How can Lean contribute to create effective meetings?
A case study at Ericsson in Borås

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Abstract

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Lean is a philosophy that has been studied extensively in recent years, and it has been successfully implemented in a number of different processes and businesses. This study aims to examine how Lean can contribute to create effective meetings, which is a topic that has received limited attention in today’s research.

Firstly, a situation analysis is done in order to identify common meeting problems at Ericsson Borås. Secondly, a comprehensive analysis is conducted concerning whether Lean is applicable on meeting processes or not. This analysis is mainly based on the five principles of Lean Thinking. Thirdly, the study investigates the potential effect of an implementation of Lean, as well as how Lean principles can be applied in order to reduce or eliminate wastes.

The result of the analysis formed the base for the development of the action plan. Subsequently, the action plan is implemented on the meeting processes by pilot testing it on three different meetings. This analysis is mainly focusing on whether the meeting problems have been eliminated or not.

Based on our research, we have perceived that almost every meeting is unique and all meeting problems we have identified do not occur at all meetings. Majority of the meeting problems were eliminated by applying Lean principles. Moreover, several respondents also expressed that Lean is a good way to give more structure to meetings, and therefore contributes to more effective meetings. However, we have noticed that principles of Lean cannot eliminate all meeting problems at Ericsson. This can be seen as minor criticism when organizations use Lean as the only solution to improve meeting processes.
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1 Background

Ericsson AB history stretches back to 1876, when the founder, Lars Magnus Ericsson, opens up a telegraph repair workshop. Today Ericsson is a world leading company in communications technology, providing equipment, software and services. The company also has over 35,000 granted patents and are the fifth-largest software company in the world. About 40% of the world’s mobile traffic uses Ericsson’s networks and equipment. (Ericsson.com, 2015)

Ericsson in Borås is a part of the business area “Business Unit Radio”. The site in Borås has currently around 1000 employees and consists of a producing, as well as a white-collar unit. The main product category is microwave links, and consists of several different products. MINI-LINK is Ericsson Borås’ highest selling product, reaching 3 million units sold totally in 2014. (Ericsson.com, 2015)

In order to compete against upcoming competitors, it has become important to invest in competence development and continuous improvements. Since 2005, one of the tools Ericsson Borås has been using to improve the efficiency of processes is Lean. Ericsson Borås is characterized by continuous capacity building, where a lot of the works are pursued in the multifunctional teams, shorter lead times for products, and continuous improvement works. Since 2006, Ericsson Borås has conducted more than 25,000 improvements and many of these have come from the employees themselves. (Ericsson.com, 2015)

According to Ericsson, their employees spend a large portion of their working hours in meetings. They also expressed that some of their meetings are perceived as ineffective. Moreover, Ericsson also believes that ineffective meetings can result in high costs for the company, since the resources and employees are not used in an optimal way. In addition, meeting processes are one of the few processes that the company has not applied Lean on. As a step in their continuous improvement work, Ericsson wants to know if Lean can be applied on their meeting processes in order to improve the company’s meetings. The purpose of the study is to investigate this issue.

Through a literature review, it is found that the research about Lean is well spread and the philosophy has been applied in several areas. The literature review also shows there are research done about meetings as well, although it is limited. However, we have found limited research that highlights an implementation of Lean on meeting processes. We will now give a brief introduction of Lean and meetings, as well as presenting the research questions.

1.1 Lean

Lean is a philosophy derived from the Toyota Production System (TPS). During the early 1970s, TPS developed into one of the most efficient production system in the world. TPS originally dealt with improving efficiency and deliver products that were faultless. The concept of Lean became popular in the early 1990s when Womack and Jones launched the book "The Machine That Changed the World". Womack and Jones began to study the effects of TPS in this book, which later came to be widely known as Lean. (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012)
Furthermore, Lean can briefly be described as a philosophy that aims to rationalize an organization’s processes. The main purpose of Lean is to identify and eliminate all types of waste, which are activities that do not create any value for the customer. Even though Lean has its roots in manufacturing industry, the philosophy has been applied in many other industries such as health care, services, and fast food chains. (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012)

According to George (2003), several studies have been done to describe how an implementation of Lean affects other processes than manufacturing. These studies confirm that Lean seems to be a universal theory in order to improve organizations’ processes. As a result, more organizations are becoming more aware of this Japanese philosophy (George, 2003). This is also something that constitutes the core in this study, which aims to improve meetings by applying Lean principles.

1.2 Meetings

The meeting is a tool used by people for different purposes. A meeting can be seen as, “a communicative event involving three or more people” (Schwartzman, 1989, cited in Asmus & Svennevig, 2009, 9) and according to Asmus and Svennevig (2009, 10) the meeting is “organized and planned in advance”. The organization of the meeting involves planning the time and location where the meeting should take place. Further on, Asmus and Svennevig (2009) states an agenda is crucial when there are several purposes to fulfil during meetings. A meeting can also be divided into two categories: formal and informal meetings. A formal meeting is something that is pre-planned (Asmus & Svennevig, 2009), whereas an informal meeting is something that can arise during corridor chats for example (O’Dea, de Chazal, Saltman & Kidd, 2006).

Meetings are an important asset in organizations’ toolbox. As Rogelberg, Allen, Shanock, Scott, and Shuffler (2010, 150) states, meetings can be used as a “potentially powerful influence on firm success and its employees”. Furthermore, Tropman (2003) states that there is often a relationship between meetings and decisions. High quality decisions often require high quality meetings. In addition to decision-making, meetings can be used for problem solving, brainstorm new ideas, or to pass on information meanwhile being able to get feedback. Despite the advantages, meetings are often perceived as unproductive, ineffective, boring, and something that has to be endured. Meetings are a process, and as any other process, it can be improved (Tropman, 2003).

1.3 Purpose and studied questions

The purpose of this study is to assess if and how Lean can be applied on meeting processes in order to improve Ericsson’s meetings. To do that we need to examine the meeting structure of Ericsson, but also identify the most common meeting problems that occur.

**Studied questions**

Based on the purpose of the study, our research question is:

- *How can Lean contribute to create effective meetings?*

In order to answer the research question, a number of guiding questions were used:
• **Is Lean applicable on meeting processes and which are the obstacles?**
  It is important to examine whether Lean is applicable on meeting processes or not.

• **How is the structure of meetings at Ericsson in Borås?**
  In order to apply the Lean principles on the meeting processes, it becomes necessary to perform an analysis of the current meeting structures.

• **What are the current meeting problems that emerge during the meeting process?**
  Problems emerging during meetings vary from different organization, as well as from one kind of meeting to another. In order to formulate an action plan it is necessary to identify current problems.

• **How can Lean be used to eliminate the problems within the meeting processes?**
  When all the problems and the cause of them have been identified, Lean can be used to eliminate them.

1.4 **Limitations**

Implementation of Lean on meeting processes will only take place at Ericsson in Borås. There are different types of meetings in the company: decision meetings, information meetings, problem solving meetings, as well as review meetings. However, due to time limitation and different structures of meetings, this study will be limited to investigate decisions meetings, information meetings and problem solving meetings. Moreover, the company already applies Lean to some extent on their review meetings. The study will be undertaken primarily in selected departments within Ericsson and focuses only on the formal meetings. The main reason to study formal meetings is due to clearness of structures of these meetings.
2 Theory

In this chapter, both theories about Lean and meetings will be presented. When it comes to Lean, the chapter is mainly focusing on Lean Thinking, Lean Service, Principles of Lean Production, as well as challenges to implement Lean into services.

The section about meetings mainly covers different steps that are involved in a meeting, and describes different methods to achieve meeting efficiency. Moreover, this section also describes common meeting problems that usually occur at different organizations.

2.1 Lean

Lean aims to maximize customer value while eliminating all types of waste. According to Womack and Jones (2003), it is critical to identify the different activities and processes, which are called value streams in Lean. Womack and Jones (2003) also define a Lean business in a five-step process: (1) defining customer value, (2) defining the value stream, (3) make the value flow, (4) make to order, and (5) a company culture where everyone strives for perfection. In order to manage Lean philosophy, it becomes important to focus getting the products to flow constantly through a “one piece flow”. Furthermore, it is necessary to apply a pull system that can deliver products or services based on customer needs, but also a company culture where everyone strives for continuous improvements.

Lean philosophy has been described in various ways. Modig and Åhlström (2011) argue that Lean aims to increase the flow efficiency rather than trying to improve the resource efficiency, where the resource efficiency means that the focus is on using resources efficiently. Flow efficiency can be defined as total time of all value-adding activities in the value stream in relation to the total throughput time. In other words, the perspective of the flow unit defines flow efficiency. (Modig & Åhlström, 2011)

Processes exist in all organizations. It might be material in an automotive industry or information in a communal organization. The processes and activities are defined by the movement of the flow unit. Some activities in the process are value adding, but not all of them. For instance, people waiting for material can be seen as a non-value adding activity. (Modig & Åhlström, 2011)

The first company to systematically focus on flow efficiency was Toyota. This was the most suitable choice for Toyota, since they had shortage of materials, machines and financial resources. Subsequently, the company also developed the Pull system in order to minimize waste, waiting, unnecessary movements, rework and inventories. (Modig & Åhlström, 2011)

Furthermore, Taiichi Ohno, the one who introduced TPS, illustrates the background behind the production system in the following way (Ohno, 1998 cited in Liker 2012, 25):

"All we are doing is looking at the time line from the moment the customer gives us an order to the point when we collect the cash. And we are reducing that time line by removing non-value-added wastes.”
Taiichi Ohno describes that Toyota has a completely different production philosophy compared to the American car manufacturers. While Ford and GM used mass production, economies of scale and large machines to produce components as cheaply as possible, Toyota had a small market in Japan due to the post-war era. They were forced to manufacture various types of vehicles in order to satisfy customer needs. Flexibility was therefore the core of their business. In addition, Toyota made an important discovery: minimal throughput times and flexible production lines resulted in higher quality, increased customer satisfaction, higher productivity, as well as increased utilization of equipment. (Liker, 2012)

2.1.1 Lean Thinking

According to Womack and Jones (2003), there are five principles that must be met in order to implement Lean in an organization. These principles have a strategic perspective and are the following five: specify value, identify the value stream, let the value stream flow, use “Pull” instead of “Push”, as well as working towards perfection. Moreover, Womack and Jones (2003) argue that the five principles should be implemented in sequence in order to achieve Lean thinking. The five principles and the sequence are illustrated in Figure 2.1.1.

![Figure 2.1.1 five principles of Lean (Lean Enterprise Institute, 2015)](image)

2.1.1.1 Value

Lean thinking is about delivering value to customer’s demand. The first step in the process of becoming a Lean organization is to identify activities that create value within the organization. This is mainly done by starting with the customers and identifies what they consider value is for them. By considering the value creation through customer’s perspective, it will be easier to identify the processes that actually contribute to create value. All the other processes are considered to create waste. It is a common obstacle that organizations fail to describe who the customer is, and what the value is for them. Consequently, these companies will run into a high risk that many of the processes at the company use resources without contributing to the value creation process. (Womack & Jones, 2003)
2.1.1.2 The Value Stream

Lean thinking is about delivering value according to the customer’s demand. The first step in the process of becoming a Lean organization is to identify activities that create value within the organization. This is mainly done by starting with the customers and identifies what they consider value is for them. By considering the value creation through customer’s perspective, it will be easier to identify the processes that actually contribute to create value. All the other processes are considered to create waste. It is a common obstacle that organizations fail to describe who the customer is, and what the value is for them. Consequently, these companies will run into a high risk that many of the processes at the company use resources without contributing to the value creation process. (Womack & Jones, 2003)

2.1.1.3 Flow

The third step in order to become a Lean organization is to focus on getting value stream flow smoothly through the processes. According to Womack and Jones (2003), it is important to focus on the actual object in terms of the specific design, the specific order, and the product itself. Once those things have been made, the next step is to ignore the traditional boundaries of jobs, careers and functions, and remove all obstacles in order to reach continuous flow of the specific product. The last step in this principle is to rethink particular work practices and tools. In order to get a continuous flow it is vital to eliminate several factors, such as backflows, scrap, and all types of stoppages. In other words, the aim is to have a flow where the buffer stock is as low as possible in the process, and avoid large peaks and declines in internal demand for products. Womack and Jones (2003) also argue that these three steps must be taken simultaneously. This approach is totally different compared to the traditional production process, and the focus in this principle is to let value stream flow smoothly.

2.1.1.4 Pull

Womack and Jones (2003) mention that any organization can introduce flow in any activity. Nonetheless, if organizations use Lean principles in order to make unwanted products flow faster, it will only create additional wastes. How can you make sure that you deliver products or services when people really want them? Pull is the solution, as well as the fourth principle. In order to get a good understanding of this principle, it is necessary to explain both Push and Pull.

Push system means that a company produces as much as possible. The focus is to “push” products out of the production. Therefore, it is important to have a high utilization of machines. As a result, you often get a large buffer stocks as well as finished goods inventory to cover customer demand. (Liker, 2012)

Pull system can be described as an opposite way of producing products or services. In other words, the focus is to build a flow through production. The production starts only when the customer sets an order. This order is then passed back through the production process until it reaches the first stage where the production starts. It means that the customer demand controls the start of the production. (Womack & Jones, 2003)
2.1.1.5 Perfection

The fifth and final principle is to bring perfection onto surface, so the improvements can be visible for the whole organization. Continuous improvement is another important aspect in order to reach perfection. It means constant pursuit of perfection by small and incremental improvements. All employees should be involved in the improvement process, because different employees can contribute by identifying opportunities for improvements that can be difficult to find by a number of people. Perfection is something that is impossible to achieve; however, the most important thing is to strive towards it and aim for improvements. Furthermore, standardizing processes makes it easier for organizations to see where the error occurs and what can be improved, which is vital in order to achieve perfection. (Womack & Jones, 2003)

2.1.2 Principles of Lean Production

In addition to the five principles mentioned in Lean Thinking, there are also a number of principles related to Lean Production. These principles have an operational focus, but can also be applied in other areas than production. Following principles are mentioned by Åhlström (2004) and Liker (2012): elimination of wastes, zero defects, multifunctional teams, decentralization of responsibilities, vertical information systems, standardization, and continuous improvements.

2.1.2.1 Elimination of wastes

In order to create value for the customer, it is critical to identify and eliminate wastes. Liker (2012) describes the 7+1 wastes as over-production, waiting, transportation, over-processing, inventory, motion, defects and non-used employee talent.

Waste #1: Over-production

Producing more than needed, which creates waste through excess inventory. Excess inventory also creates unnecessary transports and stock-keeping. This waste is normally classified as the most serious of them all.

Waste #2: Waiting

Waiting for something to happen and thus create no value for the customer. This waste may be due to material shortages, production delays or other bottlenecks in the process.

Waste #3: Transportation

Unnecessary transportation is defined as a waste of resources. This type of waste exists both within the organization, from suppliers, but also the transportation to customers.

Waste #4: Over-processing

Over-processing usually occurs when the process consists of too many unnecessary activities and poor tools. Furthermore, it also occurs when the process is inefficient, partly as a result of repetitive activities.
Waste #5: Excess inventory
Excess inventory arise due to overproduction and is considered as a serious problem. It also occurs when waiting for further or future needs. Moreover, inventory is the main source where other wastes are hidden.

Waste #6: Motion
All kinds of movements an employee does during operations, for instance, looking for components, tools or resources. Walking can also be classified as waste.

Waste #7: Defects
Defects mean that the product or the service does not meet the specific requirements, and can arise when the components are incorrect. As a result, time and unnecessary costs occur when these defects are identified.

Waste (#8): Non-used employee talent
Non-used employee talent means that the organization loses ideas, solutions and improvements.

2.1.2.2 Zero defects
According to Åhlström (2004), quality is one of the most vital aspects for a Lean production system, as well as to achieve a successful implementation. To reach high productivity, it is important that all parts and products need to be fault-free from the start. Zero defects is a principle that aims to achieve high quality products in Lean production. An important part of the principle is to work proactively instead of starting to act when the fault has occurred. To be able to work proactively instead of starting to act when the fault has occurred is the shared responsibility among the employees; which means there are no specific individuals that are responsible for the quality.

2.1.2.3 Multifunctional teams
Competent employees are important when implementing Lean to an organization. Releasing the employees’ potential can be done through multifunctional teams. A multifunctional team is a group of employees that can handle different tasks in an organization or within process flows. By performing several different tasks, the workforce can be fully utilized. Another positive aspect with multifunctional teams is increased flexibility. Employees can rotate in tasks, which mean that the organization becomes more flexible and is therefore less dependent on particular individuals. (Åhlström, 2004)

2.1.2.4 Decentralization of responsibilities
Decentralization can be defined as a process of transferring and assigning decisive power to lower levels of an organizational hierarchy. This means that knowledge, information, and ideas are starting from lower levels, and then proceed to higher levels in the organization. Furthermore, multifunctional teams are a prerequisite in order for decentralization to be possible, since more employees need to have knowledge in several areas in an organization. Decentralization often leads to increased quality, since more employees have an understanding of different process flows and have a shared responsibility of the quality.
Another positive aspect is that the number of fast decisions increases. In a decentralized organization, decisions can be made quickly when there is a need of it, since the employees have the decisive power. (Åhlström, 2004)

2.1.2.5 Vertical information systems

According to Åhlström (2004), vertical information systems mean accurate information directly reaches the decision makers. Vertical information systems make it easier for employees to understand the organization’s goals, increase the quality, and accelerate the feedback process. By using this type of information systems, it reduces the need for managers to manage various processes in detail, and thus allows the employees to get more responsibility. In order to allow employees to become more aware of the organization’s goals, it requires information systems that can perform in real-time. Moreover, Åhlström (2004) mentions the importance that the vertical information systems also can work the other way around, which means dissemination of information upwards in the organization.

2.1.2.6 Standardization

By continuously working on improvements, based on employees’ engagement and leadership that leads employees, the organization can achieve efficient value streams. Standardization is fundamental in order to achieve participation of employees, and stimulation of continuous improvements. (Liker, 2012)

2.1.2.7 Continuous improvements

Kaizen is a fundamental principle in Lean, and means continuous improvements. According to Liker (2012), continuous improvements is a process of constantly trying to make incremental improvements in order to eliminate different types of wastes, without making any radical changes. Moreover, this principle can also be described as a way to solve problems, documenting, improving processes, and focus on teamwork. (Liker, 2012). According to Santos, Wysk and Torres (2014), continuous improvement is a management philosophy which is mainly based on the suggestions of employees. In other words, organizations need to involve the employees as much as possible in order to work with continuous improvements.

2.1.3 Lean Service

The majority of today's literature regarding the Lean philosophy is based on Lean production and not Lean service. In this part, a deeper focus should be on its philosophy, implementation, and challenges that are related to Lean in a service context.

Lean service is a recent concept which originates from Lean production (Hadid & Mansouri, 2013). The concept was introduced mainly through academic literature written by Bowen and Youngdahl during 1998. Implementations of Lean in service context have similar procedure in relation to Lean production; many tools as well as techniques can be used in the same way. However, there are some significant differences and some tools can be implemented in different ways. Implementation of Lean in services sector is important to be able to reduce or eliminate operational costs, reduce time to market, and increase flexibility; as a result, it allows the organizations to quickly adapt to customer demand. (Hadid & Mansouri, 2013). Furthermore, Ikatrinasari and Haryanto (2014) state that the service industry has a 50 % - 75 % more saving potential compared to traditional processes, which can be done through shorter
lead times, continuous flow, as well as faster decisions. In other words, Lean provides effective solutions for service industry as well (Ikatrinasari & Haryanto, 2014).

Hadid and Mansour (2013) also stated that Lean has successfully been implemented in different service sectors, such as hospitals, banking, government, as well as education. On the other hand, George (2003) argues that service processes are often slow compared to production processes. Slow processes often result in poor quality, as well as expensive processes. Moreover, a mediocre service means not adding any values for the customer, which is the opposite of the Lean philosophy. A large amount of work-in-process (WIP) is the main reason why service processes are usually slow.

“Many people don’t think that service applications have setup time. But if it takes you a finite period of time to transition from serving one customer to serving another, you have setup time. Similarly, any time you delay service to one customer because it’s more convenient to continue working on your current task, you are batch processing.”

(George 2003, 46)

It is often problematic to define who the customer is during service processes; as a result, it is difficult to identify value-adding activities, as well as none-value adding activities. These complex surroundings make it even more difficult to implement Lean in a service context. (George, 2003)

2.1.4 Implementing Lean in a service context

Womack and Jones (2003) argue that it is not always essential with deep knowledge of Lean when applying the philosophy; the most important thing is the willingness to make changes.

Atkinson (2004) describes Lean as a concept, as well as a process. Whether you succeed with Lean implementation or not, it depends entirely on what benefits it can provide and how you introduce it to the employees. It is vital that the need and vision is properly introduced at the beginning, otherwise it will not be successful, no matter how well planned the change is.

When applying Lean philosophy, there are some important aspects that the managers need to consider in order to achieve full potential of Lean. Employees tend to do what “leaders” do and not what “managers” say. A leader that is influenced by Lean should have the ability to make decisions, as well as to encourage employees to make them develop. Furthermore, a working environment in a Lean organization can be described as an open information flow; in other word, Lean leaders should be good communicators and have the ability to involve all the employees. (George, 2003)

A recent study made by Burgess and Radnor (2013) shows English hospitals that have implemented Lean on their organization usually began with pilot testing in a few projects. Burgess and Radnor (2013) also believe that this strategy has become increasingly common; in other words, organizations pilot test the Lean philosophy and then decide whether to continue with the implementation or not.
Atkinson (2004) introduces four steps that can work well in order to implement Lean philosophy in an organization.

1. **Selling and Communicating the Lean Philosophy**

   The first step is to communicate the potential results and benefits of Lean, rather than specifying different tools that can be used. A common problem is that the consultants, internal and external, focusing far too much on methods rather than processes and the potential deliverables. Too often the methods are identified wrongly as the solution. In addition, many methods and tools can be considered as old and traditional way of thinking. Atkinson (2004) also mentions that consultants can sometimes overuse different terminology, in terms of “waste”, “errors”, “planning” and so on. It is better to focus on the thinking and personal values; for instance, Lean as being healthy, responsive, conserving, focused, instead of a variety of tools and methods.

2. **Management Commitment**

   An essential key factor for a successful Lean implementation is management commitment, as well as their knowledge. There are many examples where the management has been committed, but have not had the understanding of how much time and effort is required when implementing Lean. Therefore, it becomes vital that the whole organization is fully committed and understand the long process they have ahead of them. Winning the strong psychological commitment to implementation is one of the key factors and must be tied in with deliverables. (Atkinson, 2004)

3. **Design of Projects**

   When working with Lean, according to Atkinson (2004), people at all levels in the organization is required to commit to performance issues and monitor metrics developed by them. This commitment, in combination with Lean principles implemented, will result in a significant improvement for the business due to it becomes more appropriate to work on specific projects instead of a broader organizational level. Moreover, it is also important to closely lead all the events and activities that are associated with Lean. In order words, the project should involve all participants that are involved in the process or project.

   Moreover, Cross Functional Teams drive change and inspire close collaboration between different functions. Typical projects that are inspired by Lean can vary from customer service and manufacturing issues to sales, marketing, quality improvements, logistics, and supply chain issues. Atkinson (2004) argues that Lean is the best solution when it is used in environments that need a quick improvement to bring concrete results.

   How the project is designed depends on the relationship between responsible persons of the project. Responsible persons of the project need to have a dialogue with the Lean trainer in order to focus on agreeing resources and achievements. Atkinson (2004) states that the best way to fully maximize the Lean implementations is to sell the key benefits of projects, as well as show the impact Lean can have on different problems.

4. **Selling the Benefits of Lean Thinking**

   Atkinson (2004) argues that Lean is a concept and a process. It is not a collection of different techniques and methods that can be applied; instead, Lean is a philosophy that consists of different elements that interact with each other. In order to make a successful
Lean implementation, it is important to be able to sell the potential benefits that Lean can deliver. Although, the benefits must be applied to organizational measures, such as reduced defects, improved customer service, reduced lead times, increased customer satisfaction, and increase in positive business activity. In addition, organizations also need to focus on the human side of the organization. The implementation of Lean can have a powerful effect on problem solving processes. Once employees have begun to understand the process, they will start to develop a new way of looking, learning and thinking about issues that might arise.

Furthermore, Atkinson (2004) also express that an implementation of Lean in the manufacturing or the service organization, has a similar approach and effect. The main purpose of Lean is to generate a culture where Lean Thinking is the standard and where everyone seeks to do things faster, better, and reduce non-value adding activities. In other words, it is a new way of doing things.

2.1.4.1 Challenges to implement Lean into service

Corbett (2007) believes that the greatest challenge of applying Lean in a non-industrial environment is to know which tools and methods to be used in the best possible way. Everything from the culture to infrastructure means that there are certain tools that need to be used or not used at all.

George (2003) discusses that there are several complications when applying a production philosophy to a service organization. It is difficult to see an actual process of activities compared to the production industry where the actual product is visible throughout the process. In other words, if it is hard to see the process, it is even harder to make an improvement. George (2003) also mentions that there are more wastes in the service industry compared to the production industry. The cost of the service is usually affected by 30-80 % of non-value adding activities. It shows that there is a significant room for improvements in this industry.

Furthermore, George (2003) highlights two important issues to consider when applying Lean into a service context. Firstly, customers are not inventory. In order to meet customer value, a service has to be delivered when the customer wants it. It means that employees cannot pile up customer’s requests in an inventory, as people tend to do with a stack of emails. Employees must therefore fulfil the customer needs while working with continuous improvements in order to improve the current process. Secondly, complexity usually results in heavy costs for many service companies. As George (2003) argues, the more complexity a service is, the higher price has to be charged since higher work effort is needed. Therefore, service companies should focus on standardizing their processes.

Flow of processes

According to George (2003), it is difficult to identify and define the flow in the process in a service industry. In other words, the flow in the process is much less visible than in a manufacturing industry. In manufacturing industries, it is usually people who schedules and tracks the flow of material, so even if the process has not been documented in the best way someone still has a sense for the flow. The service industry usually lacks this documented flow, which means that it is impossible to know where a product is at a specific time. Consequently, it becomes harder to accurately plan the existing resources.
Lack of relevant data

As a service company often lacks a defined flow and process charts, they even lack relevant data to facilitate in making the right choices. There is often no information on how long the process takes. The same goes for common tasks; phone calls, reports, orders and so on. As a result, improvement teams need to spend a long time to map and time every process in order to increase the efficiency. (George, 2003)

“People are your major asset but they are also your major cause of variation, and they can be resistant to changes imposed on them”. (George 2003, 257)

People are not like machines. Processes of service are heavily depending on the interaction between people, both internally with the manager and externally with the customers. It is much easier, compared to the manufacturing industry, when it comes to reducing the setup time for a machine than to reduce the preparation time of the salesman. In order to reduce the salesman’s preparation time, training and education are required so the salesman can understand why changes are needed and should be performed. (George, 2003)

2.2 Meetings

2.2.1 The structure of meeting

A meeting is an event where people gather to discuss a problem, or make a decision. The meeting can be used to accomplish several tasks: creating a strategic plan, make a decision, share information, and negotiate a contract (Bostrom, Anson & Clawson, 1993). Further on, the meeting consists of different steps or phases, “A meeting is not static but includes a set of different phase” (Lantz 2001, 9) or as Tropman (2003) states, that a meeting consist of three phases: pre-meeting, meeting, and post-meeting. The different phases consist of different tasks, which need to be done properly in order to manage an effective meeting (Tropman, 2003). Combining the three phases, pre-meeting, meeting, and post-meeting, the meeting becomes one process. A meeting leader, who is responsible for the whole meeting process, manages each phase. As a result, the outcome and success of the meeting heavily depends how well the meeting leader managed each phase. However, there always exists events which cannot be fully controlled, but with a proper planning, these difficulties become easier to overcome. The outcome of a meeting depends in a large extent on the leader, and is reflected on the leader’s skill in facilitating a meeting (Ravn, 2014).

2.2.2 Pre-meeting

Pre-meeting is the first phase and consists of planning the meeting, making an agenda, sending out material, as well as inviting participants. Tropman (2003) illustrated the meeting as a dinner party, where the meeting leader is the host. Likewise the dinner party, an invitation to the meeting is required. The invitation lets participants know where the meeting is held, who is invited, when it starts and when the meeting ends. This type of information is required to be sent out; otherwise it will be difficult to perform the meeting Tropman (2003). In addition, Lantz (2001) suggests that the agenda should not be sent out too far in advance, since there is a risk that people will forget it.
To decide whom to invite, Hagerty (1990) suggests using a two-third-rule, which states that the meeting leader should only invite persons who are involved in at least two-thirds of the agenda items; otherwise it is waste of time for these persons to participate. According to Ravn (2013) the purpose of a meeting, from a meeting leader’s perspective, is to create value for stakeholders meanwhile the meeting still got a meaning for the participants. To achieve this, it becomes important that the leader does not use the meeting as a stage for his own purposes, for example, inviting participants who cannot create any value for the stakeholders (Ravn, 2013).

The invitation also needs an agenda describing the purpose and aim of the meeting, as well as required material for the meeting (Tropman, 2003). In addition, Hagerty (1990) suggests adding time allotted for each agenda item. Both Tropman (2003) and Hagerty (1990) suggests that planning the agenda thoroughly will allow the participants to have a chance to be prepared, which results in a more effective meeting. However, Nixon and Littlepage (1992) believe that an agenda is not always necessary; for example informal purposes, cover routine matters, or if other means of coordination are available. Lencioni (2004) also suggests some special meetings do not always require an agenda; the meeting can still be fulfilled in an efficient manner. However, Lencioni (2004) mentions a possibility for meetings without an agenda to go astray. A clear agenda fulfills, according to Lencioni (2004), a purpose in creating reliance for the participants, but also how the meeting leader can gain a better understanding in what a meeting entails and how to achieve the purpose. In contrast, Robin (2014) suggests that participants also have a certain responsibility prior to a meeting. To show this responsibility a participant can ask for example; an agenda, how they can help or contribute to a meeting, any preparations to do, and the purpose when invited to a meeting (Robin, 2014).

One of the reasons to send out the agenda prior to the meeting is to make sure every participant have the same understanding of the outcome in order to get a consistent meeting. One of many possible sources to inefficiency is the inconsistency between the participants in a meeting when they do not have same understanding of the outcome of a meeting (Kim & Shah, 2014). The inconsistency occurs after a meeting, when the participants have left the meeting with different understanding of, for instance, a decision, information, or a discussion (Kim & Shah, 2014). Another aspect an agenda can help is to improve the meetings is to commit participants to the meeting. According to McBride (2014, 23), setting “expectation that every one come prepared to discuss the topics on the agenda” participants becomes committed and be more effective as a team.

2.2.3 Agenda organization

The first step to organize the agenda is to gather information and topics, which are going to be discussed at the meeting. In order to manage the organization of the agenda Tropman (2003) suggests following four rules. These four rules are: the rule of halves, the rule of sixths, the rule of three fourths and rule of two thirds.

The first rule, the rule of halves, explains the importance of using deadlines in the collection of data for the next meeting. After the deadline, the meeting leader needs to sort the items and judge if it is suitable for the meeting purpose. (Tropman, 2003)
The second rule, rule of sixths, explains how to distribute the items depending on if they address the past, present or future. Items addressing the past should take up one sixth of the agenda. The major part of the meeting time, four sixths of the items, should address the present. The last one sixth of the items is a matter for future items. This time distribution helps the meeting leader to keep an updated agenda. (Tropman, 2003)

Rule number three, the rule of three fourths, refers to the material sent out before the meeting. The material should be sent as a package, containing the agenda, time, and reports. Reason to do this is to prepare the participants to be able to discuss the topic and make better decisions at the meeting. (Tropman, 2003)

The last rule, rule of two thirds, explains how to optimally allocate the meeting time depending on easy or hard decisions. The first third of time should deal with information, announcements, and easy decision, since the activity is still low among the participants. Decision and discussion that are harder and requires more of the participants should start at two thirds of the meeting. During the last part, participant starts to think about other things and shut down their activity, therefore no decisions should be planned for this part. (Tropman, 2003)

In order to effectively schedule the agenda combined with the previous mentioned rules, the “Agenda bell” can be applied (See Figure 2.4.1). The Agenda bell divides the meeting into seven categories. Each category shows how much energy a meeting participant has during the phases of a meeting. With the Agenda bell, agenda items can be planned depending on how much energy every item requires. Most meetings go through all these categories in the agenda bell, but there are exceptions at times. (Tropman, 2003). However, the agenda bell does not take in account the priority of items; which might cause problem if a difficult item is not top priority; instead a small item is priority.

![Figure 2.4.1 Agenda bell](Tropman 2003, 34)

With the help of the rule of two third and the agenda bell; meeting owners can schedule their meeting agendas in a more structured manner and make better use of the participants energy
(Tropman, 2003). In addition, according to Bostrom et al (1993, 151), an effective design of the agenda, firstly focuses on, “formulating the problem and outcomes to be addressed”. Bostrom et al (1993) suggests this will allow the meeting owner to select appropriate technology or methods to carry out each activity, thus creating more effective meetings.

2.2.4 Agenda text

The text of the agenda is important regarding the effectiveness of the meeting, since all participants only know what will happen on a meeting by reading the agenda. An agenda with topics only, will not describe everything about the upcoming meeting; therefore, participants may not be prepared for discussions or decisions. In order to inform the participants, a context for the topics is needed. The context does not have to be a long report; instead it should contain information if it is a decision or a discussion, what the meeting leader recommends, and a note for which attachment to read. With this information, no confusion about the topics may arise and the participants will be well prepared. (Tropman, 2003). In addition, Ravn (2013, 169) state it is often the topics on an agenda is, “listed as nouns, like ingredients in a recipe”. As any other recipe needs an instruction on how to use the ingredients and how to cook them, the topics on the agenda also needs to be explained “neither meals nor meetings self-organize” (Ravn 2013, 169). The topics can be self-evident for the writer in what each topic means and what to do with it, but it is not always obvious to the receiver (Ravn, 2014). Therefore should topics on the agenda have a short explanation what the topic is about rather than a one word topic.

A large portion of the materials that are sent out in advance may consist of long reports and attachments. Rather than having a long text that no one tends to read, a summary increase the chance of participants reading the information. In addition to writing short context texts, information on the importance and how urgent the item is can be added. This also helps the participants to understand what is relevant for the meeting. (Tropman, 2003)

2.2.5 The Meeting

During meetings there are several aspects to take into account as a meeting leader. During most meetings, discussions will be a part of the process. As a meeting leader it becomes important to facilitate the discussion before it go off-topic or go in circles. The agenda and purpose becomes important tool for the leader during discussions, since the discussion can be held on track and guided against the meeting objective. A poorly facilitated discussion and meeting where nothing is achieved is a waste of everyone’s time. (McBride, 2014). According to Ravn (2013), the meeting is not meant for open discussion about whatever is on our minds; instead the discussion should only contribute to create value for the stakeholders.
2.2.6 Different types of meetings

Not all meetings are of the same type or characteristic, as Lantz (2001, 7) writes, “Just as if all meetings are alike. Of course they are not”. There are some meetings purely meant for taking decisions, or to solve a task, meanwhile other meetings are for giving out information only. It becomes important, in line with the purpose and aim of the meeting, to state what type of meeting will be held. Otherwise, for example, participants might show up on a meeting ready to discuss a topic when the meeting leader wants to take a decision or hand out information. However, it is also common that meetings are a combination of different meeting types, depending on the purpose and aim of the meeting, which also becomes important to state before the meeting starts.

2.2.6.1 Information meeting

An information meeting’s main goal is to mediate information from a source to a group of people. This mediation of information can be done in several ways; for example by movies, by text or by a spokesperson. According to Lantz (2001, 8), “An information meeting is often very formal with an agenda and a planned order of speakers to present their material”. Lantz (2001) also mentions that the communication is mainly a one-way channel of information from the speaker to the audience.

2.2.6.2 Decision meeting

The purpose of a decision meeting is to make one or more decisions. The efficiency of the decision meeting depends on how the pre-meeting phase was managed. Even if the meeting was thoroughly planned, it does not provide sufficient conditions in order to execute a good decision meeting. (Tropman, 2003).

2.2.6.3 Problem solving meeting

Problem solving meetings take place when a group of people solve a problem. The problem may not necessarily be a bad thing, but rather be something that is not completed yet or something that needs improvement. Problem solving meeting can also be used to handle conflicts at times. (Creighton & Adams, 1998)

2.2.7 Post-meeting

The meeting process does not end when the meeting leader has adjourned it. Depending on what type of meeting, information that has been given out, discussion or decisions have been made. This type of data is important to save and follow up, since it will be used for later meetings or participants may have to look up the information again. Additionally, a meeting debriefing after the meeting helps out to improve following meetings. Discussing what was good and what went wrong is needed to get a better understanding in how to improve the meeting process (Tropman, 2003).
2.2.8 Typical meeting problems

When dealing with meetings, some problems may only occur once, meanwhile other seems to happen more commonly. No matter if it is a one-time problem or a common, these problems needs to be dealt with in order to improve the meeting process. Problems that occur during meetings can be divided into separate categories, structural, process, people and leadership problems (Tropman, 2003).

Structural problems arise due to unclear meeting time or location, the lack of an agenda, emergency meetings, or clear physical problems. Physical problems can for example be small rooms or too few chairs and so forth. Furthermore, there are also other problems called “check” and “trap” meetings; these meetings have no function, except to check if people are coming on time during Monday mornings or leaving too early on Friday afternoon. (Tropman, 2003)

Beside the structural problems, the actual meeting process may consist of several problems as well. These problems can be silent participants, massive negativism towards suggestions, no decisions, socializing, or improper body language (Tropman, 2003). Another problem occurring during meetings is when large amount of material is handed out at the start of the meeting, or the meeting does not start when scheduled (Tropman, 2003).

When people problems occur, it is often individuals that are singled out. It becomes easy to blame the meeting problems on them, and use them as a scapegoat. These problems may occur due to personal characteristics, but may also be triggered by process or structural problems. (Tropman, 2003)

A leader is a fundamental element in a meeting. The leader of a meeting is a central figure, and has the task to lead and manage the meeting (Tropman, 2003). Participants, who are called to a meeting, expect some kind of leadership and guidance from the meeting leader or a designated leader (Tropman, 2003). Common leadership problems can be described as following: lack of leadership, arrogant leadership, nobody is allowed to speak, loses control of the meeting, hinders the participants, and a negative attitude towards each topic (Tropman, 2003). Further on, McBride (2014, 21) writes: “the single most important thing a leader can do to improve their meeting is to improve your attitude about them”, suggesting that the leaders’ attitude and actions will affect the rest of the meeting participants.

2.2.9 Meeting efficiency

A meeting and its process can be efficient in many different ways. Depending on how meeting efficiency is defined, the assessment differs from case to case. Geimer, Leach, DeSimone, Rogelberg and Warr (2015) conducted a survey about how participants perceive meeting efficiency and categorized the results into four categories. The four categories are: People, Meeting organization, Meeting activities, and Meeting outcomes. Geimer et al (2015) define the first category, People, as behaviours and individual characteristics among participants during a meeting. The second category, Meeting organization, concerns structural factors. The third category, Meeting activities, is defined by the meeting content and purpose, and the last category, Meeting outcomes, refers to if a meeting came to a decision or not as well as work conducted outside the meeting. The study (Geimer et al, 2015) revealed that positive comments generally were about meeting as a tool and how important it is for organizational purposes; whilst negative comments were more about structural problems and
the content in a meeting. In addition, Gulliksen Stray, Lindsjoorn & Sjooberg (2013) report that the attitude against meeting has a direct effect on the perceptions of team meeting effectiveness. Gulliksen Stray et al (2013) findings reveal how difficult it can be to measure effectiveness due to many aspects can influence what perceived effectiveness is.

Moreover, Nixon and Littlepage (1992) reveal that meeting effectiveness consists of following aspects: having clear goals, committing time and energy, access to necessary information, putting decisions in writing, as well as acting upon these decisions. However, in order to increase efficiency of meetings, meeting leaders should not only study the content of a meeting. How leaders can facilitate the meeting for the participants by overlooking the whole process, should also be considered, “Facilitation is about a process - how you do something - rather than content - what you do” (Ravn 2014, 71). Further on, Ravn (2014) describes a meeting leader as an alert and active leader who guides, supports, and controls the meeting to create a value flow, thereby creating efficient meeting results.

2.3 Lack of new research and Lean Meetings

2.3.1 The absent of meeting studies

During the literature review, limited new research was found about meetings. Most of the recent articles found was how-to-do literature on how to improve your meetings and not many were backed up by empirical data or studying meetings in-depth. Ravn also points out this problem in the article “A folk theory of meetings (2013)”. Ravn exemplifies this problem in the article by using Google Scholar and searching for “research on strategy”, “research on decision making”, “research on innovation”, and “research on meetings”. While the first searches yielded thousands of hits for Ravn, the search criteria for meetings only got 69 hits (Ravn, 2013). When the same search was made by the researchers, 2015-04-19, the number of hits on “research on meetings” were 100. At the same time, this search does not tell anything about the quality of the research done either or type of document, resulting in the actual number of articles may be even lower. Ravn is not the only author who expressed this issue. Gulliksen Stray et al (2013) also write about the small amount of research concerning meeting behavior and group efficiency, even though meetings are such a common element in organizations nowadays. Further on, Gulliksen Stray et al (2013) also point out that new literature mostly describes how-to-do and what techniques to use in order to achieve effective meetings without backing it up with an empirical study.

2.3.2 Research on Lean Meetings

Lean meetings are only mentioned in articles as a concept or a term, but none of them try to define Lean meetings or study them closely. No article at all was found that only studied Lean meetings. However, one article was found which described a Lean meeting in a construction company. Barboza and Forgues (2012) made a study in how Lean can be implemented in a traditional management culture in a construction company. In the study, Barboza and Forgues implemented a method called LPS (last planner system) and one of the activities is what the company calls “Lean meetings”. Lean meetings are described by a room equipped with an electronic white board to coordinate tasks. The participants were a LPS coordinator, project manager, superintendent, health & safety coordinator, and supervisors. The meeting started by reviewing the last week’s coordination report to verify tasks; the review was followed by a presentation of the next week’s coordination report with activities. Each supervisor marked
and explained their activity plan and duration on tasks. When the meeting was finished, the coordination plan was directly printed from the electronic whiteboard, later on the finished coordination plan was emailed to all participants. Barboza and Forgues (2012) reports the main difficulties in implementing LPS were lack of training, resistance to change, and the partial and late implementation of LPS. The LPS meeting as Barboza and Forgues (2012) implemented seems to be more of a tool for improving specific meetings rather than the whole meeting process. The difficulties the implementation of LPS had according to Barboza and Forgues (2012) are similar with the general difficulties when implementing Lean. The company or participants in the project, which the study was conducted on, had no real previous experience working with Lean. In order to implement Lean on the meeting process at Ericsson, it becomes important to examine how well Lean is established at the organization. In contrast to Barboza and Forgues’s article, other articles found by searching on Google scholar for “Lean meetings”, only mentioned Lean meetings as a concept; for example, Dombrowski, Ebentreich, and Schmidtchen (2014) mention in a study that Lean meetings is a useful tool in Lean production development.

2.4 Summary of the theoretical framework

This study is based on two different theories, Lean and meeting theory. Meeting theory refers to meeting improvements regarding the structure and the process; meanwhile, Lean refers to improving different processes. At the beginning, these two theories do not have any connection, except both refers to improving processes. However, it has been more common lately to apply Lean in a service sector, which meeting is a part of. The purpose of this study is to examine whether Lean can contribute to improve meeting processes, which requires these two theories to be combined.

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<tr>
<th>Lean Thinking</th>
<th>Principles of Lean Production</th>
<th>Wastes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Identify Value</td>
<td>Elimination of Wastes</td>
<td>Over-production</td>
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<tr>
<td>Map the Value Stream</td>
<td>Zero Defects</td>
<td>Waiting</td>
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<td>Create Flow</td>
<td>Multifunctional Teams</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
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<td>Establish Pull</td>
<td>Decentralization of Responsibilities</td>
<td>Over-processing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seek Perfection</td>
<td>Vertical Information Systems</td>
<td>Excess Inventory</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Standardization</td>
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<td>Continuous Improvements</td>
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<td>Non-used Employee Talent</td>
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<th>Meeting Problems</th>
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<td>Leadership</td>
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Figure 2.4 Brief Summary of Lean and Meeting Theories
The most central part of the meeting theory is the structure of the meeting process, from the initiation of a meeting to the follow-up of a meeting. Furthermore, the theory about common meeting problems is also considered to be an important part in the meeting theory, since these meeting problems affect the meeting processes. These theories will be discussed in the following chapters; for instance, Ericsson’s meeting problems have been compared with the theory’s meeting problems during the analysis chapter, where we primarily analysed the similarities and differences.

Our Lean theory is primarily focusing on three main parts: Lean Thinking, Principles of Lean Production and Lean Service. Lean Thinking describes how Lean can be implemented in an organization by focusing on five principles. All five principles need to be met in order to implement Lean in an organization. When it comes to the theory of Principles of Lean Production, we have used these principles to reduce or eliminate meeting problems and different types of wastes. This is primarily described in the analysis chapter. Furthermore, we have also described a general explanation of Lean Service, as well as the difficulties and challenges that might arise during the implementation of Lean in the service sector.
3 Method

The following chapter describes different methods that will be used during the study. There are methods in terms of our scientific approach, as well as three different methods in order to collect the empirical data. In addition, this chapter also presents the study’s validity, reliability, bias, and a discussion of the study from an ethical perspective.

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Abductive study

According to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2008), an abductive study is a combination of inductive and deductive approaches. An abductive approach involves mixing theories and research strategies. In other words, the researcher moves between theory and empirical data, and allows the understanding emerge over time. Meanwhile, a deductive study aims to test theories with empirical data, and an inductive study aims to generate theories based on empirical data (Bryman & Nilsson, 2011). In comparison with the previous two research approaches, abduction is a process-oriented approach that considers new observations during the study. Neither one of the inductive or deductive approaches deemed to be suitable, since the aim of our study is to understand empirical information with the aid of current theories and vice versa. In addition, there is a big amount of research about Lean today and the philosophy has been applied in many different areas. However, the researchers did not find much information that highlights an implementation of Lean on meeting processes. In order to implement Lean on the meeting process, both theories need to be combined and understood. Therefore, choosing an abductive approach would allow us to move between empirical data and theories in order to get a better understanding.

3.1.2 Mixed method research

To make a situation analysis of the meetings in Ericsson, both qualitative and quantitative methods are used. Using only qualitative method, such as observations or structured interviews, does not give enough empirical data to answer the studied questions. Neither does a single quantitative method result in sufficient data for this study. Instead, a mixed method research approach is used, combining empirical data from both previous mentioned methods. According to Bryman and Nilsson (2011), the purpose of mixed method research is to fill in gaps that one single method leaves behind by combining different methods.

In this study, several non-participating observations were conducted. A non-participating observation does not reveal the meeting participants thoughts, nor does all kind of problems occur during the actual meeting. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted and are primarily used to identify issues that do not arise during the observations. However, interviews will not give all the information and data, such as how often problems occur and the correlation between different problems. In other words, the researchers have decided to use an electronic survey as a complement to the previous two methods. By combining these three methods the situation analysis will be more complete.
3.2 Study methods

3.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

Qualitative interviews are one of the methods used in order to gather information about Ericsson’s meetings. According to Bryman and Nilsson (2011), interviews are the most used method in qualitative research. Mainly, it is the flexibility interviews entails, which makes it useful in different situations. Moreover, interviews focus on respondents’ opinions, feelings and experiences. The structure of the interviews also allows respondents to move more freely in order to get insight in what they consider is relevant and important; as a result, the interview questions can differ in relative large extent.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used, which allows the researchers to develop and ask questions more freely, rather than strictly following a pre-set template of questions. However, this method requires a template to guide the researchers. This structure also allows the researchers to develop questions more deeply depending on the situation. The questions in the template (See Attachment 2) were based on the research questions. Furthermore, two researchers conducted all the interviews with one respondent at time; in other words, a total of three persons were present during all interviews. One researcher asked the questions during all the interviews, while the other researcher took notes. The reason behind this approach is to make sure that all interviews were performed in the same way. The sampling of respondents for interviews has not followed any intended structure, besides the idea to interview at least one participant and one meeting leader. However, there were some exceptions; for example some meetings were divided into a meeting leader, informants, decision makers and other participants. At the end of the meetings, interviews were made with one randomly selected respondent from each category. Further on, in the first empirical study, ten interviews were conducted. In the second empirical study, four employees were interviewed. These four people were the meeting leaders that had been chosen to do the pilot testing. Although, there were only three pilot tests in total, one of the meetings was facilitated by two meeting leaders. The pilot test evaluation interviews also followed a pre-set template (See Attachment 5).

The supervisor at Ericsson appointed the first meeting observation, and therefore the researchers had no idea who the participants were. As the interviews proceeded, people of interest were constantly revealed by respondents during interviews. This type of approach and sampling can be characterized as snowball sampling. According to Bryman and Nilsson (2011), snowball sampling is a way to initially make contact with a smaller number of people that are relevant to the study, and then use these people to get in touch with additional respondents.

There were some obstacles that aroused during the interviews. No audio recording was made; instead, the whole interview was noted by one of the researchers. This resulted that some questions had to be repeated and the wording of answers could differ at times. In addition, the researcher who took notes also got the prerogative. To counter this, both researchers could see the notes taken during the whole interview, and if anything was misinterpreted a note could be added. Another obstacle that aroused during the interviews is the difference between how the respondents answered the questions. Some answered with a few words, while others gave long explanations, which resulted in a big variation in the data collection.
3.2.2 Non-participant observations

The purpose of observation is to note how the participants behave in an environment. In other words, this method provides a more narrative description of the behavior. Furthermore, this type of observation can be applied in both a participant observation, as well as a non-participant observation. (Bryman & Nilsson, 2011)

The empirical data collection also consists of meeting observations. This type of method is primarily used to determine whether the employees, as well as the leaders’ opinions consist with the reality. The observation study was also used as a supplement to identify additional issues that respondents have not mentioned during the interviews.

Before the observational studies, the researchers generated a template (See Attachment 3) for the meeting observations. The main reason of creating meeting template is to facilitate the researchers’ work during the observations. During the meeting, the researchers observed the meetings without participating and took notes based on the template. Different aspects were observed; for instance participants’ behavior, number of participants, leadership of the leader, as well as meeting processes. In total, twelve different meeting observations were conducted before the implementation of the action plan. There were no observations made during the pilot testing due to several reasons. The lay-off (See Section 8.2.2 Ethical Discussion) at Ericsson made several meetings to be deferred, which led to a shift in the time plan. Instead, the second analysis had to rely only on interviews as a result.

3.2.3 Survey

To complement the interviews and observations with relevant data, a survey was made (See Attachment 1b). The purpose of the survey was to gather data concerning how employees perceived Ericsson’s current meetings, as well as how frequently they encountered different meeting problems. The survey questions were designed and based on the studied questions, and mainly focused on white-collar workers; in other words, the blue-collar workers such as operators and assembler were excluded. Aside from the studied questions, the common meeting problems described by Tropman (2003) were in mind. Before the survey was sent out to all respondents, it was tested on several people in order to ensure the intelligibility of the questions. The feedback from the test resulted in some minor changes in formulating the questions. Alongside the survey, a cover letter (See Attachment 1a) was sent in order to explain the purpose and aim of the study.

Ericsson’s internal poll system was meant to be used at first. However, due to its limitations in gathering data and designing the survey, Google Forms was chosen due to its simplicity. Using Google Forms had its disadvantages as well; respondents could answer the survey several times. To avoid this problem, a login was required by every single respondent. To require every respondent to login may reduce the answering frequency, and therefore the researchers chose to have the survey open and not requiring any login.
To administer the survey to the employees, a waterfall principle was used. A mail including the survey and cover letter was sent to managers at Ericsson in Borås. In this mail, they were told to pass the survey and cover letter forward to their employees. This method may be seen as unreliable since the responsibility was put on the managers, and there is no assurance that every single employee will receive this mail. Nonetheless, this waterfall principle was the most suitable alternative since there are approximately 400 white collar workers (response rate 27.25 %), and finding every employees’ mail were not possible.

3.3 Validity

Bryman and Nilsson (2011) describe internal validity as a property of scientific studies that reflects the extent of a causal conclusion based on the study’s warranty. This type of warranty constitutes by the extent to which a study reduces bias. Due to large number of interviews that will be conducted during the study, the interviews will not be recorded; as a result, the internal validity can be considered to be relatively low. Furthermore, the researchers’ interpretations of the data collection can also affect the results and conclusions. This is something that the researchers have been aware of, and have therefore tried to be as neutral as possible when it comes to interpretations of empirical data.

External validity measures whether general conclusion can be drawn from the study that is conducted. In other words, it is the extent to which the results of a study can be generalized to other organizations and people. In contrast to internal validity, external validity can be problematic for researchers by the reason of restricted selection and case studies (Bryman & Nilsson, 2011). In this study, only one organization has been investigated and therefore the external validity can be assumed as relatively low. In order to ensure the external validity, it requires several studies to be done in different organizations. However, meeting problems that have occurred during empirical collection have shown some similarities with general meetings problems that are mentioned in different literatures.

3.4 Reliability

The external reliability in a qualitative research is often hard to fulfil, since it is impossible to maintain a social environment as it were during the study (Bryman & Nilsson, 2011). However, Bryman and Nilsson (2011) mention a strategy to meet the demands of external reliability. The strategy states that researchers, who replicate an ethnographic study, need to enter the same social role as in the previous study. Since Ericsson also consists of a social environment, which is always changing and influences the meetings, it is important for future studies to know which social roles the researchers had in this study.

There is a risk in this study that the reliability might be different if the respondents changed. It may be that another organization may have other conditions and opinions regarding their meetings. In order to keep a high reliability as possible, the researchers have therefore chosen to attach the survey questions in the report. In addition, the researchers have also tried to be as clear as possible in the description of the study to once again keep a high reliability.
3.5 Bias

Bryman and Nilsson (2011) state the importance of having bias in mind when doing observation studies. How will the participants be affected by the researcher’s observation? Will their actions and behaviour change? Is there any risk that participants will be more talkative or possibly more reserved? Furthermore, bias can also occur during the selection of participants. An improper selection might mean that it does not represent the population. Bryman and Nilsson (2011) also mention that the observations generate large amounts of data; consequently, it can be problematic to connect all sorts of data and make any general conclusions. In other words, it can be difficult to see and understand the whole situation. Despite the criticism, Bryman and Nilsson (2011) emphasize that this method works best when it is combined with other methods. Observation studies are perceived as effective when it comes to investigate behaviours.

Also, the study has been delimited by focusing on Lean as the main solution to create effective meetings. This type of limitation gives the study a limited focus and not the same openness to other contributing factors. However, surveys and interviews have been designed to focus mainly on the meetings, as well as the meeting problems that might occur at Ericsson in Borås, and not particularly on Lean.

Bias may also occur during meeting observations. Even though the researchers are not actively participating during meetings, it does not mean that they are not affecting the meeting leader and other meeting participants. Some participants may become more active during the meetings in order to “show off”, while others may become nervous and less active. To make it ethically right, but also prepare the participants as much as possible, the researchers have chosen to inform these people before the meeting begins. By informing participants about the purpose of the observation, it may reduce different types of uncertainties among participants.

3.6 Ethics

3.6.1 Interviews

This study consists of both interviews on individual employees, as well as observations on groups of employees. Concerning the interviews, four basic ethical principles were used during each interview. These four ethical principles are, according to Bryman and Nilsson (2011), “Transparency of information, Consent of participation, Demand of confidentiality, Utilization of data”. The first principle, “Transparency of information”, means that each respondent has the right to know the purpose, as well as each step in the study. The second principle “Consent of participation”, gives the respondent the right to decide whether to participate or not. The third principle “Demand of confidentiality” means that collected data about participants shall be treated with as high confidentiality as possible. The last principle, “Utilization of data”, means that data collected can only be used for the research purpose. To ensure these principles were followed, the researcher asked the respondents if they wanted to participate, told them the purpose of the study, as well as that they will stay anonymous throughout the whole process. Another reason to use these ethical principles is to ensure that the respondents should feel secure in participating in interviews; otherwise there may be a risk that the respondents do not want to tell their thoughts thoroughly. Furthermore, an ethical problem may arise during interviews with meeting leaders. The interviews can be seen as an indirect way to question their approach of managing meetings. The sameethical problem may
also arise during interviews with meeting participants; questioning their way of participating
during different meetings. Therefore it is important to be transparent with the purpose of the
study and mediate that the work is built upon their reflections and opinions.

3.6.2 Observations

At the observational studies, the ethical aspect took shape a little bit different compared to the
other two methods. To keep the observed employees anonymous, no names were taken during
the observations. On the other hand, it was more difficult to keep the meeting leaders
completely anonymous, since some of the meetings always have the same meeting leader or a
unique process and purpose. Employees may recognize a mentioned meeting’s unique
processes or purpose, which we were not aware of. However, the meeting leaders will also be
anonymous for an external reader since the readers will neither be aware of the different
unique processes or purposes. In order to mediate about the anonymity, at first we asked for
permission to observe and then presented the purpose of the study and method prior to the
meeting. This made it possible to get consent from the meeting participants and leader to do
the observation. In the study, it became important to exclude individual activities which could
be connected and identified to the meeting leader or participants. Instead the meeting had to
be discussed as a whole. In addition, no names were taken in the notes during the observations
so no individuals could be identified regarding their actions.

3.6.3 Survey

When it comes to the survey, there are ethical aspects that also must be considered. The
aspects concern the same four basic principles as the interviews. To communicate the purpose
of the survey a cover letter was created (See Attachment 1a). The link to answer the survey
was embedded in the cover letter when mailed out. The cover letter also clearly stated that the
purpose was voluntarily; however, the method used to reach all employees might have been
affecting this, since the waterfall principle went through the employees’ managers. As a
result, the employees may have felt an obligatory to answer the survey or end up looking bad
in front of their manager, In addition, all the question was formulated in a way no respondent
could be identified meanwhile the cover letter stated that all respondents were anonymous.
The survey was made with Google forms, therefore all results were automatically saved on
the researchers Google accounts. There is always a risk for an external person to get their
hands on our account, but it deemed to be such a low risk and therefore Google forms could
be used for saving the data. In order to work with the results, the data was saved on our
personal company computers. The personal computers were protected by two passwords and
therefore also deemed as a safe storage for the data. It made sure no other person, except the
researchers, had access to the files or could study it. When presenting the data, it has been
selected and reworked so no unique respondent could be identified.
4 Empirical study

In this chapter, the focus is upon the company’s meetings today in terms of meeting structures and meeting processes for the different meetings. Moreover, it is also a major focus on nine common meeting problems that have been identified at Ericsson.

4.1 Meetings at Ericsson

The empirical study shows that employees spend a major part of their working hours on meetings. According to the survey (See Graph 4.1a), the majority of the employees spend 41-60% of their working hours on meetings. Opinions about meeting differs among the respondents; some employees point out that some meetings can be unnecessary and waste of time, while they stay positive about meetings as a tool and a way of working. On the other hand, some respondent were positive about meetings and stated: “Meetings are necessary”, “Meetings is the way we work”, and “Meetings are needed for a reason [...] to coordinate and how we can move forward”. However, several respondents expressed that it is much better than before regarding the meetings, meanwhile the variation still differs a lot depending on the meeting leader or meeting type.

Graph 4.1a Results of the survey question 11

The quality of the meetings differs depending on meeting type and meeting leader. There is no common structure on how meetings should be held; instead it is up to each meeting leader to decide how a meeting should be conducted. When respondents were asked if there should be any standardization, some respondents believed it could be hard to implement a general structure for every meeting, since every meeting has its own characteristic. However, they mentioned it would be positive if the company managed to apply some general guidelines on how to run effective meetings. In addition, the respondents believed it is important to have a
general standard when initiating a meeting, and then it is up to each meeting leader to customize their meeting after their needs and situation.

When implementing Lean it is always important to define who the customer is. Therefore the respondents were asked if could identify the customer in a meeting context. The result was varying; some said that during decision meetings, the customer is mainly the decision takers because the purpose of the meeting is to facilitate for them when taking a decision. Others said that the participants are the main customers, since the purpose of the information meetings is to communicate important information to them. Even though the two meeting differs there was a similarity in their answers; they tried to define the customer based on the purpose of the meeting. However, the majority of the respondents thought it was hard to define who the customer is during a meeting. In spite of many employees already have good knowledge about Lean; it was a hard and complex question for them. In other words, the empirical study shows that even if the employees and the company have come far in their Lean process, not all process has been targeted by the philosophy to the full extent.

To manage their mailbox, meeting invitations, and meeting schedule, employees use the software Microsoft Outlook. The software allows employees to send out meeting invitations to participants, and depending on the response, it becomes automatically scheduled. The employees can respond to the invitation with three different answers, “yes”, “tentative” and “no”. According to the survey response (See Graph 4.1b), the majority of the employees deems themselves to always or mostly answer the invitation. In contradiction, the interviews and survey question 13 (See Attachment 1b) entails that the employees experience problems with the culture regarding how other responds to meeting invitation. Many respondents also expressed another problem; all too often an invitation is sent out even though the employee is already booked in another meeting, which results in double or even triple bookings. Further on, an additional problem is that the software is not used to its full extent by using the functions “optional” or “required” when sending out invitations. According to the empirical study, the whole problem around the invitation culture results in missing stakeholders during some meetings, which results in delayed, postponed or cancelled meetings.
Graph 4.1b Results from survey question 4

When a new appointment for a meeting is created, the software automatically pre-sets the meeting time to 30 minutes, but the user has an option to change the time of the meeting. According to the empirical study, it is very common to use the 30 minutes intervals when booking a meeting and starting at full or half hours. A problem pointed out in the empirical study is that when a meeting is booked, for instance, to 60 minutes but ends 20 minutes early, the meeting still goes on until it reached its fully duration. Since many meetings are booked to full hours and ends on time, the next meeting starts directly when the first meeting ends. This was reported as a major problem by the respondents in both the survey and interviews. Since there is always a distance between the meeting rooms, which can take several minutes to walk, it results in a problem for the employees when two meetings overlap. The problem leads to a difficult decision for the participants where they have to choose either to be late, or leave the meeting earlier. It is considered as a customary to never leave early or arrive late to a meeting, so whatever option they choose, the results is of a negative characteristic for the meetings.

During the interviews, a majority of the respondents reported that the meeting efficiency differs a lot from meeting to meeting, which has also been noted during the meeting observations. The differences that have been pointed out have its roots in how each department works, and how their culture is shaped. Another critical factor affecting the meeting efficiency according to the respondents is who the meeting leader is. Further on, when respondents were asked if there are any given structures on how a meeting should be conducted, several respondents said that their own meetings are structured whilst other meetings were lesser structured.

Ericsson already provides the employees with material on how to run effective meetings. However, this material seems to be unknown to the majority of the employees. In the empirical study, only one person mentioned this material. On the other hand, many of the
respondents believe they have the knowledge to run efficient meetings. After a thorough search in Ericsson intranet the material was found. Besides the intranet, material or tools for improving meetings is nowhere to be seen in the offices. Furthermore, during an interview a respondent mentioned that there were courses in meeting efficiency. These courses are something the managers decide if an employee should take; however, no other respondent mentioned that they had undergone this training. Even though employees do not know about this material; many respondents mentioned they tried to improve their meetings. However, after a period of trying the improvements, they fall back on old routines.

4.2 Ericsson’s meeting process

The empirical study shows that there exists a basic meeting process at Ericsson, but depending on meeting type and leader, the process looks different. Although, the differences are of a lesser type, it mainly concerns a few steps in the process. Some meetings go through all the process steps, and other meetings only go through some of them. There are three main meeting types at the company: decisions meetings, information meetings, and problem solving meetings. The process for decision- and problem solving meetings are similar to each other, except that decision meetings are more formal compared to problem solving meetings. Further on, a meeting is not always of a pure type; sometimes a decision meeting has an information part and so on. According to the respondents in the interviews, the purpose of a meeting can be used to decide what kind of meeting it is. Tropman (2003) states the importance in prior to a meeting to describe its purpose. In addition, Lantz (2001) also mentions the importance of deciding what type of meeting will be held. However, the respondents report that a purpose or type of meeting is not always stated in the meeting invitation, which makes it difficult for them to know what is expected of every participant.

![Figure 4.2 Ericsson’s meeting process](image)

With the help of the empirical study, a process chart (See Figure 4.2) has been developed. The process chart consists of three major process steps: pre-meeting, the meeting, and post-
meeting. Decision meetings and problem solving meetings consist of all three steps, while information meetings mainly only consist of the two first steps. The process chart is also divided into several sub-processes and is described in a more detailed way.

One of the most critical steps in the process chart is the creation of agenda. According to the empirical study, it is common that agendas are in some cases insufficient or not even sent out; consequently, it becomes hard to know the outcome or the purpose of the meeting. However, the respondents also expressed that during meetings, there is often an agenda which is followed. In those cases where a thoroughly prepared and distinct agenda exists, it becomes much easier to prepare, commit and understand the outcome of the meeting. The respondents in the survey were asked “Is there any kind of agenda available prior to meetings?” The results (See Graph 4.2) highlight what many of the respondents perceive; agendas are not always sent out in advance.

Graph 4.2 Result from survey question 3

Another important step in the process is to discuss the quality of the meeting by stimulating feedback, which is something that the employees are missing frequently. However, there are some meeting groups that are working with workshops concerning how to improve current meetings. These workshops are held once in a year and focus on the structure, culture, and things that can be improved. Moreover, the respondents feel that the follow-up in several meetings are insufficient at the moment. Poorly follow-up on meetings often leads to missing important things that has been discussed.
4.2.1 Decision meetings

Decisions meetings aim to make a single or several decisions during a meeting (Tropman, 2003). According to the empirical study, the decisions are mainly based on activities or events that have occurred earlier, or there is a strategic choice to make. Decision meetings can be a one-off meeting with unique decisions or recurring meetings where similar decisions have to be taken every time. Some of the recurring meetings at Ericsson can for instance be planning or strategy meetings.

Furthermore, the purpose of the company’s decisions meetings is to make decisions on various issues, but the degree of strategic or operational nature varies from different decision meetings. Although many of these meetings are recurrent, nobody makes a decision just because it is a decision meeting. It has to be someone or a department who demands the decision.

When there is a need to make a decision, the first step is to make a collection of background information before an invitation is sent out to participants. It varies when the meeting invitation is sent out, depending on the meeting leader, how urgent the decision is, and the meeting type. There are also some meeting leaders that use to send reminders if there are recurring meetings. Moreover, the respondents have also expressed that they used to receive varying character of agendas; sometimes the agenda contains a few sentences, and others are more detailed with clearly stated purpose and aim of the meeting. There are meeting leaders that have chosen not send an agenda to the participants in advance, since it is not necessary according to them. During the empirical study, a meeting was observed where the meeting leader did not send out an agenda in advance. The reason behind this was that the meeting is recurring every week and always has the same tasks. The content and structure of the meeting are identical each week, and the meeting leader has therefore created an agenda template mainly for this meeting.

There are several different decisions meetings at the company, and therefore the meetings differ depending on the meeting leader, as well as the meeting type. Generally, the information about the decision will be hand-out to the participants. After the participants have read about the information, they usually discuss the issue together. The decision is often taken by consensus. However, it happens that there is a disagreement about the decision; therefore it is often a decision-maker who can make the final decision. The meeting leader usually has the responsibility to summarize what has been said during the meeting.

At the end of the meeting, the meeting leader usually summarizes what has been said, what decisions have been taken and other important information. This type of information is then inserted into decision logs, and each participant has the opportunity to read about it. The main purpose of the follow-up is to ensure that decisions are compiled and the responsibility lies with those who have been delegated the task.

4.2.2 Problem solving meetings

There are a large variety of problem-solving meetings at the company. How these meetings are performed is depending on the meeting leader and the purpose of the meeting. Likewise, many other meetings begin with an issue, for instance, a problem that must be solved, planning incoming activities, or monitoring the project together with other participants. Based on the background of the meeting, following aspects can be determined: the meeting content,
how the meeting should be performed, as well as the outcome of the meeting. There are many problem-solving meetings that are recurrent, but there are also such meetings that are designed to solve temporary issues. The majority of the respondents stated that recurrent meetings are usually more structured, and temporary meeting has an informal character. Based on meeting observations and interviews, it appears that some problem-solving meetings use agile methodology and boards in order to visualize. However, there are also meeting leaders who run their meetings in a more traditional way, with no agile methodology or boards. Like many other meetings, follow-up is an important part of the meeting. The respondents expressed that follow-up is usually missing in this kind of meetings, and have therefore some rooms for improvement.

4.2.3 Information meetings

Information meetings aim to mediate different types of information to participants (Lantz, 2001). In this study, weekly meetings have been studied. Weekly meetings at Ericsson are recurrent almost every week and these meeting are usually held in each department. Before the meeting takes place, the meeting leader collects relevant information. The information can differ largely from each week; including information from the management team, activities that will happen during the week, or other relevant information that needs to be collected before the meeting starts. Based on the empirical study, there are no general structures for running an information meeting; instead it is entirely up to the meeting leader. The respondents also expressed that many information meetings often consist of too much information, and therefore it is hard for the participants to receive all types of information.

The engagement among participants has been differed largely depending on the number of participants in meetings. During information meetings with few participants, the engagement among all participants has generally been relatively high. However, in meetings with large number of participants the engagement has been low instead. It was also highlighted when meeting leaders actively asked questions and invited them to discussions.

Information meetings at the company usually do not have any follow-up, which means that the meeting process of information meeting is shorter compared to other meetings. However, some exceptions arose during the empirical study. At the end of the meeting some informal decisions arose, and therefore some activities and a follow-up were needed. In other words, follow up might be appropriate depending on the situation.
4.3 Common meeting problems

Many of the respondents believe that there are a number of problems that make their meetings inefficient. Some problems are common recurrent, while others are more unusual. The common meeting problems are considered to have a great impact on the quality of meetings and will be highlighted in this chapter. These problems can be summarized into three main categories, which are then being divided into nine types of problems (See Table 4.3). Each problem will be described separately in order to give a more detailed explanation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Meeting Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structural</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing meeting rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many or wrong participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient agenda, purpose, and aim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting rooms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 Common meeting problems at Ericsson divided into three categories

The meeting problems that are mentioned in Table 4.3 do not occur every meeting, but the respondents feel that it happens relatively often that one or several of these problems arise during the different meeting at the company.

4.3.1 Structural Problems

**Missing meeting rules**

The first problem emerged from the empirical study was that several employees felt that there are missing general routines on how to run meetings. The quality varies widely on different meetings depending on the meeting leader and meeting type. Based on the empirical study, some meetings are well structured and planned; while others are not structured at all. According to the survey and interviews, the respondents expressed that decision meetings are much more structured than both information meetings and problem solving meetings. They stated it is mainly due to decision meetings are more formal than the other meetings.

Several of the respondents are positive to develop general meeting rules that can be used as a framework, which creates a better structure on how to run effective meetings. Today, every meeting leader has its own way to run meetings, which creates a big variation when it comes to meeting efficiency.
Too many or wrong participants

The second problem that has emerged from the empirical study is that meetings usually consist of too many or wrong participants. Concerning wrong participants at meetings, it generally appears when they discover that the meeting group lacks important type of information in order to continue with the discussions. This problem can also appear when the meeting group lacks a certain competence in some areas and can therefore not proceed with the meeting. Some respondents expressed that there have been occasions when key persons were not available and therefore necessary to postpone the meeting and schedule a new one. Furthermore, it is also common that there are sometimes too many participants during meetings. According to the respondents, some participants during meetings do not have anything to contribute, since their competence is not particularly relevant for the discussions. Another reason concerning too many participants is that employees see some meetings as nice-to-know meetings. Respondents describe nice-to-know meetings as meetings that are nice to know, but are not absolutely necessary. As a result, many of the company’s meetings often consist of too many participants that are not totally necessary for the meeting, as well as for the participants.

Insufficient agenda, purpose and aim

Another common meeting problem that usually occurs is insufficient agenda or no purpose and aim of the meeting. The researchers also noticed this problem during their empirical study. Some meeting leaders have a habit of sending out a detailed agenda that clearly describes the purpose and aim of the meeting. However, there are meeting leaders who neither send out an agenda nor send out a sufficient agenda to the participants. According to the respondents, it is a major problem since the participants are unsure whether the meeting is necessary or not.

Meeting rooms

There is a perceived problem with the meeting rooms at the company. Based on the survey, it appears that it is sometimes difficult to find available rooms, long distances between rooms and the quality of meeting rooms is not the best, for example, poor sound insulation. The researchers have also noticed this problem during the observational studies. Moreover, there are some problem solving meetings that are held in direct connection to the offices, also known as stand-up meetings, where many other people are passing by. This is something that affects meetings, since people are often passing by and interrupting the meeting. The noise level in the office is also something that affects the meeting in a negative way, because it can be difficult for the leader and participants to hear each other. The same goes the other way around; the noise level from the meeting might affect other people. However, some meeting leaders expressed that stand-up meetings in the office might be positive, since it is a good way to show togetherness and create a better connection between different departments.
4.3.2 Process & People

Low engagement among participants
Based on the empirical study, low engagement among participants is one of the most common meeting problems. There are participants who are not actively participating; instead looking at their smartphones or working with their laptops during meetings. One of the respondents described the problem in the following way: “some people are present physically, but they are not mentally present”. The researchers did notice the same thing during several observational studies. At these meetings, there were always few people that were not actively participating or listening. However, it is also important to emphasize that the majority of the participants were highly engaged and did contribute a lot to these meetings.

Poorly prepared participants
Many respondents expressed clearly that participants are generally quite poorly prepared for meetings. They mentioned two different reasons to this meeting problem. The first reason why participants have not been able to prepare is due to insufficient agendas that are sent out in advance. As a result, the agendas do not describe any clear information about the purpose and aim of the meeting, as well as what is expected of every participant. The second reason is that the participants do not have enough time to read the meeting material, even though the meeting leader have sent a good agenda before the meeting started. It is mainly due to prioritization of other work tasks. Consequently, it means that these participants have to read the meeting material during the meeting in order to get an understanding of what the meeting is about.

Meeting participants are sloppy with the meeting invitation
When a meeting invitation is sent out, it seems that many employees accept the invitation without making any reflection on whether they can participate or not. According to the respondents, some employees usually respond to the invitation with a “yes” and then do not appear when the meeting starts. Moreover, there are also employees who respond with a “tentative” when receiving the invitation and then do not change the status before the meeting starts. As a result, it is impossible for the meeting leader know if they are attending or not. However, it is unusual that employees respond to the invitation with a “no” and are still attending. Another aspect of the problem that was identified through interviews is that some meeting leaders are too sloppy to review participants’ calendar. The respondents expressed that meeting leaders usually send out invitations, even though some respondents are already booked in other meetings. As a result, the participants often accept several meeting invitations, and decide afterwards which meeting they will participate.

4.3.3 Leadership

Poor time planning of meetings
Poor time planning is another common meeting problem. Based on the empirical study, the majority of the meetings are booked to start on either full hours or half-hours, and when there are two meetings consecutively there is often no space of time to move between those meetings. It means that the participants need to leave before the meeting ends, or coming late to the next one.
Another problem related to poor time planning is that meetings are often booked to 60 minutes. These meetings usually last for 60 minutes, even if the meetings are finished earlier. For example, 60 minutes are booked for the meeting but it is finished after 40 minutes; nonetheless, the participants and meeting leader are starting to discuss other things that are not relevant for the meeting. One of the respondents expressed on following way: “if the meeting finishes earlier, we usually do not end the meeting but instead starting to discuss other things that are often not related to the meeting”. These answers indicate that there is a culture where the meeting time is often overused. Further on, the respondents also expressed that many meetings often do not end on time. It is mainly due to the repetition of each other’s arguments, and therefore it takes too long to finish every discussion.

**Discussions are off-topic**

Discussions are commonly occurring during meetings. The empirical study shows that some discussions during meetings are sometimes off-topic, which means discussions that do not concern the specific meeting. Although meeting leaders try to follow the agenda during meetings, it happens that some discussions can be off-topic occasionally. According to respondents, meeting leaders have the biggest responsibility to end such discussions. Moreover, respondents also believe that some meeting leaders and participants are poor at being brief and concise when presenting. A lot of people are normally too detailed in their presentations; as a result, the meeting time does not end on time and participants might lose some focus.
5 Analysis

A number of meeting problems were identified during the empirical study. In this chapter, focus will be on comparing the identified meeting problems with Tropman's meeting problems. This chapter will also make an analysis on whether Lean is applicable on the company's meeting processes or not. The overall analysis of Lean is based on five principles of Lean Thinking. In addition, this part also presents Principles of Lean Production that can be used in order to eliminate different meeting problems.

5.1 Ericsson’s meeting problems vs Theoretical meeting problems

The meeting problems which were revealed during the empirical study were divided into Tropman's (2003) problem categories. This enabled a comparison between the existing problems at Ericsson and the most common problems according to Tropman (2003). In contrast to Tropman, who divided the problems into four categories, we believed that the categories process and people were strongly connected, hence the merging of the two categories in this study.

The data collection of the most common meeting problems at Ericsson was made with the survey. In the survey, the respondents were asked about any other meeting problems that occur beside those mentioned in the survey. The answers we got were categorized according to what type of problem it was. The category which contained most problems were structural problems; however, the reason behind this may be due to structural problems depends on many different factors compared to the other categories. Problems concerning leadership contained least problems of all categories. However, the leadership category consisted of two large problems: poor time planning of meeting and discussions are off-topic. The problem discussions are off-topic can be compared to one of the common leadership problem mentioned by Tropman (2013), the leader does not lead the meeting and loses control over it. By letting the discussions go off-topic or repetitive is the result of a meeting which have gone out of control. In general, there are many similarities between the problems occurring at Ericsson and the problems mentioned by Tropman (2013). Nevertheless, there were also some unique problems occurring at Ericsson. The unique problems consisted of, for instance, employees being sloppy regarding managing meeting invitations, no clear meeting rules, or meetings that are unnecessary.

5.2 Are the combination of Lean and meetings a success story?

5.2.1 Specify value

The first step in the process of becoming a Lean organization is to specify what the customer believes is value, but it is also important that the company itself defines what value is for them. In other word, it is essential that the customer and the company have a common understanding of what the value is in order for an application of Lean to be successful. It might be difficult to define who the customer is in a meeting process and therefore it is difficult to specify the customer value as well.

In this study, the researchers have noticed that the respondents do not have a clear definition of customer and the customer value in a meeting process. The researchers received mixed responses when the respondents were asked if they can identify who the customer is in the
specific meeting. Some felt that the customer is primarily the decision-makers, since the decisions meeting aims to create a decision basis for these people. Others said that the customer is basically the participants, because the information meeting is intended to inform participants concerning relevant information.

The majority of the respondents expressed that they have not thought about this type of question before, and therefore it was difficult for many of them to specify who the customer is in a meeting process. Due to unclear definition of customer and customer value in a meeting process, it can be considered as an obstacle and thus constrain the implementation of Lean in meeting processes. However, the researchers believe that it is not an impossible task to specify customer and what creates value for the customer. The respondents have already begun to think about these questions, and the challenge is to determine a common definition rather than starting to whole process from the beginning.

5.2.2 Identify the value stream

The second step of applying Lean into an organization is to identify the value stream. Once the organization has identified the customer and customer value, it is time to develop a structure to create a better understanding of value-adding activities in the meeting process. A prerequisite for being able to identify the value stream is to define the customer and its value. In this study, the researchers have acknowledged that the company has not identified the value stream, and the main reason is due to unclear definition of customer and customer value in a meeting process.

Given that the researchers believe it is possible to identify a common definition of customer and customer value, there is no major difficulty to be able to identify value-adding activities in the meeting process.

5.2.3 Let the value stream flow

The third step is to let the value flow smoothly through the process, which can be achieved through standardization. During the empirical study, it appeared that the quality of different meetings vary widely depending on the meeting leader and meeting type. Some meetings are structured and thoughtful, while other meetings are relatively unstructured and sloppy. Moreover, the empirical study also shows that the company has not tried to standardize their meeting processes before. However, it emerged during the interviews that there are some particular meeting leaders that have made the effort and tried to standardize their meeting according to their needs. In general, the respondents are positive to standardization and expressed that it would make it easier with a standard template that describes general guidelines on how a meeting should be held.

The researchers believe it is possible to standardize certain parts of the meeting process. The company can for instance develop a standard agenda template that can facilitate for the meeting leader when initiating meetings. A well designed agenda makes it easier to create a structured meeting. There are certainly many other factors that affect the quality of meeting, but the agenda is an important factor to take into consideration.

Obstacles that might occur when applying standardization, for instance, different meetings have different characteristics. As a result, it can be difficult to adapt to each specific meeting. Some meetings may require a detailed agenda that describes the purpose, aim, key
participants and preparations. But there are also other meetings that do not require such detailed information; all it takes is a brief explanation of what the meeting is about. Nonetheless, the researchers believe that standardization would facilitate for the meeting leader as well as the meeting participants, and that a value flow can be achieved. The value flow can be achieved as meeting leader and meeting participants have a clear structure to follow.

5.2.4 **Use “Pull” instead of “Push”**

The fourth step is mainly about going from the classic Push to Pull, which means that the demand controls the flow. When applying Pull into meeting process it means that meetings need to be initiated only if someone demands it. Based on the empirical study, it appears that the meeting process only starts when a person or a department are asking for it. This applies to both recurring meetings as well as temporary meetings, which means that the company is already applying Pull method extensively.

5.2.5 **Work towards perfection**

The fifth and final step is to strive towards perfection. Womack and Jones (2003) mention that perfection is something that all companies can strive towards no matter what kind of industry or market they are in. They also emphasize two main factors that influence employees’ attitudes when it comes to strive towards perfection; it is their knowledge about the Lean philosophy as well as standardization of processes. Employees with good knowledge about Lean can therefore contribute and work with continuous improvements. Concerning standardization, it is a way to facilitate the improvement process and makes it easier to identify problems and non-value adding activities in the processes.

Ericsson in Borås has worked extensively with Lean since 2005, and has come a long way in terms of improvements in production, as well as in white-collar unit. This study also reveals that the majority of employees at the company have a great understanding of the principles of Lean. Therefore, the meeting leaders and meeting participants are sufficiently familiar with the subject of striving towards perfection. Based on the empirical study, there is no standardized meeting process at the moment. But the researchers believe that a standardization of the meeting process is fully possible. Uncertainties among employees might be the main obstacle; therefore it is important that the meeting leader can convince the participants about future advantages when it comes to introducing a standardized process.

5.3 **Meeting problems and elimination of wastes**

5.3.1 **Problems concerning structure**

5.3.1.1 **Missing meeting rules**

General meeting rules that describe how meetings should be held are something that seems to be missing during the company’s meetings. According to the respondents, missing meeting rules are the main reason why the quality of meetings varies widely. This means that the structure of meetings differs a lot depending on who is leading the meeting, and the meeting type. Moreover, the respondents expressed that missing meeting rules contribute to a low engagement among participants, overrunning meetings, as well as postponing decisions.
Identifying wastes

Over-processing/Incorrect processing: Over-processing arises when there are no clear routines for how to run effective meetings. In other words, there is a risk that the meeting leader runs his/her current meetings in an inefficient manner, which creates unnecessary work and non-value adding activities.

Non-used employee talent: This type of waste occurs when the participants do not have a clear idea of how the meeting process looks like. Consequently, the participants can not contribute with the creativity that is desired during the meeting.

Lean principles to eliminate the problem

Standardization is a principle that can be applied to eliminate this type of meeting problem. By formulating common meeting rules concerning how to run effective meetings, it facilitates both for the meeting leader, as well as for the participants. It is vital to standardize the process before anyone knows how to improve the process of meetings. The most critical part of introducing standards is to find a balance between giving employees a strict procedure to follow, and at the same time give employees enough freedom to improve and be creative.

5.3.1.2 Too many or wrong participants

The empirical study shows that it is often too many or wrong participants invited to different meetings. According to respondents, it is mainly due to two reasons; the first reason is that people do not have sufficient information about the meeting, and the second reason is that people who attend to the meeting are sometimes not correctly selected. Insufficient information about the meeting makes it difficult for people to judge whether the meeting is necessary for them or not. Concerning that some people are not correctly selected, it is also due to insufficient information. In order to manage whom to invite, Hagerty (1990) suggest using the two-third rule. However, this rule, for example, does not take in account if a person only is needed for one topic, but the topic is a must complete during the meeting. The rule may work better as a general way of thinking, but cannot be solely used. The meeting leader always has to spend some extra time thinking of what value should be created in the meeting before deciding whom to invite.

Identifying wastes

Overproduction: This type of waste arises when there are too many people who are called to meetings. In other words, people who do not create any value for the customer, thereby causes unnecessary costs in terms of not using time in an optimal way.

Waiting and unnecessary motion: Waiting arises when you need to cancel the meeting because vital information is not available at that moment, or possibly retrieve the person you need in order to continue with the meeting. In addition, it causes another waste in terms of unnecessary motion. Unnecessary motion arises when the meeting leader or participants need to check for necessary information or sending a person to bring in another participant.

Non-used employee talent: Occurs when the participants who should attend the meeting but are not in place; thus, they are not able to contribute with knowledge and creativity. Moreover, it means a loss of ideas, competence, improvements, wasting time, as well as an opportunity for the employee to learn.
Over-processing/Incorrect processing: When wrong people are called to meeting it might give rise to over-processing. This means that some participants have different opinions regarding an issue despite the fact that these people do not have relevant knowledge within the field.

**Lean principles to eliminate the problem**

The main reason to this meeting problem is that people do not have sufficiently information about what the meeting is about, and that the persons who attend the meeting are sometimes not correctly selected. A Lean principle that might prevent this problem is to introduce vertical information systems that can handle issue between the meeting leader and the participants. Vertical information systems ensures that right people get the right information regarding what the meeting is about, and where and when the meeting will be held. Furthermore, these types of information systems also make it easier for meeting leader to receive information from the participants on whether they can attend the meeting or not. In other words, the researchers believe that this waste occurs as a result of slow dissemination of information, and can be reduced by implementing vertical information systems.

Another principle that can prevent this meeting problem is standardization. For example, a standardized agenda template can simplify a lot for the meeting leader when inviting people to the meeting. A well-designed agenda also makes it easier for the meeting leader to clearly describe the purpose and aim of the meeting, which makes it easier for participants to determine whether the meeting is necessary or not, as well as preparations before the meeting.

5.3.1.3 **Insufficient agenda, purpose and aim**

Many of the respondents also expressed that meetings often have an insufficient agenda, purpose and aim of the meeting; consequently, it is difficult for the participants to determine if the meeting is necessary for them or not. Due to an insufficient agenda, it becomes difficult for the participants to prepare for the meeting and thus affecting the meeting quality. Likewise the problem the respondents reports, Tropman (2003) considers a thoroughly planned agenda is needed in order to prepare the participants better, thus creating more efficient meetings. The respondents suggest that an agenda template might prevent this type of problem. Although, Nixon and Littlepage (1992) believe that an agenda is not always necessary, the need of an agenda depends on the level of formality. In addition, Lencioni (2004) believes an agenda is not always necessary; however, Lencioni also stated that not using an agenda will risk the meeting going astray.

**Identifying wastes**

*Over-processing/Incorrect processing:* This type of waste arises when some meetings are run in an inefficient way; consequently, it affects the quality of meetings.

*Unnecessary motion:* According to respondents, there are a lot of meetings that are inefficient at the moment. Unnecessary motion is a contributing factor. For example, the meeting leader do not use a standardized agenda template and creates a new one every time. In addition, the agenda, purpose and aim varies, even though these meetings are almost the same.
Non-used employee talent: Since the participants cannot prepare enough for the meeting, it results in losing ideas and creativity during the meeting.

Lean principles to eliminate the problem
Like many other meeting problems, standardization is once again the principle that can be used to prevent the problem. By working out a standard agenda template it can reduce the risk of missing important aspects. Moreover, the purpose and aim of the meeting will certainly be more clearly since there are clear instructions to follow. As a result, it makes it easier for participants to prepare for the meeting.

5.3.1.4 Meeting rooms
According to the respondents, it is sometimes hard to find available rooms, long distances between rooms, as well as insufficient quality of some meeting rooms. Concerning unavailable rooms, it takes unnecessarily long time to search for available rooms. When it comes to long distances between rooms, it usually takes more time than expected when transferring from one room to another.

Identifying wastes
Transportation: This waste occurs when participants need to transfer long distances between different meeting rooms. As a result, the participants are risking being late for the next meeting.

Lean principles to eliminate the problem
Concerning the problem that participants need to transfer long distances between different meeting rooms, it can be difficult to find a Lean principle that can eliminate this kind of meeting issue. This problem is rather a question of resources than a performance issue.

5.3.2 Problems concerning process & people

5.3.2.1 Low engagement among participants
Low engagement among meeting participants seems to be a common problem according to the respondents. A possible reason may be due to lack of clear routines concerning how to run meetings. In other words, the respondents expressed that they cannot “see” what the next step is in the meeting process and therefore the participants’ engagement might have decreased. McBride (2014) suggests that if a meeting leader set the expectations that all participants must come prepared to discuss the problem, the engagement will increase during the meeting. This is due to the participants know what the discussions are about and how to move on afterwards.

Identifying wastes
Non-used creativity: Participants feel that it can sometimes be difficult to be engaged and motivated because they do not know what the next step is in the meeting. Respondents have stated it is mainly due to lack of a clear structure and routines to keep participants focused. Given that engagement is low, it means that the participants do not add any value to the meeting in terms of knowledge, ideas and creativity that they actually possess.
Lean principles to eliminate the problem

By developing simple and clear routines of how to run meetings; it can prevent this problem to arise. The implementation of those routines can be seen as standardization. Standardization contributes to a more transparent meeting process and thus creates a better understanding of how the meeting process looks like. Furthermore, standardization is also a good way to achieve employee’s engagement, and thereby stimulates continuous improvements. There are several things an organization can do when applying standardization; for example, introduce an agenda template that will make it easier for meeting leaders to describe the agenda items.

5.3.2.2 Poorly prepared participants

Poorly prepared participants seem to be a common meeting problem. According to the respondent, there are two main reasons that contribute to the problem. The first reason is that the agenda is sometimes so insufficient that the participants do not know what is expected of them. Tropman (2003) reports that an insufficient agenda is a common problem, which results in poorly prepared participants. To counter this, Tropman (2003) and Ravn (2013) suggest similar methods, to add a context to each topic. A context will tell the participants more information about the topic, which makes it easier to prepare. The second reason is that the participants usually decide not to read the information, because priority was given to other tasks. As a result, the participants need to read through the material during the meeting time. In order to make sure participants read the material in advance of a meeting, Tropman (2003) suggests to write short summaries and adding how urgent or important a topic is, and will therefore increase chances of prepared participants.

Identifying wastes

Waiting: This type of waste arises when the poorly prepared participants need to read through the preparation material during the actual meeting. The meeting leaders as well as other participants do not have anything to do except waiting for these people.

Non-used creativity: When participants are poorly prepared for meetings, it means that they cannot contribute with their knowledge that the actually have. Moreover, bad preparations will affect the discussions during meetings, since poorly prepared participants had not enough time to gain insight into the discussions and topics. Consequently, it may turn out to reschedule the meeting, because the currently decisions basis is not good enough to make different decisions.

Lean principles to eliminate the problem

In cases where participants have received the agenda and relevant information about the meeting, but chose to ignore it, the principles multifunctional teams and decentralization can prevent this problem. Multifunctional teams within organizations mean that different people are able to perform several different tasks. It means that the organization becomes more flexible. Participants, who ignored the invitation and agenda due to high workload, can delegate the task to someone else. However, multifunctional teams can only prevent the problem if there are available people at that moment. If the ignorance of the invitation is mainly due to lack of responsibility; decentralization is the principle that can help to eliminate the problem, since this principle stimulates more responsibility to every employee.
In order to prevent poorly designed agendas, a standardized agenda template might be the solution; in fact, the meeting leader has a template to follow which might reduce this meeting problem.

5.3.2.3 Meeting participants are sloppy with the meeting invitation

The interviews show that participants are usually “sloppy” when responding to the meeting invitation. In contrast, the majority of respondents in the survey expressed that they always respond to the invitation. However, the survey does not reveal how they respond to the meeting invitation, which means responding “yes”, “no” or “tentative”. It means that there is a culture in the organization to always respond, but the employees are sloppy with how they respond. Based on the interviews, employees sometimes accept the invitation at the beginning, but still do not attend to the meeting. According to the interviews, the responding of employees is usually not well thought-out. Even though their plans have been changed due to different reasons, it is rarely that these people change their previous status. Meeting leaders have clearly expressed their irritation of sloppy responses, but it appears that they have not dealt with the problem and have therefore accepted it. The reason behind accepting the invitation and then not attending might be due to double-booking. Employees that are double-booked mean that two meetings are supposed to start at the same time. As a result, the employees do not know which meeting they will attend to, and therefore they usually ignore one of them.

Identifying wastes

Waiting: Occurs while meeting leader needs to wait for participants’ response on meeting invitation. In such cases, it might be difficult for the meeting leader to prepare for the meeting, but also rescheduling the meeting if it turns out that key persons did not respond at all. When participants have accepted the meeting but then did not show up, it once again means that meeting leader, as well as other participants has to wait.

Lean principles to eliminate the problem

One Lean principle that might prevent this problem is to discuss, in group, how important it is to always respond to invitations. In other words, everyone gets a clear idea of what the meeting leader and participants are expecting of each other. This solution can be seen as the principle of continuous improvements. Continuous improvements mean that everyone strives towards perfection and to achieve that goal, it requires small and continuous improvements to eliminate all types of wastes.

5.3.3 Problems concerning leadership

5.3.3.1 Poor time planning of meetings

The empirical study also shows that the current time planning of meetings is not sufficiently good. There are various reasons that meetings do not start and end on time. The main reason meetings do not start on time is because all participants are not present when the meeting is supposed to start. When meetings do not end on time; it is mainly due to different types of discussions where participants usually repeat each other’s arguments. In order to keep the meetings on time, Hagerty (1990) suggests adding time allotted to the agenda topics. By having time allotted to topics, the meeting leader can keep discussions on time and make sure
to move on with the discussion if time is running out. This problem is reported as one of the most common problems according to Tropman (2003) and depends heavily on the meeting leader’s ability to facilitate a meeting.

**Identifying wastes**

*Waiting*: This type of waste occurs when the other participants have to wait for the people who are late to the meeting. Moreover, some respondents also expressed that this type of meeting problem is disturbing, since the meeting leader usually has to start over from the beginning and repeat things to those people that are late.

*Over-processing/Incorrect processing*: When participants repeat each other’s arguments, it creates waste in terms of over-processing. These types of discussions usually become unnecessarily long without coming to an end. In other words, it can be classified as non-value adding activities and do not add any value for the customer.

**Lean principles to eliminate the problem**

A Lean principle that can prevent this type of problem is to implement zero defects. Zero defects is a principle with particularly focus on applying a more proactive approach and thus stimulate the employees, before the meeting, to pay extra attention to be on time for the meeting. However, this type of meeting problem cannot be completely eliminated, since the human error is a risk that affects people of making mistakes.

Concerning the problem that participants are repeating each other’s argument, it can be difficult to find a Lean principle that can eliminate this kind of meeting problem. Possibly by applying the principle continuous improvements, it might be possible for the meeting leader to prevent such problems, and at the same time involve all the participants to improve the current meeting process. By continually finding small and incremental improvements, it can perhaps find a way to counteract each other’s arguments.

### 5.3.3.2 Discussions are off-topic

The survey, interviews and observational studies have all shown that discussions during meetings are sometimes off-topic. When such situations arise, the respondents believe the meeting leader has the biggest responsibility to end unnecessary discussions. Same as the problem with poorly prepared participants, Tropman (2003) and Ravn (2013) suggest adding a context to the agenda topics, and it will help to keep the discussion on topic. A context will tell the participants more details about the topic, which makes it easier to stick to the agenda. Further on, the respondents also expressed another problem, which concerns both the meeting leader as well as participants. When the meeting leader and participants present they are usually too detailed in their presentations. As a result, the meeting time is affected, which makes it hard to end on time.

**Identifying wastes**

*Waiting*: Waiting occurs when someone starts to discuss things that are not particularly relevant to the specific meeting. It forces many of the participants to wait for the discussions to end. Irrelevant discussions also result in many meetings do not end on time, and thus affect other upcoming meetings. In other words, it becomes a vicious circle that worsens several meetings.
**Unnecessary motion:** This type of waste also occurs when irrelevant discussions emerge during meetings. As a result, meeting leader and participants put a lot of time on unnecessary activities which do not create any value for the meeting.

**Lean principles to eliminate the problem**

A possible principle that can prevent this issue is to introduce standardization. By using general guidelines, it can facilitate for meeting leaders to run meetings and act when irrelevant discussions occur. General guidelines also create a better meeting structure, which makes it easier for the meeting leader decide whether the discussion is relevant or not.
6 Implementation

The following chapter focuses on the self-developed action plan. The action plan consists of guidelines of how to run effective meetings, as well as four other tools that work as a complement to the guidelines. In addition, this chapter also presents how the action plan was pilot tested, but also the results from the tests.

6.1 The Action Plan

In order to answer the research question, pilot tests have been conducted on chosen meetings. The pilot tests consist of an action plan, which is based on the theory, empirical study and analysis. The action plan consists of the main document “Guidelines for effective meetings” (See Attachment 6), as well as four tools as a support to the guidelines in the implementation process. The guidelines will work as a framework, acting like a backbone in the improvement process, which the meeting leader and participants should stay within. The guidelines are built up by several subsections, which contain totally 36 + 12 topics. The topics consist of reflections and thoughts for the user during the start-up of the implementation process. The topics also consist of pure practical elements and changes which can be applied in the process. However, not all topics can be applied to every meeting. Instead, the guidelines will act as a proposal on what the meeting leaders can do to improve their meetings. When using the guidelines, the meeting leader should read the document and customize the guidelines after its meeting situation. The adaptability of the guidelines is important since the empirical study revealed that every meeting is unique and should not be shaped in the same way. The guidelines should rather act as a template and a guide for every meeting leader.

Further on, the guidelines for effective meeting are divided into two main sections, one for meeting leader and the other one for meeting participants. The meeting leader section is further divided into ten separate subsections, which are based on the different process steps, activities and elements. To get a comprehensible view over which topics the user is working with, a status row exists. The purpose of the status row is to give an option to write down how far into the process of implementing the topic the meeting leader is. There also exists another row for short notes next to each topic. This row exists so the meeting leader can, for example, write down important notes, changes or what the meeting leader deems to be written down.

The different subtitles which the guidelines consist of in the meeting leader section are the following:

**General:**

The general sub-section consists of basic thoughts and reflections to have in mind, as well as questions to answer before initiating the meeting. This subsection exists to make sure that a meeting is only initiated if there is a need.

**What should the meeting time be?:**

Since there is a problem concerning time scheduling, this subsection will help the meeting leader to schedule meetings more effectively.
Preparing the participants with an agenda:
The respondents perceived a problem that other participants were not always as prepared as they should be or there was no agenda. The topics in this subsection hand out information on how to prepare the participants and show the importance of having an agenda.

Managing the agenda:
An insufficient agenda was one of the causes behind participants were not always prepared or could do proper preparations. In order to manage and compose a sufficient agenda, this subsection will help the meeting leader with guidelines.

Who should I invite, and how:
Another perceived problem by the respondents was the number of participants during some meetings, either there was too many or wrong participants. In order to invite correct participants, this subsection consists of guidelines for the meeting leader when deciding whom to invite to a meeting.

The meeting:
Several problems may occur during a meeting. To avoid the most common problems, this subsection hands out tips on how the meeting leader can work preventively.

Engage your participants:
During a meeting, the activity among participants varies. In order to keep it as high as possible, the meeting leader has to work actively with engaging the participants. This subsection consists of advices on how the meeting leader should behave in order to keep the engagement and commitment as high as possible among the participants.

How to work with the follow-up:
The empirical study revealed that a follow-up was not always conducted even though it was considered needed. This subsection explains how the meeting leader can do basic preparatory work to ease up on the follow-up work, and how to work with the follow-up.

Feedback:
In the current situation there is no time allotted for feedback. In order to continuously improve and maintain a high quality on the meetings, feedback is required. How the meeting leader and participants can work with feedback is explained in this subsection.

Meeting rules:
Many respondents felt that there was no common meeting rules to relate to during meetings. The variation between what every respondent believed was an important rule. This subsection hands out tips for the meeting leader on how to work with meeting rules with every unique meeting group.
In order to improve meetings, the fully responsibility cannot be put on the meeting leader. Even if the meeting leader has the biggest responsibility in the implementation phase, the participants also need to take a certain responsibility. The last section in the guidelines, “meeting participants”, is addressed to the meeting participants and what they can do in order to take the responsibility needed to create effective meetings.

6.1.1 Useful tools

Other tools can be useful to support the guidelines when implementing Lean on the company’s meeting process. These tools can help meeting leaders and participants to create a required shared vision to strive towards effective meetings. The four tools which have been developed in this study are the following: Effective Meeting System (EMS), Checklist, Agenda Template, as well as a Standard Working Model (SWM) for outlook.

6.1.1.1 Effective Meeting System

The purpose of EMS is to perform the same function as EPS (Ericsson Production System), which means to create a common vision and philosophy within the company in order to strive towards a goal. It is also an effective way to illustrate the pillars, principles and tips that are important in order to achieve effective meetings.

![Effective Meeting System Diagram](image)

*Figure 6.1.1.1 Effective Meeting System*

EMS is divided into three main parts: Culture & Base, Pillars, and Goal. Culture & Base are mainly focusing on philosophy, leadership, daily management, standardization, continuous improvement, as well as visualization.
When it comes to the Pillars, it is primarily focusing on the 4P (Purpose, Process, People, and Preparation). These 4P has a direct connection to the agenda template. In other words, we believe that an agenda has an important role to achieve effective meetings. There are also a number of tips between the pillars that we have chosen to include, and these are the following:

- Email an agenda 24 h in advance
- Arrive 5 min early
- Start and end on time
- Come prepared
- No smartphones
- Bring necessary material
- Stay on topic
- Be brief and concise

The final part as well as the rooftop, is the Goal. All levels in the organization have the same goal, and in this case it is to achieve effective meetings.

6.1.1.2 Agenda Template

We believe that meetings are one of the biggest wastes when it comes to wasting time. Meetings create different types of wastes, but also create inefficiency indirectly as a result of taking wrong decisions from meetings.

We have developed an agenda template, which focuses on the 4P in order to create effective meetings. 4P stands for Purpose, Process, People and Preparation. Below, we describe the 4P and hopefully it can help Ericsson to run more efficient meetings.

1. Purpose

Purpose means that everyone should know why we have this meeting. In other words, we need to be clear when describing the purpose and aim of the meeting. Moreover, it is also important to define what type of meeting it is. There are three main types of meetings:

**Decision meeting:**
Meeting that aims to make decisions concerning different types of questions

**Information meeting:**
Meeting that aims to provide information about a particular thing

**Problem solving meeting:**
Meeting that aims to tackle a problem together

These three are the main meeting types. However, it is also common with a combination of several meeting types in a meeting. By defining the purpose and aim of the meeting, but also the meeting type, it becomes easier for everyone to contribute to an effective meeting. Furthermore, it is also easier for the meeting leader to manage discussions that are off-topic.
2. **Process**

It is vital to fulfil the first step, Purpose, in order to continue with the Process or agenda. The process should be clearly described, timed, and should also show who is responsible for each sub-process.

A clearly described process is a prerequisite in order to run an effective meeting. Although, the process is only an agenda, it helps a lot and gives a better structure to the meeting. Moreover, a clear process will also make it easier for the meeting leader to stick to the right subjects, easier to control the meeting time, and ensures that we actually are doing what we have planned to do.

3. **People**

The third P, People, means that the meeting leader has to consider who should attend and what their role is during the meeting. Sometimes it can also be good to make a stakeholder analysis when it concerns a major project or to make important decisions. A well elaborated stakeholder analysis makes things easier in the next step. However, it can be a bit too time-consuming for every meeting, but it is important to apply some parts. Examples of questions that the meeting leader should consider:

- Who should be invited in order to fulfil the purpose of the meeting?
- What do I want to get out of the meeting?
- What do participants want to get out of the meeting?

4. **Preparation**

Once the previous steps are completed, it is time to start the preparatory work. It is mainly focusing on three things:

**Formal communication and structure:**
Invite correct participants and send out materials for preparation, for instance, a detailed agenda describing the purpose and aim of the meeting.

**Informal communication:**
If there is a decision meeting, the decision should already be made informally before the meeting. Decision meetings should rather focus on planning how the decision should be executed.

**Planning:**
It is important to plan ahead and make sure we all know what the next step is. As a result, it reduces unexpected things that may arise. In other words, we need to have an understanding of what we want to achieve and therefore plan things in advance.
6.1.1.3 Checklist

The checklist (See Figure 6.1.1.3) is a tool which shall be used when the guidelines is implemented in the process. Instead of, prior to every meeting, checking the guidelines to manage the meeting, the checklist will help the meeting leader and participants to stick with the new routines. There is no predetermined text in the checklist which suits all meetings. Instead, the checklist will work as a template where user can adjust according to the meeting situation. The checklist is a tool which can be used by both the meeting leader and the participants, or as a mutual tool. For instance, after a feedback meeting, the meeting group decides they need to work on four topics from the guidelines that have not been working properly; together they put those topics on the checklist. The checklist can be used in all three meeting phases in order to make sure both guidelines and routines are followed.

6.1.1.4 Outlook SWM

The SWM describes both how templates are made and can be used in outlook in order to facilitate the work when sending out agenda and invitations. The SWM is a step in the continuous improvements, simplifying and standardizing the work routines in order to minimize the lead times in always creating a new agenda and invitation.

6.1.2 How the implementation was planned

The involvement of the meeting leader increased their insight and influence in the project. Moreover, this involvement may also increase their will for doing the pilot tests and making changes. Concerning the pilot tests, the meeting leaders had the opportunity to adapt the guidelines to better suit their own meetings. Since each meeting has its own characteristic, it was vital to choose which guidelines that can be applied in each meeting. According to
Atkinson (2004), it is important to sell and communicate the Lean philosophy when implementing Lean. At Ericsson, the Lean philosophy is already well-established among employees, which means that the meeting leaders do not have to start from the beginning when introducing Lean. However, it is also vital that the meeting leaders are fully committed and engaged when implementing the philosophy.

The action plan was tested on three different meetings. We decided to perform the pilot tests on different types of meetings in terms of a decision meeting, a problem solving meeting, as well as an information meeting. Before the pilot tests were performed at different meetings, we explained and discussed the content of the action plan with each meeting leader. In other words, we wanted to be as clear as possible with the purpose and aim of the action plan. This was done in order to adjust the action plan after each meeting and their characteristic. An important factor that can determine whether the implementation is successful or not, is to convince and involve the employees, but especially the leaders as much as possible. We have therefore chosen to involve these people at an early phase in order to create a commitment and a common understanding.

6.2 Pilot Testing

6.2.1 Empirical data from the pilot tests

Pilot Test 1
The pilot test started with a presentation and a review of the action plan for the meeting leader. During the meeting, the setup for the implementation was discussed and the meeting leader had the opportunity to express his/her opinions. The meeting resulted in a proposal on how the implementation would be conducted. The pilot test was set to start the coming week and continue for four weeks. However, the pilot test was cancelled for three weeks mainly due to the meeting leader’s lack of time. Before the fourth week a new meeting was set up to discuss how the implementation would be executed on the last pilot test. During the meeting, the meeting leader expressed that it would be hard to implement large amount of the guidelines on the pilot test meeting, since they have already made major changes during the last year. At that moment we decided to focus on feedback in the last pilot test in order to see what the participants thought of the meeting. However, due to lack of time from several participants, they had to leave early during the last meeting and there were no time left to discuss the feedback. Instead a mail was sent out to several participants in order to collect their thoughts about the meeting.

Regarding the agenda template and sending out an agenda in prior to every meeting, the meeting leader thought it would be unnecessary, since it would always contain the same topics and people. The meeting leader also believed that the participants would only look at the agenda for two to three weeks, and realizes it never changes and stops reading the agenda. A parable was made with the meeting room by the meeting leader. The meeting is scheduled to same room for every week, and if the room changes for a week, participants still show up in the old room because they never read an invitation that rarely changes.
Pilot Test 2

Pilot test 2 was introduced in the same way as pilot test 1; however, pilot test 2 could start according to our five week time plan. Unfortunately, two of the meetings were cancelled due to different reasons, and one of them was meant to be observed by the researchers. In total, three meetings were tested before an interview took place with the meeting leader (respondent 2). Respondent 2 received a good impression of the action plan, and stated that the guidelines can make the meetings more structured and effective. According to respondent 2, the guidelines also demonstrate that everyone have a shared responsibility in order to run effective meetings. Moreover, the respondent 2 was also positive concerning the checklist; the checklist is an easy and effective way to summarize the most important things to consider before the meeting.

Concerning the definition of meeting efficiency, respondent 2 stated that meeting efficiency has a strong relation to a well-worked agenda. However, the respondent also expressed that meeting leaders should not always strictly follow the agenda; instead, there should be some slot of time for questions and discussions that may arise. In general, respondent 2 felt that the preparatory work is the most important part in order to achieve effective meetings. The action plan has not shortened the time of the weekly meetings. Nonetheless, shortening time is not the priority; instead weekly meeting are set to one hour so the participants can receive all the information, as well as allow different discussions. According to respondents 2, the engagement among participants has not changed significantly compared to previous meetings. The agenda template was not used by the respondent 2 since this agenda template is not suitable for weekly meetings. Furthermore, respondent 2 decided to show the checklist for all the participants in order to visualize different tips to consider before meetings. The checklist is an effective way to involve the participants, but also to show that everyone has a responsibility to strive towards effective meetings.

Pilot Test 3

Pilot test 3 differed compared to the other two pilot tests since it was conducted on a meeting which had two meeting leaders (Respondent 3 & 4). The meeting leaders divided the work tasks and facilitation of the meeting depending on the workload and what work shift they were in. Therefore, two separate interviews were conducted in order to see if they experienced the implementation and pilot tests differently from each other. Further on, the pilot test was delayed and could not start at the planned time; however, two meetings had been conducted according to the time plan. The meeting leaders had also planned to continue using the action plan in their future meetings in order to see the long term effects.

Both respondents had similar first impression of the guidelines; there were many guidelines to follow and not all were relevant for their meeting. The sheer number of guidelines resulted in a sifting for suitable guidelines to use. According to both respondents, depending on the participants and type of meeting, the sifting and approach of the implementation will differ. In addition, respondent 4 believed that the formality and the cross functionality of the meeting will also affect the number of guidelines which can be applied to the meeting. The respondents also expressed that the action plan made them to start thinking and reflecting on how they should conduct their meetings. Further on, respondent 4 also believed that the action plan will make the meeting process more structured, which is something that respondent 4 think the participants want to feel. In addition, both respondents also thought that a more structured meeting process would
make the meeting more efficient. Beside the guidelines, the respondents expressed themselves positive to the other meeting tools. However, since only two pilot tests had been conducted, they did not have the time to make use of the other meeting tools thoroughly.

During the pilot test, the meeting leader created and used their agenda template. Both respondents stated that our template was too formal and detailed, which would better suit a decision or workshop meeting. Instead they created their own template, which were less formal and detailed. Respondent 4 perceived a difference in the meeting efficiency when they used and agenda because the meeting became more structured. In addition, respondent 3 believed that in a longer timescale, the meeting should become more efficient due to the structure. Further on, at the time of the interviews, the meeting leaders also started taking notes during the meeting in order to ease up the follow-up work. These notes were saved in a shared folder so every participant could check the notes after the meeting. In addition, the meeting leaders also started to put more focus on the participants to prepare for the meetings, which according to respondent 4 led to topics being dealt with quicker than before.

Another positive aspect of the action plan is the inclusion of different meeting rules. Respondent 3 and 4 mentioned that the participants are usually very creative and like to discuss during meetings; consequently, some discussions are off-topic and they are repeating each other’s arguments. However, the respondents do not see this as a bad thing, it has its advantages as well as disadvantages. According to respondent 4, they have been discussing meeting rules, since the meeting group feel that they have to work more systematic and structured in order to solve problems, as well as make the right decisions.

There were also some critics against the action plan. Both respondents felt that the number of guidelines was too much and some guidelines were similar. In other words, they felt that it was too much information and time-consuming to read through the documents. Moreover, respondent 4 felt that these guidelines are really useful for a new and inexperienced meeting leader, but for an experienced meeting leader some guidelines were less useful, since they are too basic. Furthermore, respondent 3 felt that these guidelines have to be summarized in one slide, since it should be easy to understand and visualize information.

6.2.2 Analysis & Results of the Pilot Tests

6.2.2.1 The pilot test in general

According to the respondents, the structure of meetings plays an important role when it comes to meeting efficiency. Well-structured meetings automatically create better efficiency during meetings. In addition, the respondents also expressed that a well-structured meeting facilitates when improving other aspects of the meeting process.

Since the pilot tests could not be tested in the extent that we have planned to do, the meeting leaders could therefore not fully evaluate all the tools in the action plan. In general, EMS, the guidelines and the checklist received positive feedback from both the meeting leaders and participants. However, it emerged from some instances that the EMS could create confusions among the employees, since Ericsson already has a Lean House in terms of EPS (Ericsson Production System). Since EMS might create some confusion among the employees in the
organization, we decided to develop a new model that mediates the same message as EMS. The recast of the EMS resulted in Meeting Bridge model (See 6.2.2.4). The Meeting Bridge is based on the same principles and shall visualize and meditate the same message as EMS, but has a different design.

The meeting leaders chose not to use the agenda template, since they felt that the agenda template was too detailed and was therefore suitable for more formal meetings. However, some of the meeting leaders decided to take some inspiration from our agenda template and applied it into their own agenda. For instance, some meeting leaders created a separate slide called “Notes”; as a result, they took notes continuously during the meeting.

Concerning the checklist, the majority of the meeting leaders expressed that the checklist was a quick and easy way to get a summary of important tips to run effective meetings. Moreover, some of them even decided to print out the checklist and attached it on the wall of the meeting room. The reason behind this action was to illustrate for all the meeting participants.

It also appeared some critics against the action plan. Several respondents believed that the guidelines were time-consuming and too extensive. One meeting leader stated it was too many guidelines, and many of them were basic and tacit for experienced meeting leaders; while for new and inexperienced meeting leaders, all these guidelines might be very helpful in order to run effective meetings. The reason behind the large number of guidelines is mainly due to each meeting leader should pick and consider suitable guidelines for their own meetings, and not use all of them. We have tried to be as clear as possible when explaining the guidelines and action plan. Even if it is only pilot tests, we have now noticed that it might not be enough to explain it verbally; instead it should be clear instructions written down in the guidelines.

6.2.2.2 Which meeting problems were solved and not

The action plan was developed to facilitate for the meetings leaders as well as the meeting participants during meetings. We also wanted to see if the action plan could reduce or eliminate the nine common meeting problems that we have identified at Ericsson. These meeting problems are classified as the most common, but these problems do not occur in every meeting. Since we only did three pilot tests in total, we could only make some general conclusions on which meeting problems that could be solved or not. Meeting problems that were solved are listed in below table (See Table 6.1.2.2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common meeting problems</th>
<th>Structural</th>
<th>Process/People</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Missing meeting rules</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low engagement among participants</td>
<td>Discussions are off-topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Too many or wrong participants</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Poorly prepared participants</td>
<td>Poor time planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Insufficient agenda, purpose, and aim</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting participants are sloppy with the meeting invitation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meeting rooms</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems solved by the action plan</th>
<th>Structural</th>
<th>Process/People</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Missing meeting rules</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low engagement among participants*</td>
<td>Discussion are off-topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Insufficient agenda, purpose, and aim</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Poorly prepared participants</td>
<td>Poor time planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1.2.2 Problems solved by the action plan

As the Table 6.1.2.2 shows, six out of nine meeting problems could be reduced or eliminated. The most notable meeting problem that was eliminated is “Low engagement among participants”, which was not really eliminated but rather had a contrary effect. Instead of low engagement among participants, one meeting had some problem with too high engagement among participants. According to the meeting leader, high engagement among participants usually results in other problems such as discussions are off-topic. By using the action plan, the meeting leader experienced a better structure, agenda and preparation of the meeting, which reduced the problem with high engagement and off-topic discussions. We have also identified that many of the meeting problems are similar and have a strong connection to each other; therefore, by reducing or eliminating one meeting problem might reduce or eliminate other problems as well. According to the respondents, other meeting problems were also reduced or eliminated to a certain extent; such as, missing meeting rules, insufficient agenda, purpose and aim, poorly prepared participants, as well as discussions are off-topic. By applying the guidelines, the meeting leaders expressed that they noticed that their meeting became more structured to a certain extent. In other words, some general meeting rules are positive and contribute to improve meetings. As a result, the meeting problem “Missing meeting rules” was eliminated instantly. Furthermore, the meeting leaders also expressed that it is far more likely to begin and end the meeting on time when having some general meeting rules. Therefore, the meeting problem “Poor time planning” was also eliminated by the action plan.

6.2.2.3 The updated action plan

The action plan was reworked (See Attachment 6) after the pilot tests, since we got different feedback regarding the contents and design. The meeting leaders wanted an action plan that was easier to present and visualize, which means reducing the number of guidelines and merging all tools into one document. The major changes we made in the action plan were the following: EMS was exchanged to the Meeting Bridge, numbers of guidelines were reduced, and the sub-section “meeting rules” was combined with the section “meeting participants”.

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6.2.2.4 The Meeting Bridge

During the empirical study of the pilot testing, we got response that the EMS could create confusion among the employees. Therefore a new model was developed based on the EMS. The result of the development of EMS became the Meeting Bridge model. However, during the pilot testing, EMS was used because we did not receive the response before the pilot tests. The purpose of the Meeting Bridge is to act as a supplement for EPS (Ericsson Production System) regarding meetings. The meaning of the Meeting Bridge is to create a common vision and philosophy within the company’s meetings in order to strive towards a goal. It is also an effective way to illustrate the pillars and principles that are important in order to achieve effective meetings.

![The Meeting Bridge diagram](image)

**Figure 6.2.2.3 The Meeting Bridge, Bridging the gap to effective meetings**

The Meeting Bridge is divided into four main parts, start-up, the foundation, the road and goal (See Figure 6.2.2.3). The start-up phase refers to the birth of the improvement process. When it comes to the foundation, the primarily focus is on the four pillars (4P; Purpose, Process, People, and Preparation), act as a foundation for the road, which the meeting group has to travel on in order to achieve effective meetings. The agenda template is directly built upon the 4P, since we believe that the agenda plays an important role in order to achieve effective meetings. The road itself is built up on Lean Thinking principles, for instance, standardizations, continuous improvements, visualization and leadership. The goal is what meeting groups aim to achieve with the improvement process, and by following the Meeting Bridge this is where they will end up. However, excluding one aspect or factor, the Meeting Bridge will collapse and it will be difficult to achieve the goal, unless you start over and build up the bridge once again. Further on, to improve the process of building and maintaining the Meeting Bridge, other tools in this chapter is meant to be used.
7 Conclusion

In the following chapter, the focus will be to answer the research questions. This case study has five research questions in total, and two them “How is the structure of meetings at Ericsson in Borås?” and “What are the current meeting problems that emerge during the meeting process?” have already been answered in empirical study chapter. The remaining questions as well as the main research question “How can Lean contribute to create effective meetings?” will be answered in this chapter.

7.1 Is Lean applicable on meeting processes and which are the obstacles?

In order to answer our research question and other guiding questions, we first need to find out whether Lean is applicable on meeting processes or not. Lean Thinking states that five principles need to be met in order to implement Lean in an organization. Based on our research, we see that all five principles can be applied in meeting processes. However, possible obstacles may arise in the creation of a good flow of the process, since the characteristics of the product may differ a lot. Standardization of the meeting process would facilitate the flow, because error and unnecessary activities might be more easily to detect and can therefore be eliminated. Another obstacle that may arise is to convince all the employees that the implementation of Lean will contribute to create effective meetings. Majority of the employees have been positive, but there are also some employees that have been sceptical and preferred to stick to their own meeting routines.

A positive aspect showing that Lean is applicable on meeting processes is that Ericsson in Borås has worked intensively with Lean since 2005, and has therefore made good progress with their Lean work. Even though Lean has not been implemented on Ericsson’s meeting processes, the company has applied Lean in their production as well as the white-collar unit. During our tour in the production, we observed several Lean methods that are used extensively. For example, Lean tools such as Kanban, Pull systems, 5S and Lean boards. In white-collar unit, the company uses several Lean boards in order to visualize important information, 5S in their offices and desks, as well as working often in multifunctional teams.

Moreover, the majority of the employees have great knowledge about Lean; therefore it does not require any extensive Lean training. The management team have also a comprehensive knowledge about the Lean philosophy, and have been featured on several Lean implementations earlier in terms production and white-collar unit. Based on these factors, we can therefore conclude that Lean is very likely to be applicable on meeting processes.

7.2 How can Lean be used to eliminate the problems within the meeting processes?

Lean principles can be used in order to eliminate the problems within the meeting process. However, it is important to emphasize that Lean should be considered as a philosophy, where all principles are working together as a whole. A common problem when applying Lean is that different principles work in separate islands, and therefore organizations do not reach a fully successful implementation. In other words, it is vital that different Lean principles can support and sync with each other, and at the same time fulfil its function. During the analysis section, we have already highlighted various ways Lean principles can be used in order to reduce or eliminate different meeting problems. In this section, we briefly summarize the Lean principles’ potential effect on Ericsson’s meeting problems.
Zero defects
When meetings do not start on time, it can be eliminated by using the principle zero defects. The problem will be eliminated by a proactive approach, because it allows participants to think one step ahead, which means paying extra attention to be on time for meetings. As we mentioned earlier in the analysis section, this type of meeting problem cannot be eliminated entirely due to the human error.

Multifunctional teams
We discovered a clear reason why participants do not always come prepared to meetings; it is mainly due to the participants had to prioritize other tasks that were more urgent. The meeting problem can be solved by applying the principle multifunctional teams. This principle contributes by distributing different tasks between several people, which means increasing the chance of getting the job done on time. Participants that ignore information is another problem multifunctional teams can eliminate. The effect of this principle is that the participants can delegate tasks to other participants, which creates a better flexibility.

Decentralization of responsibilities
By using this principle, it can pull down responsibility further down in the organization, and thus create more engaged and contributing employees in the organization. Furthermore, it can also increase the sense of responsibility among employees and also enhance opportunities that work will be completed on time.

Vertical information systems
When participants do not get enough information about meetings it is mainly due to poor information system. The principle of vertical information systems both simplify and improve the flow of information, which increases possibility for right person to get right information. Furthermore, these types of information systems also make it easier for meeting leader to receive information from the participants on whether they can attend the meeting or not. In other words, we believe that this waste occurs as a result of slow dissemination of information, and can be reduced by implementing vertical information systems.

Standardization
In our research we have found that standardization of some part of the meeting process should eliminate several wastes, and thereby improve the quality of the company’s meetings. Applying standardization will bring a clearer picture of the process, and thus illustrate what the next step is during the meeting for the participants. Moreover, this principle eliminates problems concerning lack a clear direction during meetings, as well as low engagement among participants. The implementation of standardization also eliminates other problems such as missing meeting rules, too many or wrong participants, insufficient agenda, purpose and aim of meetings, as well as discussions are off-topic.
Continuous improvement

This basically means that organizations are constantly making improvements in the process. By standardizing processes, it enables small and incremental improvements, which means improved quality of meeting processes. This principle also reduces the problem that participants are sloppy when responding to meeting invitations. By discussing how important it is to always answer the meeting invitations, the meeting leader and participants get a clear idea what they are expecting of each other. Further on, another step in working with continuous improvements is to work more with feedback during meetings and continuously evaluating the way to work.

7.3 How can Lean contribute to create effective meetings?

We believe that the main difference between effective and ineffective meetings is waste. Waste in meeting processes means that meeting leader and participants are performing activities without creating any value for the product or customer. In order to achieve effective meetings, we believe it is important to reduce or eliminate all kinds of wastes; as a result, several meeting problems will be eliminated as well.

In this study, we have confirmed that Lean is applicable on the company’s meeting processes. We have also identified a number of meeting problems and causes that usually occur during meetings. Many of the meeting problems that we have identified at the company are also common at other companies, according to various literatures, which increase our study’s validity.

In our analysis, we noticed that Lean principles can reduce or eliminate the majority of the meeting problems as well as different wastes that arose. However, these principles could not eliminate all meeting problems such as problems concerning meeting rooms. Several respondents expressed that the quality of the meeting rooms are not good enough, but they also stated that there are too few rooms; which means it takes too much time searching for available rooms. We have not found any Lean principle that can eliminate this problem. This problem is rather a question of resources than a performance issue.

We have now established that wastes are the main factor that distinguishes effective and ineffective meetings; which means that an implementation of Lean will improve meetings through elimination of wastes. In our study, we have concluded it is primarily the standardization of meeting process that can eliminate different types of wastes.
8 Discussion

In this chapter, the focus is upon the academic contributions that the study has contributed with. In addition, it also discusses the research credibility, difficulties during the thesis process, and ethical discussion. To sum up, the researchers present some short recommendations on how to implement the action plan in a larger scale in the organization.

8.1 Academic contributions

8.1.1 Theoretical contributions

During our literature review, we have noticed that there is limited new literature about meetings, while the concept “Lean meetings” are mentioned at times, but the researchers are not making any extensive explanation of the concept. Besides mentioning Lean meetings in a few articles, we have not found any research studying the implementation of Lean on meeting processes. From a theoretical perspective, this study has contributed to the theoretical research by combining Lean and meeting theories together. In addition, we have also made a relatively comprehensive analysis and discussion on whether Lean is applicable on meeting processes or not.

8.1.2 Empirical contributions

We also believe that our study has contributed to the research from an empirical perspective. This study is based on an extensive empirical study and hopefully the material can be used for further research in this field. For instance, the empirical study showed how unique each meeting is, but the majority of meetings are based on the same basis. We have also identified that the meeting leader has the biggest impact on whether the meeting is effective or not. Meeting participants have also a big responsibility in order to achieve effective meetings. Furthermore, the empirical study also showed that there is a willingness to change within the company; however, it is common that some employees are comfortable with the current routines and prefer to stick with old routines.

8.1.3 Methodological contributions

This study used an abductive method, combining both empirical data and theoretical terms, in order to analyse the problem and answering the research question. The analysis was not limited to a theoretical discussion. Instead, the result from the analysis was practically tested with the help of the action plan. After testing the action plan, a new empirical study and analysis were conducted in order to verify if the first analysis were correct. The study has contributed with a method which can be used in similar studies where the researcher wants to try their theories in practical. We have also described and discussed the difficulties that had arisen during the different methods used in the empirical study. This will also facilitate for other researcher who want to do similar research in this field.

8.2 Practical contributions to Ericsson

The practical contributions this study has contributed with are an action plan on how Lean can be applied on the meeting processes in order to improve Ericsson’s meetings. The action plan consists of several guidelines on how meeting leaders can improve their meetings, as well as four helpful tools. Three of these tools, Agenda Template, SWM, and Checklist, are common
tools used in many situations and organisations; however, they have been adjusted to suit Ericsson’s needs. In contrast, The Meeting Bridge is a completely new tool based and developed on the Lean house. In addition, the tool has been developed so it can be used by both internal and external situations and not only limited to Ericsson’s meeting process. Furthermore, the action plan can be used by other organisations as well; nevertheless, it should not be applied directly without being adjusted to the organization's needs and situation.

8.3 Research credibility

Since this study only consists of one organization, there might be some disagreement about whether we can generalize the results in this study. We believe that there are many similarities between Ericsson’s meeting problems and what theory believes are common meeting problems; therefore, we can make some relatively general conclusions. Moreover, this study also aims to demonstrate different types of waste that occur in meeting processes, and how Lean principles can eliminate these in order to create effective meetings.

During the meeting observations, it has been either obvious or more subtle on whether our presence has affected the meetings or not. In the beginning of some meetings, several meeting leaders expressed in a jokingly way: “let us be more efficient than usual”. In other cases, one meeting leader did make some changes to the meeting structure before the meeting observations started, and during the meeting, since the meeting participants mentioned this issue. These events points out that the outcome of the meetings may have been affected by the observations; however, knowing about this it could be taken into account when analyzing the observations. In order to minimize the risk to affect the meeting outcome, several observations on the same meeting series could have been made. However, due to lack of time it became impossible to conduct more meeting observations during a longer time scale. Meanwhile, the empirical study existed of two other methods as well, interviews and a survey. By using all these methods together, a better general perspective over the meeting process could be accomplished, since it fills that gaps that one single method leaves behind.

8.4 Reduced meeting time is not always optimal

In contrast to minimal lead times in a production context, reducing the meeting time is not always necessary. It emerged during the empirical study that shorter meeting time is not something everyone strives towards. For example, some meeting leaders mentioned that information meetings are not seen as effective if the meeting time is reduced. If the information meeting is set for an hour, it will probably last for an hour. This is a way to socialize and create a sense of togetherness according to some respondents. Instead, we believe that meeting efficiency has a strong connection to the structure. Meeting structure is vital in order to achieve the purpose and aim of meetings. In addition, meeting structure also plays an important role in order to increase the possibility to make correct decisions.

8.5 Difficulties during the thesis process

It has been an exciting challenge to have the possibility to implement Lean on Ericsson’s meeting processes. However, it has also aroused some difficulties during the study. Ericsson announced to lay off up to 25 % of the employees in Borås right before our pilot tests, which affected the work motivation among the employees. In addition, many meeting leaders were forced to postpone their regular meetings and instead focusing on the process of the layoff.
The meeting leaders as well as many other employees were really busy with this issue for several weeks; consequently, our pilot tests were delayed by several weeks.

Furthermore, it has also been difficult to develop an action plan that will possibly fit all meetings completely. Every meeting is unique in its own way, and we have therefore tried to develop a relatively extensive action plan that might cover the majority of important aspects of different meetings. The idea was that every meeting leader should use the action plan as a “smorgasbord” and adapt relevant items after its own meeting.

Another difficulty we have experienced during the study is to convince everyone that the implementation of Lean will contribute to create effective meetings. The majority of all employees have been positive to the implementation of Lean at the meeting processes. However, there have also been a few employees who have been skeptical, and it seems that they prefer to stick to their old routines instead. Parallels can be made to different literatures that describe this issue as one of the biggest challenges when implementing a new philosophy in organizations. We have therefore tried to be as clear as possible when presenting our purpose of our study, as well as describing the potential effects of Lean. This might have convinced more employees compared to if we did not put that much effort on it.

8.6 Ethical Discussion

8.6.1 The Purpose of a Change

The implementation of Lean on the meeting processes can be applied with principles such as standardization of routines, with the aim to improve the meeting efficiency. Implementation of routines and standardization may affect the employees’ own established habits and routines. As a result, there is a risk that employees might feel like being disputed in their own work and knowledge. In addition, standardization and implementing routines may cause the employees feeling more robotic and thus reducing the personal creativity. Therefore, it becomes important when creating routines and standardization, to consider meetings as a creative event where the meeting leader are enable to shape the meeting according to its need. Another aspect is that the implementation aims to make the work easier so everyone should be able to do the work tasks, which may make the employees feeling easily replaceable. However, that is not the purpose of Lean; instead it should be considered as an advantage. An important keystone in Lean is multifunctional teams, which an implementation of routines and standardizations aims to do alongside to increasing the team flexibility. To simplify with an example, if a meeting leader has to cancel a meeting, instead of cancelling the meeting the multifunctional team can take over the meeting. However, multifunctional teams require a high reliability within the team in order to do such a thing. Therefore it becomes important, as early as possible during the project, to inform the employees about the purpose of the study and implementation, as well as selling in the advantages of Lean. Otherwise, employees may oppose the implementation and feel like questioned in their work.

8.6.2 Why is the Organization Changing?

When introducing Lean in an organization, there might be some uncertainties and resistance from the employees. Uncertainties and wrong signals can get them to think about the reason behind the changes. The purpose and aim of the implementation of Lean on meeting processes is to improve meetings; however, employees might think it is a way to cut costs and lay off
employees. Parallels can be drawn when implementing Lean in production, where the aim is to streamline the production in terms of shorter lead-time, reduce costs, as well as meet customer demand in a better way. The employees can also misinterpret this as they see themselves as redundant in the organization. Implementing Lean on meeting processes is somewhat different compared to Lean in production. The majority of meetings cannot be measured in a time scale, since every meeting is unique and takes different amount of time. Some meetings are recurring and can therefore be measured in some ways; however, the content in each meeting is different from time to time, which makes it difficult to measure in a good way. Moreover, the production is more automated compared to meetings, which makes it a slightly different type of ethical dilemma when trying to improve meetings.

The ethical problematization with implementing Lean and sending out wrong signals were risked to be reinforced during the study. While this study was conducted, Ericsson announced the decision to lay off large amount of employees in Sweden; including up to 25 % of employees in Borås. Combining the ethical problematization and the layoff, the employees might start questioning the actual purpose of our study. Therefore, it was important to be clear when explaining the purpose, which is improving the company’s meetings and not cut costs. Similar as the problem of introducing routines and standards, it became even more important to be clear why we want to apply routines and standards, as well as the potential effects.

8.7 Suggestions on future studies

In this study, we have highlighted the wastes that occur in Ericsson’s meeting processes, and how an implementation of Lean can eliminate these wastes. We have chosen to make general conclusions from our study, which gives a contribution to this area; however, our conclusions do not give an absolute overall picture. Therefore, we believe it would be interesting if others could make similar case studies on other organizations in order to confirm or deny our conclusions. Furthermore, we want to emphasize the importance of combining qualitative and quantitative studies in order to demonstrate measurable effects. We believe that a mixed method research is the most suitable method, since it fills that gaps that one single method leaves behind by combining different methods. In other words, researchers will get a better overall picture of the study.

Further on, the pilot tests have only been conducted on recurring meetings due to lack of time. The recurring meetings have different structures compared to temporary meetings. Therefore, it would be interesting to see how an implementation of Lean on the meeting processes can affect temporary meetings.

8.8 Recommendations

8.8.1 How to implement the action plan

In order to continue working with the implementation of Lean on the meeting processes, Ericsson should mediate the action plan and how to work with the implementation to the managers. The reason behind this suggestion is that the managers can open up a discussion with their employees concerning how important it is to evaluate their way of conducting meetings. This can for example be made during weekly meetings or workshops. The study has showed that every meeting varies a lot regarding efficiency, and by creating a place to discuss meetings, employees can share their experiences and knowledge. To support the discussions
and how to continue working with improving their meetings, the action plan will work as a basis. It is also important to mediate that every meeting is unique and different needs, the action plan should work as a support in the implementation process rather than a rule book to strictly follow.

Another important step that can be made when implementing the action plan is to use the internal channels of communication, for instance, the intranet or newsletters. This shows that the organization, as a whole, is behind the changes and that they are committed to the cause.

8.8.2 The action plan’s future

The action plan cannot be seen as finished even though it was further developed after the pilot test based on the feedback from the meeting leaders. The organization and meetings will always be in constant change and develop. Therefore, it becomes important to continuously develop and evaluate the action plan so it will match the organisation’s vision and culture.
9 References


10 Attachments

1A. COVER LETTER ............................................................................................................. A
1B. SURVEY ........................................................................................................................ B
2. INTERVIEW TEMPLATE ................................................................................................. E
3. OBSERVATIONAL STUDY TEMPLATE .......................................................................... G
4. RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY .................................................................................... H
5. INTERVIEW TEMPLATE – PILOT TEST ....................................................................... Q
6. UPDATED ACTION PLAN .............................................................................................. R
1a. Cover letter

Följebrev

Till anställda på Ericsson i Borås 2015-02-16

Enkätundersökning gällande Ericssons möteskultur i Borås


Vi är tacksamma om du svarar på enkäten snarest möjligt, men senast 2015-02-25. Vid avslutad undersökning kommer det att finnas möjlighet att ta del av slutresultatet, om så önskas.

Vid eventuella frågor rörande undersökningen eller enkäten, var vänlig kontakta ansvariga kontaktpersoner nedan.

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Uppsala universitet
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E-mail: ginsun.au-yeung@ericsson.com

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Handledare 1
Johan Elmquist
johan.elmquist@ericsson.com

Handledare 2
Magnus Dahlström
magnus.m.dahlstrom@ericsson.com

Tack för din medverkan
1b. Survey

*Enkätundersökning: Möteskultur på Ericsson i Borås*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td><strong>Beslutsmöten</strong> är möten där syftet är att fatta beslut kring olika frågor. Det kan även inkludera arbetsmöten där målet är att ta ett beslut. Det är många gånger en återkommande process, till exempel TDM, masterplan-möten, styrgruppsmöten med flera. <strong>Informationsmöten</strong> skulle kunna vara veckomöten, där information skall spridas. <strong>Arbetsmöten/Problemlösningsmöten</strong> kan till exempel vara process-, projekt- eller förbättringsmöten. Om du ej deltar i en mötestyp; fyll i N/A på den specifika frågan.</td>
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### 1. Hur upplever du Ericssons möteskultur i Borås?

(1 = Mycket dåligt, 7 = Mycket bra)

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### 2. Finns det några rutiner för hur era möten skall hållas?

(1 = Inga rutiner, 7 = Mycket tydliga rutiner)

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### 3. Skickas det ut någon form av agenda inför möten?

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B
4. Svarar du på kallelsen som skickas ut inför ett möte?  
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5. Finns det ett tydligt syfte och mål med varje möte?  
(1 = Aldrig, 7 = Alltid)  
5a) Beslutsmöten  
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5b) Informationsmöten  
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6. Sker det en uppföljning vid följande möten?  
(1 = Aldrig, 7 = Alltid)  
6a) Beslutsmöten  
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7. Låter mötesledaren alla deltagare komma till tals under möten?  
(1 = Aldrig, 7 = Alltid)  
7a) Beslutsmöten  
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8. Kommer mötesdeltagare förberedda till möten?  
(1 = Aldrig, 7 = Alltid)  
8a) Beslutsmöten  
|   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | N/A  
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9. Händer det att mötesdeltagare kommer sent till möten?
(1 = Aldrig, 7 = Alltid)
9a) Beslutsmöten
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7  N/A
9b) Informationsmöten
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7  N/A
9c) Arbetsmöten
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7  N/A

10. Upplever du att det är för få eller för många deltagare på möten?
(1 = Alldeles för få, 7 = Alldeles för många)
10a) Beslutsmöten
    1  2  3  4  5  6  7  N/A
10b) Informationsmöten
    1  2  3  4  5  6  7  N/A
10c) Arbetsmöten
    1  2  3  4  5  6  7  N/A

11. Hur stor andel av din arbetstid uppskattar du lägga på möten?
1. 0 - 20 %  2. 21 - 40 %  3. 41 - 60 %  4. 61 - 80 %  5. 81 - 100 %

12. Hur ofta upplever du att de möten som du går på inte är nödvändiga?
(1 = Aldrig, 7 = Alltid)
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

13. Upplever du andra mötesproblem som inte nämns i enkäten?
(Nämn max 3 st)
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
2. Interview template

**Mall för intervju**

**Tid:**  
**Datum:**  
**Plats:**

**Generella frågor**

1. Hur länge har du jobbat här?

2. Hur stor del av din arbetstid uppskattar du att du lägger på möten? Någon procentsats eller timmar?

3. Vad är din generella åsikt om möten?  
   a. Positivt/negativt?  
   b. Fördelar/Nackdelar?

4. Hur upplever du att företagets möten fungerar?  
   a. Exempel på vad som är bra/dåligt?  
   b. Skiljer det sig åt mellan olika mötestyper, mötesägare?

5. Vilka anser du är de vanligaste mötesproblemen?

6. Finns det några strukturer för hur era möten ska hållas?  
   a. Följs dessa strukturer?

7. Har ni försökt kartlägga eller standardisera/strukturerar mötesprocessen?

**Innan mötet**

8. Hur långt innan mötet skickar du kallelse till deltagarna? (Mötesägare)  
   a. Får du alltid bekräftelse från deltagarna?  
   b. I samband med kallelsen – skickar du med någon agenda som beskriver mötets innehåll, mål och syfte?

9. Hur går ni kallelse till möten? (Mötesdeltagare)  
   a. Brukar det vara problem med kallelser?  
   b. Finns det några oklarheter i kallelsen gällande mötets betydelse?  
   c. Finns det alltid någon form av agenda vid kallelse?  
      i. Om det finns agenda, beskriver den olika punkternas betydelse och information?

11. Hur bestämmer du ordningen på agendan? (Mötesägare)

12. Förekommer det att nyckelpersoner inte kan delta i mötet? Hur går ni tillväga vid sådana situationer?


**Under mötet**

14. Tycker du att alla möten du går på är nödvändiga? (Mötesdeltagare)

15. Upplever du att vissa möten drar ut på tiden?
   a. Om mötet drar ut på tiden, vad gör du då?

16. Följs agendan under mötet?

17. Brukar deltagarna var sena till mötet? Är det ett störande moment? Hur påverkas mötet av det?

18. Brukar deltagarna ha med sig nödvändigt material till mötet?

19. Hur går ni tillväga när ni fattar ett beslut?
   a. Kommer ni alltid fram till beslut, eller skjuts de upp?
   b. Är du nöjd med den nuvarande beslutsprocessen?

20. Vid Informationsmöten - är informationen alltid relevant för dig?
   a. Hade du hellre tagit emot informationen elektroniskt?

21. Vid problemlösningsmöten/arbetsmöten - tycker du att det alltid finns tillräckligt med kompens vid sådana möten?

22. Är det någon som för protokoll eller har alla ett eget ansvar?

**Efter mötet**

23. Hur arbetar ni med uppföljning av möten? Finns det en färdig sturktur?

24. Är du nöjd med besluten som ni fattar? Varför/varför inte?
   a. Kan du ge exempel på hur ett dåligt/bra beslut gick till?

25. Vem eller vilka anser du är kunden under detta möte?
3. Observational study template

Mall för mötesobservation

Utsatt tid för mötet: Datum: Plats:
Typ av möte:

Övrig information som rör mötet och påverkar dess utgång som inte framkommer:

Temapunkter att tänka på

- Mötestid (Hur lång tid pågår mötet? Starttid och sluttid?)
- Antalet deltagare
- Färdig agenda?
- Har alla med sig material till mötet?
- Sen ankomst?
- Hur aktiva är deltagarna? Vissa mer aktiva än andra? Vad gör de som inte är aktiva?
- Hur är mötesägarens ledarskap?
- Mötetsgång, hur går själva mötet till, vad händer under mötet
- Kroppsengagemang?
- Roller: finns det en tydlig ledare som leder mötet?
- Hur tar man tillvara på ny kunskap/idéer som uppstår under mötet?
- Övrigt
### 4. Results from the Survey

**Question 1, Table 4.1, Graph 4.1**

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**How do you perceive the meeting culture at Ericsson in Borås?**

1 = Very bad  
7 = Very Good

**Question 2, Table 4.1, Graph 4.2**

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**Are there any clear routines how your meetings should be held?**

1 = Very bad  
7 = Very good
Question 3, Table 4.3, Graph 4.3

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Is there any kind of agenda available prior to meetings?

Question 4, Table 4.4, Graph 4.4

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Do you respond to the invitation sent out prior to a meeting?
### Question 5, Table 4.5, Graph 4.5

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**Is there always a stated aim and purpose with a meeting?**

- **1 = Never**
- **7 = Always**

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Question 6, Table 4.6, Graph 4.6

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Does it always occur a follow-up during at following meetings?

1 = Never
7 = Always

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Question 7, Table 4.7, Graph 4.7

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Does the meeting leader let every participants speak during a meeting?

- **1 = Never**
- **7 = Always**

- **Decision**
  - Scale 1: 0%
  - Scale 2: 4%
  - Scale 3: 6%
  - Scale 4: 12%
  - Scale 5: 23%
  - Scale 6: 31%
  - Scale 7: 18%
  - N/A: 6%

- **Information**
  - Scale 1: 0%
  - Scale 2: 5%
  - Scale 3: 14%
  - Scale 4: 14%
  - Scale 5: 20%
  - Scale 6: 28%
  - Scale 7: 19%
  - N/A: 1%

- **Problem solving**
  - Scale 1: 0%
  - Scale 2: 3%
  - Scale 3: 8%
  - Scale 4: 7%
  - Scale 5: 20%
  - Scale 6: 39%
  - Scale 7: 21%
  - N/A: 2%
## Question 8, Table 4.8, Graph 4.8

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### Are other participants prepared for meetings?

- **1 = Never**
- **7 = Always**

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![Graph showing response rates for different scales]
Question 9, Table 4.9, Graph 4.9

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Does it occur that other participants show up late to meetings?

1 = Never 7 = Always

- **Decision**: 2% 12% 7% 16% 22% 29% 7% 5%
- **Information**: 3% 7% 10% 16% 18% 36% 10% 0%
- **Problem solving**: 2% 8% 9% 15% 20% 35% 10% 1%
**Question 10, Table 4.10, Graph 4.10**

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| Sum   | 109      | 109         | 109            | 100%     | 100%        | 100%           |

**Do you perceive that there are to few or too many participants during meetings?**

1 = Never
7 = Always

- **Decision**
  - 0% 2% 5% 31% 24% 21% 7% 10%
- **Information**
  - 2% 2% 12% 42% 20% 10% 6% 6%
- **Problem solving**
  - 0% 0% 6% 38% 28% 17% 7% 5%
**Question 11, Table 4.11, Graph 4.11**

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**How much of your working time do you spend on meetings?**

![Pie chart showing response rates](chart1.png)

**Question 12, Table 4.12, Graph 4.12**

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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How often do you perceive a meeting you attend too is not necessary?**

![Bar graph showing response rates](chart2.png)
5. Interview template – Pilot test

Intervjumall angående pilottest av handlingsplan

Respondent:
Datum och tid:
Typ av möte:

1. Vad har du som mötesledare fått för intryck av handlingsplanen?
2. Vad har mötesdeltagarna fått för intryck av handlingsplanen?
3. Har implementationen gått till på ett smidigt sätt? (motstånd från mötesdeltagarna?)
4. Vad är möteseffektivitet enligt dig?
5. Om mötet upplevts som effektivare efter handlingsplanen; på vilket sätt tycker du att mötet har blivit effektivare?
6. Hur har mötesprocessen blivit sedan införande av riktlinjerna?
7. Har du märkt av något om utkomsten av mötet har förändrats?
8. Vilken del eller vilka delar av handlingsplanen anser du har varit mest användbar för ditt möte? Och varför?
9. Har det blivit enklare för dig som mötesledare att hålla mötet eller är det ingen skillnad sen innan?
10. Har mötesdeltagarna blivit mer aktiva pga handlingsplanen? Om ja, på vilket sätt?
11. Gällande dokumentet med riktlinjer; vilka riktlinjer har du tillämpat på dina möten?
12. Gällande agenda-mallen; har dem 4P:en (purpose, process, people och preparation) underlättat för dig som mötesledare att hålla ett möte?
13. Gällande checklistan; har den kommit till användning? Kan den fylla en nytta i framtiden?
15. Finns det några positiva saker med handlingsplanen?
16. Finns det några negativa saker eller saker som kan förbättras med handlingsplanen?
6. Updated Action plan
GENERAL

BEFORE YOU DECIDE TO HAVE A MEETING
START ASKING YOURSELF SOME QUICK QUESTIONS

WHAT TYPE OF MEETING DO I NEED?
WHO IS THE CUSTOMER?
FOR WHOM ARE THIS MEETING?
WHAT ARE THE NECESSARY PREPARATIONS?

MEETING TIME

NO ONE LIKES BEING LATE
OR LEAVING A MEETING EARLY

TRY TO BOOK MEETINGS WITH SOME SPACE
FOR ATTENDEES TO MOVE TO NEXT MEETING

THIS WILL ALSO ALLOW YOU AND
OTHER MEETING LEADERS TO ARRIVE
EARLIER TO PREPARE FOR THE MEETING
AGENDA PREPARATION

PURPOSE
MAKE USE OF AN AGENDA TEMPLATE IN ORDER TO MAKE SURE THE PARTICIPANTS WILL GET ALL THE NEEDED INFORMATION

PROCESS
HAND OUT THE AGENDA 1-2 DAYS BEFORE THE MEETING*
DON'T FORGET TO SEND OUT AN UPDATED AGENDA IN A MEETING SERIES

PEOPLE
REMIND THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE MEETING CONTENT WITH AN AGENDA REMINDER

PREPARATION
MAKE A DEMAND THAT ALL PARTICIPANTS MUST READ THE AGENDA

AGENDA MANAGEMENT

ADD A CONTEXT TO THE TOPIC TO MAKE SURE EVERY PARTICIPANT GOT THE SAME UNDERSTANDING OF THE TOPIC

ALSO STATE IF THE TOPIC IS MEANT AS A DISCUSSION, INFORMATION, OR DECISION

ALLOCATE EACH TOPIC WITH ALLOTTED TIME

PRIORITIZE EACH AGENDA ITEM
INVITATIONS

BEFORE YOU INVITE PEOPLE
- MAKE SURE WHAT THE GOAL OF THE MEETING IS
- ONLY INVITE PEOPLE REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL

DON'T FORGET TO SEND OUT A PRELIMINARY AGENDA WITH THE INVITATION

REMEMBER THE PARTICIPANTS TO UPDATE THEIR INVITATION STATUS SO YOU KNOW WHO WILL ATTEND AND NOT

RESCHEDULE MEETINGS WHEN KEY STAKEHOLDERS CANNOT PARTICIPATE

---

THE MEETING

ARRIVE EARLY TO MAKE NECESSARY PREPARATIONS AND MAKE SURE EVERYTHING WORKS

START THE MEETING ON TIME, DO NOT WAIT FOR LATE RUNNERS

END OFF-TOPIC DISCUSSIONS IF THEY ARE NOT NECESSARY FOR THE MEETING

IF A STAKEHOLDER IS ARRIVING LATE, POSTPONE THE TOPIC UNTIL THE STAKEHOLDER ARRIVES

REMEMBER THE GOAL, THE AGENDA IS THERE TO HELP YOU ACHIEVE THE GOAL, SO STICK WITH IT
ENGAGEMENT

AS A LEADER, PEOPLE WILL BE AFFECTED BY YOUR LEADERSHIP, SO STAY POSITIVE AND COMMITTED

PREPARE THE PARTICIPANTS WITH AN AGENDA BEFORE THE MEETING INSTEAD OF DURING THE MEETING

TRY TO INVITE ALL PARTICIPANTS TO THE MEETING AND DISCUSSIONS BY ASKING THEM SHORT QUESTIONS OR ABOUT OPINIONS

CREATE A BETTER WORK ENVIRONMENT BY PRAISING YOUR PARTICIPANTS DURING THE MEETING

FEEDBACK

RUNNING OUT OF IDEAS AND HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR MEETINGS?
START HAVING A FEEDBACK TOPIC AFTER THE MEETING

DON'T FORGET TO EVALUATE YOUR MEETINGS AND INVOLVE THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS AS WELL

TIPS!
THREE QUESTIONS YOU CAN LET THE PARTICIPANTS TO ANSWER IN ORDER TO GET FEEDBACK

HOW HAVE THE MEETINGS BEEN?
HOW ARE THE MEETINGS NOW?
HOW DO WE WANT THEM TO BE?
FOLLOW-UP

START WORKING WITH FOLLOW-UP DURING THE MEETING BY DESIGNATING SOMEONE TO TAKE NOTES OF THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISIONS, DISCUSSION, OR INFORMATION

THESE NOTES CAN BE SENT OUT AS A SUMMARY TO PEOPLE WHICH COULD NOT ATTEND. REMEMBER TO SEND IT TO PEOPLE WHO ATTENDED AS WELL

DO NOT WAIT TO LONG TIME BEFORE SENDING OUT THE SUMMARY AFTER A MEETING

THESE NOTES CAN ALSO BE USED AS A FOLLOW-UP AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NEXT MEETING

MAKE USE OF A DECISION LOG

MEETING RULES

TAKE TIME TO DISCUSS MEETING RULES WITH YOUR MEETING GROUP, AND WRITE THEM DOWN

MEETING RULES AFFECT EVERYONE SO EVERYONE SHOULD HAVE THEIR OWN OPINIONS

SHORTLY DISCUSS THE RULES AGAIN WHEN A NEW PARTICIPANT JOINS THE MEETING GROUP

WHEN A PERSON ATTEND ONCE, SHOW THEM THE RULES BEFORE THE MEETING

REMEMBER THAT THE PARTICIPANTS ALSO HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO IMPROVE THE MEETING PROCESS

DON'T FORGET THAT YOU CAN STILL HAVE A GREAT TIME DURING MEETINGS MEANWHILE USING MEETING RULES
# MEETING TOOLS

## RECOMMENDED TOOLS TO USE WHEN IMPROVING YOUR MEETING PROCESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGENDA TEMPLATE</th>
<th>THE MEETING BRIDGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>REMEMBER THE 4 P</strong>&lt;br&gt;- PURPOSE, WHY HAVE THIS MEETING?&lt;br&gt;- PROCESS, HOW TO ACHIEVE THE PURPOSE?&lt;br&gt;- PEOPLE, WHOM ARE NEEDED?&lt;br&gt;- PREPARATIONS, WHAT TO DO IN ADVANCE?</td>
<td><strong>THE MEETING BRIDGE IS A REWORK OF THE LEAN-HOUSE</strong>&lt;br&gt;THE BRIDGE IS A VISUALIZATION OF HOW TO ACHIEVE EFFECTIVE MEETINGS BY SETTING UP GOAL, AND TRAVELING OVER THE GAP BETWEEN INEFFECTIVE MEETINGS AND EFFECTIVE MEETINGS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVERY MEETING IS UNIQUE, SO HAVING ONE TEMPLATE FOR ALL YOUR MEETINGS IS HARD. INSTEAD, MAKE ONE FOR FORMAL MEETINGS AND ONE FOR INFORMAL MEETINGS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USING AN AGENDA FOR A MEETING SERIES CREATES CONSISTENCY</td>
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</table>

## CHECKLIST | SWM
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAKE A CHECKLIST BASED ON THE FEEDBACK YOU GET FROM YOUR MEETING PARTICIPANTS</td>
<td>YOU KNOW A MORE EFFICIENT WAY TO COMPLETE A RECURRING WORK TASK?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAKE SURE EVERYONE READS IT AND TAKE THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO FOLLOW IT IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THE MEETING</td>
<td>CREATE A SWM FOR IT AND SHARE IT WITH YOUR CO-WORKERS TO SHARE THE KNOWLEDGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTINUOUSLY UPDATE THE CHECKLIST AFTER THE FEEDBACK YOU GET</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE FOLLOWING SLIDES CONTAIN EXAMPLES OF THE TOOLS
AGENDA TEMPLATE
IMPLEMENTING THE FOUR P ON YOUR MEETING

THE MEETING BRIDGE
BRIDGING THE GAP TO EFFECTIVE MEETINGS
CHECKLIST
Quick way to check if everything is in order

**MEETING LEADER**
- Identify purpose and aim of the meeting
- Specify the meeting type
- Identify necessary participants
- Send out a clear agenda to participants

**MEETING PARTICIPANT**
- Am I necessary for this meeting?
- Always reply to the meeting invitation
- Read through the agenda and prepare

**PRE-MEETING**
- Be there 5 min before the meeting starts
  - Start on time
  - Assign a person to take notes
- Begin meeting by presenting the agenda
- Stick to the agenda items
- Involve participants by inviting them to discussions
- Summarize the meeting content
- End the meeting by asking participants for feedback

**THE MEETING**
- Be on time
- Bring necessary materials
- Put down your smartphone and participate actively
- Provide feedback concerning the meeting’s positive and negative things

**POST-MEETING**
- Go through the sent material from the meeting leader
- Get in touch with the meeting leader if there are ambiguities
- Send out a summary of the meeting to participants
- Follow up the decisions taken during the meeting
**SWM**

**EASING UP YOUR WORK ROUTINES – PAGE 1**

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**SWM Outlook Template**

Easy steps on how to create a simple Outlook template for meeting invitations or E-mail.

---

**Introduction**

- This SWM consists of 7 easy steps to create and use a template for your meeting invitations or E-mails.
- Depending on if you want an E-mail or meeting invitation, choose Mail or Calendar in Outlook.
- If you want a meeting invitation, choose Calendar in Outlook. If you want an E-mail, choose Mail in Outlook.
- This SWM focuses on meeting invitation, but there is no difference in how to create a template for both.
- In the end are some more tips on how templates can make your daily meeting invitations and E-mail more effective.

---

**Step 1 – Creating the template**

1. Create an appointment or mail as normal.
2. a. Click in the text field, press "Insert", choose "Create from file".
2. b. Click browse.
3. Click "Insert".

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**Step 2 - Creating the template**

1. Locate and choose your premade template.
2. Click on "Insert".

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**Step 3 - Creating the template**

1. Customize your template with more options if needed.
2. For example: If you add any attachments, they will be saved to the template.
3. If satisfied with your template, proceed.

---

**Step 4 - Creating the template**

1. Click “File” followed by “Save as”.
2. Choose Outlook Template in the roll down list. Proceed with naming your file and “Save”.

---

**A**
How to use the template

After creating your template; how do I start using it?

Step 5 – Using templates

1. Instead of clicking “New Appointment”, Choose “New Items” and “Choose From...”

Step 6 – Using templates

1. Select “User Template in File System” in roll down list
2. Select one of the previous created template

Step 7 – Using templates

1. The template you choose will now pop-up
2. Every option you made during the template creating is still saved

Finished

› These are all the basic steps you need to know to start using templates
› Next slide consists of some tips & tricks on how to make changes to your invitation after it has been sent out to your meeting attendees

Tips & Tricks

› For a meeting series with an agenda template attached with objects, each meeting in the series can be changed individually by choosing “open this occurrence”.
› Want to make a change on the template affecting whole series, choose “open this series” instead
› Want to make easy changes to your excel template, right click the object and choose “worksheet object” and open, all changes made in new window will be saved in the template
› Take live notes during the meeting in the template and save them with “worksheet object” open and then save the file on your computer as normal
› Making minor adjustments to the invitation, don’t send update to attendees to keep their mailbox clean
› Only send out that an change has been made if it is a major update