COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY!

PROJECT "FRICIONLESS COMMUNICATION" (FRICO)

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WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

Oxford dictionaries (www.oxforddictionaries.com):

1. The imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium
2. Means of sending or receiving information, such as telephone lines or computers

Sounds easy - but is it? >> Human factor
”FRICO” BACKGROUND S

• Demand arising from the working life for promoting the communication skills of young engineers (for example the studies of Finnish labour organization TEK, [www.tek.fi](http://www.tek.fi))

➢ engineers often work in leadership positions already at the very beginning of their careers

➢ creates the demand for leadership and communication skills, which are not however developed much during university education
INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT "FRICO"

- Implementation 2013-2014

- Research team
  University of Oulu
  Research Unit of Industrial Engineering and Management
  Research Unit of Psychology

- 6 companies
  3 mechanical engineering workshops
  1 manufacturing site
  1 energy company
  1 communication technology company

- Funding
  The Finnish Work Environment Fund,
  participating companies and University of Oulu

- Cooperation
  Labour market organizations (employer, employee)
PROJECT OBJECTIVES

1) Evaluate and promote manager-employee communication on the individual level

2) Analyze and improve the communication cultures in the case companies

3) Develop new communication practices and innovations and integrate those to the organization’s managerial system

4) Sharing knowhow for the branch of industry for developing communication in the work organizations

➤ Improvements in the company’s communication system have a direct impact on the organizational performance resulting to improved efficiency, innovativeness and well-being at work
DIFFERENT LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION

Individual Level
- Communication skills training
  - Better leadership
  - Work efficiency
  - Work well-being

Work Community Level
- New communication practices
  - Systematic procedures
  - Employee involvement
  - Work atmosphere
  - Innovativeness
  - Problem-solving

Organizational Level
- Communication as part of the management system
  - Systematic follow-up, evaluation and development of communication
  - Proactivity of the operation
  - Dynamics of the organization

Branch of Industry
Best practices for developing the organizational communication
METHODOLOGY

Analyzing the experienced work conditions

- Organization survey (questionnaire)
- Including 22 statements concerning the communication culture and management system in the case companies, Likert-scale 0-5
- Implemented in all 6 companies, n = 448

More information from
COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING

Communication skills training (Peer Group Counselling Method, PGC)

- Communication skills training (PGC) for selected managers of the case companies, n = 11

- Measuring: Counselor Response Observation System (CROS) which includes Counselor Response Coding System (CRCS) and Skilled Verbal Response Scale (SVRS) based on the video recordings of the training sessions

- Qualitative feedback after training sessions and after the training period

- Work survey: 1) UWES7 (Utrecht Work Engagement Survey) 2) MBI (Maslach Burnout Inventory)
METHODOLOGY

Observation of the communication culture / ethnography

- Observation period of 10-20 days in each case company
- Identifying the factors, which contribute or detract the purposeful communication (making the company’s communication culture visible)
- Observed possibilities and challenges create a basis for the next phase in the project (developing good communication practices)
METHODOLOGY

Developing good communication practices / participative planning

- 1-3 workshops in each company, approx. 15 employees participating in each workshop

- Identifying the communication challenges of the companies and developing solutions and new operating models based on the previous phases in the project

- Creating concrete everyday communication practices to be implemented into the company’s managerial system by using participative planning method
RESULTS: COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING

- Most participants were able to improve their communication skills during the training (SVRS scores increased between sessions 1 and 2).
- The biggest improvement was in "client centeredness" (in dimension "counselor speaks of things that client has not mentioned").
- PGC method was evaluated as a good tool for promoting personal communication skills.
- Adopting the method requires personal commitment and ability to self-assessment.

More information:
RESULTS: OBSERVATION

- In 5 of 6 companies the main challenge in communication was the interaction between the different organizational functions, units or teams.

- In all companies the employees considered the team members or colleagues as well as the contents of the work to be the main asset and motivating factor at work.

- In all companies a spontaneous face-to-face communication was in a significant role: technological problems were found easier to solve physically close to the problematic topics and new solutions were brainstormed or matters were arranged by visiting the colleagues’ desks.

More information:
RESULTS: GOOD COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

Promoting Frictionless Communication examples

Interaction & information flow and management
- Defined, regular meeting practices and documentation (for example meeting memos, management information)
- Process flows documented and distributed
- Defining new ways and channels for information sharing (for example utilizing the company intranet)
- Defining information sharing and reporting responsibilities (for example responsible persons for information sharing, work hour arrangements btw the shifts)

Work environment & equipment
- Proper handling of material, tools and equipment (for example storage, maintenance, administration of the material orders)
- Maintaining the tidiness of the working environment

Training & HR&D
- Trainings clearly included into the HR plan
- Systematic handling of the employee feedback

Ideas & initiatives
- Systematic and documented processing of the employee ideas and initiatives
DISCUSSION

- Results indicate that it is possible systematically
  
  1) to promote the communication skills on individual, work community and organizational levels
  
  2) to develop concrete communication practices to be implemented into the daily operation and into the company’s management system

- The connection between the communication skills and the well-being at work should be studied more closely in the future with a larger data

- The cooperation with the participating companies and the communication research will continue

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