevik, 2013 p. 156-158)

The general opinion is that communication and reaching out with information to many is difficult; “...in 100% of cases they will be different interpretations” (Respondent 14). Furthermore the respondents stresses the fact that it is vital to ask control questions to ensure that the other party has understood the message. As one of the respondents explained “It is one thing what I have said and one thing how you perceived it. Anyone who communicates is responsible for ensuring that the other understands” (Respondent 6).

“Communication is difficult when we are so different as individuals and that we remember information in different ways” (Respondent 8), it is believed by the respondents that it is important to use different kinds of communication channels. The majority believes that face-to-face is the best way to communicate mainly due to the fact that you can see the reaction and get a response at once to ensure that the other party has fully understood. Written communication is seen by some as dangerous, since many are poor at expressing themselves, which leads to conflicts and misunderstandings. The interviews showed a census that verbal communication is the best way of communication. However many respondents says that the different channels of communication complement each other and enhances communication.

Scholars shows that communication is one of the most vital parts of being a manager in order to get a well-functioning organization and subordinate- superior communication is a fundamental domain (Bisel et al., 2012; Fulk and Boyd 1991; Weick, 1987). Clampitt et al. (2000) argues that it is possible to see that a good communication strategy, about when, what and to whom to communicate tend to lead to enhanced organizational performance. According to Thomas et al., (2009) The quantity of information from top management is of importance for enabling trust among employees while the demand is rather on quality when superiors is closer to the operation to create trust in communication. Sias (2005) agrees and her studies shows that job satisfaction can be related to the quality of information that employees are given. Other studies have found that internal communication spur engagement among employees further calling for transparent and good communication between subordinate and superior (Mishra et al., 2014)
However, Fulk and Boyd (1991) mean that the research field of organizational communication lack a clear direction and further mean that it is hard to grasp the essence of the many theories that exist. They further state that the field needs to develop the existing theories due to that the information society has evolved during recent years and that the information flows today a significantly larger than before (Clampitt et al. 2000). Furthermore Clampitt et al. (2000) mean that the complexity increases the importance for managers to create a communication strategy to be successful with their communication. It is important that managers are explicit in their communication in order to get the greatest impact as possible; if you are too implicit people tend not to listen to the message. It is also vital to constantly keep people informed, employees do not want to be choked by a change or decision (Clampitt et al. 2000).

5.1.4 “Stretch targets- Ambitious Goals Should Permeate the Organization”

Barnevik believes that stretch targets are more than just a tool, that it is a mentality which should penetrate the entire organization. Barnevik further believes that stretch targets tend to lift outcomes with 3-4% and argues that this is a part of an idea of continuous improvements in budgets, quantitative goals and plans to mention a few. (Barnevik, 2013 p. 84)

It is possible to see a divergence in the respondents answer whether they believe the use of stretch targets is a good advice or not. Some mean that targets should be set high in order to enhance the employees’ performance. While other stresses the fact that; "You must feel that you can succeed" (Respondent 17). Some respondents tend to be very skeptical saying "No, that I do not buy at all!" (Respondent 2). One respondent argues that with stretch targets managers tend to be satisfied with the results even though you did not reach the target because they were so stretched. Hence, that the targets in the end does not really matter.

However the majority gave the answer that in general, targets are needed in order to give the employees guidelines and motivation as well as challenging targets to spur development. "People need to know what it is we're working for, if it gets fuzzy or unclear, you perform worse" (Respondent 6). As stated, the results from the interviews still show a great ambiguity. While many initially states that stretch targets is good and effective all then stresses that goals are not to be unreasonable at all, just a bit challenging. As well as one respondent put it “Employees may feel that the targets are difficult to reach, but you have to, as the manager, never feel that the targets are unreasonable” (Respondent 11).
Stretch targets are a response to the constantly changing business environment (Thompson et al., 1997; Sitkin et al., 2011) and is used as a method of getting ahead of the competition. Defined by Thompson et al. (1997) stretch targets is the usage of targets “...that forces organizations to significantly alter their processes” (p48) and are often considered unattainable. Compared to “ordinary difficult goals”, Sitkin et al. (2011) explain, that stretch targets are extremely difficult and impossible to reach considering the current organizational capabilities as well as they are extreme novelty which means that there is no given path to achieve them. Goals that are hard and specific have shown to generate better performance than easy and unspecific goals. According to Merchant and Manzoni (1989), most management books mean that budget goals should be achievable less than 50 percent of the time in order to work as motivation. However their study shows that many companies tend to set highly achievable goals especially when it comes to budget goals, quite the opposite of what is proposed by research.

Although stretch targets is frequently used in organizations, Locke and Letham (1991) as well as many others, explain that unattainable targets tend be rejected by employees and add that goals only tend to alter performance when the goal is accepted by the individual. As mentioned by many e.g. Sitkin et al., (2011), stretch targets are considered to spur tangible performance, mandating creativity, spur high achievement and spark energy. Additionally, Sitkin et al. (2011) show in their study, that stretch targets tend to be most effective in organizations with high recent performances and high slack resources but tend to often be used by organizations with the opposite record with the result of ineffectiveness. They also present that those organizations that could benefit most from the usage of stretch targets are the organizations least likely to actually use them.

5.1.5 “Sense of Urgency- a Strong Sense of What Things That are Urgent”

Barnevik means that this often is a question of corporate culture. The advice regards whether one tend to consider solutions and actions that might require some extra effort and time, considering that the specific phenomenon is of great importance to the company. (Barnevik, 2013 p. 22-24)

The majority of the respondents agrees with the advice and further argues that prioritizing, time management and communicating what is urgent for the organization is vital. It is about getting employees to understand what the organization do and why and to make employees sense this themselves. One respondent explained it as follows of what is important; “…to get all employees to work
with what is important urgent and prioritized, and additionally throughout the company have a consensus on what is important and a prioritized” (Respondent 14).

Furthermore some respondents stated that a sense of urgency is especially important in groups which are under pressure and that this leads to that you as a manager have to go in and say what have to be done. This because it is easy that everything becomes urgent if managers do not set any guidelines.

There are some reservations to when urgency is stressed excessively. As one respondent put it “(it is)... important to know when it is urgent, and when it is not urgent. In some corporate cultures, they say that everything is in a hurry, but this is not the case ”. One other respondent argued ”I think one should be careful not to create unnecessary stress to one’s staff” (Respondent 7).

Kotter (2008; 1995) stresses the importance of always keeping the sense of urgency in every employee's mind every day. A true sense of urgency is not driven by a belief of that all is well and neither that a chaos exists but rather by a feeling of that everything is changing and that the world contains of both great opportunities and risks. Sense of urgency can be defined as stressing the importance of creating a work group that are alert and willing to get to work, whatever comes their way. It is about acting now and making real progress every day (Kotter, 2008) However, separate meanings exist regarding that a high sense of urgency during a long period of time can have a negative effect, due to that a high sense of urgency often is connected to being very alert and thus having a higher stress level. Furthermore Kotter (2008; 1995) means that a true sense of urgency is something one has to create and it is important that it runs throughout the entire organization as an attitude towards working energetically and accomplish things not just deciding what eventually should be accomplished.

Ryan (2009) declares that panic is the dark side of urgency where we tend to focus more on short term solutions than long-term success. The challenge managers are confronted with according to Ryan (2009) is how to keep employees not focusing on only ‘staying in the game’ but to constantly get better. Calling for a sense of urgency is considered the starting point.

Although firm research are lacking in the field of urgency, related areas such as prioritizing has a more extensive research base arguing that to many priorities means no priorities at all (Brown, 2013). However it is important to acknowledge the lack of current research in this field and that most things written about urgency is from other so called Gurus, thus conclusions about whether sense of urgency is an advantage or disadvantage cannot be drawn.
5.1.6 “Overflow of Reports - Do Not Drown Employees with Demands to Report”

Barnevik argues that managers’ at large companies have tendencies to demand many reports from their employees. Furthermore, by demanding that the top management team confirms each report, Barnevik believes it is possible to minimize the stream of them. He also believes that line managers should test to not send in a report, if there is not too much fuss about its absence it should be considered not necessary. (Barnevik, 2013 p94)

The majority of the respondents agree with this advice that over-reporting is not something that should occur. However all respondents says that reports is an important factor “...to know where we are going” (Respondent 15). Though, as one respondent put it “...too many details and too much information-it does not help” (Respondent 14) and many respondents have similar beliefs. The greater part of the respondents said that it exist a lot of demands on reports and further gave various reasons on why, one respondent said: “...it depends a lot on the corporate culture” (Respondent 5), while one other meant that “uncertainty of knowing whether people deliver or not” (Respondent 7), leads to a demand of reports.

The respondents mention several things that is important to report and some themes are visible; mistakes, potential risks, key figures and whether you have reached your targets are important to report “...you must report so that there are no surprises for top management“ (Respondent 7). The respondent further argued that it is vital to know; "What kind of reports do I need to control my organization”(Respondent 7). The majority of the respondents further argue that reports should be followed up and evaluated and if they are not they are not important and should not be ordered.

The respondents comments can be concluded by; “It takes time to fill out a report, you should therefore avoid too many reports“ and that “reports must be simple, and technically easy” (Respondent 2).

The issue of drenching your employees in reporting demands could be traced back to information overload (Epstein, 2007). Information overload is a well-known phenomenon that research has shown has severe effects on employees’ ability to manage their jobs and according to Mc Whorter (2003) studies have further shown that information, which is known to be irrelevant, still is considered in decision making. Additionally, Chewning and Harrell (1990) explain information processing capabilities and argue that at a certain point new additional information does not enhance decision making. Kaplan
and Norton (1992) states “what you measures is what you get” and continues by declaring that on single measure is not enough but too many could also be confusing. They further argue that organizations have a tendency to add new measures whenever suggested from a third party. Instead they mean that performance measures should be focused, motivated and evaluated.

Additionally, the same reports cannot be used throughout the whole organization; they need to be facilitated towards the specific area it evaluates and the manager that uses it. There is a contradiction to consider as some studies (Mintzberg, 1973) shows the necessity of reports to be specific and detailed believing routine reports, annual reports etc. to be irrelevant. Although other findings suggest that routine reports is thought to be sufficient considering the extra amount of time that has to be allocated to additional and specific reports (Vlahos et. al, 2004).

5.1.7 “Globally and Locally - Think Global Act Local”

Barnevik stated this in the 1980’s explaining as a reflection of ASEA/ABB seeing it as a global federation with many home countries (Barnevik, 2013 p. 46).

A great diversity is visible in the respondents answer whether “Think global act local”, is a good advice or not. Many are of the opinion that “This is a bit of a cliché” (Respondent 2) and “The worst cliché we have!” (Respondent 7) as well as many believe it is difficult to take a stand regarding this advice. One respondent question its usefulness and says that not every company should use this advice in its specific sense as well as one other state that “One does not need this advice to guide an organization but it is absolutely useful” (Respondent 6).

One respondent explains an ambiguous view where a global demand should be translated locally. He also explains that there is often some annoyance connected to it where the central organization stresses the importance of a requirement or education but when it comes down to it, tools to facilitate the local offices are not developed why it only becomes a matter for the central organization.

However some mean that one can look at the advice from a different angle and the respondent explains that every employee should feel like they can affect the entire organization when they are doing their small part. Some respondents furthermore acknowledge the importance of being able to utilize global aspects on local products and to think big and adjust and adapt to your organization; “This thought
Think global, but act local is a classical and well discussed saying in the business world (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 2002). The intention of the approach according to Bartlett and Ghoshal (2002) and Lessam and Schiefer (2009) is that companies should adopt a global viewpoint in their vision, strategy and long-term goals. However, as the second part of the advice states, it is still important to be willing to make adaptations to each local markets’ specific conditions (Lessam and Schiefer, 2009; Bartlett and Ghoshal 2002). In order for an organization to successfully use this approach the organizational structure is vital, this according to Greenwood et al. (2010). Companies need to create a corporate culture, infrastructure and processes that enable to work cohesive across borders.

The subject of “thinking global and acting local” can also be connected to Johanson and Vahlne (1977) discussion regarding knowledge about commitments in foreign markets. They mean that knowledge about and adaptations to the local markets are vital in the internationalization process. Johanson and Vahlne (1977) further state that to what extent a company is adapting is affected by how committed it is to the market. The commitment level is dependent on several factors e.g. on what resources the market has to offer.

5.1.8 “Meetings - Often Horrible Time Consumers and Responsibility Dissolvers“

Barnevik argues that meetings are a phenomenon which tends to consume a lot of time and that it gets worse for each year that passes. Therefore, Barnevik proposes tips to make meetings more efficient involving a time limit, aim, action plan and responsibility. He also means that it is important to gather people who only necessarily need to be there as well as he urge people to not go to meetings if you do not believe you have to be there. (Barnevik, 2013 p. 68)

“Meetings are important, but should be used wisely” (Respondent 17). This quote summarizes the opinion of the majority of the respondents. However to what extent they agreed varied among them. Some meant that; “There is some truth in the advice...” (Respondent 4) while others stated; “I agree with this advice to a great extent” (Respondent 2). One respondent (Respondent 16) did not agree at all with the advice and further stated that she wanted more meetings. While another respondent stated that

should be a part of everything we do //...// in a global organization there are a lot of internal collaborations” (Respondent 24).
some meetings were unnecessary, especially those where one discusses decisions; "I am the manager and make the decisions, I do not need a meeting to do so" (Respondent 12).

A common opinion was that it always should exist a clear purpose of the meeting, what one expects to get out from the meeting. "... I hate meetings that do not lead to anything" (Respondent 6). One respondent always asked himself before meetings; "... what do I get out of this?" (Respondent 12) and also stated that he expected the same from his colleagues. Many respondents further argued that meetings revolving around just one question are a good idea. Respondents also stressed that the time limit is of great importance.

What is possible to say is that the respondents seek short and effective meetings. One respondent stated that "Half of my time is lost in meetings ..." (Respondent 11) and wanted shorter meetings to get more time to do other tasks. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents believed that; “It is disrespectful to summon everyone to all meetings” (Respondent 17) as one respondent put it. The greater part of the respondents also meant that one should dare to turn down invitations to meetings. However some stated that this was hard to do, especially as a new manager but also due to the need of control and a sense of feeling important when attending meetings.

Employees and managers tend to spend a lot of their working hours in meetings and it is further discussed that time spent attending meetings only are going to increase in the future (Rogelberg et al., 2006). Scott et al., (2012) found that as much as 23 hours per week was spent in meetings by senior managers.

Meetings can be seen as an organizational tool to help achieving goals and objectives and although there are positive outcomes much research is focused on the negative aspects of them (Scott et al., 2012). The theoretical foundation is mainly derived from what has been written about interruption but it is acknowledged that meetings are a unique phenomenon. Consequently it has been shown that dissatisfaction with meetings affects both attitudes as well as well-being among employees. Meetings aims to manage several purposes; exchanging information, solving problems and making decisions to mention a few but whether meetings lead to meeting satisfaction and success is not always the case (Scott et al., 2012). In fact a study by Kauffield and Lehmann-Willenbrock (2011) shows that dysfunctional communications at meetings such as complaints and critic resulted in negative relationships towards meetings. They also found that meetings which focused on positive and proactive
communication and problem solving resulted in higher levels of meeting satisfaction. Interesting to acknowledge from their study is that only a minimal part of the studied meetings was focused on action planning and rather on negative communication affecting meeting satisfaction and success (Kauffeld and Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2011).

5.1.9 “Change is Necessary - the Obstacle is Resistance From People“

Barnevik explains that if you do not continuously keeps moving forward and change you will perish. He also states that it is about prioritize what changes that is necessary and what changes that could wait. Barnevik has experienced many situations where employees and companies look upon changes as something negative and where they often tend to be fed up with changes. He has acknowledged that and argues that it is important to show employees that change is possible and important. (Barnevik, 2013 p. 43-45)

All the respondents agreed with the part of the advice regarding that change is necessary. As one respondent stated; “It is not the largest companies that succeed today, it is the ones that are able to make changes“ (Respondent 2). The respondents further meant that the business environment today demands larger changes than before.

However the opinions about whether greatest obstacle is peoples’ resistance were not cohesive. Some respondents agreed saying that "People are pretty conservative ..." (Respondent 7). While others were not that convinced arguing; “I feel like that in general the attitude towards change is negative, but if you help the employees cross the border, most of them will turn and like the change in the end.” (Respondent 15). One respondent wanted to change the second part of the advice and explained that if you put too much focus on the ones that are against the change, you will lose the ones that want to lead the change. Furthermore she said that the people that are against might get more people on their side, additionally saying "Invest in those who want to change..." (Respondent 17).

The larger part of the respondents said that it is important to see the individuals, that one has to give the employees time to adjust to change and further argued that communication is a vital part of change. Consequently the majority of the respondents also talk about the manager’s role during change, the manager has to back up the change, and also that it is the role of the manager to lead the way through the change. However one respondent pointed out; “It often exist a gap between the managers and the
employees...” (Respondent 1), the managers have had more time to adjust to the change than the employees.

One other respondent (Respondent 17) said that one cannot just blame people and their resistance if a change is hard to implement. She argued that organizations are becoming more complex and this now makes it harder to change. Hence it is important to evaluate what the problem is if a change is hard to implement. Lastly one respondent argued that even things that work today have to change as you cannot possibly know if it will work better after the change. The respondent further stated that you can always go back to how things were if the change turned out not to be better.

Managers and organizations are constantly faced with changes, big and small; they are often necessary and unavoidable. Thus it is important that managers have awareness of possible obstacles and a clear strategy on how to handle them. Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) present a model to analyze change, which according to them, is especially helpful for managers that need to understand where and why resistance against change might occur among employees. One can see in their study, that the employees’ organizational commitment, job satisfaction, level of depression, anxiety, and exhaustion etc. affects how and why they react to change (Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999). Furthermore Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) mean that the way managers communicate with their employees and how they act, if they are involved or distance themselves also affect how well a change is implemented in an organization. Stensaker and Meyer (2011) among others further have found that resistance often is a result of whether or not the employees have experience in change since before and thus mean that experience minimizes resistance to change.

Weick and Quinn (1999) in their review of change research found that the challenge is to obtain acceptance to continuous change throughout the organization and that it is rather a switch in vocabulary from change to changing. It has been shown that change is rather a phenomenon that is never off rather than changing one thing to another.

According to Goldberg and Dent (1999) resistance to change is considered the most widely accepted mental model and furthermore not much in academia has happened these last decades since it was ‘introduced’ by Kurt Lewin in 1979. They further argue that this is an inherent assumption and an established concept. While a majority of the literature concludes the resistance is solely upon the subordinate and that managers need to meet this ‘inappropriate reaction’ Dent and Goldberg (1999)
propose that resistance to change rather is about the system or way of implementation than the individual.

5.1.10 “Risk Taking is Inevitable but Have to Be Controlled”

Barnevik argues that the greatest risk is not taking risks at all. However, risks are something humans in general want to minimize due to fear of failure. Barnevik explains that in situations where risks fall out well it do not gain the same attention as when riskful decisions fall out bad. In the latter case the decision maker may suffer severe consequences leading to a risk averse culture where employees do not dare to try new approaches if the risk is not forced from top management. (Barnevik, 2013 p. 132-133)

"If you do not dare to take the next step, chances are that you will be standing in the same place your whole life." (Respondent 6).

All the respondents agreed that risks are necessary and hard to avoid. “One has to take risks.” (Respondent 1). However it was possible to see a difference regarding how they resonate around risks and what kind of risks the managers were willing to take. According to the respondents there are areas to be more risk-taking, but the majority was clear about; “One cannot endanger third parties” (Respondent 15). Some respondents reasoned that every change comes with a risk. Others meant that; "To succeed you have to take risks...” (Respondent 5) while other answer that; “...being reckless is not interesting, but the risks are chances” (Respondent 4). Some census was found about that it is more important to act than not to act at all. Furthermore the respondents meant that as a manager you make a series of decisions and one cannot expect that all will turn out well.

Some meant that how willing one is to take risks can be affected by how long you have worked as a manager. One respondent said that; “I'm getting more experienced now and dare to take more risks than a younger and more inexperienced leader” (Respondent 12). One other respondent explained that, you have to know your business well enough to know where you can take risks "You have to know what kind of risk you take" (Respondent 8).

In conclusion the general idea where, one need to monitor the risks, if it regards few people, little money, then go for it. Otherwise you have to really assess and think about it first.

Despite the fact that managing risk is one of the most important activities for almost all organizations, it is hard to find a commonly accepted definition for the term risk neither in the field of management
research nor in public understanding (Miller, 1992; Renn, 1998). However Renn (1998) states that a common denominator can be found in all definitions - the differentiation between reality and possibility. Miller (1992) means that risk generally is associated to something negative and that all definitions uses the concept uncertainty. The concept of risk management according to Renn (1998) is that you are able to reduce the risk to a level tolerable by society as well as to ensure control, monitoring and communication. Additionally several kinds of risk management models and tools can be found to use in an organization in order to get control over its risks (Miller, 1992) and recent year have seen an increasing interest in risk management in general (Arena and Arnaboldi., 2010).

Renn (1998) state that it is possible to paraphrase the definitions of risk into three questions: “What are undesirable outcomes and who determines what undesirable means? How can we specify, qualify or quantify the possibilities of undesirable outcomes? How do we aggregate different classes of undesirable outcomes into a common concept that allows comparisons and the setting of priorities?” (Renn, 1998 p.51). Risk behavior is explained by Slovic et al., (2004) is a combination of risk as feelings and risk as analysis, instincts and rationality. They argue that knowing this is vital in in how to manage it.
5.2 Is there any Cohesiveness to be Found?

Above a discussion from each perspective have been presented and to proceed our study towards answering whether any cohesiveness is visible an analysis have been necessary. Comparing and contrasting the findings from Percy Barnevik, practitioners and researchers the following relationships have been concluded about what level of cohesiveness each advice presents.

Table 2: Level of Cohesiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Advice</th>
<th>Level of Cohesiveness Barnevik- Practitioners</th>
<th>Level of Cohesiveness Barnevik- Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delegate does not mean abdicate</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk the talk- be a role model in every area</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication - it is hard to reach out- talk to many</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stretch targets- Ambitious goals should permeate the organization</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of urgency- a strong sense of what things are urgent</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overflow of reports- do not drown employees with demands to report</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globally and locally - Think global act local</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings - often horrible time consumers and responsibility dissolvers</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change is necessary - the obstacle are resistance from people</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Taking is inevitable but have to be controlled</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compounded level of cohesiveness</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 show the level of cohesiveness the practitioners and management research had with Barnevik (2013) advice according to the empirical findings from the interview study and literature review.

As table 2 shows, the practitioners did not always agree with Barnevik. In two cases the level of cohesiveness was medium and in two cases the level of cohesiveness was low, where practitioners are more hesitant and even disagrees with Barnevik. Contrary, management research showed three cases with high level of cohesiveness and one case with low level of cohesiveness. Thus, there is no absolute cohesiveness to be found between neither practitioners and Barnevik nor management researchers and Barnevik. Though, it is more prominent among the practitioners’ answers and Barnevik’s advice.

With the help of table 2 it is possible to see that the majority of the practitioners compared to research have a different level of cohesiveness with Barnevik regarding the studied advice. Practitioners, in six out of ten advice, tend to a high degree agree with Barnevik and argues for the advice usefulness.
Considerably more often than between management research and Barnevik who shows medium level of cohesiveness in six out of ten advice calling for a more hesitant approach to the advice.

There are three advice that have equal level of cohesiveness comparing practitioners and Barnevik versus management research and Barnevik. Two of them have a high level of cohesiveness from both practitioners and management research. Thus practitioners can be expected to act according to what research argues in these cases. Additionally, it is notable that it exists a gap between management research and practitioners regarding one advice, thinking global and acting local, where research support Barnevik’s stance while practitioners believe that this advice is an cliché. Also, there are advice where research, practitioners and Barnevik all present a high cohesive understanding. Though, these advice are stated in a negative sentiment; “overflow of reports” and “risk taking have to be controlled” why cohesiveness is expected.

As previously mentioned, it is possible to see that the majority of the answers from the practitioners generate a high cohesiveness to Barnevik’s advice, whilst the majority of the answers from the researcher generate a medium level of cohesiveness. Hence a conclusion can be drawn regarding that management research tend to have a more diverse picture of how things supposed to be, whilst Barnevik and the practitioners tend to be more determined in their opinions.
6. Is Percy Barnevik a Good Source of Evidence and Advice?

The aim with this thesis was to with the help Percy Barnevik’s 200 advice, generate a picture of how well this type of management literature is connected to management research and practice, further whether Guru Theories are a good platform of generating evidence. Our research questions of this study were; Are Percy Barnevik’s advice on one hand anchored in practitioners’ way of thinking and operating, and on the other hand are they anchored in management research? Furthermore do researchers and practitioners have a cohesive view regarding if Percy Barnevik’s management advice are useful or not?

6.1 Are The Advice Relevant as They Lack Rigorous Research?

Barnevik’s advice lack references to management research or other studies and the advice solely draws on his subjective thoughts of what he believes are accurate methods to enhance an organization’s performance and managerial decisions. How relevant are the advice, as they lack rigorous research to support their effectiveness? Could his many years as a successful leader gain him legitimacy and could his advice be considered valid evidence within the management field? The answer to whether Barnevik is a valid source of evidence can potentially be drawn from how well anchored and cohesive his advice is to current management research. There are some hesitation and ambiguity in whether Barnevik can generate evidence. While there certainly are cohesiveness to be found we can question if this is enough cohesiveness to validate Barnevik’s advice as evidence. In the discussion of what constitute evidence scholars (Vermeulen, 2005) argue that evidence can only be created as result from extensive and rigorous research. Leaning against this discussion, Barnevik’s advice should not to be trusted and should not be used as guidelines in managerial situations and decisions.

Though, cohesiveness is still found in many of his advice comparing them to current research. Which raise further questions regarding what could possibly count as evidence and what is needed to back up a statement and make it valid in today’s discourse in management theories. Is it possible to consider a successful track record as a manager in four decades as equivalent to evidence from scientific research? How accurate does an advice have to be? Can Barnevik’s many years as a manager gaining experiences from trial and errors, failure and success, legitimize him and his advice? In the wake of our research it might just do that.
Comparing Barnevik’s advice to what current management research say, we value the level of compounded cohesiveness to medium (see table 2). That the cohesiveness did not reach a high level does not necessarily mean that Barnevik is discarded but rather that management research is displaying a more dispersed view upon the concepts and methods presented by Barnevik. He tend most often not to be wrong according to the research field, he rather has a more specific and direct opinion towards the given advice when comparing them with each other. In the advice about stretch targets; “Stretch targets-Ambitious goals should permeate the organization” Barnevik argue that it is a tool and a mentality which could significantly could enhance organizational performances. Although researchers in some situations agree with this research further argue that goals should be specific, possible to reach and accepted by employees. Researches further mean that stretch targets tend to be used by organizations where stretch targets are least effective. Thus, it is possible to see that his advice is not wrong but more specific than research. Research tends to be more situational and argues for each situation’s uniqueness.

Hence, Barnevik does provide many advice, which more or less can be considered anchored in management research and to consider him as proper evidence could therefore be a possible outcome of this study. Trial and errors, failures and success could be compared to scientifically executed tests, cases and studies (Bazerman and Moore, 2009; Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006b; Rousseau, 2005). Although, with less consideration to other factors possibly affecting the outcome. This reflection may be of vital significance to whether or not Barnevik’s advice can possibly be considered as evidence or not. While rigorous research uses valid methods which handle additional factors that might affect the result in addition to the studied factor, Barnevik is influenced by them without any chance to control for its effect.

Bazerman and Moore (2009) among many others argue that managers (humans) are biased, flawed and skewed and make decisions likewise. Hence, it is important to be aware of this phenomenon when considering facts when making a decision, that a manager’s decisions accordingly are affected by biases and human errors. With this in mind Barnevik’s advice are equally biased, flawed and skewed and the evidence consequently could be and probably are too. The critique towards Guru Theory is extensive due to these circumstances, research previously have dismissed its content as distorted realities and underdeveloped theories (Micklethwait and Wooldridge’s, 1997, through Collins, 2001). Though, as Barnevik tend to present a relatively coherent picture to management research it could be considered to back up what Collins (2001) and Jackson (1996) argue about involving Guru Theories in research to generate more substantial contributions to both the research field and the practitioners.
6.2 Are Barnevik’s Advice Relevant to Practitioners?

Are Barnevik able to present relevant advice about managerial situations and decisions that practitioners find useful in their work? Our study has shown that practitioners view upon management practices is cohesive to a high level with Barnevik’s advice on leadership. As stated earlier, Barnevik present his advice in a distinct and determined way and the practitioners tend to have a similar opinion. Most advice tend by the practitioners to be considered useful and relevant to a great extent. Collins (2001) and Jackson (1996) argue that Guru Theory has become popular as it is able to recognize the need and pre-occupation of managers. This further was something that Barnevik were aiming to accomplish with this book. He argued that practical knowledge and experiences from managers were something he himself found lacking when he was in the beginning of his career as a manager (Barnevik, 2013; SVT Forum, 2013). Management research is often considered inaccessible and that its findings lack the relevance practitioners seek (Ireland and Ketchen, 2008; Baldrige et al., 2004; Eppler et al, 2011; Wolf and Rosenberg, 2012; Gualti, 2007; Glass, 1976). This tends to be visible in our study as well.

It is possible to see that practitioners, as well as Barnevik, tend to have a somewhat more clear opinion towards the advice than management research. In the advice “Walk the talk- being a role model in every area” practitioners and Barnevik argue that this of course is very important and that one always should start with oneself. Straightforward, practical advice is thus something that practitioners are demanding, which Guru Theory might be capable of giving (Collins, 2000; 2001). On the other hand research argue that role modeling is of great importance but that is varies on how experienced the employee is and thus that the manager needs to be intuitive. Hence, research presents a less clear picture than Barnevik and practitioners.

Alvesson (2011) explain that in search for unstudied areas and in an urge to close gaps in management theories the relevance of these studies to practitioners have gone lost. Have management research been focusing on the wrong things then? We, based on our findings, would say no, but that there are areas that research currently have neglected. Barnevik’s book specifically and Guru Theory in general according to (Collins, 2000; 2001) are not to be neglected, which previously have been the opinion among many academics. If Guru Theory is acknowledged in management research the advice presented by Barnevik can finally be backed up or discarded. Take for example having a “sense of urgency”. This advice is developed by John Kotter, who himself often is considered a guru and his books Guru Theory. While Barnevik and practitioners believes it is an important advice (practitioners level of cohesiveness:
medium), it is interesting to acknowledge that research is not cohesive as it is currently lacking. Like Collins (2000; 2001) and Ireland and Ketchen (2008) argue, acknowledging this kind of literature research could contribute with rigor to relevant claims. Although it have been possible to see some cohesiveness to management research, this enhance the evidence about that Barnevik’s advice are more than nonsense.

Some of Barnevik’s advice were considered fairly irrelevant among practitioners this is quite interesting due to that he, as stated before, is believed by many to be a guru on the subject. For example “Think global and act local”, which is an advice understood to be a vital concept throughout Barnevik’s career, have generated an ambivalent response among the practitioners. While most of them refer to this advice as one of the greatest clichés in the business world, they still argue it might be useful but cannot really point out to what extent. On the other hand this advice is solidly anchored in management research (see table 2 and results p. 30-31).

This brings us to the gap mentioned earlier of whether scholars are able to create rigorous research that practitioners might consider relevant (Baldrige et al., 2004; Ireland and Ketchen, 2008; Eppler et al, 2011; Wolf and Rosenberg, 2012; Gualti, 2007; Glass, 1976). While management research does argue for the advice importance to managing a global organization, practitioners tend to hesitate that it is something that has to be considered. On the other hand Barnevik who was a manager (practitioner) for many years, like research, firmly argues for its usefulness and applicability. Thus, Barnevik can constitute as giving practical example to research results and although his advice lack rigorous evidence this might be a good example to where they meet, practice and research. This brings us to a discussion of how accurate an advice has to be. It is possible that an advice just has to address one aspect and give a direct answer. Guru theory could be the media bringing action and practical examples which research often tend to miss.

6.3 The Evidence from Research- Less Determined and More Ambivalent

What is also possible to see is that management research generally tend to present an unclear opinion regarding all of the advice, that it often depends a lot on the situation and the organization if an advice is useful or not. Hence, this could be a result of management research presenting a comprehensive view with many aspects. Both Barnevik and the practitioners from our study reveal a determined opinion while management research has a more diverse and situational approach. Evidence from management research is less determined and more ambivalent calling for a greater attention from practitioners.
Our study on current research have shown that there is a great many aspect to consider and research often draws on aspects not even considered by practitioners. In the advice on meeting, “Meetings- often horrible time consumers and responsibility dissolvers” (see p. 30-31) Barnevik gives advice on how managers can create better meetings advice that practitioners to a great extent tend to agree to. Research as well agree on many of these advice but additionally draws on aspects such as attitudes and well-being among participants and that content and its meaning per se is of great importance to how meetings is perceived not only how they are conducted. We believe that this is an important argument in the discussion about rigor versus relevance. That while Barnevik’s advice can give hands on tips that practitioners tend to like, research are able to give a more comprehensive approach that includes aspects that otherwise might be overlooked. Research once again argues for the specific situations uniqueness. Even though gap-spotting (Alvesson, 2011) is blamed to minimize the relevance of the study in advantage to rigor, well executed research presents results that could be of great use to managers. The question is how to reach out.

6.4 Is Evidence Based Management a Possible Answer?

The management research field is less determined and more ambivalent calling for greater attention from practitioners. With support from opponents of Evidence-Based Management a greater focus in current research could therefore enhance managerial decisions. We argue that the suggestive result, the “fuzziness”, in management research might be due to what Alvesson (2011) calls gap spotting. That the contribution to academia is of less and less importance but also that this “fuzziness” is not considered or respected by practitioners, both as a result of neglect but also to the gap of ‘don’t knowing what they don’t know’. Consequently, as Pfeffer and Sutton (2006a) state the best managers are those who acknowledge that they do not know it all. Evidence based management (EBMgt) discuss the above complexity of involving rigorous research in the managerial decisions. The results indicates that practitioners and researchers have troubles reaching each other and although research on EBMgt’s effectiveness is currently lacking the diverse view upon specific areas point upon the usefulness of combining both a practical- and a research perspective to managerial decisions. Guru Theory like Barnevik’s book on advice tend to present a possible media which practitioners find attractive looking at both sales statistics (DTS International, 2014) and based on the responses from the interviews and the questionnaire in this study. Hence, an intermediate, which translate research findings in a pragmatic and user-friendly method could enhance managerial decisions and further legitimize the relevance of research as well as experienced based evidences. However as mentioned before and stated by Ireland
and Ketchen (2008) awareness must exist regarding that interesting advice and results does not automatically lead to good lessons and real contributions for neither practitioners nor researchers.

6.5 What Conclusions Can Be Drawn From the Study?

Based on the findings from our study we find Barnevik a relatively good source of advice and thus evidence. When studied and compared Barnevik tend to find support in research and management theories although not as varied and situational as management research. While Barnevik often gives clear and practical advice management research is more hesitant calling for greater considerations in managerial decision making.

We believe the rigor and relevance debate should be seen as vital when talking about Guru Theory. Practitioners tend to prefer specific advice and suggestions and Guru Theory are a media, which tend to be popular among managers. Our study has found that several of the advice are anchored in management research as well as the advice were found relevant by practitioners and thus that researchers have found approaches that are both relevant and rigorous. But there are gaps where management research and practice in our study do not meet. Areas, which management research currently have neglected and areas where practitioners are lacking knowledge or are neglecting the suggestive results research shows.

Our findings have created the belief that Guru Theories should be acknowledged as a valid source of information by management research. Consequently we argue that Guru Literature might be another step in closing the gap between rigor and relevance within the management research field. That practitioners were able recognize their own opinions and to say that the advice were useful is an evidence and gives an indication that his advice are not just nonsense. Consequently considered to provide further indications of that Guru Theories should have a greater place in management research. We argue that Guru Theories exists as a hint in the right direction and as potential tool in translating management research findings to practical examples although not as a universal solution. We further mean that it is as vital for practitioners to realize their limitations as it is for management researchers to see its potential.

To conclude we believe, based on our findings that Percy Barnevik’s advice could be useful as the results indicated support from both practitioners and the management research field. We further argue that management researchers should consider Guru Theory rather than discard it. This we believe could generate relevant research contributions to practitioners and add rigor to an unscientific field of theories.
7. Potential Questions for Further Discussion and Research

This study only looked into the practitioner’s thoughts and opinion, thus it might be interesting to create a more elaborate study that really investigates whether the managers really do as they say. Is it possible to see the advice used in practice?

It further could be interesting to remake the study but with another set of advice from Percy Barnevik and by doing so answer the question that is impossible not to ask; if another set of advice from Percy Barnevik, would lead to other results? It is also possible to find incentives to investigate; if one would be able to get the same result if one uses management advice written by someone else than Percy Barnevik?

Additionally it might also be interesting to create a more general study concerning the gap between management theory and practice. One possible question to ask could be; considering the gap in theoretical and empirical research and the popular scientific publications the question is whether the advice and narrations that are provided to readers are accurate?

The field on Guru Theory is extensive and continuously growing. As the interest, based on sales statistics, tend to be huge it could be interesting to extend the research to include different kinds of Guru Literature to see if there are any similarities or differences. The discourse regarding rigor and relevance we believe enhance the importance of these types of studies.
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**Method References**


# Appendix 1  Questionnaire

### Question 1. "Delegate does not mean abdication" - The closer the business decisions are made, the better

According to Your experience as a manager do you think this advice is useful?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

According to Your experience as a manager to what extent do you think this advice is relevant for controlling an organization?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>To some extent</th>
<th>To a great extent</th>
<th>To a very great extent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
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</table>

### Question 2. "Walk the talk, be yourself a role model in all areas" - be a role model for the employees and act in accordance with what you urging others to do.

According to Your experience as a manager do you think this advice is useful?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I do not know</th>
</tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Question 3. "Communication-hard to reach out - talk to many" - Do not underestimate the difficulty of reaching out to many employees with important messages.

According to Your experience as a manager do you think this advice is useful?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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</tr>
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</table>

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</table>
Question 4. "Stretch targets, ambitious targets should permeate the company" - A certain degree of unreasonableness is required in order to succeed and raise beyond the ordinary

According to Your experience as a manager do you think this advice is useful?

Yes  No  I do not know

According to Your experience as a manager to what extent do you think this advice is relevant for controlling an organization?

Not at all  To some extent  To a great extent  To a very great extent  I do not know

O  O  O  O  O

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Question 5. "Sense of urgency-a strong sense of that things are keen '-' Should penetrate the organization from the top to the grassroots.

According to Your experience as a manager do you think this advice is useful?

Yes  No  I do not know

According to Your experience as a manager to what extent do you think this advice is relevant for controlling an organization?

Not at all  To some extent  To a great extent  To a very great extent  I do not know

O  O  O  O  O

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Question 6. "Over Reporting-do not drown the line people with reporting requirements" - Companies with large staffs risk to submerge the employees with excessive reporting demands.

According to Your experience as a manager do you think this advice is useful?

Yes  No  I do not know

According to Your experience as a manager to what extent do you think this advice is relevant for controlling an organization?

Not at all  To some extent  To a great extent  To a very great extent  I do not know

O  O  O  O  O
Question 7. "Global and Local - Think globally and act locally"

According to Your experience as a manager do you think this advice is useful?

Yes  No  I do not know

According to Your experience as a manager to what extent do you think this advice is relevant for controlling an organization?

Not at all  To some extent  To a great extent  To a very great extent  I do not know

O  O  O  O  O

Question 8. "Meetings-often terrible time destroyers and responsibility resolver." Do not invite people to meetings if they do not necessarily have to participate

According to Your experience as a manager do you think this advice is useful?

Yes  No  I do not know

According to Your experience as a manager to what extent do you think this advice is relevant for controlling an organization?

Not at all  To some extent  To a great extent  To a very great extent  I do not know

O  O  O  O  O

Question 9. "Change is necessary, the obstacle is people's resistance" - Change is inevitable, you have to move forward.

According to Your experience as a manager do you think this advice is useful?

Yes  No  I do not know

According to Your experience as a manager to what extent do you think this advice is relevant for controlling an organization?

Not at all  To some extent  To a great extent  To a very great extent  I do not know

O  O  O  O  O
Question 10. "Risk-taking is inevitable but must be controlled" - in order to succeed, one must take risks. The greatest risk is to take no risk at all.

According to Your experience as a manager do you think this advice is useful?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
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<th>I do not know</th>
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### Appendix 2  List of Respondents

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<tr>
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<td>Respondent 6</td>
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