Business Improvement through People:  
The IKEA Distribution Center Älmhult Case

This thesis is presented as part of the Degree of Master of Science in Business Administration

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ABSTRACT

During September 2008 the Swedish company IKEA performed its annual employee survey called VOICE. As part of this survey, IKEA Distribution Center in Älmhult (DCÄ) was assessed with a result of 521 points out of 1000 points.

The present work analyzes the impact of Human Resources Management practices included in VOICE on the Organizational Performance.

The research was performed based on a Phenomenological design, applying the Case Study Strategy over DCÄ. The Conceptual Framework used as guidance to analyze the case was based on different HRM Performance theories.

The conclusions are formulated upon the proceeds from primary data, gathered through semi-structured interviews on DCÄ, and secondary data from VOICE 2008 results and other publications.

Communication was established as the cornerstone for improving future VOICE results.

KEY WORDS

Climate Survey; Human Resources Management; HRM; Organizational Culture; Communication; Organizational Performance.
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1. INTRODUCTION

This work is focused on finding the key improvement areas in DCÄ where to apply specific changes, in order to get the VOICE 2010 results increased.

1.1. Background

During September 2008 the Swedish company IKEA performed VOICE, the annual employee survey to all its units around the world, in order to get to know the climate, or the common patterns identified in different behaviors and experiences of people in the company (Schneider, Bowen, Ehrhart, & Holcombe, 2000), and identify improvement areas. This poll gave the company an overall result of 646 out of 1000 with 77184 respondents in 39 countries (Sundqvist, personal communication, 2009).

This survey aims at understanding IKEA co-workers’ situation at the job, and the degree of understanding and application of IKEA’s Culture in everyday operations. The survey analyzes, though different questions, the following categories; Customer Competence, Motivation, Given & Taken Responsibility, Openness & Learning, Co-operation, Creativity & Speed, Organizational Efficiency, Diversity, Recognition & Contribution, Competence Development, Leadership, Goals, People Retention Index, Social & Environmental Issues and Internal Communication (Sundqvist, personal communication, 2009 and IKEA Intranet, 2009).

As part of this survey, IKEA Distribution Center in Älmhult (DCÄ) was assessed with a result of 521 points out of 1000 points, which represented the lowest result for the three Distribution Centers the company operates in Sweden. DCÄ is part of Distribution Services East Central and North (DS EC&N), the unit in charge of Store Distribution, Customer Distribution and Transport in East, Central and North European countries, operating Distribution Centers in Sweden, Poland and Russia. DS EC&N got a result of 591 points, while the global Distribution Services (DS) unit got an average result of 631 points, both out of 1000 points (Elofsson, 2008; Karlsson & Sundqvist, personal communication, 2009 and Exjobb-poolen, 2008).
IKEA identifies the units with VOICE results over 600 points as well performers, having a good level of understanding of the organizational culture, and therefore, working towards the Organizational Vision. 700 points is considered an excellent level and it has been set as the target for 2010 VOICE survey (Sundqvist, personal communication, 2009).

It is worth to note that results for DC Älmhult in 2007 survey was 499, meaning that there has been some improvement in the climate during the last year, but additional measures are needed to achieve 2010 goal. Most of the surveyed indicators have improved in 2008, in comparison to 2007, but two of them measuring ‘Creativity & Speed’ and ‘Organizational Efficiency’ have slightly decreased in the last survey. Other indicators remain in very low levels, such as ‘Co-operation’ with only 32% of favorable answers (IKEA Intranet, 2009).

In IKEA’s culture, it is believed that there is a linkage between VOICE survey results and the company’s performance. As argue by Elofsson, IKEA “...see this as a very important tool to develop our organization and by that also develop our business.” (Ibid, 2008, p. 4). Areas with high performance in this survey have better Key Performance Indicators results. Based on this, IKEA has set a goal of a minimum of 700 points out of 1000 in all company’s units for year 2010 to assure a sustainable performance through all units in the company (Karlsson & Sundqvist, personal communication, 2009 and Exjobb-poolen, 2008).

1.2. Purpose and Research Questions

IKEA results of 646 points out of 1000 shows that the company is currently performing below the target set for 2010 VOICE survey, and indicates that improvement activities must be applied in to reach this target. This work, based on a Case Study of DC Älmhult, is focused on finding the key improvement areas where to apply specific changes, in order to get the VOICE 2010 results increased. As mentioned before, this unit is currently obtaining low results in VOICE index with an average of 521 points out of 1000.
In this sense, upon IKEA’s request, this work is aiming to
- Identify focus areas in purpose to help the organization to become better in
  working together with their big areas: Business and People.
- Propose specific improvement activities in every focus area.

According to the above arguments, the following Research Questions are applicable to the current work:
- Which areas or practices need improvement activities to be applied on in
  order to improve VOICE index results?
- Which areas or practices will have the highest return on improvement
  activities in terms of VOICE index results?

Once these areas are identified the following Research Questions will arise:
- What activities should be applied to the selected areas to improve the VOICE
  index results?

1.3. Relevance

The relevance of this research is reflected on the contribution that this case study will bring to IKEA’s VOICE results, through the study of DC Älmhult, and the improvement activities identified for this unit. Although this activities may be specific for DCÄ, the results may be applicable to the whole organization. Moreover, since IKEA DS is a key figure in the company’s supply chain, every improvement achieved in this DC will be reflected in its performance, which impacts on final delivery of goods to every store in time and good condition, which at the end of the day will be reflected on customer satisfaction, and as mentioned before in Company’s performance and profits. Therefore, the present project will be of interest to IKEA organization in general. In line with this argument, the improvement activities proposed by this research aim to have an impact on employees’ everyday working conditions, since the only way of getting better results in VOICE 2010 is getting better climate, a better applied culture and higher satisfaction.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

“...HRM policies and practices are of primary importance to the organization’s survival and long-term success.” (French, 2003, p. 73)

2.1. Introduction

In the present chapter, literature on Human Resources Management and its impact on performance will be reviewed, in order to understand the linkage claimed by IKEA between this climate survey and the organizational performance. Diverse models relating Human Resources and the way they are managed with the company performance are described and analyzed, but one in particular, the Model of Organizational Performance by French, has been chosen as the central theory for this research since it reflects the VOICE categories assessed by the survey. Furthermore, this model is specially attractive because it identifies these categories as the key elements influencing the organizational performance.

2.2. Literature Mapping

The aim of this section is to identify the different fields of the literature that are appropriate for the present work. The literature review starts with the different theories of HRM, and its impact in the organizational performance. Later, going down in the figure, the concepts are narrowed to the chosen model by French, which is related to the main object of this work - The VOICE Survey -. Finally the concepts are narrowed to Culture, Climate and Communication.
2.3. Human Resources Management

Human Resources Management refers “...to the philosophy, policies, procedures, and practices related to the management of people within and organization.” (French, 2003, p. 4).

In the same sense, is defined by Boxall & Purcell as “…all those activities associated with the management of employment relationships in the firm.” (Ibid, 2003, p. 1).

Previously, functions related to People Management were focused on functional activities, such as hiring, training, wage setting, among others. However, the modern understanding of HRM is based on the fact that these activities affect each other, and affect other organization’s activities as well. Moreover, HRM functions have a deep impact on organizational overall performance, and ability to achieve objectives. In this sense, HRM is part of the organization’s strategic planning, sharing its Mission and Vision (French, 2003).
2.4. HRM Performance Models

Different models have been proposed by different authors and researchers in the fields of Organizational Performance and Human Resources Management, confirming this relation between Human Resources aspects and the company’s overall performance.

Boxall and Purcell (2003) introduce the basic idea that organizational viability is only achievable through the combination of three critical elements, as described in figure 2.

**Figure 2: Three critical elements for the viability of the firm**

These critical elements are People, Goals and Resources. As shown above, the first element is Capable People, being skilled and motivated. Secondly Appropriate Business Goals, which stand for a sense of identity and achievable objectives. Last but not least, Resources, which represent funding, operating systems, stock of...
materials. These three elements are interrelated and they affect each other. Therefore, the three elements must be equally considered as strategic for the organizational long term viability (Boxall & Purcell, 2003).

Thompson (1996 in Wiley & Brooks, 2000) stated the positive correlation between favorable work environments and profit contribution margin. The author further argued that there is a negative relationships with grievance, absenteeism and safety incident rates.

Boxall and Purcell elaborate a model through which they illustrate the relation mentioned above. They argue that the Organizational Objectives, which include creating value and returns to shareholders and obtaining sustainable competitive advantages, are rooted in two sets of goals, “Critical non-HR goals” and “Critical HR goals” (Ibid, 2003, p. 7).

The first group of goals includes what we may call the typical operative goals, such as Sales, Market Share, Return on Capital employed, Social Legitimacy, among others. These goals are the ones that add the most tangible value to the organization, and are measured and followed up to understand the current position in the market (Boxall & Purcell, 2003).

The second group includes those goals that are not in the core of the organization. They involve Labour Productivity, Organizational Flexibility and Social Legitimacy. Labour Productivity involves the relation between the value added by the people and the cost they create. Flexibility requires the organization to be able to adapt to changes quick and smoothly. Finally, the Social Legitimacy refers to people’s sense of belonging to the organization (Boxall & Purcell, 2003).

From Boxall and Purcell Model it follows that the company should focus on “Critical non-HR goals” and “Critical HR goals” in order to contribute to the overall business objectives (Boxall & Purcell, 2003).
Furthermore, this link is also emphasized by the ‘Employee-Customer-Profit Chain’ at Sears (Heskett, Jones, Loveman and Schlesinger 1994, Rucci, Kirn and Quinn 1998 in Boxall & Purcell, 2003) through “…the idea that the company will become a ‘compelling place to invest’ if it is a ‘compelling place to shop’ and a ‘compelling place to work’…” since employee satisfaction impact on customer experience, and finally in the company’s profits.

Guest (1987, 1997 and 1999 in Legge, 2001) suggests that performance depends on motivation, but at the same time this motivation must be combined with the required skills, commitment and a correct job design. Guest’s later research added the idea that employee’s Job Security Feeling, Motivation and Job Satisfaction are rooted on the commitment or psychological contract the employee has with the company.

Other theory in this direction is the High-Performance Work Systems theory (Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg, and Kalleberg, 2000 in Boxall & Purcell, 2003), which introduces the idea of linkages between People and Organizational performance, which are shown the figure 3.

**Figure 3: High-performance work systems**

This model introduces the notion that Performance is a function of AMO \( P=f(A,M,O) \). A stands for Abilities of people to do the tasks they are required to perform. M stands for Motivation of people, which is defined as the willingness to perform the tasks. Finally, O stands for Opportunities and refers to support provided by the working environment to the people to perform the tasks and responsibilities they are assigned (Apperlbaum et al. 2000 in Boxall & Purcell, 2003).

As shown in the figure, the model presents a sequence of events, which influence the following step when lines are full, and indirectly when lines are dotted.

The function mentioned above - \( P=f(A,M,O) \) - can be explained as a flow, which starts with the practices, that increase the AMO elements. These elements have a direct impact on two elements that act in parallel and affect each other,. These elements are Employee Potential and Effort, and the Systemic Response to Employee Effort. The combination of these two elements creates two new elements in the flow, which are the final Improved Company Performance, and the Improved Worker Outcomes. These two direct results influence each other as the two previous do. Finally the flow ends up with the results of the performance and outcomes in the Supportive Company, Industry and Societal Context, which close the loop acting as the new incomes for the AMO (Apperlbaum et al. 2000 in Boxall & Purcell, 2003).

Liu, Combs, Ketchen and Ireland argues that “...HRM practices shape firm performance through three key channels (...): (1) increase employees’ knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs); (2) motivate employees to leverage their KSAs for the firm's benefit; and (3) empower employees to do so. “ (Ibid, 2007, p. 504).

These three channels are represented in figure 4 by the ovals, containing the practices that each one involves. As we can see, the ovals overlap and affect each other, and HRM is the center of the model, in the common area for the three ovals. (Liu, et al. 2007).
The authors (Liu, et al.) conclude that “...human resource management has significant value for organizational performance.” (Ibid, 2007, p.510). This assertion is followed by the following recommendation “...skilled investments in: (1) HR planning, (2) compensation level, (3) incentive compensation, (4) training, (5) internal promotion, (6) employment security, (7) participation, (8) selectivity, (9) grievance procedures, or (10) flextime (...) will yield benefits in terms of increased productivity, decreased employee turnover, and greater financial returns.” (Liu, et al. 2007, p.510). Finally “...teams and information sharing” (Liu, et al. 2007, p.510) should be taken into consideration for the deep impact they have in performance.

**Figure 4: HRM practices and the processes they impact most**

![HRM Practices Diagram](source: Liu, Combs, Ketchen & Ireland, 2007, p. 505.)

Source: Liu, Combs, Ketchen & Ireland, 2007, p. 505.

### 2.5. French’s Model of Organizational Performance

In this sense, French (2003) creates a more detailed model, called Model of Organizational Performance (see figure 5), in which, as any other system, the organization’s functions (Internal Environment), receive the input from the External Environment, to produce the Organizational Outcomes.
As mentioned before, this model has been chosen because it reflects the VOICE categories assessed by the survey as the key elements influencing the organizational performance.

Figure 6 shows the correlations identified between elements in French’s Model of Organizational Performance and elements in VOICE Survey. These correlations make of French’s model a good theoretical ground on which base this work (French, 2003 & IKEA Intranet, 2009).
Figure 6: Correlation between elements in French’s Model of Organizational Performance and elements in VOICE Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French’s Model of Organizational Performance elements</th>
<th>VOICE elements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team and Interteam Behavior and Performance</td>
<td>Co-operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation and Performance</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational culture and climate</td>
<td>Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Customer Competence</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social &amp; Environmental issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership Style</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Given &amp; Taken Responsibility</td>
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<td>Creativity and Speed</td>
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<td>Structure</td>
<td>Organizational Efficiency</td>
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<td>Creativity and Speed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Given &amp; Taken Responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Managerial Philosophy</td>
<td>Openness and Learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Given &amp; Taken Responsibility</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Organizational Efficiency</td>
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<td>Creativity and Speed</td>
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One of the distinctive elements on this model is that Human Resources Management is considered the center of the model “…because HRM policies and practices are of primary importance to the organization’s survival and long-term success.”, adding that “…how well these human resources are managed is probably the most critical factor in an organization's overall performance.” (French, 2003, p. 73).

These three groups are interdependent of each other, and have reciprocal influences, not only in the way External Environment > Internal Environment > Organizational Outcomes, but also the Outcomes impacting in the Internal and External environments, and the Internal environment affecting in the External one as well.

As described above, this model identifies the Internal Environment of the organization as the sum of functions and attributes that, influenced by Human
2.5.1. External Environment

According to the model (French, 2003), the External Environment is integrated by the different factors that may influence the organization as a whole, and specifically in this case, the HR procedures and policies and the way people behave and interact inside the organization.

“Management may have only limited control over these factors...” (French, 2003, p. 71).

The elements in this particular vision of the External environment are some extent aligned with the traditional PESTEL which include the Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental and Legal aspects of the environment or market in which the organization acts (Evans & Richardson, 2007). Since these elements have an impact on performance, the firms acting in certain market must explore their environments and understand the changes that occur in order to adapt their strategies and maintain their competitive advantages (Johnson, Scholes & Whittington, 2008 and Walsh, 2005).

The external environment proposed by French (2003) includes:

- Human and Cultural Factors

In this subgroup the author (French, 2003) identifies the Managerial Skills and Abilities that predominate in the market or society the organization is working in. Also, personal Values about interpersonal relations, and about products and services offered by the organization. Finally, elements such as “...attitudes about work and leisure, (...) collective action, (...) and attitudes about participation in decision making and problem solving.” (French, 2003, p. 73).
This element can be understood as the social aspect of PESTEL, Gillespie (2007) describes its influence on performance arguing that any change in social and economical trends may impact on the demand for companies’ products and services, and at the same time availability of workforce, and motivation and willingness of people to work for certain company.

Becker and Murphy stress the idea that social factors influence people choices and behavior. One of their assumptions is that people follow social decisions on the belief that other may have better knowledge of information regarding certain issue, and this gives them more confidence on their decisions. But other of their theories explains that some social factors, such as “The desires for prestige and to conform are important in their own right…” (Ibid, 2000, p. 11).

Social factors are highly important for company performance, not only because they impact on demand, but in the HR side, they can be determinant for people willing to work and develop all their potential in certain industry or company, considering the social implications it may have.

• Technology
This subgroup refer to the Technology available in the particular market or society, including not only the hard technology available, but also the soft side of technology, the knowledge and skills held by people in the market (French, 2003).

This approach includes not only technologies, but also research which may lead to the creation of new products and services, or the development of new processes and activities (Evans & Richardson, 2007 and Gillespie, 2007).

It is clear the influence technology has on organizational performance, reducing costs and developing new products, but the influence it has through people is very important as well. The changes on activities and skills can have both positive and negative effects on people performance, which may impact on overall organizational performance. For instance, when new technology arrives in an organization, may
lead to massive dismissal with positive economic effects, but people motivation may be reduced, and so does people performance.

• Natural Resources and Economic Factors
These two subgroups affect directly in the economic performance of the organization, and therefore in the HR benefits. French (2003) include here the availability and costs of Natural Resources, the demand for the organization’s products and services, the purchasing power of potential customers, employment and unemployment levels in the economy, and the competition towards resources and markets.

These two elements are mainly described by French (2003) from an economic point of view, considering the availability of resources. But the Natural Resources can be related to the Environmental, Ecological or Green aspects in PESTEL. Evans and Richardson (2007) argue that these considerations can push organizational performance and results because of the new ways of consumption of market, prioritizing the Green products. At the same time, these ecological trends may affect the individual performance of people in the organization, creating disagreement or collision with individual interests, and affecting in the same way Social Aspects do (Becker & Murphy, 2000; Gillespie, 2007 and Marcus, 2007).

Regarding the pure economic aspects, it includes public spending, interest rates, exchange rates, taxation pressure and investment (Evans & Richardson, 2007 and Gillespie, 2007). These elements have a clear impact on organizational performance, but at the same time may increase or reduce employee performance in different ways. One of them is the general feeling and expectancies in the market, job security, willingness to spend or save money, among others.

• Regulatory measures
This subgroup is integrated by Laws, Court decisions and other regulations, that influence the organization activities, and in this particular case, the labour laws impacting on HRM (French, 2003). Gillespie (2007) includes in this section of
PESTEL different regulations, such as consumer laws, competition laws, employment laws and health and safety legislation.

The regulatory frame influences the company economic performance, applying restrictions to labour hours, wages, working place conditions, termination formalities, vacations, leaves, and other conditions, but at the same time, these rules impact employee performance.

- Markets
Markets are the target groups where the organization’s products and services aim at, being a key element in the organization’s performance and profitability, and therefore having high influence on HR policies and Job Satisfaction. People working in successful organizations tend to feel the success as own, increasing motivation and performance (French, 2003).

Other way of understanding the Markets is through Porter’s Five Forces. This model understand the market not only as the target of organization’s products and services, but also as competitive place, where these forces interact, enhancing the industry and market. Porter’s Five Forces are Thread of New Entrants, Bargaining power of Customers, Bargaining power of Suppliers, Thread of Substitutes products or services and the Industry, Jockeying for position among current competitors. These five new elements influence the organization interacting in the same industry with opposite objectives affecting the performance. In the HR side, this constant competitive situation may be felt by people as challenging, creating commitment to their organization, but at the same time, it may be source of insecurity and stress (French, 2003 and Johnson et al. 2008).

2.5.2. Internal Environment
The Internal Environment is integrated by “...aspects of the organization's internal environment over which management and employees together have a great deal of control.” (French, 2003, p. 73), and all these element interact with each other, influencing the way they perform.
The author (French, 2003) includes in this internal environment the following elements:

- **Human Resources Management**
  It is the central piece, since the author identifies it as “...probably the most critical factor in organization's overall performance.” (French, 2003, p. 73) arguing that “People form the organization, and people manage the processes that create the product or service for which the organization is in business.” (French, 2003, p. 73).

The other elements in the Internal Environment, which surround the HRM, are divided by French into two subgroups, according to the deal of ‘people’ degree included on them, and their relation to the organizational “...central resource - people-...” (Ibid, 2003, p. 77).

The first includes Financial Resources, Technological and Physical Resources., and Structure, which “…are not directly ‘people’ dimensions.” (French, 2003, p. 77), but they have an impact on organizational performance. This group can be associated to the Relevant non-human Resources identified by Boxall and Purcell (2003) in the previously mentioned model of Three critical elements for the viability of the firm.

The second subgroup includes the more human elements in the model which are Management Philosophy, Leadership Style, Individual Motivation and Performance, Team and Interteam Behavior and Performance, and Organizational Culture and Climate (French, 2003).

- **Financial resources**
  Financial resources are vital for any organization to have access to equipment, supplies, skilled co-workers, to effect payments on debt and payrolls, and perform any other activity that is required for the company to operate.

Blumentritt claims that Budgeting or Financial Management, defined as the “...process of allocating an organization's financial resources to its units, activities
and investments.” (Ibid, 2006, p. 73), plays a vital function in organizational performance. “Budgeting, strategies, and strategic management share an orientation toward improving business performance, as each is used to set an organization on an appropriate path to success and guide its managers’ decisions and activities.” (Ibid, 2006, p. 73).

In the HR side, having a strong financial situation, gives the company the opportunity to offer benefits and salaries good enough to retain people, and hire the best workforce available.

• Technological and physical resources
Technological and physical resources available for the organization “...will influence its effectiveness and efficiency.” (French, 2003, p. 77).

The replacement of people by technological resources has a cost, and the organization should evaluate its impact on profits. This cost is not only economic, for buying and installing new technological resources, as mentioned before it may influence motivation of people due to the dismissal of colleagues.

In this sense, Bharadwaj asserts that organizations with “…IT resources are able to (1) integrate the IT and business planning processes more effectively, (2) conceive of and develop reliable and cost effective applications that support the business needs of the firm faster than competition, (3) communicate and work with business units more efficiently, and (4) anticipate future business needs of the firm and innovate valuable new product features before competitors.” (Ibid, 2000, p. 173).

The same occurs with other physical resources, they are the support for the business, and the tools required by people to perform their tasks and responsibilities in the firm. The better is the assignation of resources, better the organizational performance will be (Bharadwaj, 2000).
Other HR aspect of the technology is described by Patterson arguing that “The more technology is used to support HR and training activities, the higher the satisfaction is with HR and training performance.” (Ibid, 2005, p. 12).

- Structure
Structure, although is not included by French as a ‘people’ element, it has a deep influence on HR. The author defines it as “…all the arrangements in an organization through which the activities and behavior of its employees are directed toward desired goals.” (Ibid, 2003, p. 78). It covers aspects such as Job Design, Hierarchy and Working rules, and therefore influences the way co-workers interact and communicate, promoting cooperation or conflicts (French, 2003).

According to Mintzberg (1980 & 1981), organization’s structure is created by the combination of parts or areas into which the organizations are divided and the mechanisms organizations use to coordinate their work. These combinations arise to the five Mintzberg’s configurations - The Simple Structure, The Machine Bureaucracy, The Professional Bureaucracy, The Divisionalized Form and The Adhocracy - which lead organizations to behave and perform in different ways, depending on the internal characteristics and the context in which they act.

- Management Philosophy
This concept is defined as “…the set of ideas and beliefs held by executives about how people should be managed and customers treated.” (French, 2003, p. 78).

- Leadership Style
Leadership Style involves “…the way executives and supervisors actually interact with others in their leadership roles.” (French, 2003, p. 78).

As we can see, these two elements, Management Philosophy and Leadership Style, are linked and run together through the organization (French, 2003).

The Top Management Philosophy is the main signal, which is, at the end of the day, reflected in the behavior and philosophy that managers and supervisors will spread
through the whole organization. The philosophy is rooted in the values and ethics held by management (French, 2003).

This philosophy can be well illustrated by McGregor and Cutcher-Gershenfeld (2006) through the Theories X and Y. These theories analyze the different assumptions Top Management makes about people in organizations, and upon which they create their leadership styles. The first theory, Theory X, assumes that people working in organizations have no ambitions, and want to have no responsibilities, therefore Managers must lead with specific orders and directives, controlling every task and co-worker, and pushing them to achieve objectives. On the other hand, and contrary to Theory X, Theory Y assumes that people in organizations work with commitment to achieve the objectives they have been assigned. People in Theory Y want to develop themselves and have responsibilities.

Back to the Leadership Style, French (2003) argues that, since it is a process of influence of people aiming at organizational objectives and vision, managers and supervisor must promote the cooperation and group efforts to improve organizational performance, but as mentioned before, this must be reflected before in the philosophy.

“...effective leadership requires an appropriate blend of production-centered behavior, such as assigning tasks, establishing deadlines, and reviewing deficient work, and employee-centered behavior, such as being friendly and approachable, listening to subordinates, and involving them in planning or decision making.” (French, 2003, p. 83).

Sashkin (1982) argues that improvement processes towards productivity, cooperation, and quality create more beneficial results when the participation of subordinates is promoted. The author refers not only to the organizational results, but also to subordinates’ feelings regarding autonomy and task accomplishment.

“...charismatic leadership perception causes an increase in organizational performance and forms organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) on workers. (...) it
is expected that workers accept their leader charismatic; show organizational citizenship behavior, in other words, it is expected they spend up more power for that organization...” (Aslan, 2009, p.273).

Integration, along with training, development, delegation, support and involvement, lead to people empowerment, and this to “...enhanced autonomy, creativity, and productivity...” (French, 2003, p. 85).

• Individual Motivation and Performance

“Motivation may be defined as the desire and willingness of a person to expend effort to reach a particular goal or outcome. Motivation is a consequence of many forces operating simultaneously in the person and the person's environment. (…) enhancing motivation can lead to improved performance and greater organizational success.” (French, 2003, p. 86).

Several theories have been created to understand the causes of Motivation, and its impact on productivity and performance.

Some examples cited by French (2003) include Maslow’s Need Theory, which argues that employees’ motivation is caused by their willingness to satisfy needs. Other theory, Motivation-Hygiene Theory, bases the motivation on the satisfaction or dissatisfaction employees feel regarding their job position, responsibilities, recognition, interpersonal relations, vertical relations, working conditions and salary, among others. Skinner’s Reinforcement Theory “...focuses on influencing behavior through rewards and punishments, or reinforcement.” (French, 2003, p.89). Finally, the Equity Theory is based on the assumption that employees need to feel that their contributions to the organization, and what they receive back must be fair and aligned.

From a cognitive point of view, motivation can be described as a process in which people allocate energy and time to perform tasks and achieve objectives and goals. But these objectives must be set being aware of how workers allocate energy according to their values. Furthermore, in order to generate motivation, goal setting
must be accompanied by previous feedback on performance. This process of feedback creates the motivation on workers to achieve higher goals, which must be followed by new feedback processes to create a virtuous cycle. The opposite may happen when feedback on performance is not applied, workers may feel a lack of recognition the may demotivate (Latham, 2007).

- Team and Interteam Behavior and Performance
Katzenbach and Smith (1993 in French, 2003) define a team as a group of people holding complimentary skills performing complimentary activities toward a common goal. Furthermore, the members of the team are mutually responsible for the team outcomes. Team members must share information, and at the same time, they must support, encourage and trust each other to reach the team objectives and contribute to the overall organizational performance.

When it comes to interteam relations, or cooperation, researchers, during the decade of 1930, identified organizations as Social Systems due to the high levels of interaction among workers, and the interdependencies of different variables in the job place, activities performed, relation with fellow workers and supervisors, among others. (French, 2003).

“...experimentation led researchers to conclude that productivity depended at least in part on the extent to which the employees became a team and cooperated wholeheartedly and spontaneously.” (French, 2003, p. 31).

In this sense, promoting problem solving among groups and effective communication reduces conflicts, enhancing the teams productivity and efficiency, and, as mentioned before, improving organizational performance (French, 2003).

Team members must know each other and share values and mental models “...to effectively cooperate with teammates so as to adapt to changing environments, team members have to predict how their teammates are going to act.” (Chou, Wang, Wang, Huang & Cheng, 2008, p.1714).
• Organizational Culture and Climate

“**Organizational culture** can be defined as the fabric of values, beliefs, assumptions, myths, norms, goals, and visions that are widely shared in the organization. Usually the concept is used relative to a total organization, although there can be distinct subcultures within some organizations.” (French, 2003, p. 94).

French in this regard, adds “…the components of culture are linked to organizational performance. (...) unless people in organizations understand how to identify the functional and dysfunctional aspects of organizational culture, they and their organizations become victims of the culture rather than masters of it.” (Ibid, 2003, p. 95).

Culture is a variable difficult to measure, but can be understood from what people say and do through interviews, observations and climate surveys (French, 2003).

French (2003), based on Litwin, Humphrey and Wilson, 1978, and Kozlowski and Doherty, 1989, elaborates the following definition for Organizational Climate:

“…the measurable, collective perceptions of organization members about those aspects of their working life that affect their motivation and behavior - in particular, the culture of the organization, the prevailing leadership style, the degree of structure, and the personnel policies and practices.” (French, 2003, p. 95).

Climate surveys measure employees’ perceptions about structure, responsibility, rewards, risks, development, fellowship, job standards, among others. Negative climate conditions may lead to, and be caused by, stress, looking for another job, reporting sick, lacking communication with superiors and job dissatisfaction, and may reflect the level of the outcome called participant satisfaction, which will be analyzed in the coming paragraphs (French, 2003).

Schein suggests that organizations should examine their collective assumptions, in order to “…reveal the subtle operation of cultural forces as well as make visible where different assumptions lead to different behaviors and often conflicts.” (Ibid,
Successful organizations are those that manage these internal elements and their interactions in a harmonious and intelligent way (French, 2003).

2.5.3. Outcomes
Finally, in the Outcomes side, French (2003) identifies:

- Effectiveness
  ...as “…the extent to which organizational goals are achieved.” (Ibid, 2003, p. 75). Individual and group objectives must be set and assessed in line to the organization’s goals, in order to secure that every action performed by people correlate with organizational performance.

- Efficiency
  ...which is defined as the relation between “…a desired outcome against the resources used to achieve that outcome.” (French, 2003, p. 76). Organizations must fulfill objectives, but the costs of doing this must not be higher than the outcomes obtained.

- Development
  ...is described as “…the extent to which individuals employees, groups of workers, and the total organization are developing their capacity to meet future opportunities and challenges.” (French, 2003, p. 76). This is vital for assuring current performance, and organizational growth in the long term.

- Participant Satisfaction
  It “...refers to employees’ positive emotional response to their work and jobs.” (French, 2003, p. 76), not only individually, but also in a group and organizational level.

“…In modern management theory, employee satisfaction is considered one of the most important drivers of quality, customer satisfaction and productivity.” (Matzler, Fuchs & Schubert Astrid, 2004, p. 1179).
Motivation and work morale are characteristics of satisfied employees, and working more effectively and efficiently (Eskildsen & Dahlgaard, 2000 in Matzler, Fuchs & Schubert Astrid, 2004).

On the other hand, dissatisfaction is a source of reduced individual performance, and therefore organizational performance. People working under dissatisfaction or frustration will not work toward organizational vision and objectives, and will aim at different personal targets, such as analyzing quitting the organization, or not caring of promotion. Complaining with others, absenteeism and doing work incorrectly are other possible reactions, which reduce performance (French, 2003).

2.5.4. Final Comments on French’s Model
As mentioned before, these outcomes and internal and external environment factors affect each other in a circle, virtuous or vicious depending on the positive or negative impact, through business.

“Factors in the external environment must be accommodated, perhaps even influenced; the internal factors must be intelligently and harmoniously managed; and the outcomes must be evaluated continuously to determine the extent to which the organization is successful.” (French, 2003, p. 76).

2.6. Culture, Climate and Communication

“New research shows a crucial link between human resource and training practices and employee productivity, business results—and shareholder returns, too—even if few HR departments have made the leap from concept to reality.” (Patterson, 2005, p. 1).

Patterson (2005) asserts that creative HR practices, specially imaginative training, increase productivity. According to a study performed over 36 integrated steel finishing lines in steel mill companies, those “…that used the most innovative human
These creative practices were applied in different areas of HRM, such as flexibility in job design, training in skills, problem solving, team working, information sharing, employment security and employee screening, while employees working under traditional practices are defined as to be “...doing their own jobs on their own.” (Snyder, 2004), with no support to improve their individual performance (Ichniowski, Shaw, & Prennushi, 1997).

Training specially focused on information sharing, communication and culture has a positive impact on productivity, as is proved by Ichniowski and Shaw (2003) in their study, comparing the productivity of the integrated steel finishing lines which apply this kind of HR practices to those that only apply traditional HR practices. This idea is supported by Beckman’s (1999 in Chow & Liu, 2007) proposition that HRM practices can be useful for solving the difficulties that stop the formalization of experience and knowledge to create new organizational capacities, improved productivity and innovation.

Moreover, Chow and Liu claim that “Creating a supportive culture together with the appropriate HR systems could be utilized to shape the willingness of workers to share their knowledge. Thus, it is logical to posit that matching the human resource system and corporate culture will enhance firm performance.” (Ibid, 2007, p. 50), and the way to do that is through communication.

Culture must be shared by the organization, and spread with communication vertical and horizontally in order to have the whole organization embedded with it, and obtain the maximum commitment, and alignment to organization’s vision. But the culture may be jeopardized by Role-relaxed individuals, who are individually oriented and act based on personal values, not considering organizational values. In this scenario, communication is vital to realign the role relaxed personnel and have them integrated into organizational culture and values. At the same time, organization must understand the roots of this misalignment since they might be the source of improvement (Rose, Kahle & Shoham, 2000).
People acceptance to change can be compared to performance in the sense that in both cases clear communication is required. In the first case to get support, and in the second case to get people aligned to organizational vision. Based on this analogy, change management theories are analyzed for being a good source of best practices for gaining commitment through HRM practices.

Chawla and Kelloway (2004) propose a model combining change management strategies, such as communication and integration, with Job security feeling as components to increase the attitudinal and behavioral acceptance to change or openness to change. Other element that is combined in the model with the openness to change is the trust in management, assuming that the higher the trust in management is, higher are the probabilities of acceptance of change (Coch & French 1948 in Chawla & Kelloway, 2004).

According to this model, Communication, Participation and Job Security will be combined in a process called Procedural Justice, but at the same time they would also influence the openness and trust. This process may lead people to feel that the change is fair, and therefore they will support it, in the opposite case, if a feeling of unfairness arises, people will resist the change (Chawla & Kelloway, 2004). The result of this feeling of justice may lead either to a positive trust and openness to change, or to resistance to change. At the end, these results will be reflected, besides on the responses to change, on turnover intentions and neglect.

The results of the research addressed in the precedent paragraphs, confirmed that the communication and Job security impact, directly and indirectly through justice, positively in the openness to change and the trust, but the participation only impacts on openness positively through the Justice, but not directly, since no matter how much people is involved, they need to feel that the change is fair. Reasons and benefits must be communicated in order to avoid misunderstandings, and reduce the feeling of risk that the change might involve. The impact of Openness and Trust on Turnover Intentions and Negligence were confirmed to be negative. This means that the higher feelings of trust and openness to Change are, lower are the intentions of
leaving the organization and neglect (Chawla & Kelloway, 2004). In this sense, Granrose, Huang and Reigadas add that “Participation and empowerment are certainly elements in normative models of organizational culture change...” (Ibid, 2000, p. 492).

Pfeffer argues that training and communication “…tends to go to those already fairly well trained, most often in the management or professional ranks. Much less is done to upgrade the skills of front-line employees” (Ibid, 1994, p. 18), leaving these people outside the organizational information loop.

Highly performing organizations tend to consider employees as owners, in order to increase commitment and motivation, but this feeling of ownership creates a feedback cycle with the requirement of information. This cycle push information to people, to make them feel owners, and at the same time, people claim (pull) for information to increase the feeling of property. (Pfeffer, 1994).

“If people are to be source of competitive advantage, clearly they must have the information necessary to do what is required to be successful.” (Pfeffer, 1994, p. 41), and this is more than informing employees’ functional goals, it includes the organizational vision and culture. (Pfeffer, 1994). Moreover, “The evidence is that participation increases both satisfaction and employee productivity.” (Pfeffer, 1994, p. 42).

People must be given more information about operations, and this must be accompanied by training to develop the skills to employ that information and increase productivity, detect problems and create improvement activities (Pfeffer, 1994).

Becker asserts that “Education and training are the most important investments in human capital.” (Ibid, 1980, p. 17). The author further argues that knowledge must be shared through the whole organization in order increase productivity, or the return on that investment in Human Capital. In the empiric field, the author (Becker) identifies different phenomena regarding information sharing and training at different
ages or organizational levels, such as “Younger persons change jobs more frequently and receive more schooling and on-the-job training than older persons do.” (Ibid, 1980, p. 30), and “Abler persons receive more education and other kinds of training than others.” (Ibid, 1980, p. 30).

Ericksen and Dyer assert that people High Reliability Organizations, highly productive and problem-free performing organizations, “...communicate more or less continuously because they implicitly recognize that a direct relationship exists between the quantity of communication and reliable performance. (...) They strive to avoid distortions and misunderstandings by conversing and corresponding in a direct, clear, precise and accurate manner.” (Ibid, 2005, p. 911-12).

Regarding training and educations, the authors (Ericksen and Dyer, 2005) add that people in this kind of organizations “…continuously strive to go deeper and wider in their skills and understandings. (...) also take responsibility for each other’s learning by openly sharing information and knowledge with colleagues both inside and across departmental boundaries.” (Ibid, 2005, p. 913).

2.7. Climate and Employee Surveys

“A good deal of research and experience with climate surveys (questionnaires) shows that measures of organizational climate are linked to organizational performance.” (French, 2003, p. 95).

Sanchez asserts that employee surveys “…are typically designed to enhance organizational communication, measure employee views on a wide range of work-related topics, and both measure and improve employee engagement. Employee engagement is more often the intended outcome of employee surveying. The survey is the first step in building a value chain that leads to forging the sort of organizational environment that supports and contributes to organizational success.” (Ibid, 2007, p. 48).
Finally, Sanchez argues that Employee surveys, along with fluent communication channels are an important source of employee engagement, and this “...has a significant influence on organizational performance and can become a long-term source of competitive advantage. To effectively manage this opportunity, the majority of organizations conduct regular surveys of employee opinion.” (Ibid, 2007, p. 55).

2.8. Other Company’s case

AstraZeneca went through a similar situation last year, when its global employee survey called FOCUS gave them the signal of “...the need for improved communication from leaders about AstraZeneca’s strategic direction and the need to strengthen further our change management capabilities whilst continuing to invest in the development of our people.” (AstraZeneca, 2009a). Based on this result, the company set new targets for their indicators for next year, in order to improve the employee engagement and the clarity of direction of the business (AstraZeneca, 2009a).

The main activity applied by the company to improve these results was to set dialogue sessions between the member of AstraZeneca’s Senior Executive Team (SET) and employees in different locations around the globe, sharing the vision and strategic direction the company is taking. “Feedback after the meetings showed that people welcomed the opportunity to interact with SET members and understand better the role everyone can play in driving future success.” (AstraZeneca, 2009a).

Other result of the survey showed that an improvement area might be the way of developing personal, in order to achieve the highest potential through the right skills. In this sense, the company is adopting a new global Learning and Development structure, with a global approach, aiming to “...ensure that high standards of best L&D practice are consistently applied in the most efficient way.” (AstraZeneca, 2009b).
3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

*Three cause effect relationships create a cycle, which may be virtuous or vicious.*

The conceptual framework describes “...how all the concepts fit together and relate to one another.” (Fisher, 2007, p. 126).

Based on theories and models described above, the following conceptual framework has been developed to understand the way the concepts involved in this research work and act together. This conceptual framework is shown in figure 7.

The conceptual framework designed for the present work, contains three equally important elements connected through bidirectional cause effect relationships.

**Figure 7: Conceptual Framework**
We start with the element on the top, which is an abstract of French’s (2003) model of Organizational Performance. We have in the center of the circle the Human Resources Management practices inside of the Organization. The organization at the same time contains and is affected by some of the activities that French identifies as part of the Internal Environment. We are not considering all the functions described by the author, but only those that are directly related to the people in the organization and at the same time, those that are assessed by the VOICE survey as described in the previous chapter. All these activities are linked and affected by the common factor Communication.

On the bottom of Figure 7 lay two elements, VOICE and PERFORMANCE. As described before VOICE is an employee survey for assessing climate, and by PERFORMANCE is understood the overall organizational performance, which may be measured by productivity, efficiency, goals achievement, or any other indicator.

As mentioned before, these three elements are part of a cause effect system. Based on the different theories described above, we can assert that HRM practices have a clear impact on organizational performance, being people one of the most important resources in any organization. At the same time, the organizational performance affects the HRM development and practices in the organizations and that is the reason for the bidirectional cause effect relationship.

On the other hand, we can see that the elements contained in the top diagram are considered and assessed by the VOICE survey, arising here other cause effect relationship since any change on those practices affects the VOICE results. In this case there is a bidirectional relationship as well, caused by the fact that the results in VOICE will promote changes in HRM practices in the organization, the motivation of this work is a clear example of this.

Finally, we have the bidirectional relationship between VOICE and PERFORMANCE, which is explained by French’s (2003) Model of Organizational Performance as described above and by IKEA’s experience.
These three cause effect relationships create a cycle, which may be virtuous or vicious.
4. METHODOLOGY

A Case Study aims to understand the dynamics present in the object of study.

4.1. Research Design

“We really cannot take decisions on important issues unless we investigate (research) more deeply the relevant information, gathering more information on the particular aspect we are interested in. Then we analyse all this information to make a judgement about the right solution to our problem or answer to our questions.” (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005, p. 9).

Information is the cornerstone of good decisions, and as quoted above, complete information can only be gathered through an effective research process, well oriented and focused in the problem to be solved. In this sense, the ‘Strategy’ for the research work, or Research Design, must be the adequate, since it leads the researcher through the data collection process, defining methodologies and analysis. The design is based on the Research Questions, and should give the researcher the best option to solve the Research Problem (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005).

Furthermore, Collis and Hussey (2003) argue that the Research design gives the researcher a plan which guides and focus the research. The research design for the present work is based on the Phenomenological research paradigm, since the object of study is a group of co-workers, and the understanding of their reactions upon survey questions, and the analysis of possible improvement activities to change those reactions. The reasons on which co-workers base their answers to the VOICE survey are vital in this case, and this phenomenon cannot be analyzed in depth through the Positivist Paradigm (Collis & Hussey, 2003).

According to Ghauri and Grønhaug’s (2005) Classification of Research Designs, this work would be under the Causal Research category, since its aim is to identify causes of low favorable answers in VOICE survey, and propose improvement activities, to cause an increase in the VOICE index 2010.
4.2. Case Study Research Strategy

This work is based on the Case Study strategy. It is “…an extensive examination of a single instance of a phenomenon of interest and is an example of phenomenological methodology” (Collis & Hussey, 2003, p. 68).

According to Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005), case studies are a useful tool to research on variables which are difficult to quantify, and at the same time, the phenomenon cannot be analyzed outside its environment.

Yin (1994) identifies different research strategies such as: case study, survey, experiments, histories, archival analyses. The author argues that Case Studies have advantages over other approaches when “…a ‘how’ or ‘why’ question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control.” (1994, p. 9). Although the research questions for this work are not ‘how’ or ‘why’, understanding the reasons and the way the variables relate to each other is the foundation to understand what activities should be applied. Regarding the other research strategies they were dismissed due to the contemporary phenomenon main focus of study, the research questions as argued above and due to the extent of control the researcher has over the events because in case studies the contemporary phenomena cannot be manipulated by the researcher (Yin, 1994, pp. 4-5).

A Case Study aims to understand the dynamics present in the object of study (Eisenhardt, 1989 in Collis & Hussey, 2003), and is justifiable “…where the case serves a revelatory purpose” (Yin, 1994, p. 44).

Understanding these dynamics, and revealing the potential improvement activities to be applied to IKEA, will help the organization reach the target set for VOICE Survey 2010.

The present research project will be based on a single case study carried out on DC Älmhult. The research will investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real life and will be divided into two main stages. The first focused in finding the causes and reasons of low results in VOICE index, with the aim to identify the areas to
improve. This stage is based on secondary data, such as VOICE 2008 questionnaire and results. The second stage is focused on gaining a deep insight of the VOICE dynamics, the structure and functions in DCÄ, previous activities regarding VOICE results, among others.

Some researchers pointed out limitations regarding the case study strategy. Yin stated that “Perhaps the greatest concern has been over the lack of rigor” (Yin, 1994, p. 9). However, in order to make a rigorous research project, as mentioned in the further section Trustworthiness of the research, a mixed source of evidence and different perspective from the different actors was gathered, a formal procedure for gathering information was developed and the information was double-checked. Another criticism that case studies have received is their lack of representativeness (Fisher, 2007, p. 60). However, to this point, Yin argues that “…case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations and universes” (Yin, 1994, p. 10).

4.3. Data Collection

Firstly, this study involves the collection and analysis of secondary data, including academic material about Human Resources Management, and its impact on companies’ performance. Moreover, literature about the different elements considered in the VOICE survey is considered, as well as research in Job Satisfaction field.

According to the research stages introduced above, the first phase, is characterized by the analysis of secondary data, in this case internal obtained from a different source, the results of VOICE survey 2008 answers. Although this information has been collected with a different purpose, assessing the VOICE levels, it is very useful for the present study. It is analyzed in detail for all co-worker groups into which DC Älmhult’s structure is divided aiming to find patterns and correlations in the answers, both internally and in comparison to other team.
Once these causes are identified, the most attractive are selected according to the patterns of behavior and co-workers’ reasons for answering in certain way. Neutral answers in the Likert scale identified in the Survey results are considered as well, since they are the closest to favorable answers, and might be the easiest to improve.

As mentioned above, the main element in the second stage is primary data, to be collected through semi-structured qualitative Interviews “...at the source” (Collis & Hussey, 2003, p. 160). Qualitative methods help researcher to obtain details and understand social processes (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005).

“Qualitative data are attractive for many reasons: They are rich, full, earthly, holistic, real; (...) and they, in principle, offer a far more precise way to assess causality in organizational affairs...” (Miles, 1979, p. 117 in Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005, p. 111).

This kind of interviews gives the researcher the opportunity of finding new information and aspects of the object of study since discussions and matters explored may change from interview to interview (Collis & Hussey, 2003), and they help to understand the reasons, the ‘How’ and the ‘Why’, and the respondents behavior and position on the research issue (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005).

These interviews are performed with key co-workers and Team Leaders in order to understand deeply the patterns in the answers, and get suggestions of improvement as well.

“Although such a study may be limited to just a few aspects of organisational life, the results can be extremely stimulating and original.” (Collis & Hussey, 2003, p. 68).

In this sense, this proposed work aims to suggest improvement activities to be applied initially to DC Älmhult, but it may also be used further as a corporate practice.
Moreover, the results of this work might be useful to any other organization with similar objectives concerning the application of activities that aim to improve Human Resources alignment and satisfaction, and at the end of the day, improve company performance as well.

4.3.1. Sample Selection

Interviewees are chosen among DC Älmhult personnel, with the objective of understanding the VOICE index and its interrelations, and further, understand the impact of communication in the results.

Five interviews are performed, one of them with Human Resources manager in DCÄ. The other four interviews will be carried on with the collaboration of team leader from the best and worst performing teams in terms of Voice Results.

The main objective of this comparison between above average and below average performance teams is to identify differences in knowledge, beliefs, actions and management, and understand which variables make the difference.

4.3.2. Interview objectives and content

Interviews will aim to obtain the following information from the interviewees

- Interviewee background.

- General Aspects of VOICE.
  General overview and opinion regarding VOICE.
  Facts or events where they see that the high results on VOICE impact results / performance, and what they think the reasons for that to happen are.
  Reasons for general low results in DCÄ, compared with General Results.
  Reasons for particular low and high results, which may change interview to interview.
• Particular Aspects of VOICE.

Reasons for particular low and high results, which may change from interview to interview, according to the team in which the interviewee participates.

Detailed guides for interviews can be found in Appendices 2 to 6.

From the different questions mentioned above, I identified a common factor, on which most of the questions lay: Communication. Different variables in the survey are influenced by communication, and a lack of it, or problems and noise in it, can create a misunderstanding in some aspects assessed by the survey, or in the interpretation of the question itself, leading to lower results.

Based on this, the interviews will try to get a deeper knowledge on the communication practices applied to the different teams and from HR positions.

4.4. Data Analysis

Eisenhardt defines this process as “...the heart of building theory from case studies...” (Ibid, 1989, p. 539).

Yin argues that “Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing or otherwise recombining both quantitative and qualitative evidence to address the initial propositions of the study” (Ibid, 2003, p. 109).

According to Fisher (2007), the analysis of data involves four activities: data reduction, data display, theory building or recognizing the categories and conclusion drawing and verification. The first step, the reduction, consists of a categorizing or grouping the data under different themes, being useful to organize and structure the relevant information. During the second step, the data is displayed or utilized according to the research objectives. Once the information is arranged and displayed, the analysis of the information focuses on finding the patterns on the gathered data or in detecting the meaning of the data. Finally, the conclusions will be drawn from the information gathered and analyzed.
In this particular work, before conducting the five interviews mentioned above, the secondary data obtained from the VOICE 2008 results in DCÄ was analyzed in the way described above and considering the literature reviewed, in order to detect the improvement areas, and focus the interviews on those fields.

Once the interviews were conducted and the main concepts and theories reviewed, the proceeds of the interviews, such as audio records and notes were transcribed into a document to be reduced, dividing the data by themes. Through this reduction and classification, the patterns and common answers, as well as the causal relationships, were identified, confirming the conceptual framework developed for this case study. Finally, the answers to the research questions stated above are presented during the conclusions and suggestions.

4.5. Trustworthiness of the research

According to Yin “...a research design is supposed to represent a logical set of statements...” (Ibid, 1994, p. 32), and this logical statements must be tested in order to assess the quality of the work. In social sciences, four tests are commonly used to test this quality, this are: Construct Validity, Internal Validity, External Validity and Reliability.

4.5.1. Construct validity

This test refers to generate validity in the findings and results from using the proper sources of information (Fisher, 2007). Yin (1994) argues that this test is especially problematic in case study research, but in order to solve this difficulty he suggests three ways of increasing validity. These are: use multiple sources of evidence, establish a chain of evidence and have the draft case study reviewed by key informants.
The present work is choosing the first suggestion, interviewing different sources of primary data, it means not only interviewing Team Leaders in DCÄ, but also having a wider point of view from a Human Resources Manager.

• Internal Validity
The internal validity focuses on finding the support to the cause - effect relationships. In order to increase internal validity, some authors suggest to check the conclusions with others, permanently question the interpretations and, finally archive the proceeds of the research in order to enable others to analyze it (Fisher, 2007).

This work is in one sense confirming the cause - effects relationships in the previous literature reviewed, but at the same time, follows the suggestions mentioned above in order to increase its internal validity.

• External Validity
This test questions the generalizability of the findings to other contexts (Fisher, 2007). According to Yin (2004), case studies can be analytically generalized.

This work is based on a particular problem, the low results of VOICE in DCÄ, but as mentioned before, the proceeds of this work can be generalized to other IKEA units, or to be adopted as a corporate practice.

4.5.2. Reliability

This test aims to demonstrate that “...the operations of study - such as the data collection procedures can be repeated, with the same results.” (Yin, 1994, p. 33).

This work aims to maximize the reliability through the documentation of all the operational steps taken, as well as the guides for the interviews. These steps will be a guideline for the repetition of the procedures in order to get the same results.
4.6. Limitations

The major limitation of this study lays on the lack of access to co-workers to be interviewed. Due to time limitations only Team Leaders and HR Manager were available for interviews. This fact may prevent the research from having the point of view of co-workers, who are the biggest group of respondents to the survey, with the risk of obtaining a biased opinion from interviewees.

Other limitation is related to the case selected to be the object of the case study. DCÅ has, because of being the first Distribution Center built by IKEA, some particularities, such as the average age and the quantity of years the co-workers have worked in this DC are much higher than other units in IKEA. This fact may lead the research to conclusions that may not be applicable to all other units with co-workers with different characteristics.

Finally, the time limitation may also cause that literature in the field of study is not fully covered, involving the risk of not having considered other applicable theories and models.
5. PRESENTATION OF ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

23 out of 36 questions were identified to have communicational issues as the common pattern.

5.1. IKEA Profile

IKEA is the world leading home furnishing company, founded in 1943 by Ingvar Kamprad in Sweden, starting his mail order business, offering low cost furniture, but not affecting quality, design and functionality. IKEA’s first showroom was opened in Älmhult in 1953, and after that the concept was applied everywhere in the world, self-service, flat pack and low costs, as the company has grown (IKEA, 2006 and Kling & Goteman, 2003).

Nowadays, IKEA is present in 24 countries with 261 owned stores, and planning to open 12 new stores during the current fiscal year. Other 34 stores owned by franchisees in 16 countries make a total of 295 IKEA stores in 36 countries (IKEA, 2009a).

Every IKEA business is run under the same clear Vision: “To create a better everyday life for the many people”. This vision, as well as IKEA’s Business Idea “To offer a wide range of well designed, functional home furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible will be able to afford them” clearly reflect the Low Prices Strategy applied by Ingvar Kamprad in the early 40’s (IKEA, 2009b).

“IKEA is a company that is highly involved in the fabrication of culture and the conscious transmission of perspectives. (...) IKEA’s headquarters started to ‘nurture their own culture’ and introduced various training programmes and official scriptures in order to safeguard the special ‘IKEA spirit’ in the organization.” (Salzer, 1994, p. 145).

IKEA Distribution Services East Central & North (DS EC&N) is part of IKEA Distribution Services (DS), having Store Distribution, Customer Distribution and
Transport as its core business. DS EC&N is integrated by four Distribution Centers (DC), 1 in Russia, 1 in Poland and 2 in Sweden, and 1 Customer Distribution Center (CDC) in Sweden. From these centers, IKEA products are distributed to 32 stores and directly to customers buying via e-commerce site or telephone (Exjobb-poolen, 2008 and Karlsson & Sundqvist, personal communication, 2009).

DC Älmhult is one of the Distributions Centers in Sweden, and received its first in delivery in 1964, being the first distribution center the company operated. With a total head-count of 301 people, 85% of these are blue collar. The mentioned DC operates at a storage capacity of approximately 180,000,00 m³ and 170 gates for in/out operations (Exjobb-poolen, 2008 and Karlsson & Sundqvist, personal communication, 2009).

When it comes to HRM practices in IKEA, IKEA’s ‘Our Human Resource Idea’ statement evidences a clear alignment of HRM and the company’s vision: “To give down-to-earth, straight-forward people the possibility to grow, both as individuals and in their professional roles, so that, together, we are strongly committed to creating a better everyday life for ourselves and our customers.” (IKEA, 1999, p. 1).

Furthermore, IKEA recruitment nowadays is based on values, choosing those co-workers who share IKEA’s values and understand IKEA’s customer’s expectations in order to have the committed to achieve the organizational vision. Regarding development, HR Idea stress the responsibility of the co-workers on this field, having them the main responsibilities for vocational training, self-learning processes from own and other’s experiences, and the willingness of sharing this own experience and learning. Finally, in the managing or leading levels, the HR Idea expect from these positions good communication in all the ways horizontal and vertically, to be accessible to co-workers, and to facilitate co-workers training and development. Communication is the core concept of the HR Idea (IKEA, 1999).
5.2. VOICE Co-Worker Survey

Under the motto “Creating value for our customers, begins with valuing our people” IKEA performs every year, with the collaboration of the marketing research and consulting firm Research International Sweden AB, the VOICE co-workers survey with the aim of understanding the co-workers’ situation at the job, analyzing Motivation, Responsibility, Learning, Cooperation, Creativity, Efficiency, Diversity, Recognition, Development, People Retention, Customer Competence, Communication and Leadership issues. VOICE is a trademark of Research International (Elofsson, 2008; Exjobb-pollen, 2008; Karlsson & Sundqvist, personal communication, 2009 and Research International, 2009).

Research International defines its product VOICE survey as a tool that “…measures how effectively a company's employees are delivering brand promise and servicing customers. It provides a detailed understanding of employee behaviours and strategies on how companies can effectively improve customer satisfaction, efficiency, and profitability. (...) Voice™ looks at how well employees accept, believe in, are familiar with, and understand a company's values.” (Research International, 2009).

Jonsson defines it as a “…‘Climate Check’ (...) where the IKEA culture is mirrored in the questions. Many of these questions are related to motivational or institutional factors for knowledge sharing within the organization.” (Ibid, 2007, 139).

“VOICE is a really good tool that gives us awareness to help us (IKEA) keep on track with questions around for example leadership, culture, customer in focus and motivation.” (Månsson, 2009).

The index value is the result of the sum of the percentages of favorable answers. All answers over Neutral are considered favorable, and the percentage of them over the total answers is the value captured in the index as absolute value. Finally the sum of these absolute values for the 10 aspects analyzed by the index forms the Voice Index result for the sample. (Elofsson, 2008 and Karlsson & Sundqvist, personal communication, 2009)
The model of the survey is shown in Figure 8. The aspects covered by the survey are the following:

- Customer Competence
- Motivation
- Given & Taken Responsibility
- Openness & Learning
- Co-operation
- Creativity & Speed
- Organizational Efficiency
- Diversity

These categories are divided into three groups, People, Organization, and IKEA issues, and in the center of the model appear Leadership and Visions & Goals, influencing the surrounding categories. Finally, all the elements integrate one IKEA.

Figure 8: VOICE Core Model

Source: Research International Sweden AB

At the same time, each category in VOICE contains several questions, and the average of the different answers in every category will be the value used in the index.
Additionally, other aspects are assessed, but not considered in the VOICE Score, such as

- Leadership
- Goals
- People Retention Index
- Social & Environmental Issues

As mentioned before, all these categories are assessed through different questions. The questionnaire includes 44 questions, and can be found in Appendix 1 (IKEA Intranet, 2009).

Last survey was performed in September 2008, and the result for DC Älmhult was 521 points out of 1000 points (Exjobb-poolen, 2008 and Karlsson & Sundqvist, personal communication, 2009). Figure 9 shows the overall results for VOICE survey 2008 in DC Älmhult, as part of presentation by Research International Sweden AB.

**Figure 9: VOICE 2008 results DCÄ**

Source: Research International Sweden AB and IKEA.
As mentioned at the beginning of this work, it is part of IKEA's culture the fact that there is a linkage between VOICE survey results and company performance. IKEA's areas with high performance in VOICE survey have better Key Performance Indicators results. These indicators measure the performance of every area or department in the company through different aspects, such as Quantity of cubic meters managed per hour in the DC, Orders in time, Damages, Inventory Differences, etc. (Karlsson & Sundqvist, personal communication, 2009).

The linkage between HRM practices and performance has been developed as well through the literature in the precedent chapters.

5.3. Analysis of VOICE Questionnaire

VOICE Questionnaire, presented in Appendix 1, was analyzed in order to identify the patterns shared in the questions and possible answers. In order to do so, the questions were classified, in two groups, out of the 44 questions included in the survey, 8 questions are ‘Background questions’, leaving a total of 36 questions to be the core of the survey.

The questions and their answers were identified to share some common patterns, in some cases being the element that is intended to assess, and in some other being the possible source of positive answers.

In this sense, 23 out of 36 questions were identified to have communicational issues as the common pattern, as mentioned before this may be because the element to be assessed is related to communication, or improved and focused communication activities can lead the respondents to answer positively to those questions. It means that almost the 64% (63.89%) of the answers to the questions can be improved through appropriate communication activities, which may include pure communication in several ways, training and integration practices.
Among these 23 cases, 15 items we identified as related to pure communicational issues, 2 cases to training issues, 1 case to integration issued, 2 cases as combinations of communication and training, and 3 cases as combinations of communication, training and integration together.

Examples of pure communication are the questions number 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 22; 26; 28; 29; 30; 32 and 33. Questions number 13 and 14 are cases of Training, and question number 15 of integration. When it comes to the combinations, communication + training is reflected in questions number 11 and 23, and the triple combination is associated to the questions number 19; 20 and 25.

One questions from each group will be presented here as illustration of the classification mentioned above, all other questions are presented in detail in Appendix 1.

Question number 3, To what extent do you agree with the following statements according to you and your situation?
   a) I am familiar with IKEA’s vision.
   b) IKEA’s vision inspires me in my work.

Possible answers
   Likert scale
   1. Strongly disagree
   2. Disagree
   3. Neutral
   4. Agree
   5. Strongly agree

In this question, especially in subquestion a), the communication issue is reflected in the knowledge of the company’s vision, which is easily shared through communication activities.

Question number 13, To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
   a) I have good opportunities to develop and expand my competence within IKEA.
   b) It is my responsibility to make sure that I develop professionally within IKEA.
   c) I receive the support I need in my development.

Possible answers
   Likert scale
   1. Strongly disagree
   2. Disagree
   3. Neutral
4. Agree  
5. Strongly agree

This question, related to development, is clearly related to training, and the appropriate training activities can lead to improved results.

Question number 15, How much of the time do you feel satisfied with your job?  
Possible answers  
1. Hardly never  
2. Only now and then  
3. About half of the time  
4. A large part of the time  
5. Most of the time

As described in Chapter number 2, integration is one of the main factors in Job Satisfaction. Integrating people through different kind of activities and information sharing may be the source for improved results.

Question number 11, To what extent do you agree with the following statements?  
a) When I do a good job my contribution is recognized. 
b) I fell respected and valued in my department. 
Possible answers  
Likert scale  
1. Strongly disagree  
2. Disagree  
3. Neutral  
4. Agree  
5. Strongly agree

In this case, the combination is reflected in the fact that the recognition is mainly a communication issue, but the training can help co-workers to develop their skills and improve performance with better results, that will be more easily recognized, increasing employee morale.

Question number 19, To what extent do you feel that you can make your own decisions in your work.  
Possible answers  
1. To a very small extent  
2. To a fairly small extent  
3. To a certain extent  
4. To a fairly large extent  
5. To a very large extent
Finally, the triple combination in this case can be found in the following sense. First the communication aspect is reflected in letting the co-workers know what decisions can be made by them. Training is involved for being the source of developed skills that will give co-workers the chance to make decisions, and integration is considered in the way of making the co-workers feel that they are part of the decision process.

5.4. Analysis of results of VOICE 2008 in DCÄ

At the moment of analyzing the overall results of the survey for 2008 in DC Člmhult presented in figure 9, the first figures to notice are the lowest results, which are far from the average of 70 for each indicator targeted for 2010. Cooperation and Creativity and Speed, represented by the questions number 25 and 24 respectively are the two lowest indicators in 2008, with 32% and 37% of favorable answers.

For these two cases, especially for the cooperation one (question number 25), the results may be improved through activities as mentioned before.

Question number 25, What do you do?

a) When a problem or shortcoming arise in the work of your department, do you try to solve the issue together?

b) When problems arise involving several departments, do people from all the departments involved take part in the attempts to solve the problems?

Possible answers

1. Never
2. Seldom
3. Sometimes
4. Often
5. Always

These questions have been classified above as part of the triple combination group, being the communication the main element. Communication must be promoted in order to encourage co-workers to seek for help among their teams, or other teams, instead of trying to solve the problem by their own. This cooperative orientation may be encouraged by training as well. Finally, the integration among teams is crucial for this indicator, in order to develop a feeling of belonging at a macro level, and not only to the teams in which co-workers act.
In this case, this question is oriented to Creativity and Quickness. The first aspect may be developed by encouraging the communication and ideas generation. The second aspect cannot be improved by communication in real terms, but co-workers can be informed regarding the process in decision making process, and the reasons for decisions to take the time they take. Understanding this, will let the co-workers to accurately assess the speed of the decision making process. It is remarkable the point that this information sharing process does not replace the base improvements to be applied in case that actually exists a quickness problem, and the assessment done by co-workers is correct.

When it comes to the analysis of the individual results for every questions, some results are found to be of particular interest for this work. Additionally to the already mentioned areas with low results, the following questions have performed below the expected value, and according to the relations exposed above, they might be improved through communication activities.

Question number 4 is assessing objectives, and the answer to this kind of questions would be expected to be higher than 68%, being this a clear case in which a lack of communication is impacting in the results.

Question number 4, To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

a) I am familiar with overall goals of my unit.
b) In my department we work towards clear goals.
c) In my department our goals are regularly followed up.

Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Other examples of low results because of a lack of communication are the results for question 6, especially sub-questions a) and c).

Question number 6, To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding your customers?
By customers we mean customers in store.
a) I am well aware of how satisfied our customers are.
c) In my department we are good at listening to the customers’ problems.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Finally questions 10 b) and 10 c) are assessed with very low positive answers by co-workers.

Question number 10, To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
b) My manager updates me on a regular basis on IKEAs Social & Environmental responsibilities.
c) In my department we are taking concrete actions which reflect IKEAs Social & Environmental responsibilities.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

As can be seen, there is a lack of knowledge of IKEAs Social & Environmental policies, which can be solved by education and communication in this field.

As described in the conceptual framework, the communication is found to be the common element that goes through all the categories assessed by the VOICE survey,
and at the same time, through the elements included by French (2003) in his Model of Organizational Performance.

Furthermore, people in organizations must be provided with information, and this must be accompanied by training to develop skills that allow them to employ that information, and consequently increase productivity, detect problems and create improvement activities (Pfeffer, 1994).

At this stage, based on the secondary data analyzed, communication accompanied by training and integration in smaller scale, have been chosen to be the source of low results in VOICE 2008 for DCÄ. These elements have been found to present in the wide majority of questions and answers, and therefore, improvement activities on this field may give the organization better results in future VOICE surveys. This preliminary assumption will be complemented with the proceeds of primary data collection.

5.5. Analysis of Primary Data

From the different interviews, common elements have been found regarding the way they see VOICE. Starting from the most general and main agreement, there is a common agreement among all the interviewed teams and HR manager in the sense that VOICE is important for the organization because it gives the opportunity of co-worker to express themselves, and co-workers expect to be heard. These ideas are in line with Sanchez’s concept regarding surveys, he argues that employees develop engagement when they can express their ideas, but “...when management fails to take action in response to areas of concern highlighted by the survey (...), the survey experience can produce feelings of frustration and disappointment among employees.” (Ibid, 2007, p. 48).

The same happened when the interviewees were asked about the linkage between VOICE and performance. All the respondents agreed on the existence of that linkage, and that the better the results in VOICE are, higher is the performance of the teams. These is as well confirmed by the theory assessed for this work in chapter number 2.
in a double sense, first human resources practices in general are confirmed to affect the performance (Apperbaum et al. 2000; Boxall & Purcell, 2003; Ichniowski, Shaw, & Prennushi, 1997; and Liu, et al. 2007). Considering the particular aspects of VOICE, in the sense of its elements, theory developed by French (2003) claims the same results. Finally, when VOICE is considered in its functional side, Sanchez (2007) agrees as well on the positive relationship between VOICE and organizational performance.

On the other hand, all the interviewees agreed on the fact that VOICE allow them “...identify what is right and what is wrong...” (Interview number 1) and try to find the solutions.

Other area of agreement among the answers is the reason they find for DCÄ getting the lowest score among the Distributions Centers in Sweden. They all agreed that the age of the people is the main reason. Co-workers in DC Törsvik and Costumer DC are much younger, newly comers to the company, but in DCÄ, most of the people has been working there for many years, and might the only place where they worked after finishing school. This old workers tend to be more demotivated, they have been recruited a long time ago, under a different strategy, and at the same time they do not receive the training the newly comers get. This is one of the phenomena detected by Becker (1980) regarding the bigger quantity of training and information the younger workers get due to their changes of jobs.

Further on the differences among the DCs, other element that at first glance may seem to be contradictory, is the fact that DCÄ has the lowest turnover of the three DCs, according to the information received from HR Manager. DC Törsvik and CDC have much higher turnover, and this has a double impact. The first one is that the new people is recruited by values shared with IKEA culture, and the second is that the new people being recruited receive more updated and better training than those that have been worked for the company for many years. These two effects of the turnover, lead to better VOICE results because of the compatibility of values and knowledge.
When talking about the reasons that may affect the results of the different teams in DCÄ, all the answers argued that the working times and shifts held by the team with highest results was the most attractive, and many co-workers would be interested in working in that way. This team works for three complete weeks in a row, including weekends, and get the 4th week completely free. This availability of free time promotes the out of office activities which lead to stronger team building and feeling of belonging and better communication. When the team leader of this team was asked about the impact of this difference on the VOICE results, he argues that it affected the results, not because of the physical time, but for the team spirit created in the group from these outdoor activities. In this sense, other of the team leaders admitted be planning this kind of activities for the team because she recognized the value of this activities on the team and VOICE results. Linking this with Chawla and Kelloway (2004) theory exposed above, this commitment to the team is crucial to get support, and improved performance.

The outdoor or out of office activities have been considered as important by HR manager interviewed, he confirmed that the organization does not have a special budget for this kind of activities, otherwise they would stop being spontaneous, and begin to be other job activity, but he assured that in case that a team proposes to do it, the funding would be available.

Co-workers in DCÄ receive several publications with information about the company at different levels; “All IKEA Staff receives the global co-worker newspaper ‘Read Me’.

All coworkers in DS EC&N receives ‘The Magazine’ that covers what is going on within the DS Area.

All co-workers in Sweden receives the ‘Info-Bladet’ that is a leaflet put up in all canteens and restrooms. It covers what is going on within DS Sweden.

All co-workers in Älmhult receives the ‘Älmhultsbladet’ that is info for all IKEA coworkers, in all IKEA companies, in Älmhult.” (Karlsson, personal communication, 2009).
This triggered one question that was included in all the interview guides, regarding at what degree all this information was read by the co-workers in the different teams. All the respondents, except the team leader of the team performing over the average in VOICE, agreed that they believed that co-workers do not read that amount of corporate information. On the other side, the team leader with results over the average was the only one asserting that “We read it all, and we usually discuss the information during the lunch or breakfast.” (Interview number 1). The difference in the answers for this team may be the reason for having good results, specially in the areas of organizational vision and culture.

Following with this interview, this team leader, when asked about the most important factor to perform well, he replied “The most important is the team work.” (Interview number 1). As described above, team working leads to cooperation and commitment, and these to improve performance (Chawla & Kelloway, 2004). Sanchez adds “An engaged workforce demonstrates such discretionary behaviors as:

- A willingness to go the extra mile in executing projects and even the most routine work.
- Being motivated to perform to the highest standards.
- Applying creative energy to all work.

Other recurrent element detected in the different interviews is the feeling of the team leaders that co-workers were not really involved in the VOICE process during the previous years, and they had not a clear knowledge of the meaning of the questions or the way the survey works. But during the current year different communication activities were performed in the team and information was shared in order to have all the co-workers having a sound knowledge of what is being assessed through the survey. In this sense, other activity that was detected to be implemented in order to avoid misunderstandings in the survey next year is the request from the team leaders to the co-workers to try to avoid the neutral answers, unless is really necessary. Avoiding the neutral answers, the survey will arrive in more accurate results.
When talking about the low results in the Organizational Efficiency category, a recurrent case was identified - The purchase of Forklifts for the warehouse. Co-workers identify the last purchase of forklifts as inefficient because, in their opinion, different model should have been bought. Again in this case we see that the lack of involvement and integration of co-workers in this purchase created a conflict and a disagreement, that was reflected in the survey as an inefficient activity (Chawla & Kelloway, 2004).

During the interviews, respondents introduced some activities that are being applied, which are related to the perspective of Communication - Training - Integration presented early in this chapter. Among those activities are the visits to stores, or to other areas of the company, in order to let the co-workers understand the way the company works beyond the warehouse. Other activity well developed in IKEA is the TOP DAY (Taste Other Positions Day). This activity consists in “...for example (...) you visit the flow department and see how the loading and unloading for the next day are set up. And then after you have been there for a day, checking out what the planner is doing on his working day, you are supposed to inform that to your team (...) what it means to us, how it affects us. These are areas where we can do better, where we can cooperate better, and so on.” (Interview number 5).

Analyzing the answers from low performing teams, one of the respondents identified as one of the reasons for the low results that he, as team leader, was covering two positions, with almost no contact with co-workers in the warehouse. We can see once again how the communication is playing crucial function in VOICE results.

Finally, regarding the Vision, the core of IKEA’s culture, one of the interviewees narrated the following situation:

“IKEA’s vision is very clear in the stores, and in IKEA Customer Service Centers we talk about it all the time, but here you don’t talk about it that much. So here is more ‘It’s a warehouse’. I think most of the co-workers see their job as ‘I don’t work at IKEA, I work in a warehouse’.” (Interview number 2).
As shown through the analyzed answers to the interviews, the communication is found to be the key element in this case. It is identified as the main element in the causes of low results, and therefore is proposed by this author to be the improvement area chosen, along with Training and Involvement or Participation.
6. CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Communication triggers the process of organizational performance, since it is the common factor to the categories designed in the Model of Organizational Performance and the VOICE survey.

6.1. Conclusions

Improving the results for VOICE 2010 in all IKEA units is one of the objectives set by the top management, based on the results of the survey in 2008. The aim is to achieve a minimum of 700 points out of 1000. Even if this objective may be seen as ambitious, it reflects the potential of continuous improvement that has identified IKEA through its history.

VOICE survey, as other employees’ survey, aims to listen to their employees’ opinions, and measure how much of the culture is embedded in the organization. Moreover, it is a tool to enhance communication at all organizational levels and generate engagement, which will lead to an improved organizational performance.

VOICE involves several aspects of IKEA’s organizational life and culture, and for this reason communication is to be the main character on the stage. Analyzing the questions and answers for VOICE 2008 survey in DCÄ, communication was confirmed to be the main factor in the equation of reducing the results. The grade of development of communication is directly proportional to almost 70% of the questions in VOICE Questionnaire, and therefore, improving these practices will lead to a generalized increase of the results. Trying to improve other areas of VOICE, without improving the communication activities would be nonsense.

Communication is not the only element identified by this work but it is accompanied by two other elements that are highly related to it. These are Training and, Involvement or Participation. Training is a way of communicating, and it involves the training of skills required to perform certain tasks and the training of aspects related to the organizational culture and structure, or problem solving, among others.
Involvement or Participation is a result of good communication techniques, and at the same time it gives communication a bidirectional sense.

As mentioned before, communication, along with its two derivates, can be the source of simultaneous improvements in the different VOICE categories. As described before, Communication is the element with the highest return on improvement, since is has been identified the common element to most of the categories in VOICE Survey and the Conceptual Framework. In this sense, improvements in communication will be reflected in better results in several VOICE categories at the same time.

The preliminary detection of communication done through the analysis of the VOICE 2008 questions and results was followed by the analysis of the primary data collected through five the semi-structured interviews conducted. These interviews were addressed to 4 team leaders in DCÄ, 1 of them with VOICE results above the average, and the other three with results below the average. A fifth interview was addressed to a HR Manager in DCÄ, in order to obtain a more general insight.

The proceeds of these interviews confirmed the previous selection of communication as the root of VOICE results.

Finally, following the design of the conceptual framework created for this work, it can be concluded that communication triggers the process of organizational performance, since it is the common factor to the categories designed in the Model of Organizational Performance and the VOICE survey. DCÄ case gives us the clear picture that Communication is the element that must be improved to have higher results in VOICE and better performance in IKEA, aligned with the principles stated by IKEA’s HR Idea.

In the next section, the suggestions of improvement activity to be implemented is presented.
6.2. Recommendations

Considering that several activities are already being applied to the different IKEA units as an attempt to improve VOICE results, such as visit to stores, out door activities, TOP Day, among others, the following proposal intends to maximize the contents to be communicated, bringing co-workers to a different environment to give them the opportunity to understand more of IKEA in every aspect of the organization, and as mentioned before, obtain the maximum return on improvement activities for VOICE 2010 results.

A good way of promoting the communication and cooperation is arranging functional workshops, which might be focused on certain activity of the organization, but participants must be invited from all the different areas. The primary effect of this gathering is creating a camaraderie climate, in which, informally, co-workers can get to know other co-workers from different areas and units, who have totally different responsibilities in the organization. Getting to know someone face to face promotes the creation of communication channels, and improve the fluency in the existing channels. At the same time, this will increase the knowledge of the employees regarding IKEA organization by sharing experience with co-workers from different business units.

Furthermore, these workshops, as mentioned above, should concentrate in certain area or unit of the organization, but developing in the study of cases, which may be real life cases or fictional, in order to let the co-workers have a look at the complete chain of value, and let them understand what is their position in the process, and the implications their assigned tasks have over the full business, and the value they may create through their actions.

Co-workers are divided in groups and are assigned a role in the chain. This role can be any customer in the chain, both internals and externals, in order to make it more real and inclusive.
Considering the 6 HR activities presented in the Conceptual Framework before as the causes of organizational performance, this kind of activities impacts them, leading to organizational performance.

Culture and Climate is improved, Vision and Culture can be presented and reinforced, in order to assure a complete understanding of their implications in co-workers every day job, and to strengthen the shared values.

When it comes to Structure, this workshop permits the co-workers understand the position they occupy in the organization and the real impact their tasks and responsibilities have over full process and the value adding chain towards final costumer. On the other hand, it also let co-workers have a better understanding of the processes of decision making, the reasons behind the decisions, and the time they require before being seen in the organization.

In the field of Management Philosophy and Leadership Style, this workshop will let co-workers get to know the direction of the business, what is expected from them beyond their daily tasks, and understand the reasons for management to set certain goals and objectives to different units.

Regarding Motivation and Performance, these activities promote integration and involvement. Co-workers feel they are considered by the organization, generating commitment, engagement and loyalty.

Team and Interteam Behavior, or Cooperation, is improved, as mentioned before, because co-workers get to know other people working in the organization, and what their tasks and functions are. This ease the process of cooperation, creating a network which may be useful for problem solving.

Moreover, this kind of workshops may have the following characteristics and advantages as well:
- Develop the Communication Channels, which might be used to transmit any information to the organization.
• Facilitates the process of knowledge sharing during these events.
• Gives the opportunity to co-workers to meet face to face managers and high level executives, to make them more real, and not just a name.
• Offers the opportunity to train specific skills required by the attendees.

Finally, it is worth to mention that this kind of activities shares the values and objectives promoted by IKEA’s HR Idea (IKEA, 1999) in different ways. As shown as follows these values and objectives are covered by the Workshop since it...
• ...gives co-workers the knowledge of what customers need, helping them to be “...service oriented with the customers’ best interests at heart.” (IKEA, 1999, p.2).
• ...promotes the openness to improvement (IKEA, 1999).
• ...gives co-workers the opportunity to “…challenge established patterns…” (IKEA, 1999, p.2).
• ...promotes cooperation activities (IKEA, 1999).
• ...gives co-workers the opportunity to learn about other positions in the company to lead their own “…vocational training and personal development.” (IKEA, 1999, p. 3).
• ...creates the environment for co-workers to learn from their own and others experiences, and share their knowledge and experience with other co-workers (IKEA, 1999).
• ...lets co-workers “…gain knowledge about the IKEA business idea and the fundamental values.” (IKEA, 1999, p. 3).
• ...offers “… the opportunity to experience different working environments…” (IKEA, 1999, p. 3).

People learn more and better by doing than just reading organization’s publications, specially in the case of blue collar personnel, who usually have no access to training or learning processes, or for co-workers who have worked in the company for long time, and the changes the organization suffered lately are not assimilated by them.
6.3 Suggestions for further research

After arriving to the above conclusions for the present work, it is suggested that further research should address some aspects that were out of the scope of this project due to the restrictions that a Master Thesis involves.

The first aspect to be considered is the possibility of performing more interviews or focus groups, with the objective of testing the applicability of the improvement activity proposed in the section above.

Other complementary study may address the problem from a more holistic approach, in order to find other elements that combined with the identified communication, training and involvement may result in better and improved results.

Finally, it may be advisable to perform a cross case analysis, including the case studies of DC Tørsvik and Customer DC. This will allow the researcher to arrive to a more general solution to the need of improving VOICE results.
7. REFERENCES


Appendix 1: VOICE Questionnaire
Source: IKEA Intranet

Background questions
1 How long have you worked in your present job?
Possible answers
1. Less than a month
2. 1-3 months
3. 4-6 months
4. 7-12 months
5. 1-2 years
6. 3-4 years
7. 5-9 years
8. 10 or more years

2 How long have you been employed by IKEA?
Possible answers
1. Less than a month
2. 1-3 months
3. 4-6 months
4. 7-12 months
5. 1-2 years
6. 3-4 years
7. 5-9 years
8. 10 or more years

Shared Vision and Goals
3 To what extent do you agree with the following statements according to you and your situation?
a) I am familiar with IKEA’s vision.
b) IKEA’s vision inspires me in my work.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

4 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
a) I am familiar with overall goals of my unit.
b) In my department we work towards clear goals.
c) In my department our goals are regularly followed up.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

5 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
a) I am well aware of what is important in order to make my unit successful.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Customer Competence
6 To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding your customers?
By customers we mean customers in store.
a) I am well aware of how satisfied our customers are.
b) I am aware of our customers’ quality demands regarding the products or services I work with.
c) In my department we are good at listening to the customers’ problems.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Confidence in Management
7 How much confidence do you have in the managers at the various levels within IKEA?
How much confidence do you have in...
a) ...the management team of your unit.
b) ...your immediate manager.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Leadership
8 To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your immediate manager?
a) My manager is a good listener.
b) My manager communicates in a clear and comprehensible way.
c) My manager is good at handling conflicts.
d) My manager communicates an inspiring future to my department.
e) My manager encourages a variety of opinions and welcomes challenges to the usual way of doing things.
f) My manager is decisive.
g) My manager ensures that decisions taken are implemented.
h) My manager ensures that decisions and schedules are followed.
i) If I take responsibility, my manager supports me when needed.
j) My manager gives me constructive feedback on my work.
k) My manager ensures that all co-workers are involved in the planning, implementation and follow up of activities.
l) My manager enables co-workers to develop.
m) My manager is good at developing trustful relationships between co-workers.
n) My manager acts as a good role model for the IKEA values.
o) My manager is actively initiating changes to improve the way we work.

Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

9 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
It is important to a manager to be able to give precise answers to the majority of questions that his/her co-workers may raise about their work.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Social & Environmental Issues
10 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
a) IKEA’s Social & Environmental work are important to our business and customers.
b) My manager updates me on a regular basis on IKEA’s Social & Environmental responsibilities.
c) In my department we are taking concrete actions which reflect IKEA’s Social & Environmental responsibilities.
d) It is my responsibility to contribute to IKEA’s Social & Environmental work.
e) IKEA is a company that shows in actions that it takes Social & Environmental responsibility.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
Recognition & Contribution
11 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
a) When I do a good job my contribution is recognized.
b) I feel respected and valued in my department.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Diversity
12 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
a) In my department we seek input from people with diverse backgrounds, styles, and approaches.
b) People with diverse backgrounds, styles, and approaches have equal opportunities for promotion within IKEA.
c) Our department has a mix of people with diverse backgrounds, styles, and approaches that help us achieve our goals.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Competence Development
13 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
a) I have good opportunities to develop and expand my competence within IKEA.
b) It is my responsibility to make sure that I develop professionally within IKEA.
c) I receive the support I need in my development.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

14 How well do the demands made of you at work reflect your competence?
Possible answers
The demands...
1. ...fall far below my competence.
2. ...fall below my competence.
3. ...correspond to my competence.
4. ...are above my competence.
5. ...are well above my competence.
Motivation
15 How much of the time do you feel satisfied with your job?
Possible answers
1. Hardly never
2. Only now and then
3. About half of the time
4. A large part of the time
5. Most of the time

People Retention
16 Here, two people are talking about their work at IKEA. Their remarks represent extremes on a scale. If you agree entirely with A, mark next to A on the scale. If you agree entirely with B, mark next to B on the scale. If your views fall somewhere in between, mark the appropriate position on the scale.
A says: In my job I do what I have to and no one can complain about me.
B says: I fell strongly involved in my work and most of the time I do more than is expected of me.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Person A
2.
3.
4.
5. Person B

17 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
a) If someone asked my, I would strongly recommend him/her to seek and employment at IKEA.
b) I would stay at IKEA even if I were offered a similar job at approximately the same pay and benefits in another company.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

18 What do you think your chances are of finding a similar or better job with approximately the same salary and benefits in another company?
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Very poor
2. Poor
3. Neutral
4. Good
5. Very good

Given & Taken Responsibility
19 To what extent do you feel that you can make your own decisions in your work.
Possible answers
1. To a very small extent
2. To a fairly small extent
3. To a certain extent
4. To a fairly large extent
5. To a very large extent

20 Do you have the authority to deal with problems arising your work yourself?
Possible answers
1. To a very small extent
2. To a fairly small extent
3. To a certain extent
4. To a fairly large extent
5. To a very large extent

21 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
a) My colleagues take responsibility when problems at work arise.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Openness & Learning
22 To what extent do you agree with the following statements? In my department...
a) ...there is an atmosphere of trust where conflicts and disagreements can be discussed in an honest way.
b) ...we can openly and without fear talk about mistakes made at work.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

23 To what extent do you agree with the following statements? In my department...
a) ...I constantly benefit from the knowledge and experience of others.
b) ...we learn from mistakes and use the lessons we learn to improve the way we do things.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
Creativity & Speed
24 To what extent do you agree with the following statements? In my department...
   a) ...new ideas are strongly encouraged and supported.
   b) ...we often try out new ways of thinking and working.
   c) ...we make decisions urgently when necessary.
   d) ...things happen very quickly as soon as a decision has been made.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Co-operation
25 What do you do?
   a) When a problem or shortcoming arise in the work of your department, do you try
to solve the issue together?
   b) When problems arise involving several departments, do people from all the
departments involved take part in the attempts to solve the problems?
Possible answers
1. Never
2. Seldom
3. Sometimes
4. Often
5. Always

Organizational Efficiency
26 To what extent do you agree with the following statements? In my department...
   a) ...we are organized in such a way that everyone knows who should be doing what.
   b) ...we have very effective tools to perform our work.
   c) ...we always adopt the most cost efficient ways of working.
   d) ...we always try simple solutions to solve problems that arise at work.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

27 Do you fell there are any significant barriers to efficiency in your department, and
   if so, what are they?
Possible answers
1. Everything too tightly controlled
2. Matters are not addressed in time
3. Inflexible, rigid rules
4. Policies not clear
5. Decisions aren’t taken quickly enough
6. Computer systems
7. Bureaucracy
8. Poor work routines
9. People think only of themselves
10. Top management control
11. Workload too heavy
12. Lack of information that I need to carry out my work
13. Information overload
14. Lack of relevant competence
15. Co-worker turnover too high
16. Lack of clarity regarding who does what
17. Time spent on irrelevant tasks
18. No, I don’t feel there are any significant barriers to efficiency
19. Other, please specify

Internal Communication
28 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
a) I know where to find relevant information I need to perform well in my job.
b) I have access to all the information I need to perform well in my job.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Annual Performance Talk
29 Have you had a Yearly talk (individual feedback on performance and goal setting) with your manager within the last twelve months?
Possible answers
1. Yes
2. No

30 If you have had a yearly talk with your manager within the last 12 months: What was the outcome of your yearly talk?
a) I received feedback on my work performance.
b) Together we formulated concrete goals for next year.
c) We discussed my development opportunities.
d) We followed up the activities we agreed on in our last talk.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Follow-up Questions
31 Did you participate in the previous VOICE-survey?
32 To what extent do you agree with the following statements with regard to the previous VOICE-survey? In my department...
   a) ...the results have been presented.
   b) ...we have worked together with the results.
   c) ...we have implemented activities as a consequence of our action plan.
Possible answers
   1. Disagree
   2. Agree

33 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
   a) I am well aware of the overall supply chain goals.
   b) IKEA's supplying strategy creates guidelines in my daily work.
Possible answers
   Likert scale
   1. Strongly disagree
   2. Disagree
   3. Neutral
   4. Agree
   5. Strongly agree

Stress
34 How often do you fell stressed at work?
Possible answers
   1. Always
   2. Often
   3. Sometimes
   4. Rarely
   5. Never

35 People may worry about different things at work. Do you sometimes worry...
   a) ...that your workplace will be re-organized.
   b) ...whether or not you will still have your job in the future.
   c) ...that you will not be able to handle your job because you too much to do.
   d) ...that you will not be able to handle your job due to lack of competence.
   e) ...that you will make a mistake.
Possible answers
   1. Often
   2. Sometimes
   3. Never

36 Here are two people are talking about their work at IKEA. Their remarks represent extremes on a scale. If you agree entirely with A, mark next to A on the scale. If you agree entirely with B, mark next to B on the scale. If your views fall somewhere in between, mark the appropriate position on the scale.
A says: There is so much to do at work that I feel totally exhausted when I get home. I find it difficult to cope with what I should do at home.
B says: I am very busy at work too, on the other hand, I felt I’ve got energy left when I get home.
Who do you identify with; A or B.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Person A
2.
3.
4.
5. Person B

Physical Work Environment
37 To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding your work environment?
a) The climate (air humidity, ventilation, temperature) is satisfying.
b) The noise at work does not disturb me.
c) We have tools that enable us to perform our work ergonomically.
d) We have security regulations that are understandable to all co-workers.
e) We need protective clothing and hearing protectors when they are needed.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

38 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
a) I have not had any physical problems caused by my work during the last couple of months.
Possible answers
Likert scale
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Background Questions
39 How often are you in contact with or work directly with your customers? (Customers in stores)
Possible answers
1. Every day
2. Every week
3. Every month
4. Seldom
5. Never
40 Are you a manager with co-workers reporting to you?
   Possible answers
   1. Yes
   2. No

41 How old are you?
   Possible answers
   1. 24 or younger
   2. 25-34
   3. 35-44
   4. 45-54
   5. 55-64
   6. 65 or older

42 Are you...
   Possible answers
   1. Male
   2. Female

43 Do you work full-time or part-time?
   Possible answers
   1. Full-time
   2. Part-time

44 How long have you been employed at IKEA?
   Possible answers
   1. Less than one year
   2. 1-9 years
   3. 10 or more years
Appendix 2: Interview Guide no. 1

Background Questions
1. Please describe your academic background.
2. How long have you worked for IKEA?
3. What is your current position?
4. What other positions have you held?
5. Have you worked at IKEA Stores before?
6. Have you worked for another company before working for IKEA?
7. Are you leading the same team as in 2008?

General Aspects of VOICE
8. Please describe VOICE survey from your point of view.
9. In your opinion, what are the strengths and flaws of VOICE?
10. In your opinion, what are VOICE objectives?
11. Do you think these objectives are achieved?
12. What do you think are the 3 most important factors in the VOICE survey?
13. Do you think there is a relation between VOICE results and employee and Company results and performance?
14. What are the facts or events where you see this relation in employee? in Company?
15. Why do you think DCÄ got lower results than the general results?
16. Why do you think the lowest indicators are Cooperation and Creativity and Speed?
17. Why do you think that only 46% of DCÄ believe that their work is done efficiently?
18. In your opinion, why is DCÄ having lower results than Törsvik?

Particular Aspects of Voice
19. Do you think there are differences in the team and the kind of activities the team performs, that may influence the VOICE results?
20. What is done differently in your team, compared to other teams?
21. How would you define your leadership style?
22. How do you communicate with your team?
23. How often do you have team meetings?
24. Do you think this frequency is enough?
25. What kind of information is shared during the team meetings?
   How much of this info do you think is read by them?
27. How would you define the relations and climate in your team?
28. Do you promote ‘after office’ activities in your team?
29. What do you think is the relation between the leadership indicator and the VOICE results?
30. Do you apply any communication tool within your team, other than the team meetings?
31. Do you think people in your team is aware of IKEA VISION, business objectives and other corporate policies such as social and environmental?
32. Why do you think only 86% in your team, and 75% in the general say that know IKEA's vision and it inspires them? They are not low numbers at all, but considering the importance of the Vision in IKEA, and that it is published everywhere...

33. What do you think makes your team be over the average in the VOICE results?

34. Results in VOICE 2008 were higher than those in 2007. What are the reasons for these higher results?

35. What was done differently? What kind of activities were applied to improve the results?

36. Unit’s Goals have lower results than the overall vision, why do you think that happens?

37. Organizational Efficiency, why do you think only 63% of your team thinks that the work is done efficiently?
Appendix 3: Interview Guide no. 2

Background Questions
1. Please describe your academic background.
2. How long have you worked for IKEA?
3. What is your current position?
4. What other positions have you held?
5. Have you worked at IKEA Stores before?
6. Have you worked for another company before working for IKEA?
7. Are you leading the same team as in 2008?

General Aspects of VOICE
8. Please describe VOICE survey from your point of view.
9. In your opinion, what are the strengths and flaws of VOICE?
10. In your opinion, what are VOICE objectives?
11. Do you think these objectives are achieved?
12. What do you think are the 3 most important factors in the VOICE survey?
13. Do you think there is a relation between VOICE results and employee and Company results and performance?
14. What are the facts or events where you see this relation in employee? in Company?
15. Why do you think DCÄ got lower results than the general results?
16. Why do you think the lowest indicators are Cooperation and Creativity and Speed?
17. Why do you think that only 46% of DCÄ believe that their work is done efficiently?
18. In your opinion, why is DCÄ having lower results than Törsvik?

Particular Aspects of Voice
19. Do you think there are differences in the team and the kind of activities the team performs, that may influence the VOICE results?
20. What is done differently in your team, compared to other teams?
21. How would you define your leadership style?
22. How do you communicate with your team?
23. How often do you have team meetings?
24. Do you think this frequency is enough?
25. What kind of information is shared during the team meetings?
   How much of this info do you think is read by them?
27. How would you define the relations and climate in your team?
28. Do you promote ‘after office’ activities in your team?
29. What do you think is the relation between the leadership indicator and the VOICE results?
30. Do you apply any communication tool within your team, other than the team meetings?
31. Do you think people in your team is aware of IKEA VISION, business objectives and other corporate policies such as social and environmental?
Particular Questions for Interviewee no. 2

32. Why do you think only 82% in your team say that know IKEA’s vision and 39% that it inspires them? 82% is not a low number at all, but considering the importance of the Vision in IKEA, and that it is published everywhere...

33. Results in VOICE 2008 were lower than those in 2007. What are the reasons for these lower results?

34. What was changed in the team?

35. What was done differently?

36. Unit’s Goals have lower results than the overall vision, why do you think that happens?

37. Organizational Efficiency, why do you think only 25% of your team thinks that the work is done efficiently?

38. Leadership high, voice low.
Appendix 4: Interview Guide no. 3

Background Questions
1. Please describe your academic background.
2. How long have you worked for IKEA?
3. What is your current position?
4. What other positions have you hold?
5. Have you worked at IKEA Stores before?
6. Have you worked for another company before working for IKEA?
7. Are you leading the same team as in 2008?

General Aspects of VOICE
8. Please describe VOICE survey from your point of view.
9. In your opinion, what are the strengths and flaws of VOICE?
10. In your opinion, what are VOICE objectives?
11. Do you think these objectives are achieved?
12. What do you think are the 3 most important factors in the VOICE survey?
13. Do you think there is a relation between VOICE results and employee and Company results and performance?
14. What are the facts or events where you see this relation in employee? in Company?
15. Why do you think DCÄ got lower results than the general results?
16. Why do you think the lowest indicators are Cooperation and Creativity and Speed?
17. Why do you think that only 46% of DCÄ believe that their work is done efficiently?
18. In your opinion, why is DCÄ having lower results than Törsvik?

Particular Aspects of VOICE
19. Do you think there are differences in the team and the kind of activities the team performs, that may influence the VOICE results?
20. What is done differently in your team, compared to other teams?
21. How would you define your leadership style?
22. How do you communicate with your team?
23. How often do you have team meetings?
24. Do you think this frequency is enough?
25. What kind of information is shared during the team meetings?
   How much of this info do you think is read by them?
27. How would you define the relations and climate in your team?
28. Do you promote ‘after office’ activities in your team?
29. What do you think is the relation between the leadership indicator and the VOICE results?
30. Do you apply any communication tool within your team, other than the team meetings?
31. Do you think people in your team is aware of IKEA VISION, business objectives and other corporate policies such as social and environmental?
Particular Questions for Interviewee no. 3
32. Why do you think only 86% in your team, and 75% in the general say that know IKEA's vision and it inspires them? They are not low numbers at all, but considering the importance of the Vision in IKEA, and that it is published everywhere...
33. Results in VOICE 2008 were lower than those in 2007. What are the reasons for these lower results?
34. What was changed in the team?
35. What was done differently?
36. Your team has one of the highest results in Cooperation. How do the team manage the cooperation?
37. How do you promote it?
38. Organizational Efficiency, why do you think only 63% of your team thinks that the work is done efficiently?
Appendix 5: Interview Guide no. 4

Background Questions
1. Please describe your academic background.
2. How long have you worked for IKEA?
3. What is your current position?
4. What other positions have you held?
5. Have you worked at IKEA Stores before?
6. Have you worked for another company before working for IKEA?
7. Are you leading the same team as in 2008?

General Aspects of VOICE
8. Please describe VOICE survey from your point of view.
9. In your opinion, what are the strengths and flaws of VOICE?
10. In your opinion, what are VOICE objectives?
11. Do you think these objectives are achieved?
12. What do you think are the 3 most important factors in the VOICE survey?
13. Do you think there is a relation between VOICE results and employee and Company results and performance?
14. What are the facts or events where you see this relation in employee? in Company?
15. Why do you think DCÄ got lower results than the general results?
16. Why do you think the lowest indicators are Cooperation and Creativity and Speed?
17. Why do you think that only 46% of DCÄ believe that their work is done efficiently?
18. In your opinion, why is DCÄ having lower results than Törsvik?

Particular Aspects of Voice
19. Do you think there are differences in the team and the kind of activities the team performs, that may influence the VOICE results?
20. What is done differently in your team, compared to other teams?
21. How would you define your leadership style?
22. How do you communicate with your team?
23. How often do you have team meetings?
24. Do you think this frequency is enough?
25. What kind of information is shared during the team meetings?
   How much of this info do you think is read by them?
27. How would you define the relations and climate in your team?
28. Do you promote ‘after office’ activities in your team?
29. What do you think is the relation between the leadership indicator and the VOICE results?
30. Do you apply any communication tool within your team, other than the team meetings?
31. Do you think people in your team is aware of IKEA VISION, business objectives and other corporate policies such as social and environmental?
Particular Questions for Interviewee no. 4
32. Why do you think only 50% of your team say that IKEA’s vision inspires them?
33. Results in VOICE 2008 were higher than those in 2007. What are the reasons for these higher results?
34. What was done differently? What kind of activities were applied to improve the results?
35. Organizational Efficiency, why do you think only 43% of your team thinks that the work is done efficiently?
Appendix 6: Interview Guide HR

Background Questions
1. Please describe your academic background.
2. How long have you worked for IKEA?
3. What is your current position?
4. What other positions have you hold?
5. Have you worked at IKEA Stores before?
6. Have you worked for another company before working for IKEA?
7. Are you leading the same team as in 2008?

General Aspects of VOICE
8. When was VOICE first implemented?
9. What was TOTAL IKEA results for VOICE 2008?
10. Please describe VOICE survey from your point of view.
11. In your opinion, what are the strengths and flaws of VOICE?
12. In your opinion, what are VOICE objectives?
13. Do you think these objectives are achieved?
14. What do you think are the 3 most important factors or elements in the VOICE survey?
15. Do you think there is a relation between VOICE results and employee and Company results and performance?
16. What are the facts or events where you see this relation in employee? in Company?
17. Why do you think DCÄ got lower results than the general results?
18. In your opinion, why is DCÄ having lower results than Törsvik?

Particular Aspects of Voice
19. Inside DCÄ, Do you think there are differences in the teams and the kind of activities the teams perform, that may influence the VOICE results?
20. How does the TOP Management of DCÄ communicate with different teams?
21. How does HR department of DCÄ communicate with different teams?
22. In case that meetings are held, How often do they have meetings?
23. Do you think this frequency is enough?
24. What kind of information is shared during this meetings?
   How much of this info do you think is read by them?
26. How would you define the relations and climate in the different teams and overall in DCÄ?
27. Does TOP Management of DCÄ promote ‘after office’ activities?
28. Does TOP Management apply any communication tool, other than meetings or publications?
29. Some team leaders yesterday mentioned some activities, such as visiting other IKEA companies, or visiting the store, or spending one day at other co-worker’s work place. How often these activities are performed in DCÄ?
30. Do you think people in DCÄ is aware of IKEA VISION, business objectives and other corporate policies such as social and environmental?
31. Why do you think only 75% in DCÅ say that know IKEA’s vision and 59% that it inspires them?
32. Results in VOICE 2008 were higher than those in 2007. What are the reasons for these higher results?
33. What was done differently? What kind of activities were applied to improve the results?
34. Why do you think the lowest indicators are Cooperation and Creativity and Speed?
35. Why, in your opinion, only 41% says to be aware of Customer satisfaction?
36. Organizational Efficiency, why do you think only 46% of DCÅ think that the work is done efficiently?
37. Magasinet Dec. 2008 states that DC Jarosty has applied activities to improve Cooperation. What are those activities?
38. What other activities to improve VOICE have been applied to other companies in the group?
39. What do you think is the relation between the leadership indicator and the VOICE results?